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AN APPLICATION OF THE COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT) APPROACH FOR ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) LEARNERS IN THE ARAB CONTEXT

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AN APPLICATION OF THE COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

(CLT) APPROACH FOR ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL)

LEARNERS IN THE ARAB CONTEXT

By

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B.A., English Linguistics and Literature, College of Arts, University of Baghdad 2007

THESIS

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DEDICATION

To My Parents, and My Brother Gaith with Love!

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ABSTRACT

EFL textbooks in countries of the Arab region have introduced the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach as a way to improve learners' English fluency. However, Arab EFL teachers face many challenges in implementing this approach. This study was conducted to provide a possible sample of a CLT unit plan to examine: 1) what does a unit plan with the CLT approach look like? 2) How to use CLT activities to promote an interactive EFL learning?

The related literature review identified some initiatives to enhance the Arab EFL communication skills, represented by introducing the CLT approach to language teaching methods and to new EFL textbooks. Yet, these contributions have not been fruitful enough to the EFL education in the Arab world. The related literature revealed gaps of implementation, represented by the use of traditional language teaching methods while adopting CLT-based textbooks. The literature review further revealed a lack of EFL teachers' efficiency in implementing the CLT approach. Accordingly, it has become increasingly important to address these common EFL challenges in order

to help EFL teachers create an interactive class where learners may develop their communicative abilities.

Scholars like Savignon (2002) and Richards and Rodgers (2014) stated that the goal of CLT is to establish a meaningful communication of a language. Therefore, this study designed a unit that integrates the CLT principles and activities to promote a meaningful communication process inside EFL classrooms. The proposed unit is an example for EFL teachers to consider while implementing CLT textbooks. It aims to help Arab EFL teachers nurture their vision of a unit plan mechanism, while simultaneously considering the learners' needs and goals.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Learning English has become a widespread phenomenon around the world, including the Arab region. Globalization is one of the reasons that led to the emergence of this linguistic phenomenon and is especially associated with the use of the English language. Correspondingly, interests in teaching and learning English, as an international language has increased. Crystal (2003) stated that the English language is an international language because of its political, economic, and military power. Indeed, learning English has turned into a necessity across the world. According to Crystal (2003), English is taught as a foreign language in more than 100 countries.

The Arab world has witnessed a big movement toward the learning of the English language to the extent that it is replacing the native languages in some countries of the Arab region, such as the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Qatar, in the professional and educational fields (Zughoul, 2003). Accordingly, teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in the Arab region is a growing phenomenon. In spite of how English language use has spread in the Arab region, there are still some problems in the learning and teaching of English as a foreign language. Therefore, there is an increasing need for new and more effective approaches to teaching English appropriately, which is parallel to the rising number of EFL learners during the last decades.

Adoption of new approaches is needed to address existing challenges in learning the English language. One of the currently adapted approaches to teach

English in the Arab region is the communicative language teaching approach (CLT) (Abbas, 2012; Alkhawaldeh, 2010; and Hammad, 2014). The CLT approach is regarded as a hope to achieve EFL learners' goals of speaking the English language fluently. Nevertheless, the desired goals were not reached as tangible results indicate. The literature addresses three related factors: teaching methods, EFL teachers' skills, and EFL curriculum.

Statement of the problem

Recently, the Arab-region countries have seen a large influx of EFL-related teaching pedagogies. However, the process of teaching English is not exempt from problems and challenges. According to research in the field, many of the problems and challenges pertain to teaching methods, EFL teachers' skills, and the EFL curriculum (Abbas, 2012; Al-Mahrooqi, 2012; Hammad, 2014). Many studies attribute the problems of the EFL teaching process in the Arab world to the teaching pedagogy and to the program content. The EFL materials used in Arab-region countries present multiple problems. The EFL materials in some countries are designed and then imported from overseas while local teachers are not trained to apply those materials (Abbas, 2012). In other countries, the materials are locally produced, but lack the communicative-intensive approach that is very much needed by learners.

Arab EFL teachers face challenges and difficulties while teaching the language. These challenges arise from insufficient pedagogical training and self-development (Gebhard, 2006). Research has shown that most of the Arab EFL teachers still use the traditional methods to teach English (Abbas, 2012; Al-Mahrooqi, 2012; Hammad, 2014). The traditional methods of teaching mostly focus on grammar, memorization, drilling, translation and other practices that do not promote the

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development of communicative competence. Further, other factors may include the EFL teachers' lack of motivation or the inability to modify their teaching practices due to strict governmental policies (Abbas, 2012; Al-Mahrooqi, 2012; Hammad, 2014).

Shah, Hussain, and Nasseef (2013) claim in their study that one of the main factors that hinders the English language education process is teacher competence. Even using approaches like CLT to teach English in some Arab-region countries has not been completely successful. Ultimately, the ones suffering the most because of these problems are the Arab EFL learners who are unable to reach a fluid level of proficiency in the language.

Significance of the Study

Researchers indicate that most schools across the Arab region focus on teaching English using traditional methods. For example, teachers focus on memorizing new complex vocabularies, memorizing rules of grammar, and memorizing chunks of paragraphs (Abbas, 2012; Bailey & Damerow, 2014; Hammad, 2014). This study aims to develop a CLT-based unit plan that could be used by EFL teachers in Arab-region countries. It aims to add to the field of EFL teaching in the Arab world by providing new EFL teachers and experienced EFL teachers who are new to CLT with a justified guide to consider for the implementation of the CLT approach. Several articles have tackled different issues of EFL teaching in Arab countries but few have targeted EFL teachers' challenges in the application of cutting-edge EFL methods. This study aims to provide pedagogical suggestions for teachers so that they may create an interactive-based class environment rather than a grammar-memorization-based one. The contributions of this study are not expected to be exclusive to the communicative language teaching approach. Rather, it hopes to

contribute as a possible alternative to be considered for the instruction of English language learners in the Arab world.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to elaborate on other research findings in the field of EFL pedagogy across countries in the Arab region. Additionally, it aims to investigate EFL teaching challenges in this region and to provide an example of the application of the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach in an EFL teaching unit. Hopefully, this study will provide Arab EFL teachers with options to understand and implement the CLT activities through the proposed unit plan.

The next chapter reviews literature from some Arab region countries on related EFL teaching issues in applying CLT. Chapter three will introduce the theoretical perspective of this study by describing the CLT approach meaning and principles. Chapter four will provide an example of a CLT unit developed through CLT principles and activities. Finally, chapter five presents the conclusion, limitations of this study and provides recommendations for further related studies.

Research Questions

The research questions of this study include the following:

1. What does a unit plan with the CLT approach look like?

2. What are some CLT activities that promote an interactive EFL learning process in a unit?

Chapter Two

The Communicative Language Teaching in Iraq and neighboring Arab-

Region Countries: A Literature Review

Introduction

While learning English has become a widespread phenomenon around the world, related problems and challenges have increased and become more complex. Empirical studies have shown some pitfalls in EFL learning and teaching. Just as in other regions of the world, the countries of the Arab world share some issues in EFL learning and teaching processes. This study aims to develop an attainable plan of a unit using the communicative language teaching approach (CLT) in an EFL Arabic-speaking class. To be more specific, this study hopes to provide a guide and suggestions for EFL teachers from Arab-region countries who are facing challenges implementing the CLT approach.

This literature review addresses three main areas of research, described below, that examine the documented obstacles that EFL teachers and learners in the Arab region face in EFL education. Accordingly, this review also aims to provide possible solutions for an EFL teaching approach that address the communicative goals of EFL learners.

The first section presents an overview of EFL teaching problems in the Arab world. It explores the basic difficulties EFL learners in the region face while learning English. The second section presents initiations to solve the EFL teaching problems in the region. It concentrates on the new textbooks that used for EFL education but do not address/solve EFL learners' needs. Further, this section also elaborates on EFL teachers' awareness about how they use these texts. The third and last section in this chapter explores current EFL trends of implementing the

communicative language teaching (CLT) approach in some countries of the Arab-speaking region. This section describes how efforts promoting CLT as a modern approach for EFL teaching fall short addressing learners' needs when EFL teachers in the region lack clear understanding of how to effectively apply the CLT approach in their classrooms.

Arab-region EFL teachers must consider the EFL basic principles and problems to help EFL learners develop English language fluency. Therefore, this chapter addresses some of these points related to teachers' skills/knowledge, and EFL methods and curriculum.

1. Background of the Problem

Learners' failure of communicating fluently in English has been approached differently by scholars across Arab countries. For example, some empirical studies have demonstrated how Iraqi EFL students lack fluent communication using the English language (Hasan & Hamza, 2009; Sami & Moslehel-ddin, 2014). Results from these studies have provided evidence for a real need to enhance the communicative language teaching approach in Iraqi schools. Hasan and Hamza (2009) showed low rates of the participants' performance in the linguistic forms test. These points provide an indication of EFL learners' inability to use certain linguistic forms in suitable situations, which translate into limited communicative skills. These research results present Iraqi EFL learners' lack of fluency and their language skills proficiency problems and challenges.

