

Communicative Language Teaching Methodologies in Omani EFL Context

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Abstract

Ever since Communicative Language Teaching (CLT hereafter) was first proposed in 1970 in the UK, there has been widespread implementation of the CLT methodology as it has evolved over the years incorporating the local needs and conditions of the particular contexts, especially in Asia. This paper seeks to revisit the significance of CLT methodology being used in English-as-a-lingua-franca (ELF hereafter) settings in an English-medium-instruction (EMI hereafter) university in the Sultanate of Oman. The emphasis on communication, as it were, in language learning classrooms has led to the augmentation of communicative competence among learners in EFL contexts across EMI universities in Oman. This paper goes on to elaborate how the focus of CLT has been on language functions with a significant emphasis on communicative interaction in the classroom, meaningful practice of language functions with learners, and active involvement of facilitators which, in turn, brings about a renewed emphasis on the notions of positive reinforcement, consideration of mistakes as natural, and use of target language in the classroom which has emboldened the learners with more confidence in using English as a lingua franca in EMI universities in Oman.

Keywords

Communicative Language Teaching, English-Medium-Instruction (EMI) University, Communicative Competence, Communicative Approach, English-as-a-Lingua-Franca (ELF) Context

1. Introduction

Ever since Communicative Language Teaching (CLT hereafter) was first proposed in 1970 in the UK, there has been widespread implementation of the CLT methodology as it has evolved over the years incorporating the local needs, aspi-

rations, and ground conditions of the contexts, especially in Asia. The Sultanate of Oman has seriously invested in teaching English as a foreign language at all levels beginning in the early years of schooling and including public and private gender-separated schools, colleges, and universities. The English language is taught as a textbook-based and teacher-centered compulsory subject from grade one to undergraduate and postgraduate degrees (Al-Mahrooqi & Asante, 2010). The English language teaching and education process, across all spectrums and timelines, aims to offer learners elementary skills in the language: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. While there has been a substantial debate underpinning the appropriate ways of defining CLT and its varied use in language learning classrooms, not a single model of CLT has been regarded as authoritative (McGroarty, 1984; Markee, 2001). CLT begins with a basic theory of language as communication with its goal to develop learners' communicative competence (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). CLT serves the purpose of achieving communicative competence to that extent in Oman where communicative competence is well on the verge of English being used as the lingua franca. CLT has evolved over the years in the Oman with its practice in EMI Universities which focus on ELF settings. While seeking to establish the importance of using CLT methodologies in Omani EFL context, this study follows the overall structure of looking at the broader literature review underpinning the calls to adopt CLT in the Omani EFL context.

2. Literature Review

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) forms an educational scheme for language instruction and includes ideas of achievement and inspiration. For some researchers, CLT is one of the most influential and effective language teaching methodologies, which increases learners' communicative competence (Savignon, 2002; Ying, 2010). The CLT was first introduced in the 1970s, and since then it has quickly become a significant method, getting language teachers' attention from all over the world. The purpose of CLT, as Richards and Rodgers (2014) stated, is to produce meaningful communication in a language. Using communicative activities will enable language learners to acquire language naturally. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), these types of activities provide an opportunity for language learners to engage in cooperative work with their peers, which also enable them to listen to each other.

CLT looks at English not as linguistic features, but as a communicative ability. The functions are more important than the structures where the key aim is to build communicative abilities including grammatical competence, discourse competence and sociolinguistic competence (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Similarly, Littlewood (2007) described CLT as "development within the communicative method, in which the vital feature of the communicative tasks serve not only as significant components of the methodology but also as units around which a course may be organized" (p. 244).

According to Cook (2001), the central educational principle of CLT is that fruitful learning of the L2 depends on the quantity of communication and the intervention of meaning that learners contribute in throughout the EFL classroom time. Littlewood (2007) stated that, this method emphasizes the language as it is applied in real life settings, so the learners are provided with chances to drill their beliefs and views. Similarly, Larsen-Freeman (2000), who also regarded CLT as a communicative method that recognises the connection between language and communication, asserted that CLT aims to improve the ability of language learners to communicate and use the target language appropriately so they can genuinely use it outside the class. She has also pointed out that language teachers aim to allow their learners to communicate by providing them with information about linguistic forms, meanings, and purposes.

In CLT L1 is rarely applied, although it could be used when using L2 seems to be difficult. In CLT, there seems to be very little room left for the learners' L1 in a communicative classroom where the main aim is to develop interaction using L2 (Cook, 2001). The L2 should be applied not only during open class events but also for clarifying actions and performs or allocating homework to learners (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). In addition, Nunan (1991) outlined five features of CLT that were considered to support good practice in developing learners' language competence:

- Stress on learning to communicate through L2.
- Introducing authentic materials into L2 teaching and learning practice.
- Providing chances for learners to focus on their learning practices.
- Enhancing students' class experiences as essential contributing features to classroom learning context.
- Connecting L2 learning with language activities outside the school.

However, CLT, like all other teaching methods, has some drawbacks and has faced some criticism. According to Brown (2007), CLT requires a native speaking teacher, as it is a challenging task for a non-native speaking instructor to practise all its techniques. Therefore, a teacher with low L2 ability and short experience may find difficulties in applying this teaching method, and consequently, may use L1 to explain new terms and clarify difficult instructions might assist a non-native speaking instructor (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Moreover, learners who do not use L2 outside school classrooms, or those who are at elementary levels, might find CLT challenging to practice.

