

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the main findings in relation to the research questions, notes the limitations of the study, outlines its contributions and suggestions or further research, and discusses its educational implications. The researcher concludes this chapter with some personal reflections on this work.

7.2 Summary of the Study

The current study examined teachers' views on implementing CLT to teach reading comprehension in Libyan preparatory schools. More specifically, the study aimed to investigate the features of CLT and how they were practiced by teachers in classroom. To identify these features, the researcher carried out a questionnaire survey, observation, and interviews.

The research participants consisted of 230 teachers who were teaching English in preparatory schools. Subsequently, the researcher conducted an observation with ten teachers who have from six to ten years of experience in teaching English through a CLT curriculum. During the observed lessons, the researcher noticed how the teachers put into practice the areas examined in the questionnaire. The interviews were conducted to (1) listen to the teachers' perspectives on their practices and (2) discuss a

range of views and beliefs about implementing CLT in teaching reading comprehension.

The current study identified the difficulties in implementing CLT. The researcher investigated the major difficulties that faced Libyan teachers to implement CLT to teach reading comprehension. In order to identify these difficulties, the researcher conducted a questionnaire survey, an observation, and a series of interviews. The questionnaire items were composed with the purpose to examine the teachers' perceptions on the difficulties they had faced in using the method.

Through the observed lessons, the researcher noticed directly the main constraints that have hindered the implementation of CLT. During each interview, the researcher listened to the teachers' perspectives and discussed the major difficulties that have had an impact on the way they implemented CLT in teaching reading comprehension.

The current study also identified the types of CLT activities and examined how Libyan teachers implemented these types of activities to teach reading comprehension in classroom. Through the questionnaire survey, the researcher examined the CLT activities and the teachers' way of implementing them. The researcher conducted classroom observation to observe the teachers in their real-life situations. Then, the researcher conducted semi structured interviews in order to let the teachers express their views about the CLT activities and how they practiced the activities to teach reading. The teachers also discussed their obstacles in implementing CLT in reading lessons.

The current study identified the significance differences on the different years of teaching experience with the major difficulties that faced Libyan teachers to implement CLT in teaching reading comprehension. To achieve this objective, the researcher conducted three data gathering procedures: a survey questionnaire, an observation, and a series of interviews. The use of these procedures facilitated the researcher in producing rich and diverse data. The combined methodology also helped the researcher to (1) eliminate bias, (2) enhance accuracy and significance of findings, (3) arrive at strong conclusions, and (4) detect underlying reasons to further describe and explain the findings.

7.3 The Main Results

The current study investigates teachers' knowledge and understanding of CLT features through implementation and practice in classroom. Their positive views towards CLT features revealed that the teachers understood the basic features of CLT. They agreed to the following features: (1) CLT improves students' ability to read, (2) CLT offers opportunity to practice the language, (3) CLT requires proficient teachers, facilitation, and motivation, (4) reading comprehension improves students' vocabulary and (5) reading comprehension improves students' pronunciation.

At the same time, the teachers' lack of understanding or misunderstanding of the CLT was reflected in their different interpretations of the items in the questionnaire. Teachers' misunderstanding of CLT features were clear in some features such as (1) the efficiency of GTM to teach reading compared to CLT, (2) the fact that CLT neglects their role as a teacher in the classroom, (3) their control over the classroom during CLT

implementation, (4) reading comprehension helping to obtain meaning, accuracy than fluency; and (5) teachers' previous negative experience implication of CLT to teach reading.

This study also investigated the major factors that have given impact on the Libyan teachers in implementing CLT. A range of major difficulties were identified to have hindered the implementation of CLT in teaching reading. The teachers also viewed the educational system, students, CLT, and socio-cultural contexts as the major obstacles to implementing CLT in teaching reading.

The CLT activities were also examined through identifying their types and implementation during teaching reading comprehension in the classroom. The current study revealed that the Libyan teachers implemented some types of CLT activities in teaching reading comprehension. The traditional education and beliefs of teachers' primary role has made it difficult for the teachers and students to accept and successfully implement CLT. Although the Libyan teachers have some knowledge about CLT activities, they provided limited practices. They noticed that they have faced major difficulties that have constrained the implementation.