Moreover, other empirical studies have also stated the existence of challenges in a fluent English communication in Oman, Jordan, and Palestine. One of the challenges is teaching strategies provided in the textbooks, which were

implemented with traditional methods while using CLT-based textbooks. Another challenge is EFL teachers' unawareness of implementing the CLT approach. Teachers' insufficient performance was found aligned with their lack of training and to limited class time. However, it is important to mention that all of these studies indicated the positive perceptions of both EFL teachers and learners to acquire a meaningful communication (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012; Asassfeh, Khwaileh, Al-Shaboul, & Alshboul, 2012; & Hammad, 2014).

2. Initiations to Solve the Problem

2.1 Textbooks

Because of the increasing need to improve the speaking fluency of Arab-region EFL learners, new textbooks have been designed to help EFL learners' develop communication abilities. Different Arab-region countries have updated their textbooks; however, researchers have raised some issues concerning the content of these textbooks and the application of this content (Alkhawaldeh, 2010; Hasan & Hamza, 2009; Sami & Moslehel-ddin, 2014). Each country has slightly different but related problems from its neighboring countries.

In Iraq, EFL resources such as, written materials, visual materials, and oral materials contribute a great deal, to EFL learners' development process. Researchers like Hasan and Hamza (2009) and Sami and Moslehel-ddin (2014) recommended the use of more conversational materials for EFL learners in Iraq. There is a considerable lack of using authentic materials, which can enhance the students' ability to communicate (Hasan & Hamza, 2009; Sami & Moslehel-ddin, 2014). Authentic materials can be newspapers, online resources, videos, or images that intended for native speakers' everyday life (Reid, 2014). In Jordan,

Alkhawaldeh (2010) criticized the current curricula and syllabi, because they do not meet the students' need and language levels. He encouraged updating the EFL curriculum to fit students' requirements of improving their language fluency. Hammad (2014) showed through data collected that teachers in Gaza were happy about the new textbooks because they met their students' needs and desires. This positive perception was because of the variety of topics that correspond to students' daily life. The aim of updating the textbooks was to develop Palestinian EFL students' speaking fluency. However, there were some difficult new long vocabulary like, pineapple, and roundabout, etc., which required longer class time for teachers and students to cover. Iraq and Lebanon shared similar problems in terms of textbook design and appropriateness to the audience. Their appropriateness relates to their lack of culturally responsive content. A main challenge of the new textbooks was they were imported from other countries. In Lebanese private schools, the assigned textbooks were imported from the United States and they addressed American culture. According to Esseili (2014), the assigned textbooks were ineffective because they were not contextualized to address the Lebanese culture, but rather they addressed United States culture.

In some cases, for governmental schools, the government imposes the materials that will be used and teachers do not have the right to suggest additional materials for learners. In Oman, Iraq, and Jordan, according to Alkhawaldeh (2010), Al-Mahrooqi (2012), Hasan and Hamza (2009), and Sami and Moslehel-ddin (2014) there is an obvious lack of communicative skills represented in the EFL learners. These authors have called for the enhancement of communicative skills in public school curricula.

In the different Arab-region countries, textbooks were updated to include the CLT approach in order to develop fluent EFL speakers. However, these textbooks encountered some inappropriate implementations because of the EFL teachers' applied their personal methods (what they were used to) in teaching the new textbooks (Alkhawaldeh, 2010; Al-Mahrooqi, 2012; Hasan & Hamza, 2009; Sami & Moslehel-ddin, 2014).

2.2 Calls for Applying CLT

The collected literature shares one theme across Arab-region countries, which is the increasing interest in using a communicative language teaching approach of EFL in the Arab-region. According to Hymes (1971) communicative language teaching (CLT) is a method for teaching languages—in this case, English. Its primary aim is to develop language learners' communicative ability by employing real-life situations (as cited in Savignon, 2002).

Some researchers have recommended the application of communicative language teaching in EFL classrooms to solve some of the Arab EFL fluency problems. Hasan and Hamza (2009) and Sami and Moslehel-ddin (2014) called for using communicative techniques and the use of authentic materials to enable Iraqi EFL learners to express themselves during conversational activities. They recommended the use of communication lessons to improve the speaking skills of Iraqi EFL learners. Similarly, Al-Mahrooqi (2012) revealed an absence of fluent speaking skill for Omani EFL learners. Her study showed there is an obvious need to enhance communicative skills in the Omani public schools' curriculum.

There is an official movement by some governmental Arab-region governments to modernize the EFL curriculum to meet market needs in each

country. Some included demands for applying CLT. The Ministries of Education of Iraq and Jordan each called for introducing a new curriculum to support an EFL communicative-based approach. In addition, The Ministry of Education in Iraq called for the abandonment of teaching grammar and memorization as a new policy in teaching English. The Jordanian Ministry of Education embraced the CLT approach for teaching English in private and public schools during the mid-1980s (Asassfeh, Khwaileh, Al-Shaboul & Alshboul, 2012). Yet, records from 2011 indicated that Iraqi EFL learners' level of proficiency dropped significantly during final tests in comparison to previous years (Fahad, 2012). The reason behind that failure was the traditional teaching styles followed by EFL teachers.

As was previously stated, Arab EFL learners lack fluent communication skills, which they need in their academic and professional life. For that reason, some studies appeared to address that widely spread problem in the Arab world. Despite the initiations to solve the EFL issues, still there are some gaps around the CLT approach understandings and implementations.

3. Communicative Language Teaching Curriculum: Issues or Gaps of implementation

3.1. Traditional Implementations

The emergence of the CLT approach aroused researchers' curiosity to address the question of how EFL teachers could implement communicative instructional activities in an EFL classroom. Many studies from around the world have looked at that question. As CLT emerged as a new approach in the Arab world, some Arab EFL teachers were challenged and confused about how to apply

the CLT approach properly. Hitherto, studies had not shown a clear application of communicative language teaching.

As previously mentioned, CLT was adopted to develop English speaking skills and empower EFL learners' English language communication skills. The intended results were not achieved as well as expected. According to the collected literature from some Arab countries, the main reason behind that breakdown was due to the misuse of the CLT approach. Research showed that Arab EFL teachers used a "*traditional method*" of teaching CLT (Abbas, 2012; Alkhawaldeh, 2010; Hammad, 2014). Researchers agreed that the traditional method is a method where the teaching focus is mainly on grammar, memorization, and exercises that assess grammar and memorization levels. Since the phrase "*traditional method*" could bear different connotations, I specifically refer to the traditional method used by Arab EFL teachers as the GME method. G stands for grammar, M stands for memorization, and E stands for exercises. This method is widely found across different Arab countries in an EFL context. Hasan and Hamza (2009) provided clear evidence of the results of using the GME method of teaching English in Iraqi schools. 79% of the 251 participants evaluated themselves as being proficient in listening (to English), 12% of the 251 participants evaluated themselves as being proficient in reading, 5% evaluated themselves as being proficient in writing, and 4% evaluated themselves as proficient in speaking. Noticeably, the speaking skill obtained the lowest rating in comparison to listening. Accordingly, one could interpret this to mean that Iraqi EFL learners listen more than speak during class time. The results draw a clear picture of how teaching is conducted inside classrooms. The problem of teaching English extends beyond Iraq to other countries in the Arab region. Al-Mahrooqi (2012) did a study on 58 undergraduates

to investigate the methods of teaching English skills in public schools and private institutes in Oman. Her study showed that 45 of the 58 participants did not have the opportunity to study the English language communicatively in schools. Rather, they studied grammar. Alkhawaldeh (2010) found through his study that there is an absence of communicative context in Jordanian schools. Jordanian EFL teachers use the GME method without practicing communicative skills. Based on that, Alkhawaldeh recommended abandoning the GME method of teaching English in Jordanian schools that still adopt GME and replacing it with CLT. According to Hammad (2014), EFL teachers in Gaza were satisfied with the new textbooks, but faced two main challenges. The first one was the time limitation allotted for each class, which obstructed them from achieving their classes' goals. The second challenge was dealing with difficult vocabulary, pronunciation, word form, and use. Abbas (2012) indicated some challenges in implementing the new curriculum "*Iraq Opportunities*" by Iraqi EFL teachers and revealed the existence of traditional practices followed in the EFL educational system in Iraq. "The curriculum represents traditional practices only in modern terms" (Abbas, 2012, p. 232). A linear written curriculum was used in the EFL process of teaching the English language. Abbas (2012) indicated an urgent need to reconceptualize the curriculum planning and development of "Iraq Opportunities" to meet Iraqi EFL learners' demands. These findings, which give a clear indication of current reasons behind the unfruitful results of learning English in Iraqi schools, have led to predictions warning of lagging in the English learning process.

