



CLT IN LIBYA: INCONGRUITY OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

Abstract

Libya recognizes the importance of English language competency in the modern world. From trying various teaching methods, Communicative Language Teaching has become the current choice with its proven approach for EFL. Although some Libyan teachers approve of the theory of CLT, its full implementation inside the classroom reflects the incongruity of the teachers' attitudes and their practice. Teachers' positive attitude did not seem to translate entirely to the observed practices inside the classroom.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, CLT, Libyan EFL teachers

1. Introduction

The English language has gained prominence as the internet, international economics, and globalization use English as the base expression. Many recognize that English is the international language or the world's lingua franca (El-Fiki, 2012; Omar, 2014; Burka, 2020). Like other Middle Eastern countries, Libya is compelled to reform its education system to learn the language. Many Libyans prefer to learn and use English in Libya compared to the other language programs offered in the country as the language supports the global connections in the oil-based economy. Realizing this, the government re-introduced Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in primary and secondary schools starting in the 2000s (Aloreibi & Carey, 2017). The curriculum, embodied in the textbook – English for Libya, aims to provide the students with English language competencies.

1.1. Development of CLT in Libya

Although English language teaching started in the 50s in Libya, the lack of teachers had forced the Ministry of Education to abandon its implementation. Only after four decades, the government re-introduced English in the curriculum for the secondary level. Teachers tried to implement various approaches in teaching English over the years. With the criticism on the methods, the Ministry introduced a new curriculum based on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). This method is preferred considering the demand for change and the need to improve the communicative skills of Libyan graduates (Aloreibi & Carey, 2017). The impetus comprises

using English in the classroom as much as possible. With the CLT practices, teachers believe that EFL students shall participate more actively in the classroom.

The introduction of CLT met with controversies. One problem is that teachers found the approach very new. Another problem is the lack of educational media to support CLT. In addition, there was also limited time to learn the language and the opportunity to practice English. Experts also saw a mismatch of the curriculum and the nature of examinations, which made CLT principles difficult. The teachers understand that this new curriculum aims to meet global standards and the country's education goals. However, the teachers view the situation differently. Some Libyan teachers adopted CLT quickly, while others showed resistance considering the inadequacy of the learning setting. One of the concerns was that the teachers' beliefs or attitudes about CLT had not been considered. Teachers anticipate that this failure to consider their views may deter the implementation of this method. This present study explores this aspect of CLT implementation in Libya.

1.3 Principles of CLT

The central dogma of CLT is learner engagement in the communication process to acquire the English language competencies (Savignon, 2007). Its application in the teaching process encompasses the following expectations from teachers and students.

- Language use is preferred to language knowledge.
- Appropriateness and fluency are preferred over structural correctness.
- Interpersonal interactions are preferred to intrapersonal interactions.
- The context is valuable in the interpretation of the sense of the text.
- Learners actively participate in expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning inside the classroom.
- Learners have a choice of language and autonomy, among other choices.
- Learners engage in spontaneity and trial-and-error in classroom activities.
- Pair work and group work are helpful learning methods and are given in small classes.
- The delivery is based on authentic materials.
- Successful communication involves risk-taking.
- The approach is learner-centered.
- The teacher constantly shifts from director transmitter to facilitator roles.
- The learning environment is not excessively formal but interactive.
- The method's purpose is not just for competence but also to meet the learners' outlooks during the learning process.
- Both teachers and students commit to using English as a medium of classroom interaction.

Globally, CLT has widespread acceptance. Nonetheless, research specifies challenges in its implementations. Although the impetus for CLT uses inside the classrooms and the teachers' recognition of its potential outcomes, teachers still opt for more traditional methods of teaching English. For some teachers, the successful implementation of CLT depends not only on the teacher but also on systemic factors. However, this study identifies the impact of teachers' attitudes and the approaches used inside the classroom.

2. Review of the related literature

2.1. Teachers' role in the implementation of CLT

Teachers and their attitudes have a crucial role in the application of any teaching approach in the classroom. Karavas-Doukas (1996) suggests that one cause for CLT theory and practice inconsistency is the teacher's attitude. A positive attitude affects the teacher's behavior inside the classroom. This outlook influences what students learn and helps determine the educator's teaching style. In various countries using ESL, research on the teachers' attitudes towards CLT and practice reveals varying results.