These teaching methods generally have some drawbacks and were criticized for different reasons. Teaching L2 around the world stresses a change towards more communicative teaching methods with collaborating student-centered learning setting. While the CLT approach, for example, encourages communication and interaction, learners do not have enough L2 to start with and often end up using their native language. But for students and teachers who have grown up in contexts which often have teacher-centered classes, syllabus limitations, exams and large number of students in classrooms, there is regularly a discrepancy between theoretical teaching methods and real practices. Syllabuses are often

taught item by item instead of holistically contrary to the CLT approach. Teachers usually take it upon themselves to convey information rather than as a facilitator. Most importantly, exams are based on separate items rather than on communication alone. Learners face difficulties with reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar. Some studies (Sinha, 2017b) insist on the appropriate usage of word, along with comprehension, in order to teach English. It must be noted here that word meaning is subject to change and that slang is the most volatile part of the vocabulary. Therefore, for contemporary usage, a recent standard dictionary needs to be consulted (Sinha, 2017a). Another study indicates developing an understanding of the relationship between word recognition skill and Academic English performance in English-medium instruction (EMI) university programs in English-as-a-lingua-franca (ELF) contexts (Roche et al., 2016). However, since writing skill is a very compound activity which involves accuracy, writing for different purposes such as writing emails with various use of vocabulary, it becomes the most challenging skill in the language. Teachers, therefore, try to support learners use sentences meaningfully in paragraphs which would make a meaningful piece of writing. There is no denying the fact, however, that teaching academic writing to Arab learners needs special attention, especially when a majority has no concept of plagiarism. The other aspect is the teaching of the English language at grades 11 - 12 levels where learners are taught fixed expressions and phrases, reading, and writing passages which they are required to memorize and then reproduce for exams purposes.

Studies undertaken in the context of specific countries reflect a different story. In the context of Vietnam, for example, Ellis (1994) investigated the suitability of the communicative approach and his findings revolved around the problems of teachers' dependence on the inherent traditional teaching practices. In a similar study in the context of Greece, Karavas-Doukas (1996) examined the attitudes of the teachers towards the use of CLT and despite the fact that CLT was at the core of the English curriculum in Greece, teachers showed an inclination towards carrying on the burden of the past-traditional teacher-oriented instruction style. It can be said that teachers either did not comprehend or were reluctant to look into the practical implications of the CLT principles. Li (1998), in another significant study, explored Korean teachers' perceptions of the way CLT was implemented, and the findings confirmed that the teachers came across different types of impediments in classroom implementation of CLT practices. Broadly speaking, the Korean study categorized these impediments in terms of problems faced by teachers, students, and the education system. Teacher specific difficulties included deficiency in spoken English, strategic and sociolinguistic competence, CLT training, fewer opportunities for CLT retraining, misconceptions about CLT, and little time for and expertise in material development. Students suffered from low English proficiency, little motivation for communicative competence, and reluctance to class participation. Educational system was found to be resource deficient in terms of lack of large classes, grammar-based examinations, insufficient funding, and lack of support. Difficulties caused by CLT it-

self: CLT's inadequate account of EFL teaching, lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments (Li, 1998: p. 687). All of these cumulatively impacted the CLT implementation.

There are examples, however, of CLT method being adopted in Asian contexts successfully. Tomlinson (1990), for example, used CLT methods with Indonesian senior and junior high school students. Although the method was in its early days of implementation, teachers succeeded in controlling a class of 48 students. The students were also more highly motivated to learn English than other students who did not use the method.

It is possible that the main challenge in L2 classes in EMI setting is the large number of students (classes normally comprise 30 - 35 students) and the inadequate teaching resources. Consequently, teachers fear the lack of classroom management and running pair and group work during the lessons with large numbers of learners.

Calls to Adopt CLT in the Omani EFL Context

The traditional teaching methods, which are adopted in different EFL contexts around the world, regularly emphasize grammar, memorization, interpretation and other practices that do not support the progress of communicative capability. This creates the need to implement a teaching method that encourages people to use English for real communication in the EFL setting. In Oman, one of the currently adopted methods to teach English as EFL is the communicative language teaching method (CLT). The purpose of CLT, as Richards and Rodgers (2014) have stated, is to produce meaningful communication in a language. Using communicative activities will enable language learners to acquire language naturally. Communicative activities create a friendly environment inside the classroom among learners, which helps in the language learning process. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), these types of activities provide an opportunity for language learners to engage in cooperative work with their peers, which also enable them to listen to each other.

Similarly, Larsen-Freeman (2000), who also regarded CLT as a communicative method that recognises the connection between language and communication, has asserted that CLT aims to improve the ability of language learners to communicate and use the target language appropriately so they can genuinely use it outside the class. She has also pointed out that language teachers aim to allow their learners to communicate by providing them with information about linguistic forms, meanings, and purposes.

Al-Mahrooqi (2012), recommended the implementation of CLT in EFL classrooms to solve some of the Arab EFL fluency problems. She carried out research on 58 undergraduates to examine the teaching methods of English language skills in public schools and private institutions in Oman. Her study showed that 45 out of the 58 participants did not get the chance to learn the English language communicatively in schools. Her study showed there is an obvious need to enhance communicative skills in the Omani public schools' curriculum. She revealed an absence of fluency as part of speaking skills for Omani EFL learners.