On the other hand, Esseili (2014) showed that Lebanese EFL teachers struggled with textbooks because of their focus on writing rather than grammar. Lebanese EFL teachers in Esseili's study claimed that teaching writing is

impossible without teaching grammar. However, the study considered that a lack in

EFL teachers' awareness, since while they focused mainly on grammar skills in

their teaching, these Lebanese teachers also indicated a lack of communication

activities. The teachers attributed this to the limited class time allotted for speaking

activities. Furthermore, there are differences between applying communicative

language teaching (CLT) in private institutes and public schools. Students at

private institutes have more opportunity to communicate and converse in English

than do students in public schools, possibly because of differences in time

limitations and class sizes. Fahad (2012) showed that EFL learners at Iraqi public

schools performed inefficiently in English language conversation because they

used words from their native language to help them continue the conversation. EFL

learners at private institutes performed better in conversation because they used

continuous streams of English-language sentences without inserting any native

words (Fahad, 2012). Similarly, Asassfeh et al. (2012) showed that Jordanian EFL

learners who studied at private schools performed a high rate of communication

competence because they encountered communicative meaning oriented

instructions. The research by Asassfeh et al. (2012) revealed that Jordanian EFL

teachers at public schools focus on teaching grammar and sentence repetition, and

they use Arabic to explain grammar rules. The study revealed that EFL learners'

main need in Jordanian public schools is to learn to communicate in English

because of its importance to their future careers. In spite of these needs, EFL

teachers did not respond to their students' requirements and instead continued

using the GME method of teaching English (Asassfeh et al., 2012). Jordanian EFL

teachers, especially in public schools, need to be aware of new techniques for

implementing the new communicative approach-based textbooks. Apparently, the

GME method is used in implementing the new textbooks in public schools while in private schools this implementation is more cohesive.

Obviously, there is a clear lack in Arab-region EFL teachers' performance while applying the new assigned CLT-based textbooks. The teachers need a guide and support on applying communicative language teaching properly.

3.2. Lack of teachers' efficiency

Research results provided a vision of how EFL teachers can play a significant role in creating a communicative language learning class and developing EFL learners' proficiency levels in the English language. Teachers should contribute as facilitators of speaking skills by providing a communicative space, so learners can achieve an advanced level of speaking by communicating verbally and frequently in English (Hasan & Hamza, 2009). In fact, EFL teachers are responsible for the EFL learners' experience in acquiring language skills. If teachers are not educated on providing linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural skills, then their students will not show language skills development. Al-Mahrooqi (2012) recommended that EFL teachers practice communicative activities in the classroom to enable EFL learners improving their English language ability in their studies and in daily life.

Alkhawaldeh (2010) did a study on Jordanian EFL teachers' challenges. The study showed that EFL teachers in Jordan have a number of challenges. The most important challenges were related to the pervasive use of GME methods for teaching English and the absence of the communicative context. According to Alkhawaldeh, EFL teachers in Jordan need instruction and training on teaching the English language. Fahad (2012) showed that EFL teachers at Iraqi public schools

used words from native language to instruct an EFL class, the reason that learners performed inefficiently in English language conversation.

The literature shows some common challenges and problems shared among the selected countries in this literature review. Also, it gives recommendations as an attempt to overcome these challenges and problems. Briefly, the following table summarizes the challenges and their counterpart recommendations. It provides a concise overview of the main problems of the EFL educational process in the Arab world and possible solutions.

Table 1

Challenges and Recommendations Retrieved from Collected Literature

Challenge	Recommendation
GME methods of teaching	Abandon GME methods and replace it with CLT
New designed textbook with inappropriate implementation	Raising EFL Teacher awareness of the CLT approach principles and activities
EFL teachers' ignorance of implementing CLT approach	Providing guidelines for EFL teachers to experience how CLT implemented
Limited class time	Focusing more on productive activities that consume less time

Summary

This chapter helped me shape an understanding of EFL teaching current challenges in some Arab-region countries. The challenges that this literature addresses are mainly issues of: teaching methods, EFL teachers' skills, and EFL curriculum. Obviously, Arab EFL teachers need to understand the main concepts and practices of the communicative learning approach. Further, teachers and the ministries of education are in a need for critical reflection on definitions and methods used in the curriculum to produce an intelligible curriculum and practices.

As the literature above revealed, there is a shift toward using the CLT approach. That shift is tangible through newly updated textbooks in some schools across the Arab-region world. Although the textbooks call for the application of communicative activities, still there is a gap between current approaches and desired outcomes. The current study aims to fill this gap by suggesting a potential communicative language learning application that might prove helpful for EFL teachers in the Arab world.

Chapter Three

Why Communicative Language Teaching?

"Effective teaching is not about a method. It is about understanding and implementing principles of learning" (Brandl, 2008, p. 1).

This chapter will provide general knowledge about the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach and the grammar, memorization, exercises (GME) method. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the effectiveness of CLT in the Arab EFL pedagogy. In chapter two, the related research indicated positive perceptions toward CLT by Arab EFL learners and teachers. The reason behind supporting CLT is that Arab EFL learners need to develop their language fluency for academic and professional purposes. For the same reasons, Arab EFL teachers also show positive perceptions towards using CLT. Yet, these teachers have been challenged by the lack of familiarity in the application of such approach. The specific challenges raised in chapter two relate to teaching methods, EFL teachers' skills, and EFL curriculum. To address these issues, EFL teachers might need to consider the CLT principles. Additionally, they need to differentiate between CLT and GME to use them strategically. Accordingly, this chapter begins by describing definitions of CLT. Then, the CLT approach is contrasted with the GME method. For this purpose, the author uses her personal experiences as an EFL learner under the GME method. Finally, the chapter concludes the discussion by offering a set of principles for the proper implementation of the CLT approach.

CLT Definition

In the past, British applied linguists decided to develop a communicative language teaching (CLT) approach rather than a structural one (Savignon, 2002). The

structural method of teaching English as a foreign language depends more on teaching grammar than communicative techniques.

European countries also adopted a CLT approach for business reasons to support fluent communication in English (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Savignon, 2007). In fact, main two goals of CLT are: (a) to enhance communicative competence in language teaching, and (b) to emphasize the inherent relationship between language and communication. Linguists assert CLT as an approach rather than a method because it provides a frame for language teaching and learning rather than procedures (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Consequently, American and British linguists defined CLT as an approach, not a method.

Richards and Rodgers (2014) regard CLT as a shift in language teaching. They argue that CLT is the result of two influences, which shape the language teaching directions in years. The first is an external one, which reflects the urgent demands of a society for learning English as an essential life requirement. The second is an internal one, which reflects the development of language teaching philosophies, techniques, options, and new research in the field of language education. Consequently, CLT is a result of these two factors, which is a clear example of a model shift in language teaching.

Larsen-Freeman (2000), who also regards CLT as a communicative approach that recognizes the connection between language and communication, asserts that CLT aims to improve the ability of language learners to communicate and use the target language appropriately so they can use it genuinely outside the class. Larsen-Freeman states that the goal of language teachers is to enable their students to communicate by providing them with information about linguistic forms, meanings,

and functions. She shows that language teachers should promote communication activities and monitor their students' performance.

Richards (2006) defines CLT as achievable interactions with users of the language, creating meaningful interactions by using language and integrating new communicative competence to the target language. He discusses CLT in the context of: a) the process of language learning, b) classroom activities that assist communicative language learning, and c) the roles of both teachers and learners. Richards emphasizes that the main goal of CLT involves meaningful communication that focuses less on grammar learning and more on interaction. According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), the meaningful communication involves communicative competence that is to consider when and how to say what to whom. In terms of classroom activities, Richards highlights the shift from traditional activities like grammar drills and dialogue memorization toward using pair and group activities, role-plays, and work projects. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), these types of activities provide an opportunity for language learners to engage in a cooperative work with their peers, which also enable them to listen to each other. Richards (2006) differentiates between the roles of students and teachers inside the class. Students engage in group work, while teachers monitor student performance in those activities and facilitate students' learning processes.

Richards and Rodgers (2014), who define CLT as a communicative and functional approach, present a set of principles for such an approach:

- Learners learn a language through using it to communicate.
- Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities.

- Fluency is an important dimension of communication.

- Communication involves the integration of different language skills.

- Learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error. (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p.105)

While there is a consensus among researchers about the previous standards, disagreement remains regarding the role of grammar in CLT. Wilkins, for example, argues that grammar and vocabulary are something that "a language learner needs to understand and express" (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 85). This understanding is regarded as a basis for a well-developed language-teaching syllabus. Similarly, others state that teaching grammar contributes in language learning, improves communicative competence, and does not affect CLT (Ahmad & Rao, 2012; Canale & Swain, 1980; Savignon, 2002; 2007).

Savignon (2002) defines CLT as involving both the process and goals of learning a language. She sees learners as needing to interpret, express, and negotiate meaning through reading and writing as well as oral communication.

