

Teachers' Role in Communicative Language Teaching in Libyan Secondary Schools

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Abstract:

Teachers play an important role in classroom management. They act as facilitators of learning to enable students to learn in the way that suits them best rather than telling them what to do. CLT provided a focus for debate on the issue of learning facilitation. And there is a growing need for preparing a good teacher who has a facility for English language teaching in the communicative language classroom. CLT was the main focus for English language teaching in Libyan secondary schools. This article discusses the key role of Libyan EFL instructors

through implementing CLT in Libyan secondary schools. After the debate on this issue, the discussion focused on using CLT and facilitating student learning in Libyan secondary schools. It also provides pedagogical implications and recommendations for these methods in the secondary curriculum. Finally, it leads to the conclusion that supports the role of the teacher in the EFL communicative classrooms.

Key Words: *Implementing CLT in Libyan Secondary Schools, Using CLT, Adopting Student-Centred Learning and Facilitating Student Language Learning*

1. Introduction:

Methods of language teaching play an important role in foreign language teaching and learning contexts. The new teaching methods encourage students to learn and think for themselves. There is an increased demand for good quality of language teaching and learning in the communicative language classroom. English is the most widely spoken language which is used for many specific purposes such as 'technology', 'science', 'business'. The effective use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) would help in facilitating student language learning (Ansarey, 2012). Applying CLT in the learning process requires a need for change in the classroom. The use of this methodology facilitates student language learning in communicative classrooms. By using CLT, the teachers' role has been shifted away from being controllers towards facilitators of learning. The approach of facilitation has been specifically adapted for facilitating students' independent language learning and making it more possible (Rogers, 1969).

Facilitation with CLT methodology is a commonly used action to support student learning in the classroom (Clifton, 2006). CLT is one of the most commonly used methods for facilitating students' learning through the approach of the student-centred learning in EFL classroom contexts. Thereby, CLT is the reform of both educational system and secondary schools in Libya.

The aim of the education policy in Libya is to develop the school curriculum through updating its objectives and teaching methods. In essence, the present government's policy is to improve the performance and qualification of teachers, educators, and inspectors through training courses and programs (GPCE, 2008). The Libyan government has adopted a good policy on education for developing skills of learning like 'skills of analysis', 'conclusion and construction of wide knowledge, for decision-making and scientific solutions to solve problems faced by the educators in the learning process (GPCE, 2008).

Based on this, the secondary school curriculum was changed and based on the principles of the communicative language teaching in which English teachers need to offer some useful advice to support students learning in the classroom (Saleh, 2002; GPCE, 2008; Dalala, 2014). Krishnan and Emhamed (2011) stated that in 2000, the new English Language curriculum depending on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has been created with the aim of producing skilful teachers who could use new methods or ideas and keep up-to-date innovations. However, there had been a mismatch between teachers' beliefs and teachers' practices while investigating EFL teachers' implementation of the communicative approach in Libyan secondary

schools. It was revealed that the teachers' role as facilitators in the use of CLT did not encourage and support students' learning in the secondary school curriculum (Orafi & Borg, 2009). Overall, in order for students to have a good education, EFL teachers would act as a guide, a director, a helper, an organizer, a communicator and a facilitator when implementing CLT in the secondary school curriculum in Libyan.

2. Implementing CLT in Libyan Secondary Schools:

A fundamental change in the role of the teacher to a facilitator of language learning with the use of both the communicative language teaching methodology and the student centered-learning in EFL Libyan secondary classes would become more and more required (Salih, 2018). This is because traditional methods in which teaching could not facilitate learning may not help English language learners to improve their communication skills (Athawadi, 2019).