The study also revealed that there were significant differences of variant number of teaching experience years with the difficulties related to students and CLT itself in implementing CLT. The data revealed that Libyan teachers have adequate knowledge and clear views on the effectiveness of CLT as a teaching method, but they still lack

practice and implementation. They have encountered many obstacles that have constrained the implementation of the method.

7.4 Limitations of the study

There were difficulties encountered by the researcher in the process of distributing the questionnaires to the teacher participants. As the schools involved in this study were scattered over a wide area of land, reaching some of them was challenging. In many cases, guides were employed to reach some rural schools, but despite the difficulties and the time spent in processing the questionnaires, depending on this method managed to include a substantial number of teachers although it was not easy to get male teachers involved in a study conducted by the female researcher. In a strictly conventional Islamic country like Libya, the researcher faced problem when some of the male teachers refused to cooperate, while others requested her to follow stringent procedures when communicating with one another.

In this sense, Islamic law prohibits the females sitting with or talking to non-close relative males individually or within close proximity. Rees and Althakhri (2008) highlighted that Islam greatly influences people's beliefs, behaviours, and practices in Arab countries. In the present study, female teachers were free to provide consent in participating the interviews, but they avoided to interact with the male teachers. Additionally, "married female teachers" were obliged to seek permission from their husbands, while "unmarried female teachers" must seek permission from their parents, brothers, or both. In both cases, getting permission is very unlikely to happen, for the

dominance of men over women in Arab families has been noticed for centuries (Metcalf 2008; Rees and Althakhri, 2008).

This study was significant in providing data on teachers' views regarding the implementation of CLT to teach reading comprehension in Libyan preparatory schools. However, this study is not without limitations. The research participants for the interviews and observations involved only female teachers. Gender differences were not considered in this study, so it was not possible to make any generalizations on the basis of the data (Cohen et al, 2007).

Another limitation was that the data collection procedures were based upon the teachers' points of views. The present study may have yielded more reliable results with multiple data sources including a survey of the students. The data analysis was limited because students were neither questioned nor interviewed, therefore comparison could not be made with data obtained from teachers. Libyan students at preparatory school are small (from 11-15 years old) to share in the current study, they did not have a good knowledge to answer the questionnaire or the interview questions. The fact that data were gathered only in Tarhuna region also limits the generalizability of the findings. The study additionally focused only on public schools in Tarhuna; further studies may include private schools in order to compare the two school types. The researcher's limited time as a doctorate student also prevented her from interviewing students, hence the inability to provide a more in-depth picture of CLT implementation. The allocated time for teaching (semesters) in Libyan schools is another limitation. The researcher took about 4 months to conduct the questionnaire survey, observations and interviews.

These procedures were prolonged because students had final exams and summer holidays.

7.5 Contribution and Implications of Study

This study contributes to the existing knowledge by identifying teachers' views about CLT and its implementation in teaching reading comprehension. There is a lack of studies on the implementation of CLT at the preparatory schools, also for the implementation of CLT to teach reading comprehension therefore, this study offers useful implications for teaching reading through CLT in Libyan preparatory schools.

The researcher believed that this study contributes to the relevant literature in many ways. Carless (2004), for example, notes that little attention has been given to study how teachers implement changes in the pedagogy. In this respect, the current study presents detailed insights on teachers' understanding of CLT features to teach reading comprehension. The findings also present how a range of difficulties have shaped the way teachers implement CLT in teaching reading comprehension. Also, the study provides a clear picture of how teachers implement CLT activities and how these activities can be constrained by many adverse forces and conditions, both internal and external, to the teachers who teach reading comprehension.

7.5.1 Methodological implication

Methodologically, this study showed the value of mixed methods with triangulation and how quantitative measure can support qualitative measures in studying teachers' views of CLT and its implementation. The qualitative data (observation) enabled the

researcher notice any inconsistency between what the participants believe (questionnaire) and how they practiced in the classroom. Observation data opened up the horizons of the study and enabled the researcher check on different issues related to teaching practices. In the same time, semi-structure interviews (qualitative) were useful for confirming and elaborating the ideas and information obtained from the questionnaire and the observation (triangulation method).