Theoretical Foundation of CLT

From a sociocultural theoretical perspective, language acquisition occurs in a collaborative process in which learners interact for their own purposes; from this process, they learn and build grammatical, expressive, and cultural competence (Ohta, 2000). According to Krashen (1984), second language acquisition develops in two ways. The first one is that second language acquisition is similar to children first language development. The second one, language acquisition is an unintended process because people are often not aware that they are acquiring a language while they are doing so. Yet they are aware of using the language for communicative purposes. In

addition, they are often not aware of the rules they have acquired through communication but they "feel" the language. This idea is linked to Krashen's (1984) hypothesis of language Acquisition. The acquisition process highlights that speakers' fluency in a second language develops spontaneously, rather than memorized, in a social context with meaningful and comprehensible input in that language.

Specifically to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the importance of collaborative interactions is central to learning a second language. The main theoretical perspective in CLT is "communicative competence" which is a term used to describe the ability to speak a language fluently and appropriately (Savignon, 1971). Competence is linked to understanding the grammar and structure of a language; competence that is naturally internalized by the native speakers of a language (Canale & Swain, 1980). According to Chomsky, speakers' competence enables them to produce grammatically correct sentences in a language (Savignon, 2002). On the other hand, communicative competence refers to the ability of using fluently and accurately a language in a social and cultural context. Savignon (1971) characterized the communicative competence as being able to interact and negotiate meaning through the use of language. In a second language context, meaningful interactions among language learners provide a pedagogical advantage for them to learn the nuances of a language through activities related to real life activities, context, and communication, in turn this process helps second language learners improve their linguistic understanding and expression (Van Lier, 2000). Savignon (2002) argues that through communicative competence learners develop grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociocultural competence and strategic competence. Grammatical competence refers to employing grammatical rules in interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning. Discourse competence

involves consistent series of words in a text, like an email, a novel or an online conversation. Recognizing each word helps in interpreting the general meaning of the text. Sociocultural competence involves understanding the social context in which communication is used like, participants' role, their shared information and the interaction function. Strategic competence is coping strategies that used in unfamiliar contexts with constraints like, imperfect knowledge of rules. Practice and experience will increase the grammar, discourse and sociocultural competence adaptation. The coping strategies are important for communicative competence to distinguish highly effective communicators (Savignon, 2002). Savignon also showed that practice and experience of these components altogether without separation, learners will improve their communicative competence. Consequently, the CLT approach highlights communicative competence through group work activities that promote meaningful interaction among students. Based on a significant application of these activities inside EFL classrooms, learners will develop communicative competence in the second language (Canale & Swain, 1980).

CLT Approach and GME Method

The development of language teaching methods usually corresponds to community demands and needs (Richards, 2006). This section of the study does not intend to explore all past methods, but rather it will focus on the GME method, because it has been the dominant method of teaching the English language across many Arab-region countries. This section will compare differences between the traditional GME approach and the CLT approach. Before explaining the differences between the two methods, I would like to describe how the GME method is typically used to teach English to Iraqi elementary, middle, and high school students. This part also describes my experiences as an EFL student learning the English language in

Iraq. This study targets EFL teachers, many of whom experienced the same learning method during their school years. By sharing this experience, I hope to make it easier for them to compare and understand the major differences between GME and CLT.

Personal Experience with English Language as an EFL Learner

I began learning English in 1994 when I was 10 years old at a governmental primary school in Baghdad. The EFL curriculum in Iraq is nationalized, that is, all Iraqi students learn the same EFL subjects. The teaching methods remain consistent in using a non-communicative approach, while the texts increase in complexity. Through each stage, the emphasis is on the memorization of vocabulary, relevant dialogues, and grammatical structures. Using my experience as an English language learner in Iraq serves as a model for the following descriptions.

Elementary schools (6-12 years old):

In the elementary school early grades, EFL teachers begin by teaching the English alphabet, because that is how Arabic is taught. In addition, students are taught to pronounce English sounds and they learn about English orthography (upper and lower case letters as well as cursive and print). The students repeat and imitate the teacher's pronunciation of English sounds. The aim of this is to help students increase vocabulary and memorize the English alphabet. Teachers often prepare big posters to illustrate the form and pronunciation of the letters. Some teachers use recordings of alphabet songs, helping their students learn to pronounce English sounds by having them repeat the songs as a group. In the later elementary school grades, students learn pronouns with those pronouns meanings in Arabic, and their positions in a simple sentence. Textbooks supply students with exercises for practicing the alphabet and simple vocabulary and short dialogues for practicing simple sentences. The major goal of these exercises and dialogues is for students to practice writing and reading.

Although the dialogues could be considered a CLT approach, their function is more on reading about the interactions among people rather than on authentic communication. So in the end there is no support for development of students' communication skills. The focus is still on memorization, receptive language skills, and on preparing students for the next stage, which is middle school.

This stage of my EFL education added some vocabulary to my mental lexicon but out of cultural context. Further, this stage could not provide cooperative work with my peers to exchange speaking and listening, it was merely individual work.

Middle School (13-15 years old):

This is the stage where students encounter a more advanced level of English language. They study different verb tenses like the simple present, simple past, and the present continuous. Their textbooks are composed of medium-length paragraphs that display relevant context, such as descriptions of famous ancient Iraqi places, stories of famous Arabic scientists, or discussions of scientific subjects. The paragraphs are intended to help students learn new vocabulary that is more advanced than at the previous stage. Students are to memorize the new vocabulary words, complete grammar exercises provided in the textbooks, and write compositions consisting of two or three paragraphs about a certain topic. They are expected to compose well-structured sentences to generate meaningful written paragraphs.

In spite of an advanced level of learning the English language in this stage, it did not add anything but new vocabulary and grammatical rules. At that stage, I was just memorizing the English grammatical rules and the new vocabulary for the exams sake. Therefore, I was very good at spelling, remembering vocabulary meaning, and applying some grammatical tenses and rules. However, if I met English native

speakers outside my classroom context I would not be able to communicate fluently with them.

High School (16-18 years old):

High school is a three-year stage preceding the university level. In this stage, the students encounter the most advanced English of their educational journey before attending a university. EFL students in high school use both textbooks and literature books. The textbooks include paragraphs that contain advanced vocabulary and different themes, and they concentrate on grammar exercises. The other books are often famous British literature (*Kipps* by H.G. Wells, *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens, and *Merchant of Venice* by Shakespeare). During high school, teachers focus on having their students write compositions as a way of improving the reading and writing skills. They pay attention to mechanics and surface comprehension of the content of dialogues and compositions, but again these features do not promote an authentic use of language. The activities also strive to deepen the students' understanding of the reading. In the last grade of this stage, students must pass a standardized national examination enabling them to access their desired university. Students who achieve the highest scores have the best opportunity to enroll in a desired field of study. The Iraqi Ministry of Education is responsible for preparing the final examinations, including those for English. The tests are the same for all students at this level, which focus on writing and reading and grammar rather than communication.

Again, the case here is not a better scenario from the previous stages. It is true that this stage was more advanced than others were in terms of complicated grammatical rules, difficult vocabulary, long dialogues, and famous texts. Their job for me was not more than memorizing them so I can successfully pass the exams. As

a result, this stage did not enhance my English oral fluency, as I could not share and use the language with other peers.

GME Method vs. CLT Approach

Richards (2006) and Richards and Rodgers (2014) illustrated major differences between the GME method and the CLT approach. There are obvious distinctions between the two methods that Table 3 shows.

Table 2

GME VS CLT Approaches to EFL Instruction.

Element of difference	GME	Assumptions	CLT approach	Assumptions
Grammar	Deductive learning; grammar as starting point	Learning grammar rules will improve language learning	Inferential learning of grammar through meaningful communication as starting point	Learning grammar will improve through authentic communication
Memorization and repetition	Reading of dialogues and new vocabularies	Reading these exercises will improve learner's speech	Fluency group activities like, role play activity	Vocabulary is learned in the context of negotiating meaning and producing own dialogues
Exercises and drills	Inclusion of grammar, questions and answers about assigned paragraphs, and pronunciation	Practice and repetition of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation improves language use	Accuracy is reached overtime group activities like dialogues or exercises focus on specific tense	Authentic interactions support the learning of grammatical rules, accurate use of vocabulary, and pronunciation
Teacher's role	Instructor's role is to follow a preplanned lesson and correct students' errors	Teachers are source of language learning, Teachers have a dominant role	Facilitator role is to accept learners' errors and further their understanding by negotiating their use through a work plan of authentic experiences that lead to notice accurate and contextualized use of the language	Learners, teachers, and circumstances together are sources of language learning. Learners feel secure and are encouraged to communicate

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Table 2 (Cont.)

Learners' role	Passive role of giving correct answers and following instructions	Performing of accurate verbal and written skills without mistakes through passive receptive role	Cooperative role, group activities and pair work	Demonstrate language fluency and improve a meaningful language learning through active and collective use

CLT Principles

Richards (2006), Richards and Rodgers (2001), and Savignon (2002) identified principles for a CLT approach. These principles require activities that enhance meaningful communication among language learners (Richards, 2006). Understanding these principles will encourage teachers to abandon the GME method, which requires learners to memorize dialogues and vocabularies, work on large numbers of grammar exercises, and give correct answers.

