Exploration of English Teachers Understandings and Practices of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) at Pre-University Level of Islamic Tertiary Educational Organization

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EXPLORATION OF ENGLISH TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS AND PRACTICES OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT) AT PRE-UNIVERSITY LEVEL OF ISLAMIC TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies regarding communicative language teaching approach (CLT) have shown that many language teachers saying they are adopting CLT in their classes. However, when it comes to the reality they are utilizing other traditional approaches which reflect a disparity between the theoretical and practical sides of this issue which needed to be studied. Thus, the first objective of this paper is to explore the understandings of English language teachers from Centre for Strategic Education and Training (IIUM CRESCENT) regarding the main attributes of CLT. The second objective is see how they practice it at the pre-university level in International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The third aim is to find out what the situational challenges that might face them whilst implementing CLT, which causes a deviation from utilizing it in their classes. A qualitative phenomenological analysis method was adopted in this study, and its participants are five English language teachers from IIUM CRESCENT. These English teachers who have taken part in this study showed a positive understandings of CLT attributes which coincide with its characteristics. However, they have also mentioned some cultural and situational challenges that hinder their implementation of CLT, as result; they blend it with other teaching methods. This paper concludes with recommendations for adopting CLT for multi-national and multi-cultural students at pre-university level in Islamic context.

Contribution/ Originality: The paper's primary contribution is finding that English teachers grasp a satisfactory understanding of CLT attributes that mostly coincides the main characteristics of CLT. The outcomes revealed that CLT has been implemented a long with other teaching methods in IFLA classrooms. These answers exposed a satisfactory coincidence between teachers' theoretical understandings and their authentic application of CLT.

1. INTRODUCTION

English is considered as an international language all over the world and is the medium of communication in almost all the sectors such as business, science, research and education. The global demand of English has made English teaching and learning an important arena in general education. Littlewood (2007) emphasized the fact that

some traditional methods of language teaching like Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Audio Lingual Method (ALM) were not effective in making learners communicate with each other in English. However, CLT has been considered as an effective language teaching method in which ESL learners can communicate with each other and this method of language teaching is much more effective than the traditional teaching methods such as GTM. In fact, the CLT approach emphasizes on communicative competence of the students by using authentic materials and tasks that persuade them to speak fluently (Savignon, 2002).

At present, the Malaysian English teachers are concerned with their students' English language proficiency. They are trying to identify the methods that can be effective for promoting communicative skills in English among Malaysian students. Some teachers believe that old language teaching methods like Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Audio Lingual Method (ALM) should not be thrown away altogether as they might be effective in certain contexts, while some other teachers think that the modern language teaching approaches like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approaches are more helpful for the students.

The International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) uses English as the main medium of instructions in the classrooms. All the new students of the university have to show their proof of English proficiency either by showing their International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) result sheet or taking the English Placement Test of IIUM. After meeting the least required score in English test, they are given permission to enter the courses of designated faculties or *Kulliyyahs*. The students who do not meet the least score in the English proficiency test have to undergo the English learning programme under the Centre for Languages and Pre-University Academic Development (CELPAD) and Centre for Strategic Education and Training (IIUM CRESCENT). Here the students are taught how to use English in reading, listening, speaking and writing.

Previous studies regarding communicative language teaching approach (CLT) have shown that many language teachers say they are adopting CLT in their classes. However, when it comes to the reality, they are utilizing other traditional approaches which reflect an incongruence between the theoretical and practical sides of this issue which needed to be studied (Littlewood, 2007; Mowlaie and Rahimi, 2010; Coskun, 2011; Fairley and Fathelbab, 2011).

In Malaysia the implementation of CLT in English language is extremely advocated and recommended by the ministry of Education. Accordingly, the national curriculum of Malaysia is regarded as a communicative curriculum in order to develop students with the ability to communicate accurately and effectively in the common English language activities (Raissi *et al.*, 2013). In the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) English language is the medium of communication. So, IIUM intake students who do not achieve the least possible English language requirements have to master all the four skills at the pre-university language centers, such as Centre for Strategic Education and Training (IIUM CRESCENT). Nevertheless, after spending a long time studying English, many of those students particular from those who are non-nationals lack proficiency of English. This deficiency particularly in oral communication, is still remains a phenomenon, yet, to be answered.