However, Shihiba (2011) reached a conclusion that Libyan EFL teachers had a shortage of understanding of the concept of learner-centeredness and its implementation in the classroom. This may be attributed to the teachers' weakness of language proficiency and their insufficient implementation of the curriculum innovation while using CLT in Libyan secondary schools. Such these factors were also referred to by Al-Bakbak (2019) who stated that Libyan EFL teachers who employed CLT have faced some difficulties in their classrooms. The considerable difficulties were 'ill-trained teachers', 'lack of motivation on the part of the students', 'the educational and examination system', and also 'limited resources'. Similarly, Athawadi (2019) conducted a survey

investigating factors hindering the implementation of CLT in university English classes. He found that four factors that may hamper the implementation of this method in Libyan English classes. The factors are ‘students’, ‘teachers’, ‘teaching resources’ and ‘educational system’. Athawadi (2019) revealed that the factor of students has a big influence on the use of CLT in the classroom. And three major problems are caused by this factor including low English proficiency, resistance to participation and confidence and readiness for CLT. The teacher factors represent a few difficulties in the implementation of this methodology. And lack of knowledge, lack of teacher training programs and teaching skills are secondary factors attached to the teacher factors as explained by the author mentioned above. Also, lack of teaching resources like audio and visual aids is another main factor which affects the successful use of CLT in English Libyan classes. Moreover, the factor of educational system in which large classes and test-oriented teaching would hinder the implementation of CLT in the classroom.

Since the facilitator’s action is a subject of considerable debate, Saeed and Rao (2013) found that teacher training to be more facilitator of learning while using the communicative approach in the English language learning classroom would seem to be a critical factor in the teaching/learning process.

Libyan educational authority, therefore, attracted great attention to teacher-training development considering the important role of the teacher in enhancing the learning skills and intellectual knowledge essential for keeping pace with global improvements of good communication skills, new teaching methods and modern learning

techniques (GPCE, 2008). The Libyan education authority did this because some of the Libyan teachers are still dealing with traditional method of teaching such as the way of memorizing and reciting things while students of the twenty-first century in Libya require a teacher who has very modern ideas about educating his/her children integrating methods of thinking and analysis (GPCE, 2008). To achieve such these objectives, the traditional role of the teacher would be shifted from a controller into an “assistant and a director to create the scene for the student and the active learner and even train students on the skills of thinking and analysis, installation, conclusion and practice” (GPCE, 2008: 28). And aiming to maintain high standards of facilitating student learning through adopting CLT approach in Libyan secondary classrooms, EFL teachers’ job entails a lot of hard work. Their job involves understanding the most important aspects of their own roles as language learning facilitators. Without practicing and developing this role, EFL teachers in Libyan secondary education would not facilitate student learning and may not make learning possible.

3. Using CLT :

Nowadays, CLT approach is essential to learning a language. This approach is based on the fundamental principles that teachers should facilitate and support student language learning (Little wood, 1981; Brown, 1994). CLT is one of the most commonly used methods in language teaching and learning inside classrooms. Klein (1986) & Brown (1994) highlighted that adopting this approach is essential and beneficial to the teaching-learning process simply because as Abebe et al (2012) explained that in order to obtain learning facility and confidence, EFL

educators are in need for using CLT methodology that prevents ‘extensive teacher-controlled drills’ and discourages ‘quizzing of memorized material’. Thus, “The instructors who teach language have to develop interest towards using CLT methodology as well as various types of active learning methods that fit with the different learning style and strategies of the students” (ibid: 52).

Qinghong (2009) argues that the communicative approach encourages student-centred learning rather than teacher-centred classroom. Implementing this method in the classroom requires that the teacher needs to consider some key issues such as the essential role of both the teacher and the student in learning the communicative classroom activities and achieving good communication skills. According to Abebe et al (2012: 54), EFL teacher plays a major role in needing analysis, setting goals, designing syllabuses, using suitable methods and assessing students’ performance while adopting CLT in classroom learning. Therefore, the role of the teacher in the communicative classroom in which he acts as a learning facilitator seems to be an entirely different from the teacher role in traditional methods of teaching in which he does everything and controls the classroom activities (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). From this, it is clear that the required role of the teacher in the communicative approach is as an assistant manager who could hear student voice in the classroom (The National Report of the GPCE, 2008: 49). In this regard, Ibrahim (2015: 81) illustrates that

Teachers play significant role in application of CLT approach. Successful application of communicative language teaching is significantly influenced by teachers as a main part for controlling this method. Evidently, teachers

with high fluency and oral ability can motivate students and improve their interests to be autonomous learners and to participate in communicative activities. Therefore, effective employment of communicative learning method requires proficient teachers with high oral ability.