Richards (2006) summarizes the CLT principles as follows:

- Make real communication the focus of language learning.

- Provide opportunities for learners to experiment and try out what they know.

- Be tolerant of learners' errors as they indicate that the learner is building up his or her communicative competence.

- Provide opportunities for learners to develop both accuracy and fluency.

- Link the different skills such as speaking, reading, and listening together, since they usually occur so in the real world.

- Let students induce or discover grammar rules. (p. 13)

Other authors shared similar principles. Savignon (2002) cited Berns' (1990) summary of the CLT approach principles. She added student diversity and cultural

context as important elements that must not be ignored in the language learning process. She also encouraged the recognition of language varieties in learning and teaching. She added an important principle that rejects determining any specific methodology or technique for teaching CLT. Accordingly, various activities will emerge inside a classroom to enhance the learners' ability to interact meaningfully (Richards, 2006).

How to Overcome the Barriers of CLT Application in the Arab World?

According to the related research in Chapter Two, the traditional method or GME, which centralizes grammar, memorization and exercises in teaching English, hinders the fluency ability for EFL learners; reason why Arab EFL learners find themselves unable to communicate fluently in English after studying it for a long period of time. Consequently, there is a need to provide Arab EFL teachers with a guide of implementing the CLT approach in their classes. Although the research shows that some Arab region countries developed their textbook with a CLT approach in teaching English, the research results have indicated the use of traditional methods while teaching with these textbooks.

Therefore, I propose a unit, which is based on CLT principles and activities as an attempt to overcome those challenges. However, this is not a call to abandon the existing textbooks, but rather it is a call to gear the teaching to respond to the general need of EFL learners. According to Savignon (2002) "[c]ommunicative language teaching does not necessarily mean the rejection of familiar materials. A teacher with only a grammar-translation textbook can use it to support a focus on communication" (p. 7). The proposed unit will help Arab EFL teachers to create an interactive class, which will help learners engage in conversations and discussions and negotiate meaning through participating in the CLT activities. Further, this unit, presented in

the following chapter, is appropriate for the Arab context because its content addresses essential needs for an EFL Arab learner who plans to study abroad. It is appropriate because it does not contradict the local traditional norms, as might some educational systems fear of CLT for that reason. It is a unit that aims at overcoming CLT applications barriers by enhancing a meaningful communication by using recurrent topics in the lessons.

Chapter Four

A Proposed CLT Unit

Introduction

The literature review identified the challenges that a majority of Arab EFL teachers face when implementing the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach. These challenges hinder the CLT approach from achieving its main goal, which is to enhance meaningful communication. Therefore, this chapter contains a CLT-based unit plan for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) that describes how to apply CLT pedagogical principles. It is offered as a step to inform Arab EFL educators about how to develop lessons that include CLT applications. The main purpose of this chapter is to address the question of how to promote an interactive EFL class in a way that ensures improvement of EFL learners' English language proficiency.

The Unit Plan Sample

Because the main purpose behind acquiring a new language is to communicate, language teaching should focus on enhancing the learners' communication skills. The goal of most language learners is to speak a foreign language fluently. However, sometimes learners become frustrated after a while because they have not made much progress toward the goal. Eventually, learners lose their enthusiasm and become unmotivated to learn a language. As a result, there is a need to create a link between the desires and goals of the learners and the goals of teaching the English language. EFL teachers need to be mindful of students' interests and goals and integrate communicative activities that address topics directly related to learners' lives. Such activities can improve EFL learners' interactions and may

motivate them to continue pursuing the skills and goals that they have set for themselves.

In the proposed unit, I present my suggestions for applying a CLT-based unit plan. The unit topic is *Studying in the United States*. This unit includes five lesson topics, which are all related by theme to the main unit topic. A description of each lesson topic is provided later in this chapter, as is an example of how to apply one of the lesson topics. In the following section, I describe the suggested unit plan's main elements in the light of CLT principles.

Unit Topic

The topic is about a student who was awarded a scholarship to study in the United States. The purpose behind choosing the United States as a context is because it is an English-speaking country with the largest English-speaking population in the world (Ryan, 2013). Many EFL learners in the Arab world are motivated to learn English because of a desire to study abroad. The selected topic addresses an issue of interest to such students and is one of many that can be used to enhance the communicative abilities of EFL learners. The general goal behind this unit is to enhance their ability to communicate in English by using authentic text about a topic of direct interest to them (the process of preparing to study abroad) while also helping them to become familiar with process and a new culture. Since one of the CLT principles is using authentic substantive conversations, the designed unit considers practical instructions that correspond to EFL learners' everyday experiences. Using authentic topics and materials (videos, newspapers, or online materials, etc.) can enhance EFL learners' language acquisition ability. Using authentic materials has advantages. The authenticity serves the interest of language learners so they will be

more motivated, learners will have the opportunity to be exposed to cultural differences between their first language and the target language, and learners will use real-life language skills spontaneously (Richards, 2001). It is important to mention that teachers can have discussion with their students to decide the next topic. Doing that learners will find an interesting class discussion and encouraging language learning environment.

Unit Duration

The estimated time for this unit is about 10 sessions, distributed among the five lesson topics. However, it will vary according to the size of the group and will depend on the students' comprehension. If the students do not understand the main ideas of a lesson, the teacher may modify the activity or switch to an alternative activity.

Unit Goal

The goal of this unit is to help students increase English language fluency to communicate effectively in English by engaging them in speaking, listening, reading, and writing about a topic of direct interest and importance to them, while also educating them about cultural differences they might encounter. This unit will also enable EFL learners to induct grammar rules throughout the activities.

Learners' Age and Background

This unit targets adults' learners who finished their academic years, yet they have English speaking proficiency issues. Usually adults' learners in the Arab world have basic knowledge in the English language. Chapter Two shows that EFL learners get English education in primary schools, high schools, and universities where EFL

learners expose to vocabulary, grammar, dialogues and drills. However, EFL learners still struggle a considerable lack in oral communication.

Seating Arrangement

Learner interactions are important for successful completion of this unit, so teachers should provide a seating arrangement that enables communication among learners. For instance, teachers could replace traditional row seating with cluster seating, taking into account the number of students and school policy. The seating arrangements may change according to the activities. For example, for discussion activities students should be in groups to help them interact readily. For activities like watching videos, hosting a guest, or listening to a presenter, teachers should adjust the seating to make it easy for learners to watch and listen.
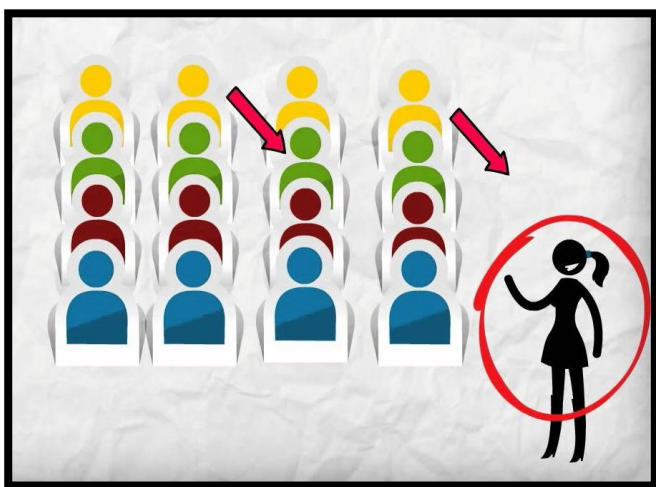
Figure 1. Illustration of a Traditional Classroom Seating Arrangement
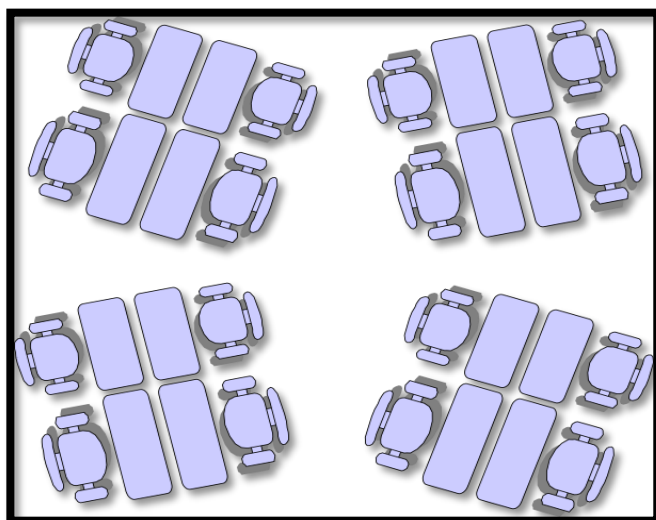
Figure 2. Seating Arrangement during a CLT Lesson That Enhances Class Interaction

Unit Materials

One of the CLT principles includes the use of authentic materials. "Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities" (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 105). The authentic materials are usually not designed for language learners, but rather for native speakers (Nunan & Miller, 1995). They can be newspapers, online resources, videos, or images (Reid, 2014). By using the authentic materials, EFL learners will be exposed to real-life recurrent situations (Richards, 2001). If learners are exposed to real-life environments, it that would enable learners to have an intercultural exchange and communication. To create a more motivated communicative class, teachers can ask their students to choose the materials they like and bring it to class. For example, if a class topic is about "a tour around a city" then students can choose to bring either images of their favorite city, a map of the city or a video exhibiting sightseeing in that favorite city.