The researcher believes that this study provides significant implication for designing effective programs for teacher education and training, which can prepare Libyan teachers to become real facilitators in language classrooms. An identification of the main difficulties that have hindered the teachers from implementing this approach properly offers clarification about the most significant reasons for the restriction.

English language teachers in Libya need the support to make the essential adjustments required by implementing the new methods. English language teachers within the Libyan context may not be conscious of the power and influence of their existing beliefs and their traditional education. This involves the need for teaching education and training programs where teachers are given opportunities to reproduce upon their own classroom practices, and where existing beliefs are uncovered and confronted. As pointed out by the participants of the current study, qualified teachers should have skills and knowledge to practice CLT to teach reading. Most of the participants stated that training in the form of applied practices is more beneficial to them, rather than in the forms of lectures and theories.

Educational officials in Libya need to realize that in order to implement the new methods effectively, teachers need the skills and knowledge that can help them to cope with the demands of this new method. The educational system needs to understand that it is not enough to ask teachers to follow the guidelines of the teachers' books. Teachers need to attend training programs that can prepare them with the new teaching methods. It is the responsibility of the educational system in Libya and the English teachers to think and consider the extent to which examination and the curriculum in teaching reading comprehension are aligned. Teachers' prior experience of language teaching and learning and the contextual factors that influence what they do inside the classroom hence should be considered in any teachers training program.

In classrooms, Libyan students do not have the opportunity to practice or speak English and are required to wait for the teacher' call to answer questions. The current study suggests a need for teachers to understand and accommodate the differences between the Western and Libyan cultures when it comes to engaging students in communicative activities. The current study explains a range of difficulties that have limited the uptake in the implementation of CLT in Libyan preparatory schools. Nevertheless, teachers and students cannot be blamed for this limited uptake. If the Libyan society is willing to improve the status of English language teaching in Libyan classrooms, all the stakeholders including educational officials, curriculum planners, and policy makers need to commit to this process. Finally, the implementation of CLT involves not only the teachers' effort but also the recognition of the teachers' voice and its incorporation into educational practices and policies.

7.5.2 Theoretical implication

The current study has a number of theoretical implications based on its findings. The positive views of the majority of the participants about the features of CLT such as the role of the teacher as a facilitator (6.2.1.4) of learners' learning seemed to be not in line with Rogers' (1969) and Wimmer' (2002) views. Teachers in this study adhered to their role as a knowledge source and information transmitter. At the same time, they tried to be facilitators who assisted students in the process of acquiring the language but through their control over the classroom.

Teachers in the current study were in agreement with O'Sollivan's (2004), Li's (1998) and Frisby's (1998) assumptions about the existence of certain influential difficulties and challenges that could impede teachers' proper implementation of CLT in developing countries (see section, 2.8 and 6.3). The findings of this study indicate that in Libya the cultural attitude towards the CLT at the institutional level seems to be at variance with that at the personal level of teachers. While teachers were positive about the implementation of this approach for teaching reading (see 6.3.4.2), the current hierarchal structure of the educational system in Libya represents a traditional view about teaching and learning. Surprisingly, this centralization contradicts with the aims of education in Libya, in general, (see section, 1.7) and those of introducing the English language curriculum innovation of 2000, in particular. These aims seem to be compatible with Dewey's conception of the aims of progressive education and Rogers' conception of the aims of humanistic education (see 2.2). However, the current centralized educational system in Libya is similar to Rogers' description of the politics of the traditional education (see 2.1.1).

Another difficulty that hinder CLT implementation within the Libyan context stems from Libyan teacher-student relationship that is governed by the Libyan sociocultural context. For example, the Libyan students are aware that their appropriate behaviors at schools are often judged in accordance with how much respect they show towards school seniors (i.e., head teachers and teachers). The Libyan learners' perception is not in line with the principle of the CLT which emphasizes the significance of students' making or at least participating in making decisions about their own learning (Rogers, 1969). Being incompatible with Dewey's theory of democratic education, there could be a difficulty in shifting students' perceptions of the role played by teachers and students in learner-centered classrooms. A reflection on Dewey's concept of democratic education indicates that introducing it into schools will require teachers and students' internalization of conceptions of openness, confidence, cooperation, willingness and true responsibility. This idea is not in line with teachers' dominance of the classroom.