3. Research Design and Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach to collect data. While quantitative research veers around measurement based on relationships surrounding variables leading to statistical analysis, qualitative or interpretive research tradition, on the other hand, views human behavior as too complex to be understood using such methods (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992: p. 48). Qualitative research instead describes people and their perceptions of the world (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992: p. 2; Bell, 1993: p. 5). This study considers the interpretative mold and addresses the issue of CLT in the context of perceptions in the classroom and interpretation of the studies to arrive at a better conceptual clarity about the use of CLT in language learning classrooms in EMI universities of the Sultanate of Oman evoking an ELF setting. The research process takes into consideration the classroom observation reports, and program evaluation reports which have been taken into consideration to arrive at a qualitative understanding of the issues involved in implementation of CLT methodology in EMI Universities of Oman.

4. Results

CLT, with its emphasis on communication in language learning classrooms has led to the augmentation of communicative competence among learners in ELF contexts across EMI universities in the Sultanate of Oman. It is discernible from studies how the focus of CLT has been on language functions with a significant emphasis on communicative interaction in classroom, meaningful practice of language functions with learners, active involvement of facilitators which, in turn, brings about a renewed emphasis on the notions of positive reinforcement, consideration of mistakes as natural, and use of target language in the classroom—a cumulative effect of which has resulted in emboldening the Omani learners with more confidence in using English as a lingua franca in the context of EMI universities of the Sultanate of Oman.

5. Discussion and Analysis

The Broad Context of English Medium Instruction in Oman

The main discussion about learners' first language (L1) use in teaching language happens between monolingual and bilingual supporters. Both sides have different assumptions towards L1 use in EFL classrooms. A monolingual approach would emphasize avoidance of L1 use in EFL classrooms, while bilingual method supports the use of L1 in EFL classrooms. Public schools, due to cultural reasons, employ female teachers to teach in female schools whereas male teachers teach in male schools in big classrooms, with a regular number of 30 - 35 learners of diverse abilities. Students have 5 - 7 English language sessions per week; each session lasts for 40 minutes with a total of 4 - 5 hours of English language learning exposure per week. Teachers and students are asked to strictly use similar textbooks and teaching resources provided.

The textbook series, used in EFL classrooms in Oman, is called “English for

Me” for grades 1 - 10 and “Engage with English” for grades 11 - 12 (MoE, 2017). The ultimate goals controlling the Ministry of Education design and use of these textbooks are, to provide socially proper education that encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and an appreciation of English language’s global value. Moreover, the MOE stresses that the textbooks have been designed to support a student-centred, communicative approach to English language learning.

The English language course books for grades 11 - 12 are “Engage with English’ (EWE) and were initially designed to help learners” academic progress, and to preserve motivation and interest. The general aims of the EWE course are to raise learners’ language levels to a good general standard so that they are prepared to enter the career they have chosen and develop their specific language skills further. The curriculum design is meant to serve the needs of all Omani learners during their last year of secondary education, not just those going on to further education. Generally, the EWE course has a number of linguistics and non-linguistic aims, including:

- To provide learners with a functional command of English as preparation for work or future studies;
- To develop and consolidate functional skills in English;
- To give learners the skills and confidence to use English outside the classroom;
- To develop learners’ awareness of learning strategies they can apply to further their learning of English both inside and outside of schools;
- To enable learners to acquire active mastery of the core grammar of English;
- To establish a basis for both fluency and accuracy within specific domains; and
- To use English as a medium for learning about other cultures and contrasting it with their own (MoE, 2017).

In addition to the linguistic objectives, there is also a range of non-linguistic aims embedded in this course. For example, the course materials offer opportunities for learners to become familiar with self-help strategies and stress the appropriate use of a range of resources for independent learning and reflection, and monitoring strategies. Additionally, basic skills such as dictionary skills, library and research skills, and paraphrasing, referencing, and accurate citation of sources, are built into the class materials in grades 11 and 12 for a more comprehensive L2 learning. Moreover, the themes and topics of the course deliver an international outlook and cover a range of matters that have a global impact, and through which learners will be encouraged to reflect on these issues and relate the subject matter and its implications to their own specifically Omani experiences. For instance, a number of topics link either directly or indirectly to the various vocational fields that many of the learners will be entering, such as the tourism and hospitality industry, computer technology, office management and electricians.

According to Brown (2007), there seems to be an unavoidable relationship between a language and the society in which it is taught. However, students in

Oman are infrequently properly exposed to English language, and only a limited number of Omani teenagers have the chance to listen to English language being practiced and used by their fathers and mothers at home. Indeed, these children are given the chance and exposed to English through the television canals and the internet if they have access to it at homes. This might generate difficulties for teachers trying to implement the EFL syllabus where they suppose to deliver more communicating settings to use English language properly in their EFL classrooms.

Teaching Methods and L1 Use in EMI Context

Language teaching is regularly observed in relations to method, and aiming to increase teaching practices, teachers and researchers attempt to find out which way is the most effective. A number of English language teaching approaches have been developed aiming at finding the best way to teach L2 in different EFL contexts. According to [Tochon \(2014\)](#), teaching and learning methods have moved on from the traditional grammar translation method, and since the introduction of the communicative approach, which recognized the need for students to be able to experience using the language to communicate, there has been a shift towards students being engaged in experiential learning, including project-based and problem-based learning.