Lesson Topics Overview

The proposed unit, entitled *Studying in the United States,* integrates different topics, such as contacting the university, finding housing, emailing an advisor, using public transportation, and taking a tour of the city. These topics will be discussed in detail next. The dual purpose of the topics is to educate EFL learners about the process of being accepted in a US university while also practicing class CLT activities and building their language fluency. Therefore, the topics are arranged in a logical sequence to support content sustainability. Teaching language through sustained content helps learners to develop academic vocabulary of the subject area from related topics. According to Young and Hadaway (2006), language learners should use the new vocabulary a number of times in its real context to enable them to acquire its meaning and function. By developing new vocabulary, learners will use it during the class activities to communicate within their groups.

To provide an overview of the five topics (see Figure 3), the following narrative presents a general description of each topic included in the unit:
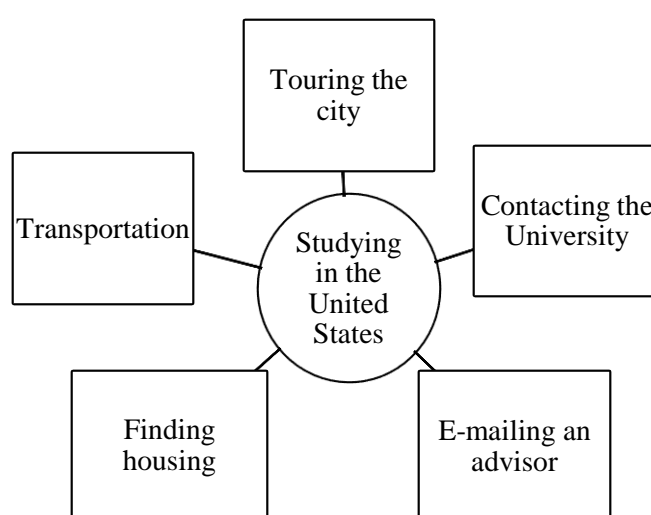

Figure 3. Topics Included Around the Main Unit Subject

Contacting the University: This is the first topic, EFL learners will explore the process of contacting a US university. This topic will enable learners to get information from a university website by reading the university application requirements. It will introduce learners to the application documents by listening to a presenter. Also, this topic acknowledges the cultural differences by comparing local and western cultures through group discussions. Accordingly, learners will acquire different language skills like, reading, listening, and speaking besides inferring some grammatical rules through some types of CLT activities, which are promoted by the CLT principles.

E-mailing an advisor: This is the second topic of the unit. In this topic, EFL learners will be familiar with the emailing process in general, and emailing an academic advisor specifically. Students will consider what questions to ask an academic advisor so they can benefit as much information as they can about studying in the university. In this topic, students will listen to an advisor, they will be able to engage in writing sample emails, and participate in class discussion. These activities will create an interactive class that makes EFL learners practice different language skills through CLT activities using authentic realia, such as email samples and a native speaker.

Finding Housing: This is the third topic of the unit. The aim of this topic is to provide EFL learners with general information about housing types that are available for an international student in the US. In this topic, learners will improve their writing, reading, and speaking skills. They will write about different housing options that they will read in universities' websites, they will speak in group work about their findings. Learners will demonstrate cultural differences through group discussions by

comparing local housing options and western housing options. Also, learners will discover new grammatical rules through authentic written texts.

Transportation: This is the fourth topic of the unit. It is one of the important topics for students who want to study in the US. The aim of this topic is to enable learners identify the transportation systems in the US and compare them to the local transportation systems. This topic will enable learners to interact in group work activities, exchange ideas and new information by performing CLT activities using authentic realia like, pictures, maps, and videos.

Touring the city: This is the last topic of the unit. After learners have been introduced to the transportation systems and types, now they can go around the city to discover new places, such as, sightseeing, shopping, grocery and public parks. This topic will be an opportunity for learners to exchange information about the city of the university they chose and of famous cities through group discussion and authentic materials like videos and pictures. Learners will develop listening, speaking, cultural exchange, and grammatical rules induction.

Strategies

Teachers should develop CLT strategies and activities that are related to learners' objectives and their reasons for learning the English language. One of the problems that the literature revealed in the Arab region is that traditional methods are used in the presence of the CLT approach. Therefore, teachers must be aware that there is a difference between the traditional teaching methods and the CLT approach, especially in the roles for both teacher and learners. In CLT, learners' roles shift from being individualistic to cooperative. During CLT activities, language learners practice cooperation skills not only with their peers but also with their teachers because

learners also have the role of negotiator. Richards and Rodgers (2014) state that

teachers have three roles: There is the teacher's role as an analyst, as she/he defines

language learners' needs to assess correspondent class activities. There is the

teacher's as a counselor when she/he facilitates communication between speakers by

paraphrasing and giving feedback. And, there is the teacher's role as group process

manager, when she/he organizes the classroom activities and settings. According to

CLT principles, language teachers should not correct learners' errors because it can

hinder the communication process among learners and can discourage them from

continuing speaking (Zhu, 2010). Teachers should accept learners' errors as a natural

process for language learning and they should correct errors in a way to not be

considered as a threat to students (Huang, 2009). Teachers may correct learners

implicitly by using different correction types such as recasting, elicitation, asking for

clarification, metalinguistic clues, and repetition (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). In fact,

performing these strategies may be challenging in the Arab world due to cultural

background. The education traditions in most Middle-Eastern countries use teacher-

centered and structured lessons styles (Dirkx & Pringer, 1997). Nevertheless, EFL

teachers are advised to incorporate both traditional and modern methods taking into

considerations learner levels, ages, and needs, and class time. After teachers figure out

their roles and their students' roles, they should identify a procedure to perform the

unit. The procedure should focus on introducing the main ideas of the lesson,

motivating the learners to participate, enhancing communication, and evaluating

students' performance. Here is an example to consider in each session:

1. At the first session, teachers begin the unit by asking their students about their

   goals after learning English. To do that, teachers can provide an authentic

   conversation like using a video asking, "Why do we learn English?" Teachers

should remember that this is just a general unit introduction. Therefore, the introduction should use wide- scope ideas.

2. To make the class appealing to students and build expectations, teachers can ask them what they expect to learn from the topic "*Studying in the United States*". Then, teachers may pick the most-desired topics to cover in later lessons' activities. One approach is to split the class into small groups and let each group of students discuss their areas of interest. After the discussion, teachers ask each group what they picked. Teachers should remember to employ their students' ideas to create an interesting environment in the class.

3. Teachers can make the class more interactive by asking students what they know about the unit topic. Learners will have an opportunity to brainstorm ideas and then discuss them in the class. Teachers can also host a speaker who has real experience studying in the US to answer students' questions. Further, teachers can ask students about the difference between studying in the US and in the local universities. Teachers should focus on enhancing communication during these activities.

4. At the end of this session, teachers will need to evaluate the learners' progress and comprehension, and their own ability to achieve the unit goal. To do the evaluation, teachers could ask their students to prepare a short presentation about the most important unit takeaways. Teachers could videotape the presentations and give them back to presenters so they can reflect on their language performance.

Objectives

The objectives of a unit plan should correspond to the learners' main needs. "Regardless of how distant or unspecific the communicative needs of the learners, every program with a goal of communicative competence should pay heed to opportunities for meaningful language use, opportunities to focus on meaning as well as form" (Savignon, 2002, p. 12). Learners' needs may vary from one to another because they depend on their level and age. In either case, the objectives of this unit, *Studying in the United States,* can be achieved by providing authentic materials in each lesson. The general objectives for this unit are the following:

1. Learners will become familiar with the application process in US universities, to include, required tests (TOEFL, GRE), written forms (Study objectives, recommendations), and transcripts.

2. Learners will become familiar with a university student's way of life in the US, by discussing topics like housing, emailing an advisor, and transportation. Learners will be introduced to detailed information about each topic.

3. Learners will acknowledge cultural differences between two cultures. They will compare the foreign culture and the local culture in terms of life of a student.

4. Learners will gain new vocabulary through the different topics of the unit.

5. Learners will improve their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills through class participation activities assigned by their teachers.

6. Learners will improve their grammar by peer feedback while participating in class activities or by self-reflection while watching their own presentations at the end of the unit.

Language Skills

One of the CLT principles is that "communication involves the integration of different language skills" (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 105). Therefore, the proposed unit intends to involve reading, listening, writing, and speaking within different lesson topics. Young and Hadaway (2006) state that English language learners should not only acquire oral proficiency but rather they should master reading and writing at the same level of speaking and listening. In addition, learners will have the opportunity to acknowledge cultural differences. Furthermore, learners will induct grammar rules through activities, like, inferring a recurrent sentence tense of a story, advertisement or a presenter.