Hence, the understandings and practices of the English teachers concerning the CLT method in IFLA classrooms need to be reassessed. According to Richards (2005) teachers who are not aware enough about CLT and do not have a comprehensive understanding of it, can find it difficult to use it appropriately in teaching process; as a result, return to other traditional approaches instead. Similarity, Littlewood (2007) highlighted that many teachers claim they are applying CLT in their classes, however, in reality they are using other traditional teaching methods which means that there is still a gap between the theoretical and practical aspects that needed to be studied. Additionally, it is worthwhile to mention that scarce studies have been conducted regarding implementing CLT in teaching English in the Malaysian intermediate and secondary school levels as well as the university level, however, none have been done in the pre-university English language centers and institutes, particularly, those institutes

which are in international Islamic environment with multi-national students like Centre for Strategic Education and Training (IIUM CRESCENT).

The main purpose of the present study is to explore the Centre for Strategic Education and Training (IIUM CRESCENT) English teachers' understandings and practices of communicative language teaching (CLT) approach in their classrooms as well as identifying the situational constraints which face them while adopting CLT in their teaching of English language.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach was introduced by Hymes (1972) in the early 1970s. He emphasized on the fact that while learning a language we should be able to use it for communicating within the society which involves "interpreting" a particular message and "negotiating" its meanings to others in a specific situation. Since then, it has evolved as an approach to help learners of English as a second language to develop their English language proficiency.

The communicative language teaching approach is based on the theory of language for communication that focuses on developing communicative competence among learners (Hymes, 1972). Later on, researchers and practioners such as Canale and Swain developed the theory further by adding four more elements, namely grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence (as cited in (Razmjoo and Riazi, 2006)). According to Razmjoo and Riazi (2006) grammatical competence enhances student's ability to pronounce or write accurate sentences in the language they are learning. On the other hand, a learners' ability to communicate by using appropriate words in a particular social context is judged by his sociolinguistic competence. Sociolinguistic competence depends mostly on the cultural codes of a particular society the learner is in. Discourse competence refers to a learner's ability to communicate in different conversation and written form of language by keeping the cohesion and coherence in mind. The last competence is called strategic competence and it helps learner to use the correct strategy of communication in the social context.

It is obvious that teachers will have their individual techniques of teaching a language. Although CLT began as an approach for enhancing communicative language use, it covered a broader area that includes designing classroom materials, teaching techniques and observing how teachers and students take up the CLT approach in the classroom. The main focus of this approach was to develop learners' communicative competence (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). In this regard, Brown (2007) put forward four characteristics of communicative language teaching which are as follows:

(1) The goal of a lesson in a CLT based classroom focuses on all of the elements of communicative competence and does not only restrict to grammatical or linguistic competence.

(2) Language teaching techniques are planned in such a way that engage learners in using language in a pragmatic, authentic, functional and meaningful way.

(3) Between the important aspects such as fluency and accuracy, CLT sometimes puts more emphasis on fluency. In this case, the learner is engaged in communicating with the other person more than being accurate. This leads to let the learners be engrossed in using language more meaningfully.

(4) The students of a communicative classroom gradually get accustomed to using the language spontaneously in a context.

According to Nunan (2005) CLT's theory of language learning process has five general learning features. Firstly, the target language can be learnt by interacting in that language. The focus of language learning is to communicate through interaction in the target language. Secondly, CLT uses authentic materials as a part of the lesson. Thirdly, learners are provided with plenty of opportunities to interact in the target language. Fourthly, the learner learning the language by sharing his personal experiences with peers in the class discussions. Lastly, the teacher tries to motivate students to use the target language both inside and outside classroom. This gives the

learners the ability to use the language in the real world. Nunan (2005) believes that language drills or controlled practice do not help the learners much is acquiring a language. A learner is benefitted more if he gets the chance to practice the target language in a real life situation outside classroom.