Teaching methods have contributed new features and have tried to deal with some concerns around language learning. They differ depending on their inclusive or exclusive utilization of L1 in L2 classrooms. These methods have been derived from different pedagogical settings and are focused on different social and educational requirements. Therefore, in order to apply them effectively, teachers should consider these questions: who the students are, what their present level of language proficiency is, what kind of communicative needs they have, the situations in which they will be using English (L2) in the future.

L1 Use from a Sociocultural Theory (SCT) Point of View

Sociocultural theory is a developing theory that looks at the significant influences of society on individual development. It defines learning as a social practice in which social communication and culture play a vital part in the progress of cognition. The term sociocultural theory (SCT) belongs to [Vygotsky \(1997\)](#), who developed a learning theory that brought together the cognitive and social features of language learning ([Lantolf, 2004](#)). It is a socially clear model for cognitive expansion in which the role of the social setting in cognitive growth is highlighted. In a recent study, social support has recently been measured among adolescents of Oman ([Zayed et al., 2019](#)). According to [Lantolf \(2004\)](#), it is “a theory of mind that recognises the central role that social relationships and culturally constructed artefacts play in organising uniquely human forms of thinking.” (p. 30-31).

One of the norm beliefs of SCT is mediation, or the use of items and tools to simplify an activity. For example, [Vygotsky \(1997\)](#) considered language a critical mediating instrument in social interaction and learning. He reasoned that everything is learned on two levels: first, through interaction with others, and then

combined into the individuals' mental structure. In other words, learning happens in the first instance through interaction with others, who are more experienced and skilled, and who are in a position to guide and support the actions of the beginner. With regard to this point, Lantolf (2004) further stated that although humans use other cultural and social tools to learn, language remains the most important of these instruments. Indeed, a language, as Lantolf and Thorne (2007) stated, is "the most pervasive and powerful cultural artefact that humans possess to mediate their connection to the world, to each other, and to themselves" (p. 205).

From a sociocultural viewpoint, language facilitates our learning and, therefore, students' L1 is seen by teachers as a resource in L2 learning. Students' L1 is seen both as an instrument for both communication and thought in students' speech. The L1 helps both social and metacognitive purposes in SCT classrooms. Thus, in a classroom, language assists not only a communicative purpose in teacher-student and student-students' dialogue but it is a psychological instrument as well. For instance, the common friendly greeting such as "مكّي لع مال سلّا" (Alsalam alaikuom) (peace be upon you) tends to be regularly used by learners and teachers in L2 classrooms in Arabic, as it represents both cultural and religious values. Thus, social and cultural functions cannot be separated.

Swain and Lapkin (2000) suggested that rejecting learners' admission to the L1 denies them a valuable cognitive tool. Other educational researchers see L1 as a mediational device and recommend that what happens in combined L2 discussions not only leads to learning but that it is learning in itself (Donato, 1994). Donato (1994), concluded that "in social interaction, a knowledgeable teacher participant can create, using speech, supportive conditions in which the novice learner can participate, and extend current skills and knowledge to higher levels of competence" (p. 52). In this regard, Vygotsky (1978) stated that humans develop cognitively by building the meaning of what surrounds them; whether that is related to their societal setting or past actions. Both learning and development happen as a consequence of the individual's interactions with their learning environment. Teaching aids usually simplify this communication; and when learning progresses, it results in the development and expansion of knowledge.

Ellis (2010) asserted that SCT is distinguished by theoretical variety, and he defined the differences between cognitive SCT and social SCT in terms of language, representation, the social setting, learner identity, the learner's linguistic background, language learning, interaction, and more significantly, the methodology used in researching the L2 learning. Following Table 1 exemplifies these differences.

In fact, SCT suggests that students should create their learning within their setting and with the use of mediating tools. This building of knowledge covers understanding wholes, as well as parts, that are considered to be part of their environment. Similarly, EFL teachers need to understand what learners learn and what they perceive the world to be. EFL teachers need to be aware of their learners' learning styles. Thus, the role of teachers is to facilitate learning and learners

Table 1. Differences between cognitive and social SCT (Adapted from Ellis, 2010: p. 28-29).

Dimension	Cognitive SCT	Social SCT
Language	Language seen as either a group of formalist rubrics or as a network of form-function mappings.	Language seen not just as a linguistic scheme but also as a varied set of a cultural practice, often best understood in the setting of broader relations of influence.
Mental representation	Two views: 1) As a group of rubrics that include the student's linguistic capability. 2) As a complicated network of relations among neutral modes.	In some social philosophies, representation is not deliberated at all. Vygotskyan methods highlight the semantic rather than the official features of the language that students adopt.
Social context	A complete circulation is prepared between "second" and "foreign" language settings. Social setting is understood as swaying the amount of acquisition and final level of aptitude reached, but not as touching the core developments responsible for achievement.	The social context is seen as both determining L2 use and developmental, and as something the participants equally construct. The social setting is where learning occurs and takes place.
Student identity	The student is seen as a "non-native speaker". Student identity is motionless.	The student is seen as having many identities that give chances to learn a language. Student's identity is dynamic.
Learner's linguistic background	The student has a complete linguistic capability in his/her L1.	Students may be bilingual and may show variable degrees of ability in their various languages.
Input	Contribution is seen as linguistic data that helps as a cause for achievement. Contribution is viewed as related to, but distinguishable from interaction.	Contribution is seen as contextually built; it is both linguistic and non-linguistic.
Interaction	Communication is viewed as a foundation of input.	Communication is seen as generally a discussed incident and a means by which students are socialized into the L2 context and culture. Input and interaction are viewed as a socio-cognitive whole.
Language learning	L2 achievement happens inside the mind of the student as a consequence of input that encourages universal cognitive procedures.	L2 achievement is learning-in-action; it is not a mental event but a social and concerted one.

should not be told everything, but they are encouraged, through questions, to formulate their knowledge.