However, in the most traditional Libyan secondary schools, the teacher is more powerful than the student. He is still in the dominant position and the most powerful person in the classroom while the student plays a passive role in the learning process (Wei, 2010). This idea was strongly supported by Mohammed et al (2016: 5133) who noticed that through using CLT in secondary schools teachers do most of conversation and/or discussion while the learners' just listen to short utterances and questions directed to them. And the interaction is usually performed by few fluent speakers in the class and the others who may lose interest in the lesson just sit and listen passively. Moreover, Shihiba (2011) stated that when implementing CLT in Libyan secondary schools, students need to take an active part in the classroom instead of playing a passive role in the learning process. Achieving this goal requires that teachers need to adopt student-centred learning and accept the role of facilitation in a communicative language classroom management. In addition, Diana (2014) concluded that EFL teachers have some misconceptions about the use of communicative approach in the classroom. One of the misconceptions is the teachers themselves who seem to be reluctant and unwilling to deal with this approach and improve their own ability in this discipline. According to Kumar et al (2013), such these teachers may have deficiency in communicative competence. Moreover, they may have insufficient trading and salary given to them from teaching. (Kumar et al, 2013: 27) illustrated that through second language learning stages and

while using CLT the roles of both the instructors and educators changed. EFL teachers' adoption of the role of facilitator in the Libyan language classes while using student-centered learning in the communicative language teaching would be in accord with the aim of the current study.

Communicative language teaching improves good communications skills between students while using collaborative learning in a communicative language classroom. Dalala (2018: 15) concluded that the teachers' role is "to prepare and encourage their students to perform classroom activities and meaningful tasks giving them an opportunity to learn and practice language in the classroom". Owen and Rasali (2018) found that after implementing the communicative activities in the classroom, students' speaking performance improved and became better than before. Communicative language teaching is thereby a way of learner-centred approach through which learners play an important role in practising the language inside classroom and the major role of the teachers is to facilitate and monitor the teaching/learning process (Owen & Razali, 2018; Richards & Rodgers 2001). In this regard, Shariq (2017: 89) states that communicative language teaching encourages interactive teaching and students would achieve good education through learner-centred classrooms in which EFL teachers act as facilitators who would help learners to be more independent of their teachers. Hence, "in the learner-centered method the teacher plays the role of a guide, providing the proper learning environment for his students to learn to use the language for communication" (Kumar et al, 2013: 27).

So far the new policy adopted by Libyan educational authority shifted the emphasis away from traditional learning methods. Being a

successful new language learning method used in Libyan secondary schools, CLT entails a real change in the teaching/learning process. And more importantly, there is an urgent need for qualified teachers in Libyan secondary schools dealing with both CLT and student – centred learning.

4. Adopting Student-Centred Learning:

Teachers' duty will include acting the role of learning facilitation in the learner-centred language classroom including 'preparing learners', 'analysing learner needs', 'selecting methodology', 'transferring responsibility', and 'involving learners' Tudor (1993). Jones (2007) explained that through using a student-centred class the role of teacher would be more than of a facilitator and instructor as the students are active involvements in the learning process. In other words, their teacher acts as a helper, as guide, as a manager and as a director of their learning. Teachers, therefore, need to recognize the necessity of using a student learning facilitation when using both Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and student-centred learning (Weimer, 2002). The role of the English language teacher in the classroom is to support and encourage students to enhance their communication skills but does not act as a classroom controller who manages or directs everything inside the classroom. However, Chang (2011) conducted a study showed that using teacher-cantered classrooms, Taiwanese students do not have chance to speak English and they need to wait for the 'teachers' call to answer questions'. Sarhan (2015) concluded that using communicative student-cantered approach would face some difficulties, namely 'the teacher', 'the student', 'the educational system' and 'the teaching material'. He

adds that well-planned teachers would support cooperation and develop authentic materials in a good learning context.