Four studies show that a positive attitude towards CLT does not necessarily result in satisfactory classroom implementation. In a study conducted in Turkey, Ozsevik (2010) found that 61 Turkish English teachers in the primary and secondary levels encountered many challenges in implementing CLT in their classrooms. Teachers link the difficulties to the educational system, the students, the teachers, and CLT itself. Although teachers showed keenness in introducing and adopting CLT, their lack of optimism may have contributed to the difficulty of overcoming the challenges. Teachers pointed that there is a need to establish more favorable conditions for CLT implementation to realize the full benefits of CLT. In Bangladesh, the attitudes of 36 EFL teachers involved in Karim's study (2004) showed that their positive attitudes towards CLT were reflected in their practice. However, to some extent, some incongruences were observed in the teachers' attitudes and practices. The study did not blame the teachers' inconsistency since the gaps did not result from the teacher's misunderstanding of CLT. Factors such as traditional exams, lack of resources, large and unequipped classes, and the lack of administration's support were recognized as causes of the poor CLT implementation. In Razmjoo and Riazi (2006), a similar positive attitude of English teachers in Iranian private high schools about CLT had been observed. The study also delved into comparing the practices of CLT in public and private high schools. Findings indicated that private high schools partially implemented CLT, unlike in the public schools. The teachers in these schools did not establish any importance to CLT with the teachers' classroom practices. In Dordinejad et al. (2011), Iranian teachers from private language institutes supported grammar, dialogues, vocabulary, and reading activities in CLT. However, these activities were poorly integrated into their language lessons. The culprit for unsuccessful CLT implementation was recognized to be their cultural background.

Other studies did not specifically identify the kind of attitude for CLT in their classrooms. However, they connected the teachers' lack of training to the poor implementation of CLT. In a study in Southern Brazil, CLT in the high schools and language schools hinges on the teachers' awareness of CLT theories (Aleixo, 2003). The poor implementation, however, was attributed to the lack of training. Other factors contributing to the problems in CLT implementation included different constraints in the school setting. In another Iranian study, Mowlaie and Rahimi (2010) investigated the inconsistencies of the English language teachers' attitudes and CLT principles. Results showed a misalignment of the teachers' attitudes and classroom practice. The teachers similarly pinpointed the lack of training as the root cause.

Considering the varying outcomes of teachers' attitudes on CLT implementation in the classroom, this study ventures in finding the connection of these variables in the Libyan context. The research objectives include the need to determine the impact of teachers' attitudes in CLT implementation and the need to establish the connection of their attitude to practice. This study aims to address the following research questions.

1. What is the perceived attitude of Libyan teachers towards CLT?
2. To what extent does the attitude of Libyan teachers influence the practice of CLT inside the classroom?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

3.1.2. Teachers

Participants involved 17 EFL teachers from various language institutions in Libya. There were eight males and nine females, whose ages range from 22 to 58 years. The average age of the sample is 37. There were 13 with a degree in English in the group, while seven participated in teacher training courses. The average teaching experience was 13.6 years.

3.2. Instrumentation

3.2.1. Teachers' questionnaire

The study used a questionnaire covering the dominant ideologies of Communicative Language Teaching. These principles included the contribution of learners, error correction, group work, language use, the role of grammar, and the role of the teacher. The four-point Likert scale questionnaire is based on the Karavas-Doukas (1996) instrument, comprised of 13 unfavorable and 14 favorable statements. The set of 27 questions is aimed at measuring the English language teachers' attitudes towards CLT principles.

3.2.2. Classroom observation method

To verify the responses from the questionnaire, the research included a classroom observation. The observation method used 13 items, which were, like the questionnaire, based on CLT's six major principles.

3.3. Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed to the 17 Libyan EFL teachers. Experienced observers visited these teachers' classrooms to determine the actual practice of EFL teaching as against the CLT theories.

4. Results and Discussion

The study used an independent samples t-test to examine any significant difference between the teachers' attitude towards CLT and their classroom practice. For this test, the mean and standard deviation from the questionnaire were compared against the mean and standard deviation obtained through observation data.

Table 1. Independent Samples *t*-test for Teachers' Attitude and Practice

	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Teachers' Attitudes	2.78	.30	3.88	9	.004*
Practice	2.37	.05			

**p* < .05

Table 1 shows that the two-tailed $p = .004$ is less than the observed t absolute value at 3.88. The values imply explicitly that there is a significant difference in the perceived attitudes of Libyan EFL teachers and their teaching practice of the English language. The result signifies that Libyan English language teachers have a moderately positive attitude towards CLT principles. However, this favorable attitude does not seem consistent with the teachers' practice. The inconsistency appears more evident with the role of grammar and group work. Teachers seem to be familiar with the theory but fail to show practice. A positive attitude towards the theory does not assure its classroom implementation.

5. Conclusion

Although the teachers' attitude towards teaching approaches may be favorable, this research showed that actual practice does not conclusively follow this regard. CLT may be a proven method in teaching English as a second language. However, in Libya, its implementation inside the classroom needs more vigorous application. The research findings support the outcomes of earlier studies. Libyan teachers understand the potential impact of CLT in language learning. The positive attitude for CLT is not sufficient to ensure the teachers' use of the approach.

Future research must explore the gap from theory to practice. Researchers can look into reasons and obstacles for this gap. They can specifically identify factors that hinder teachers from fully implementing and benefitting from CLT.

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