In L2 classrooms in different EFL contexts, students have been motivated to participate by applying the L2. Indeed, researches from the EFL setting show that some students do not have the competence to use L2 only and consequently they tend to use L1 in their classrooms communications (Macaro, 2009). In this regard, Vygotsky (1978) asserted that social communication facilitates cognitive progress and therefore, in the setting of a class, more social interaction, both student-teacher and student-student, is desired. L1 is essential to increase learners' class participation in the EFL classroom setting, where everyone's contribution is significant.

As amplified participation is necessary for better L2 learning, and as more recent research recommends that L1 use permits better participation, total rejection of L1 in an L2 learning classroom context may decrease learners' participation. In this regard, [Anton and DiCamilla \(1999\)](#) stated that the usage of L1 by the students has a significant cognitive part, offers scaffolding, aids to express interior speech, and also makes intersubjectivity. They added that in the practice of this combined arrangement, adopting a common L1 to explain the difficulties which might rise could support the L2 learning.

In the EFL classroom in Oman, which is the central focus of this research, interaction happens between teachers and learners and between learners and their classmates often through L2. However, at other times, this interaction is mediated by the use of Arabic language in the EFL context where all students speak the same L1. According to [Brown \(2001\)](#), these learners would use the L1 until such time that they have learned enough English to accomplish a short interaction with their teacher. For example, learners might sometimes get stuck and make use of Arabic to ask for their classmates' help. In a study by [Reyes and Vallone \(2008\)](#), they found that the use of L1 in students-students interaction supports the process of increasing learners' knowledge, and it is also an example of using what is known to progress and obtain what is challenging and new. Thus, a language class offers a situation where new learning builds on earlier knowledge and experience, where learning is facilitated through communications with others, where learning is a sequence of problem-solving, and where learning is a practice simplified by teachers and other learners.

Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC)

In language learning and teaching contexts, the type of discourse between teachers and learners creates the main part of the educational process. In other words, what occurs in the classroom and how students and teachers co-construct information has become very important. The importance of classroom interaction is the critical component in communication, and it is in fact the heart of communication or what communication is all about ([Brown, 2000](#)). According to [Walsh \(2006a\)](#) good teaching "is concerned with more than good planning... good decisions are those that are appropriate to the moment, not ones which 'follow the plan'" (p. 19). He further added that "interaction does not simply happen... in an acquisition rich classroom, [it] is instigated and sustained by the teacher... while learners clearly have a significant role to play, it is the teacher who has a prime responsibility" (p. 19).

[Walsh \(2011\)](#) further claimed that the main aim in classroom discourse analysis was not only to define the components of the classroom dialogue but also to confirm that teachers and learners developed the kind of interactional competence that would consequently lead to more active classrooms with learners being more actively involved in the learning practice. He also argued that anyone trying to develop learning and teaching should consider the classroom discourse and should consider the importance of classroom interactional competence

(CIC). In line with this point, Walsh (2006b) defined CIC as “teachers’ and learners’ ability to use interaction as a tool for mediating and assisting learning” (p. 132).

One feature CIC is the degree to which language usage and pedagogic aims meet, as language use and pedagogic objectives must be aligned. The idea of CIC builds on ideas connected to the importance of interactions in the language learning context and specifically focuses on how teachers’ and learners’ interactional choices produce learning opportunities in the classroom. Teachers establish CIC through their ability to use language that is suitable to both the classroom style and the students (Walsh, 2006a).

Regarding the importance of classroom discourse adjustment, O’Neill and Geoghegan (2012) claimed that positive modifications in teacher-learner’s interactions depended on teacher-awareness of the lesson, discourse interactions, and the ability to self-monitor and self-evaluate to be able to modify their talk. Therefore, Walsh (2006b) emphasized the importance of CIC as it “facilitates interactional space” in the classroom (p. 131). He argued that learners need space to contribute to the classroom interactions to enhance their learning. This could be obtained by increasing wait-time, reducing teacher echo (i.e. the repetition of a preceding utterance or learner’s input) and helping extend learners’ turns (Walsh, 2014), which will maximize the possibilities for learning chances in the classroom. For instance, in the classroom context, when the teacher aims to elicit ideas from the learners, CIC would be established if there were long pauses in the interactions (i.e. more than one second) after a teacher’s question, giving learners the chance to form views and express them in their own time. In comparison, if the teacher frequently fills the silence in the classroom with needless teacher echo, he/she would not demonstrate CIC (Walsh, 2006b). Another feature of CIC, as Walsh (2006a) claimed, is the teacher’s ability to shape student contributions by “seeking clarification, scaffolding, modelling or repairing learner input”, thus “helping learners to say what they mean” (p. 131). This feature is described as “shaping [which] involves taking a learner response and doing something with it rather than simply accepting it” (Walsh, 2014: p. 5).