It has been argued that there is a strong connection between student-centred learning and learning facilitation such as ‘self-directed learning’, ‘self-instructional’, ‘individual’ and ‘autonomous learning’ in contexts of language teaching and learning (Voller, 1997 cited in Benson & Voller). Thanli et al (2008) found that three case study teachers could manage to shift their traditional roles to deal with student-centred learning successfully and appropriately after attending learner-centred training programmes. Rogers (1969) appreciated the role of learning facilitation in the classroom while employing the approach of student-centered learning. Nonkukhetkhong et al (2006) and Schuh (2004) argued that both teachers and students would prefer to employ such this approach in classrooms. Consequently, it is argued that the implementation of the role of facilitator in EFL Libyan secondary classes entails full understanding of the ideas of ‘Learner-centred Psychological Principles’. These principles would suit all ‘learners’, ‘teachers’, ‘administrators’, ‘parents’ participated in educational system (Lambert and McCombs, 1998:16 cited in Lambert & McCombs). EFL teachers in Libyan secondary schools therefore need to understand the use of learner centred instructional approaches such as “cooperative learning, inquiry-based learning, students-led discussion, and concept mapping” Yilmaz (2009:29). However, through using communicative language teaching in Libyan secondary schools, Shihiba (2011) found that there is still a fundamental misunderstanding about the real purpose of learner-centeredness employed by EFL teachers in the secondary school

curriculum. These teachers lack its main 'principles and practices' in addition to their weakness in language proficiency. Such these factors may influence the success of the teachers' implementation of the school curriculum innovation. Learner-centeredness entails shifting the teachers' role from a 'knowledge-transmitter' into a 'facilitator of students' learning' and also shifting the students' role from passive recipients of knowledge into active participants in the language learning classroom (Shihiba, 2011). Generally, the action of shifting roles would facilitate student language learning and make it more possible in EFL Libyan secondary classrooms.

5. Facilitating Student Language Learning:

The change of the name of teacher into facilitator was based on changes and developments in teaching and facilitation principles. Shihiba (2011: 37) illustrates that "changing the approach of instruction into facilitation involves a change in the role of teacher from a knowledge-transmitter or an information-giver to a facilitator of students' learning". By the same token, many researchers such as Kim and Pollard (2017) appreciate the role of facilitators acted by the communicative language teachers in the classroom. In such a communicative classroom, Saleh (2019) comes to the conclusion that EFL teachers in Libyan secondary schools need to engage students in duties and activities that requires analysis, 'synthesis', 'reflection' and dealing with problems. Hence, to give students a chance to take part in the learning and assessment processes Libyan English language teachers in the secondary curriculum need to adopt and support their roles as facilitators of the language learning classroom activities (Dalala, 2017). Maryslessor et al (2014)

argued that teacher roles in the classroom include “demonstrating, directing, explaining, prompting, resolving disagreement, monitoring work silently, supervising, controlling, providing language items, creating context for language use, grouping learners, evaluating, participating as co-communicator, advising, introducing, giving speaking tasks, questioning, dictating, listening and correcting”(ibid: 18).

Such new teaching methods mentioned earlier encourage students to learn and think independently for themselves instead of being the passive participants. However, one of the EFL teachers in Libyan secondary schools in Orafi & Borg’s study (2009: 249) illustrated that “the teacher does everything in the classroom. This is not only in the English subject, but it is in all of school subjects. How do we expect the students to change their behaviour in the English subject?”. However, students cannot do everything without the teachers’ support and there is an urgent need for qualified teachers who could direct and scaffold students’ learning in the classroom. Therefore, it is clear that such teachers in these schools need to work with each student who requires extra support (Dalala, 2014). From this, it is clear that the language teacher in Libyan secondary schools would not do everything in the classroom but he should work as a helper to give guidance and advice when is needed (Wei, 2010). Adopting such a role in the classroom would actively empower students’ language learning and give them confidence in themselves. The concept of teaching in which knowledge and skills have been instructed to a student by a teacher has been rejected by Rogers (1969) who believed that this aspect is no longer valid since it would not facilitate students’ independent learning.

Knowles (1975) described the task of facilitator as 'climate setting', 'planning', 'diagnosing needs for learners', 'setting goals', 'designing learning activities', and 'evaluating learning outcomes'. However, he discussed and insisted the difficulty of adopting the facilitating role used by teachers who have very modern ideas about educating their students. In terms of this, Zeichner and Ndimnade (2008) & Lyle (2008) addressed that preparing teachers to be good facilitators is essential for ease of learning and teaching students independently.