Fairley and Fathelbab (2011) reported that the way teachers think about CLT principles and what the implement in the class are totally of two different tracks. The authors pointed out six major challenges of implementing CLT approach in an English reading and writing classroom. They noticed that there was lack of motivation among students, some of the students remained idle in the class, one expert group of students completed the task before others and got bored, there were shortage of authentic materials, all the students were not participating equally and there were lack of teachers' feedback after the tasks were done.

Similar discrepancy between the teachers' understanding of CLT and their way of teaching was noticed by Kleinsasser and Sato (1999). The authors found that the teachers were not interested to implement CLT in the classroom as they lacked adequate knowledge about this approach of language teaching. A Turkish qualitative study conducted by Coskun (2011) pointed out the incongruity teachers' attitude towards CLT and their practice in the classroom. In this regard, Walia (2012) mentions that CLT is based on the principle of being adept in communicative fluency in an ESL setting. It sometimes leads the learners to forget about accuracy of language structures or theoretical side of language learning and engage more in interacting in English. Often, teachers are not used to continue with such communicative tasks in the classroom which is one of the main causes of CLT being unsuccessful in many ESL classrooms.

In a CLT classroom, the success of implementing the approach is dependent equally on both the teacher and the students. Here the learners are both listeners and speakers at the same time. That is why the students play the role of negotiators who can communicate in the target language while participating in group works or class activities. Here a learner in incumbent to contribute as much as he receives knowledge from his group mates and the whole process promotes independent learning (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

Howard and Millar (2009) investigated Ellis's principles in relation to the implementation of CLT in the South Korean context. They discovered that in Asian contexts, students are rather passive and reluctant to speak up in the class. Moreover, a larger class size, lack of tools to assess speaking skill and inadequate institutional infrastructure deter application of some of Ellis's principles in class. These problems may have been rooted in the unsuccessful implementation of teacher training programmes or not being able to provide enough opportunities for the students to communicate in the classroom.

The CLT approach has transformed a teacher-centred language classroom into a student-oriented classroom. It has made CLT popular worldwide as it gives both the teacher and students a chance to be active participant of the learning activities (Brown, 1994 as cited in Chang (2011). Similar emphasis on the context has been given by Littlewood (2007) who has pointed out some issues regarding the East Asian language learning contexts. He found that in most of the East Asian language classrooms, both the teachers and student steer away from using English in class. They are more comfortable in using their mother tongues instead. Moreover, students' are demotivated to acquire even the minimal competence in English language. The assessment system also does not require the students to prove their communicative skills in English language, which is one of the main causes from them to be disinterested in communicating in English in the class. According to Brown (2007) the teacher of a CLT classroom must not follow the traditional teacher's role to only transfer knowledge to students. He should be a facilitator who respects students and keeps their linguistic needs in mind. Littlewood (2007) also maintained that the communicative language teacher promotes the use of target language instead of using the mother tongue. If the students use more of their mother tongue, they will not be able to learn the target language by using in various communicative activities which is considered as the main theory of learning a language under this approach. Similarly, Richards and Rodgers (2001) claimed that from the very beginning of the course, a teacher should make

the students familiar with the target language by using it in a meaningful way himself. It will encourage the students to use the target language more.

In a CLT based classroom a learner has a role different than the traditional classrooms. Here a learner negotiates meaning of a given message according to the existent context. The learner transfers the meaning between himself, the context and the learning element. In this process, his other peers help through being actively engaged in CLT based tasks. Such learning environment lets a learner learn a language independently (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). In such classes, teachers play various types of roles. First, a teacher becomes a facilitator who propels the communication process among all learners in the classroom. The teacher is also a participants who engages in communicative activities with the students. In addition, the teacher acts as "analyst, counselor, and group process manager" (Larsen-Freeman, 2000 as cited in Chang (2011). Brown (2007) states that in CLT classes, a teacher should emphasizes on both accuracy and fluency; it should be kept in mind that fluency should not take over the skill of clear communication (Brown, 2007).