Walsh’s (2006a, 2006b) study was particularly important as it resulted in developing the SETT (self-evaluation of teacher talk) framework. This tool allows individual teachers to evaluate the level to which their language use and pedagogic goals are aligned and associated, in order to increase their interactional awareness and expand the quality of their teacher talk. As Walsh (2006a) described it:

“This instrument was used, firstly, to enable teachers to analyse their own classroom data; secondly, to facilitate participation in reflective feedback interviews. Essentially, teachers made a series (5 or 6) of ‘snapshot’ recordings of their own lessons (each lasting about 15 minutes); analyzed their recordings by: 1) identifying modes and 2) transcribing examples of interactional features using the SETT grid; finally, they discussed their assess-

ments with the researcher in a post-assessment feedback interview” (p. 134).

The SETT tool contains a variety of analytical ideas and procedures that are planned to increase the awareness of teachers about the language they use in class, the suitability of these conversational designs to the pedagogic purposes they follow, and the learning chances they produce for their learners. This tool has been shown to be very beneficial as it offers accessible metalanguage for the teachers and learners to debate and analyze classroom dialogue in a perceptive way without being too difficult. Walsh (2006a) identified four classroom modes, each of which has its own typical interactional features associated with defined pedagogic objectives (see Table 2). He claimed that by using a mode of analysis and the SETT framework, teachers can improve a fine-grained understanding of the connection between teacher talk, interaction and learning, which can then allow them to identify methods to expand their classroom performances and to make appropriate changes.

According to Walsh (2006b), the first step of this assessment practice includes teachers identifying diverse steps and stages of the lesson, which he labeled “modes” (p. 66). Each mode has a set of “interactional features” (e.g. display

Table 2. The SETT grid (Modified from Walsh, 2003: p. 3).

Mode	Pedagogic Aims	Interactional Features
Managerial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To convey information - To organize the physical learning contexts - To present or accomplish any task - To move and change from a learning manner to another one 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A sole, extended teacher turn which uses clarifications and/or guidelines - The usage of temporary markers - The usage of conformational forms - A lack of student participation
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To run language exercise around a part of material - To produce answers in linked to the materials - To check and confirm responses - To explain when needed - To assess inputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wide use of questions - Form intensive feedback - Helpful repair - The usage of scaffolding
Skills and systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To allow students to produce right forms - To allow students to use the L2 - To offer helpful feedback - To provide students with exercise in sub-skills - To show right answers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To use of straight repair - The usage of scaffolding - Extended teacher opportunities - Show questions - Teacher echo - Explaining requests - Form intensive feedback
Classroom context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To allow students to express themselves - To create a setting - To encourage spoken fluency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extended student chances - Short teacher turns - Minimal repair - Content response - Referential queries and questions - Scaffolding - Explanation requirements

questions) aligned with certain pedagogic aims (e.g. to check and display answers). He recommended that teachers could use a mode analysis along with the SETT framework to analyze the suitability of the interactional features relative to the modes of the lesson practice. The framework provides teachers with a way of describing their discourse and connecting it to lesson purposes. It assumes that lessons are made up of a sequence of events or “modes”, each with different aims and interactional features, as shown in the table below.

Walsh (2006a) listed the interactional features related to turn-taking that either supported the scaffolding of learning or resisted it. Their research findings show that such interactional may be maximized through increasing wait-time, reducing teacher talk and supporting extended learner turns.

Generally, dialogic interactions are those communications whereby learners ask questions, comment on ideas that arise in class, clarify and state opinions, and are given extra time for thinking. Learners ask for the support of their teacher who also needs to care for learners’ initiatives and be able to use dialogue to provide stability and confirm interchange. The consequences for L2 learning in traditional textbook-orientated classrooms versus those that are using “modern” pedagogy, based on social constructivist theory, are acknowledged by Tochon (2014) who has demonstrated that students actually acquire the language through opportunities to use it for real life purposes in order to make meaning. Similarly, Shamsipour and Allami (2014) applied Walsh’s (2006b) list of interactional features related to turn-taking that either supported the scaffolding of learning or resisted it. Their research findings show that such interactions are maximized through increasing wait-time, reducing teacher talk and supporting extended learner turns. Wait-time refers to “teachers giving adequate time for a learner to reply, whereas teacher echo happens when the talk period is stopped as the teacher just repeats the learner’s speech and, consequently, acts as a fence to supporting the scaffolding dialog or turn-taking opportunity of the dialogic conversation” (O’Neill, 2018: p. 9).

Table 3 below provides a comparison of the influence of dialogic and monologic learning settings on learners’ experiences. The comparative features noticeably display the limits in monologic learning settings and explain the need for change towards a critical pedagogical approach whereby teachers could be transformative intellectuals able to be informed in the use of their cognitive and metacognitive processes to be able to lead the scaffolding of students’ learning in the best possible means (O’Neill, 2018). This means that such teachers would be conscious of their thinking processes during a class and would be checking the pedagogical dialogue they run to make changes to exploit the scaffolding of learners’ learning (e.g. extended wait time, modelling, extended learner turn, seeking clarification). This reflects the significance of the meta-language that relates to the learning, and the necessity for learners to have learnt this to be able to join and understand the teacher talk and related debate (O’Neill, 2018).

Table 3. Comparison between dialogic and monologic teaching practices (Adapted from Edwards-Groves, Anstey, & Bull, 2014: p. 81-82).