CLT presume the importance of social interaction through the teaching/learning process. The Habermasian Ideal Speech Situation can offer an appropriate model for communication between all school community members especially teachers and students. This idea failed in Libyan context as it requires a change in teachers' conceptions about authority and control over the learning process which can be a major challenge for this process. Related to the same token, the idea of "community life" (Dewey, 1916, p.358) has proved to be not in line with Libyan context. Dewey (1916, p.358) recommended that "learning in school should be continuous with that out of school". This is not relevant to our Libyan context where students speak their mother tongue (Arabic) outside the classroom; hence, students cannot improve their own

experiences outside classrooms. Relating the classroom learning to the learners' context and past experiences would lead him/her to construct knowledge independently (Vygotsky, 1978). However, such an assumption may not be in consistence with non-western context as a Libyan context.

7.6 Recommendations for Future Research

According to the results of this study, further study areas are recommended that are considered relevant to the topic of Libyan teachers' views of their understanding of CLT and the implementation of CLT activities in reading comprehension teaching. Investigating Libyan preparatory school students' understanding of CLT has emerged as an interesting issue for further research. Such an investigation would uncover how the students recognize their role in the learning process. Their lack of understanding of their new roles and responsibilities in CLT can make the implementation process more complex.

The English language is taught in Libyan preparatory schools among other subjects. Therefore, teaching English with CLT while teaching other subjects with the old methods may result in significant confusion for the students. At the same time, English teachers who adopt CLT will find themselves alienated from teachers who adopt only the old methods. Agreement on teaching features by teachers of all preparatory school subjects can enhance the success of CLT implementation in Libyan preparatory schools. Given the facts, this study provided insight on the implementation of CLT in reading comprehension teaching. The current study advocates further research of this kind to provide better insight on Libya and elsewhere. A further mixed study of teacher' views

and difficulties with implementing CLT ought to be carried out on the insights highlighted in this study.

7.7 Conclusion

In Libya, English is taught as a foreign language and English teachers face many difficulties, especially at the preparatory level. Although the Ministry of Education in Libya has made various efforts to provide appropriate materials and an innovative approach for teaching English as a foreign language, many researchers (Orafi, 2009; Shihiba, 2011) believe that CLT implementation in Libyan secondary schools has been a failure.

This study is significant as it contributes to literature on the implementation of CLT in reading comprehension at Libyan preparatory schools. The current study is also important, as it identified teachers' understanding of CLT features and CLT implementation in reading comprehension teaching. Libyan teachers realize that the effect of old methods, the sociocultural context and the lack of experience with practicing this method are some of the challenges that reflect teachers' limitations in implementing CLT. Teachers observed in classrooms did not fulfil all CLT activities due to a lack of support from the education system, the students' low proficiency, and their belief in their traditional role, which all make it difficult for teachers and students to accept and successfully implement CLT. The effect of differences in years of teaching experience length appeared significant on difficulties related to the students and to CLT.

The current study indicated that Libyan teachers implement CLT in classrooms but with limited practice owing to the difficulties they face. A mixed methodology triangulation research design was employed to increase confidence in the findings. The results through qualitative and quantitative data provided contradictory points.

Through the results of the questionnaire, teachers provided their positive views about implementing CLT in the classroom, but through the observed lessons the researcher noticed that there were some difficulties restricted their implementation. The researcher hopes that the Libyan government is planning on ways to prepare teachers before implementing CLT in the Libyan curriculum. Communicative language teaching seems to be partially implemented in Libyan preparatory schools. Nonetheless, teachers are still facing restriction factors in practicing this method to teach reading comprehension

It may be appropriate to conclude this research by citing Freire (1997, p.106) “it is imperative that we maintain hope even when the harshness of reality may suggest the opposite” There is a lot to gain and little to lose in taking steps forward in the direction of implementing the communicative language teaching for teaching reading comprehension in Libyan preparatory schools and perhaps also in those of other developing countries.