Karava-Doukas (1996; as cited in Chang (2011)) suggested that the differences between the beliefs and practices of CLT by teachers may contribute to the avoiding investigating teachers' attitudes towards implementing any new approach. In short, the teachers will not change their views about implementing CLT if theorist try to convince them about the effectiveness of CLT. The traditional way of teaching is deeply rooted in the teachers' beliefs that is not easy to modify. Razmjoo and Riazi (2006) in their mixed-method study attempted to find out the attitudes of Iranian English teachers at institutes and high schools in Shiraz. They distributed a questionnaire to 100 male and female teachers and an observed these teachers' classes to see how they implemented CLT in their class. The researchers found that even if the school teachers were positive about implementing CLT, they did not put it through in their practice in the classroom. However the teachers at institutes were employing CLT in their English classes properly.

Thompson (1996) believes that the teachers will not be able to develop teaching techniques that cater CLT approach unless they have a thorough understanding of the system. Their lack of knowledge on CLT will push them back to the traditional teaching. To this effect, Harmer (2003) claims that the problem of implementing CLT is basically with how the teaching techniques are being modified by a teacher to implement in a particular learning context so that the learners' needs are served. Kleinsasser and Sato (1999) believe that a teacher's personal experience, ideas and reaction to challenges of communicating in the local context influence his comprehension of CLT approach. The theoretical aspects of CLT will have very less impact on the way he reciprocates with the new approach. Thompson (1996) also reports that there is a misconception among the teachers and practitioners about CLT and hinder its implementation in the language classroom.

In 1988, the Ministry of Education, Malaysia had introduced a new integrated curriculum for secondary school or Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah (KBSM). This curriculum follows the principles of the CLT approach for the secondary schools' students. After completing the syllabus of each grade, a student is supposed to be able to achieved proficiency in speaking, reading, writing & listening along with other sub-skills like grammar, pronunciation & vocabulary through communications in the classroom (Raissi et al., 2013). The curriculum stemmed from the national "philosophy of education" in Malaysia.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

As mentioned earlier, this study attempts to explore the understandings and practices of IIUM CRESCENT English language teachers. It also identifying the challenges which negatively affect the adapting of CLT in Islamic context pre-university language centers. Furthermore, this study adheres to the phenomenological qualitative research design in order to find out answers to the above-mentioned research questions. It is the first study which investigates the current situation of implementing CLT in IIUM CRESCENT. It can be said that there are certain

features which make qualitative methodology the best choice for this research. One is that it adds value to the study by supplying in-depth, detailed description of a phenomenon (Klenke, 2008).

3.2. Participants

Five English language teachers were chosen as participants for this study. The method of choosing them was snow ball sampling when the first interviewee recommended the second and the second recommended the third and so on. Three of them were International teachers with 8 to 12 years' experience of teaching English. The other two participants were Malaysian with three and five years of experience in teaching English. The researcher's objective was to achieve a well understand about the teachers' perception about using CLT in their English class and how they do implement it as well as recognizing the challenges that face them while using it.

3.3. Setting

The study was carried out in IIUM CRESCENT which is a strategic business unit under the center for language and Pre Academic Development (CELPAD) at International Islamic University Malaysia. IIUM CRESCENT was established in 2016 and officially recognized by the Malaysian Ministry of Education. It has mostly pre-university students from local and international including many from Arab countries(IIUM CRESCENT) (Centre for Strategic Education and Training, 2017).

3.4. Research Instrument

The data in this study was obtained through person to person interview. Namely, semi-structured interview was decided which consisted a set of open-ended questions. The questions which were included: what is your understanding of CLT, what is your experience of it, and what are the challenges that impede CLT implementation in classroom. The answers from interview were recorded, transcribed and analyzed.

3.5. Data Collection Procedures

The researcher has employed the following procedure so that the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings can be guaranteed. Semi-structured interview sessions were conducted with the chosen English teachers according to the research questions of the study. The interviews' durations were 43:17 and 41:33 minutes with the first and second interviewees respectively, 32:07 minutes with the third interviewee and 23:07 and 21:35 minutes with the fourth and fifth interviewees respectively. In order to confirm the information confidentiality and privacy, clear statements were made to the informants that the data from the study will be treated as confidential, protected and only to be used for academic purposes. Pseudonyms were used where names and other identifying information in this current documentation were removed. The interviewees were asked for their consent regarding this interview verbally at the beginning of the interviews. Moreover, they had been asked voluntarily to sign a consent forms before the interviews started. The same interview protocol and the same language namely English were applied for all of these interview sessions. A tape recorder was used for recording these interviews.