Dialogic teaching practices are often experienced as:	Monologic teaching practices are often experienced as:
a learning focused partnership	directive compliance relationship
open, participatory and collaborative	a one-way transmission of knowledge
the typical IRE is disrupted with a 4 th turn	a typical 3-part IRE structure
talk is a leverage for deep learning and reasoning	talk for organising students, behaviour and resources
more dynamic, active and activist	more static and passive
process orientated – making learning and knowledge public	knowledge driven – ideas often remain invisible
more students have a voice	more students being silent
active listening to teachers and peers	teacher centred, directed and mediated
equitable ways of relating	hierarchical ways of relating
shared responsibility for learning	students responsible for complying
more time for students thinking and talking	less time for students thinking and talking
more opportunities for thinking and talking	less room for negotiation of meaning
more time for rehearsing and consolidating ideas	“on the run” thinking and articulation of ideas
students develop from what they are thinking	students trying to guess what is in teachers’ mind
students positioned as thinkers, theorises, holders of a position	students positioned as followers of instructions and more simply as being correct or incorrect
making learning and thinking and knowledge accountable	making compliance accountable or prioritised
more open-ended questioning enabling reasoning, hypothesising and “thinking aloud”	questioning for known answers or more closed questioning
divergent ideas accepted and valued	having more convergence of ideas
more democratic	more autocratic
power and agency being dispersed more equally	having power and agency dominated by the teacher
time for talk being more equitable – the “floor is shared”	the floor being generally the province of the teacher

Individual Differences

Learning L2 should not only be limited in creating a communicative learning environment but also in considering other factors that enhance learning to take place. These other factors could be varying in nature. In fact, there are many other vital aspects that are specifically linked to the learners themselves and that are a significant factor in learning the L2, including individual differences. Thus, it was important for this study to consider learners’ individual differences in terms of learning strategies, as the student participants involved in this study belong to a specific sociocultural L2 context where English language is a foreign language.

According to Ari and Deniz (2008), individual differences in students are personal differences specific to each learner, and they contain different variables

such as intelligence, interest, socioeconomic status, background, opinions, gender, aptitude, language learning styles, physical features, and personality characters. As a result, not every student learns in the same way, and not every method attracts the interest of each learner on an identical level. Students who differ in achievement abilities need diverse activities and assignments (Good & Brophy, 2000). Therefore, during the lesson time, it is very important for a teacher to use different teaching methods and strategies where learners can use different abilities and skills in order to create a successful and rich L2 learning environment. Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) have stated that learners' performance increases when learners' strengths and special needs are complemented by different teaching methods.

As the L2 education is concerned, previous studies have shown that learners with diversity in intelligence capabilities can be successful in learning L2 (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Consequently, this leads us to think about what really makes a good EFL learner. Moreover, the features of a good language learner could differ from one context to another. In this regard, Lightbown and Spada (2006) suggested characteristics such as motivation, intellectual abilities, and learning preferences as the most important learning variables that should be taken into consideration when attempting to create what really makes a good EFL learner. These individual differences are also noticeable through learning styles and approaches that L2 learners apply.

The degree of motivation that EFL learners bring to the classrooms affects their learning accomplishment (Brown, 2007). Motivation is considered to be one of the vital affective aspects that positively influence language learning. Gardner et al (1997) described language learning stimulation as the "degree to which a specific work or strive to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" (p. 10). Similarly, Renandya (2014) claimed that the success of language learning has been credited to the learners' motivation levels. During the process of teaching and learning, motivation plays an essential role in increasing learners' enthusiasm, commitment, and involvement. Furthermore, without sufficient motivation, even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to achieve any beneficial language learning improvement (Dornyei, 2001). Therefore, students should keep their motivation during the classroom activities as their enthusiasm affects their learning success. In this regard, Dornyei (2001) argued that "teacher skills in motivating learners should be seen as central to teaching effectiveness" (p. 116). Teachers should observe conditions under which learners obtain language and make changes towards creating the best learning situations, or in Dornyei's (2001) words, "all students are motivated to learn under the right conditions, and that you can provide these conditions in your classroom" (p. 118).

Motivation in learning a foreign language is separated into four components: intrinsic, extrinsic, instrumental, and integrative motivation. Thus, L2 learners may differ in their motivation based on their learning aims and the contexts in which they are studying. Additionally, Culhane (2004) stated that instrumental

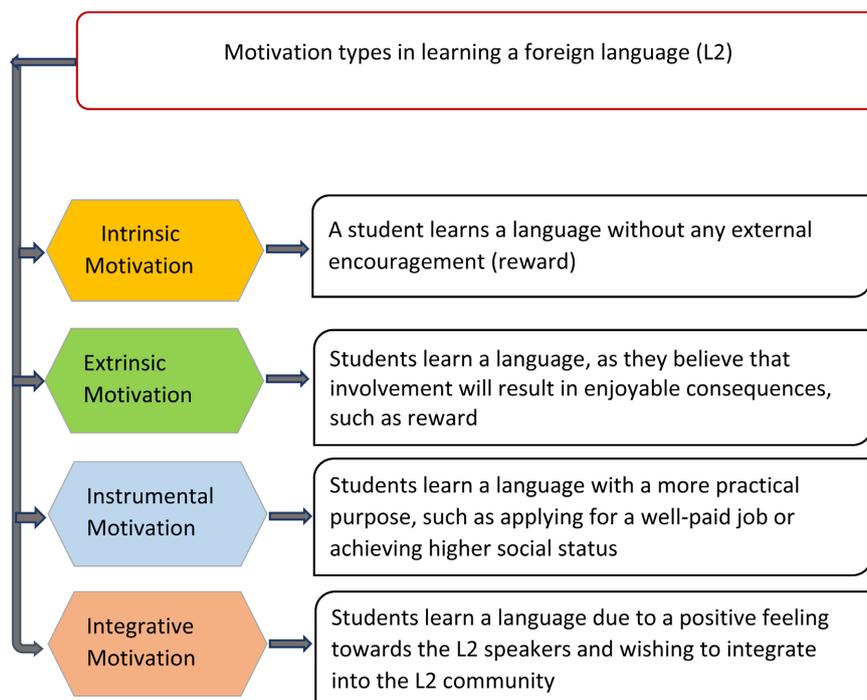


Figure 1. Motivation types in learning a foreign language (L2).