To perform and fulfil such these functions and tasks, EFL teachers in Libyan secondary schools need to understand their actual roles as 'teacher scaffolding' through which the teachers offer their scaffolding and direct students' learning. This requires a lot of care and attention to equip and prepare teachers for understanding and performing their roles to do the job properly (Dalala, 2014). Tudor (1993) stressed the importance of a good education through implementing the role of facilitation in language learning classrooms. He adds that developing student language learning through this approach includes valuable skills such as personal skills, educational skills, and course planning skills. Suad (2018: 52) shows that "in order to develop and enhance this active student role, students should be given a high level of tolerance and comfort, which consequently requires teachers to change their roles and adopt more active and facilitative roles". In this regard, there is a need for changing the teacher education and the training programmes to encourage and develop students' independent language learning (Rogers: 1983). And he suggested that such a change requires pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes in order to foster and develop language

teachers' understanding of their roles as facilitators of learning in the classroom. Since the teachers have a main role in the process of teaching and learning a language, (Suad, 2018) highly recommends that Libyan education authority should do something and work hard for them to receive a lot of training in EFL learning in order to improve their ability to employ the communicative approach in the secondary curriculum.

Through investigating some post-graduate students' conceptions of the role of facilitator in the language classroom, Salih (2018) conducted a phenomenographical study exploring the following research question: what does the role of facilitator in the language classroom mean to you? The results of this study revealed that the participants of the study emphasized the important role of the facilitator of learning in the language classroom through 'facilitating students' independent learning', 'sharing responsibility of the learning process with students' and 'making the language class lively and interesting' and building a good rapport with students. However, some other important conceptions of the role of facilitator in the language classroom have not been mentioned by the participants of the study. Salih (2018:49) illustrates that such those conceptions are 'analyzing learners' needs' and 'responding to them', 'identifying individual differences' and 'accounting for them in lesson planning', 'developing learner's full potential', 'making school a sub-community of learners', 'using formative assessment strategies for evaluating student learning' and 'promoting learner autonomy'. Finally, the role of the EFL teacher in the Libyan secondary classrooms, therefore, needs to be shifted to the modern active student's role in which students are required to use modern methods of leaning and assessment in

order to judge their performance and develop their language learning skills.

6. Implications:

Facilitating student language learning in Libyan secondary schools involves the implementation of both the CLT methodology and the student-centred learning approach inside EFL classrooms. Facilitation of language learning in such these classes requires that teachers need to adopt some active-participative methods and techniques used by students in the classroom such as working in small groups to facilitate student language learning and encourage their independent learning needs. The act of learning facilitation could help Libyan secondary students in building skills of intellectual knowledge such as critical thinking, scientific analysis, and knowledge construction, information for decision-making and scientific solutions to problems faced by students in the learning process. In order to achieve such skills, teachers, have no option but to act as facilitators of learning inside classrooms while using CLT. Implementing this role in communicative Libyan secondary classrooms is an absolute necessity for supporting student independent language learning after solving problems related to the role of both CLT and learning facilitation in the EFL communicative classrooms.

7. Recommendations:

Teachers' implementation of the role of facilitator is essential to make independent language learning possible. It is strongly recommended that English language teachers should employ this technique to develop students' communication skills in communicative

language classrooms. This role would be supported by pre-service and in-service teacher training. More importantly, English foreign language teachers should receive good training before starting their profession.

8. Conclusions:

This paper is a discussion of the role of language instructors as facilitators of learning in the communicative foreign language teaching/learning classroom in Libyan secondary education. Implementing the role of facilitator in CLT in this context is not easy task. Generally, there are major factors that may influence the implementation of CLT and its way of learning facilitation. The effective implementation of this role in the Libyan secondary curriculum entails a skillful facilitative teacher who helps students and encourages them to become more independent of their teachers. This role requires a good teacher who has special teaching/learning skills and also has good understanding about what to do and perform as a facilitator inside the communicative language learning classroom. Understanding the role of facilitator of learning by teachers themselves would be an absolute necessity for enhancing student independent language learning through employing both the communicative language teaching and the student-centered learning in the classroom. Thereby, staff training in this discipline is more essential in order to solve problems faced in the implementation of these methods EFL learning inside Libyan secondary classrooms. And more importantly, teaching staff should act as an active facilitator of learning in these classrooms. To sum up, great importance should be attached to this research.

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