CLT Activities

Littlewood (1981) states that the purpose of CLT activities is to enable learners of different language proficiency levels to practice English according to their needs. CLT activities encourage language learners to continue communication inside their classroom. Using communicative activities will enable language learners to acquire language naturally. Communicative activities create a friendly environment inside the classroom among learners that help in the language learning process. Richards and Rodgers (2014) share similar beliefs about CLT activities, but they expand the definition to include more ideas. For example, Richards and Rodgers state that the main purpose of using CLT activities is to provide a communicative context inside classrooms. They indicate that CLT activities should improve learners' accuracy and fluency. Furthermore, they added that CLT activities should combine speaking, listening, and reading simultaneously. Additionally, Richards and Rodgers consider that grammar can be discovered through CLT activities. Research results

have revealed that teaching grammar explicitly does not show any advantages for the study participants (Christison, Christian, Duff & Spada, 2015). According to Krashen, (as cited in Christison et al., 2015), the content should be interesting and appealing to learners so the implicit grammatical message is acquired spontaneously. In order to create an opportunity for language learners to develop their fluency and cooperative work in a class, Richards and Rodgers (2014) provide CLT activity types:

Types of CLT Activities

1. Jigsaw activities: The class is divided into small groups to find missing information that is distributed among groups.
2. Task completion activities: Puzzles, games, and other class activities are used to complete a class task.
3. Information-gathering activities: Students collect information through surveys, interviews, and searches.
4. Opinion sharing activities: Students organize a list of most important findings and compare them.
5. Information transfer activities: Students learn new information and represent it differently.
6. Reasoning gap activities: Students infer new information from already existing information.
7. Role-plays: Students perform a role based on given information.

Plans of the Unit and Its Topics

In this section, I provide an example of a unit plan (See table 3). Table 3 shows a general description of the lesson topics that included in the unit. Then, I

provide examples for applying the lesson topics using CLT activities in the light of CLT principles.

The first topic is a detailed lesson plan, which contains two sessions (see Tables 4 and 5). Each session has a topic that related to the main lesson topic. During each session, CLT activities were suggested so that learners have the ability to practice different language skills, communicate and exchange information using authentic realia. Each session has goals that are different from others, so learners can have enough time to practice each skill.

The other four topics are briefly described with one CLT activity for each topic. Table 6 contains a brief lesson description about the topic of *Emailing an Advisor*. Table 7 contains a brief lesson description about the topic of *Finding Housing*. Table 8 contains a brief lesson description about the topic of *Transportation*. Table 9 contains a brief lesson description about the topic of *Touring the City*.

Table 3

A Proposed CLT Unit

Unit topic: Studying in the United States
Duration: 10 sessions
Unit Goal: To improve learners speaking, reading, writing and listening besides exposition to a real-life topic
Learners' Age: Adults
Seating arrangement: The teacher arranges the seating in a way that corresponds to students' group activities.
Materials: Authentic materials (Videos, newspaper, magazine, websites, etc.)
Lessons included: Contacting the university, Finding Housing, Emailing an advisor, Transportation, and Touring the city
Strategies: 1. Teachers should introduce the unit topic at the first session 2. Teachers should motivate learners 3. Teachers should make the class more interactive 4. At the end of the unit, teachers should evaluate the learners' progress
Objectives: 1. Learners will be familiar with studying in the US process 2. Learners will improve their language skills and grammar knowledge, and gain new vocabulary 3. Learners will be exposed to cultural differences
Skills: Writing (emails, peers feedback, interviews), Listening (videos, records) Reading (unit texts, websites) and Speaking (group/class discussions, presentation), grammar rules induction through activities and cultural differences exposure.
Class Activities: CLT activities to enhance meaningful communication

Table 4

A Lesson Plan on Contacting the University – Session 1

Contacting the University - Session 1	
Session Topic Visiting the university website	
Description This topic forms the beginning of the lesson Contacting the University. After deciding where and what to study, students will have to know about the university application requirements. Students seek to study abroad should first think of contacting a university. Contacting a university could be by email, fax or sometimes universities provide application details on their websites.	
Goal The goal of this lesson is to develop EFL learners' comprehension about applying to a US university. Also, integrate reading, writing, listening and speaking alongside with cultural understanding through a real-life realia.	
Duration 45-60 minutes	
Level Intermediate	
Materials Online sources like university websites or a general website talking about applying to US universities like http://www.internationalstudent.com/study_usa/application-process/ A meeting on Skype	
Activity-1 (Group Discussion)	1. Teachers ask students to pick a university in the US that they wish to study at. 2. Teachers can suggest some universities if learners do not know what to pick. 3. In an individual work, each Learner reads a university website and write down the university requirements in a separate paper. 4. In small groups, learners will discuss what they have found by comparing their papers. 5. Teachers bring the class into one group to see the common findings. 6. Teachers can write their students findings on a white board.
Skills	Reading with understanding the website content of international students' application. Speaking by sharing their work in small groups and in one big group.
Time	20-30 minutes

Table 4 (cont.)

Activity-2 (Task Completion)	In this activity, teachers will ask students to identify the sentences tense. 1. Teachers can use the task completion activity. 2. During this activity, teachers can pick few sentences from the websites and hide the verbs. 3. Teachers then ask the students to work in pairs. Each pair of learners should complete the sentences with appropriate verbs according to their context.
Skill	Grammar rules (Verbs tense)
Time	10-15 minutes
Activity-3 (Information gathering)	In this activity, teachers wrap up the main ideas from this session. 1. Teachers host a presenter from a US university on Skype who can talk about their university acceptance process. 2. In this activity, learners will listen to the presenter, and write down the important ideas of the acceptance process. 3. After the presenter finishes, teachers split students into small groups to compare the acceptance process with the local universities process.
Skills	Listening, comprehension, writing, and cultural exchange
Time	15 minutes

Table 5

A Lesson Plan on Contacting the University – Session 2

Contacting the University - Session 2
Session Topic   University application
Description   This session continues the information gained from the first one. After the students introduced to the required documents, now they should have a close look at these documents.   Teachers need to prepare for this session in advance by collecting samples of what learners found through websites last session. For example, a sample of academic documents (a personal statement, recommendations, and study objectives) and a sample of immigration documents (passport, visa and DS-2019 form).
Goal   The goal of this session is to enable learners to consider two types of documents, the academic documents and the immigration documents.

Table 5 (cont.)

Duration	
45-60 minutes	
Level Intermediate	
Materials Websites, power point	
Activity-1 (Role Play)	Through this activity learners will identify the required documents for a US university application: 1. Teachers present the required documents that were already found last session. This step is just to refresh the learners' memory so they can follow up with the information. 2. Teachers ask learners to participate in a role play activity. One learner can volunteer to act the role of a university employee who has information about the application process and another learner acts as an international student who has inquiries about the application process.
Skills	Speaking and listening while learners ask and answer questions about the application process.
Time	15-20 minutes
Activity-2 (Information Transfer)	In this activity learners will develop more knowledge about the differences between the required documents: 1. In pairs, learners will discuss to each other what they know about the required documents. 2. Learners will transfer their ideas depending on their own understanding from previous activity. 3. In one big group, teachers present the required documents on power point slides. 4. Teachers ask learners what type of document each slide shows. 5. In pairs, learners will discuss each slide content so they can transfer their own ideas to their peers.
Skill	Reading while learners consider the power point content and speaking while they engage in pairs' discussion.
Time	25-35 minutes

Table 6

A Brief Lesson Description- Emailing an Advisor

Emailing an advisor	
Description	This lesson aims that learners know how to email an advisor for the first time. Learners will gain knowledge about the questions they need to ask before they start studying. They will develop their writing, listening and comprehension by using CLT activities. They will also develop a cultural understanding between local and foreign universities.
Activity (Information gathering)	Teachers can host an American professor at a US university via Skype. The host will provide information about what international students need to ask through email before arriving to the US. 1. Learners listen to the professor and write down notes of important information that they gather through the interview. 2. Learners will discuss the gathered information in small groups during an allocated time. 3. Teachers will monitor the groups, and provide feedback for the discussed information. 4. In an individual work, learners write what they comprehend from the interview and the group discussion.

Table 7

A Brief Lesson Description- Finding Housing

Finding Housing	
Description	The goal of this lesson is to provide learners with information about the housing types while they are students in a US university. Learners will be introduced to cultural differences through this topic. Also, this lesson aims to develop learners' reading, writing and grammar rules induction. Teachers should know that this topic might need a previous preparation. They have to collect basic information about housing types in the US.
Activity (Opinion sharing activities)	1. Teachers ask learners to visit a US university website and look for housing options. 2. Learners will write a paragraph about the available housing options. 3. In small groups, learners discuss the options that they found and compare them to local housing options. 4. Teachers will collect the written paragraphs. 5. Teachers pick one sentence from each paragraph and write it on the white board to ask about its tense. Teachers can mix between wrong and right tense sentences. 6. Teachers will correct only a sentence that its grammar contradicts the meaning.