motivation relates to the learner's main concern for language development, while integrative motivation considers the learner's readiness and interest in encouraging L2 learning through social communications with speakers of the L2. In other words, L2 learners would be recognized as instrumentally motivated learners if they were seen to learn the L2 with the aim to apply for a better job or to pass examinations.

Regardless of whether instrumental motivation or integrative motivation have a more significant part in L2 learning practice, Cook (2001) reported that integrative motivation was viewed as greater and superior to instrumental motivation for guessing the achievement of L2 learning. If learners appreciate the target culture, they may read literature or exercise the L2 and thus be able to increase their language abilities. Figure 1 illustrates the types of motivation involved in learning a foreign language. The following chart shows motivation types in learning a foreign language (L2).

6. Conclusion

CLT methods are based on the principle that language is used for communication. The learners are expected to be able to communicate with English-speaking people. Another feature of the CLT method is that it provides the learners with a central role in the classroom. That is, they are expected to be responsible for their own learning and to be capable of working independently of the teacher. They are also encouraged to take the initiative, negotiate to mean, and go through the process of learning. The teacher's role, however, is to work as a facilitator to guide the students to perform the tasks set for them. The teacher should also ca-

ter to individual differences among learners and should provide them with tasks that contribute to their language development.

It also shows that the attempt to introduce CLT methodology in Oman has resulted in conflicting attitudes among the teachers of English themselves and between the students and the teachers. The classroom observation data show that teachers, especially the male expatriate Arab teachers, adopt an authoritarian teaching style that stems from the hierarchical nature of Arab society. The predominant teaching style of all the teachers observed was a repetitive insistent questioning of the students. This is designed to encourage competitive “bidding” among the students. In the context of EMI universities in Oman, as Nunn (1999: p. 37) has suggested, this type of questioning is commonly used as part of a process of reconstruction of texts which have already been learned. The findings, based on classroom observation, show a substantial contradiction between policy and practice in terms of CLT methods in Omani EFL classrooms. Partly it is due to local culture as well. Many practices in the classroom, such as the use of memorization, competition, and the dominant role of the teacher, emanate from Arabic culture. In order to successfully implement CLT methods, students need to be given adequate time to complete tasks in pairs or on their own and an attempt should be made to let the learner fight the competitive stress through psychological training as we can see in the sports paradigm (Alexe et al., 2013). Our findings do show the use of pair and group activity in Omani EMI programs. Pair-share-care has been a part of the EMI setting in Oman which cumulatively helps students develop an ELF or English-as-a-lingua-franca cultures in which they transfer their knowledge learned in the classroom and express themselves in the English language as they go into the job market or in the local marketplace.

Arabic culture places a high value on hierarchy, respect for elders, and competition; furthermore, Arab literacy practices place a high value on memorization. We have also noted that many of the classroom practices owe their origin to the initial training of the teachers, which is based on the traditional methods. All of these factors may even be regarded as obstacles to the successful implementation of CLT methods. In addition to these factors, most of which relate to deep-seated attitudes and beliefs, there are other factors relating to the educational provision that one may regard as obstacles to the implementation of CLT methods. While analyzing the use of CLT methods, a series of evaluation reports show that the attempt to introduce these methods has met with considerable resistance from teachers. The aim of this study is to contribute to our understanding of the factors underlying the use of CLT in the classroom and any resistance thereof and more generally, to contribute to our understanding of the process of successful English language curriculum innovation in the EMI universities of the Arab world. This in turn implies that the cultural factors are primary in language teaching, learning, and successful curriculum innovation. The findings of this study also suggest that there are several significant background factors like failures, attrition, and other challenges (Roche et al., 2015; Sinha et al., 2018; Al-Busafi, 2012) that

affect the attitudes of teachers and pupils towards teaching and learning English in language learning classrooms in Oman. These include gender, literacy levels, the location of school and nationality, and accordingly, suitable talent identification methods applicable to Oman (Al-Busafi et al., 2013). CLT can be fruitful in its entirety only after all stakeholders partake of their responsibilities in the right spirit and in the right direction.

7. Recommendations and Suggestions for Future Practices

The study is by no means a definitive answer to the question of how curriculum innovation in Oman can be successfully implemented in the light of CLT methodology. There is scope for further research in this area of study as there are a number of outstanding questions which require further investigation for future practices, including the following:

- What is the role of the political factors in CLT implementation as part of curriculum innovation?
- What are the attitudes of GFP English teachers and students towards the teaching-learning enterprise?
- What are the attitudes of students at the EMI Universities in Oman towards learning English?
- Self-esteem, academic self-efficacy, perceived stress, and preferred learning styles have been linked to academic performance (Zayed et al., 2016). Do these variables work in the EFL context in Oman?

This calls for improvements in the teacher training program and in the course delivery of effective language learning programs in schools and colleges and EMI universities of Oman.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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