Table 8

A Brief Lesson Description- Transportation

Transportation	
Description	The aim of this lesson is to provide learners with general information about transportation in the US. Learners will compare the local transportation system with the US transportation system to acknowledge cultural differences. Learners will develop speaking and listening while they learn what to use to transfer between states and between apartment and university.
Activity (Jig Saw)	1. Teachers bring pictures of different transportation types (bus, car, caps, airplane, and trains) 2. Teacher provide a US map to illustrate the transportation distance. 3. Teachers ask questions like; what do you ride if you want to move from one state to another? Or what do you ride if you want to go from your apartment to your university? 4. Learners answer the questions by putting the pictures on the map. The picture will be an answer for that question. 5. In small group discussion, learners can compare between the transportation types locally and in the US. For example, they can discuss what local transportation is available to move between local states.

Table 9

A Brief Lesson Description- Touring the City

Touring the city	
Description	This lesson aims to provide information about a famous city by using interactive activities so learners can exchange their thoughts and information. Learners will develop listening, writing and inducting grammatical rules.
Activity (Reasoning gap)	1. Teachers will split the class into two groups. A group who will see a picture and another group who will watch a video. 2. For the picture group, teachers just show the picture at the beginning with the name of Albuquerque on it. 3. For the video group, teachers will play a video with full information about what is on that picture. The video provides information about Albuquerque balloon fiesta. For example, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prpAF4Gewdo 4. The picture group will discuss in groups what the picture is. Teachers can ask the groups to discuss; what is on the picture? What is the most thing they like in that picture? Then Learners will discuss their answers in pairs and write their ideas down. 5. For the video group, teachers ask each learner to write down the important information. 6. Teachers will gather the class again and ask each learner from video group to discuss the information that he/she understands from the video. The video group will have the full information but they will discuss it to their peers using their own words. 7. Teachers can make quote from the video to highlight some grammatical rules. 8. Teachers can ask if the speakers in the video used a past tense or a present tense. They can also ask learners to locate the adjective and nouns said throughout the video.

Summary and Further Resources

This chapter attempts to provide a unit plan that is based on principles from the CLT approach. The application of such plans might vary from one context to another, depending on teachers' goals, learners' need and some schools' teaching policy. Other factors that might influence the implementation of these lesson plans are the class size, class time, and, the cultural background of the schools' surrounding community. Each context may need some requirements that are different from another context. According to Prabhu (1990), there is no good method for teaching different contexts. He stated that different contexts need different methods of teaching. Therefore, teachers only can decide how to develop their plans and adjust them according to their context needs.

For further resources on developing a unit plan and a lesson plan, the following are some suggested resources to help EFL teachers designing their own plans (See table 10):

Table 10

Further Resources

Resource	Description
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q42UQAz_0vE	This video is a workshop in Arabic by Arabic as a second-language teachers to develop a unit plan.
1. Larimer, R. E., & Schleicher, L. (1999). *New Ways in Using Authentic Materials in the Classroom. New Ways in TESOL Series II: Innovative Classroom Techniques*. TESOL Publications, PO Box 753, Waldorf, MD 20604-0753. 2. Young, T. A., & Hadaway, N. L. (2006). *Supporting the Literacy Development of English Learners: Increasing Success in All Classrooms*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association. 3. Lee, J. F., & VanPatten, B. (1995). *Making Communicative Language Teaching Happen. Volume 1: Directions for Language Learning and Teaching*. McGraw-Hill, Inc., 860 Taylor Station Rd., Blacklick, OH 43004-0545; toll-free: 800-722-4726. 4. Dirkx, J. M., & Prenger, S. M. (1997). *A Guide for planning and implementing instruction for adults. A theme-based approach. Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 5. Nunan, D., & Carter, R. (Eds.). (2001). *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages*. Ernst Klett Sprachen.	To develop a unit and/or lesson plan that includes the language skills, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation

Chapter Five

Conclusion

This chapter concludes the study by building on the major challenges addressed in this study to identify related implications for successful implementation of the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach by Arab EFL teachers. This chapter also discusses the study's limitations and makes recommendations for future research.

Challenges and Implications

In referring back to the reviewed literature in chapter two of this study, there are some challenges that constrain Arab EFL teachers from applying the CLT approach.

The first challenge is teachers' unfamiliarity with the CLT approach. It is evident that a majority of EFL teachers in the Arab world lack knowledge about implementing CLT. They may have heard about CLT but they are not proficient in making it happen inside EFL classrooms. An implication of this fact is that ministries of education and school administrators need to provide training or workshops for teachers to raise their practical knowledge about using the CLT approach in order students receive a better interaction class.

The second challenge identified in this study is the limitation on class time. This real problem needs to be observed on two levels, academically by research and practically by policy makers' interference. Time limitations are a big constraint to CLT implementation. According to the reviewed literature, many EFL teachers avoid the CLT approach because it consumes more class time than the traditional GME method. This implies both that school administrators, in coordination with policy

makers in the government of each Arab country, should rethink the class time allocated to English language teaching if they consider English fluency crucial to the development of their countries' economies and education levels. As well as for teachers and educators to search for and develop CLT strategies, that are more time efficient for EFL learners.

The third challenge is that teachers use grammar-based teaching methods in dealing with new CLT-based textbooks. One of the implications is that teachers should acknowledge the difference between teaching traditionally, which focuses on addressing grammar, vocabulary memorization, and text translation, and using CLT, which consists of a set of principles (see Chapter 3). It is important that teachers be aware of impact of traditional teaching on learners' language level proficiency. In addition, policy makers should have a hand in addressing that educational issue. Administrators could contribute by observing EFL teachers' class performance or by distributing surveys to EFL learners to assess the results of class activities and teaching methods.

Finally, the fourth challenge is that of unmotivated learners. If learners are interested during class time, they will be motivated and eager to learn. EFL teachers are responsible for providing a comfortable classroom environment and activities that appeal to their students. In addition, teachers should create their lesson plans based on learners' interests. Research indicates that these factors, often part of a CLT approach, can increase language-learning motivation. The related implications are that teachers must be motivated to want to use the CLT approach, and they must be provided tools and guidance. As an example, a curriculum designer can integrate interesting topics that address learners' desires.

Limitations

This study has number of limitations. The first limitation is that this study is non-empirical. It depends on findings in the literature from empirical studies previously conducted in different parts of the Arab region.

Another limitation is that the study targets EFL adult learners in Iraq and neighboring Arab countries, but only few studies about that age group were found. Because it was challenging to find empirical studies for that age rank specifically, I used research from high school and university level studies.

One more limitation is that the study could not find this type of data from participant surveys, interviews, or observations, making it difficult to suggest which type of CLT activities best fit the class time limitation. Therefore, no solution for the class time problem is provided in this study.

In addition, the study could not find data specifically about Arab students' perceptions concerning practicing CLT activities, though the collected literature shows that Arab students' motivation plays a vital role in learning English.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study confirms the existence of a real need to tackle teaching and learning the English language using the CLT approach. It explains the differences between CLT and the traditional GME method of teaching English, and it describes a sample CLT-based unit plan, both in an effort to answer the challenges and implications identified above. There are some questions that neither this study nor other studies focused in the Arab region have answered. I recommend them as topics for future studies in the field of EFL teaching:

1. How can EFL teachers overcome the class time limitation in applying CLT activities? By addressing this question, research will contribute to solving one of the main problems in applying CLT. Dealing with time is a common problem for EFL teachers around the world. Savignon (2002) mentioned that she has not met any teacher who has not suffered from time limitations in dealing with communication activities. Answers to this question will help EFL teachers implement the CLT approach efficiently.

2. How can EFL teachers benefit from technology in CLT activities? Addressing this question might be another step to helping EFL teachers implement the CLT approach. In addition, incorporating technology in EFL teaching might help increase EFL learner motivation. This question is a call for programmers and software developers to explore development of software or applications that EFL learners and teachers can use to facilitate the language learning process. For example, developers could build a program that measures a speaker's pronunciation and sentence structure accurately.

3. *How can CLT explore the cultural differences between Arab EFL learners and the western world? This is an important question because the reviewed literature has revealed a lack of using western culture -based textbooks. It is also important because if this question can be answered effectively, EFL learners would be exposed to information about western culture that may differ from what they find on media like newspapers, television shows, movies, and the internet, providing them with an additional perspective.*

   According to Brown (1994), language and culture are related to each other and cannot be separated. Therefore, policy makers and curriculum developers should rethink teaching English texts out of their cultural context.

This might prove difficult in some conservative societies, but there should be a way to satisfies the local culture and incorporate the western culture appropriately.

4. How can assessments serve the communication skills for EFL learners? It is important to help English language teachers assess EFL learners' communication skills to ensure the students are gaining fluency. Addressing this question would help EFL teachers in developing their assessment strategies and save their time and effort to ensure their teaching method achieves its goals successfully.

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