3.6. Data Analysis Procedures

Qualitative method is a procedure when a researcher methodically identifies and organizes the data so that he/she can gain understanding of the data and to enable him/her to show his/her experience (Ary et al., 2010). In this process of analysis, using the software program scribe express the researcher transcribed the data verbatim, subsequently saved this data electronically and labeled it. The above-mentioned research questions were taken as a guide for analysis of this data. Then, the researcher applied the data reduction techniques by coding and templates of generating themes. After that, the researcher has explored and identified the themes and subthemes through deliberate reading, interpretation and classification of the data. As a final step, in order to show the findings, the

researcher applied the explanatory interpretation which was supported by excerpts for the interviewees' verbatim transcription.

3.7. Credibility and Trustworthiness

Most of the generated themes were sent to two researchers in teaching English as second language TESL as inter-raters so that the credibility and trustworthiness of the data in this research can be fulfilled. Accordingly, a high agreement between the researcher and the inter-raters was achieved with 91.6% which reflects a satisfactory a representative interpretation.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the four research questions and issues addressed in the literature review, the researcher created the emergent themes which are hoped to answer the research questions. After that, these main themes were discussed in further exploratory details supported by excerpts from the participant's transcripts and connected to the theoretical framework and previous studies.

Research Question 1

What is the IFLA English teachers' understanding of the main attributes of CLT?

Before exploring English teachers engagement with CLT, the researcher attempted to identify their understandings about its attributes. According to Thompson (1996) teachers' lack of understanding CLT leads them to many complications while employing it and these challenges revert them subsequently to the traditional approaches. Thus, four main themes were created from the participants' interviews. They are; *practical for communication, student-centered method, fluency over accuracy, and practical for interaction.* Firstly, the informants illustrated that CLT is practical for communication which concurs with Hymes (1972) "communicative competence" model. In this model, Hymes confirmed that for learning another language, we should put the student in social world which allow him/her to communicate with the others in the target language. Informant 1 stated that "... *I think CLT for..for communication great..really great..but writing and gramma.. we need to use some other method to make sure they meet the accuracy the language.. ".* Informant 2 similarly stated that *"…and then through in the interact..they try to communicate with each other..so that is one of the most important things of the CLT approach..".* This correspond the view from Walia (2012) who says that one of the major principles of CLT is that students are required to be involved in significant communication to achieve communicative fluency in ESL contexts.

Secondly, the participants emphasized oral fluency in the target language, rather than grammatical accuracy so that students can use English for exchanging information through oral communication. This is clear in the excerpt by informant 1 above, they actually consider it to be most useful for developing oral communication skill. Similarly, Informant 3 stated that *"…CLT communicative language teaching..emmm that's when you give the students an opportunity to be able not only interact with themselves, but to be able to .. to be able to give the students a chance to improve their speaking .. listening and you know using language..using English language…"* This concur with what has been mentioned by Brown (2007) according to him, one of the main principles of CLT is that it gives more significance to fluency over accuracy so that the learners can get more involvement with the language. However, accuracy should not be neglected in communicative language teaching.

Thirdly, the informants see CLT as a student's-centered method which coincide with Brown (2007) who confirms that CLT has changed the educational system from the teacher oriented learning to learner–oriented ones. Informant 4 explains;

"….its students centered,aaaa CLT encourages students centered approach ..okay.. rather than the teacher.. during the talking in been the center ..so, with CLT, we encourage students, so students will take responsibility of their own learning..Okay...because if you allow them to work in in pairs or in groups and they learn from each other.."

Fourthly, the interviewees understand CLT as an interactive methods. With CLT according to outcomes form the study students are not passive listener who are just waiting to get everything from the teacher. However, they are active participators in the learning process. This is mentioned by informant 3:

"…they will interview each other since the students come from all the parts of the world ..alright..so, the will interview each other alright..aaa most probably before interviewing each other, they will list down all the questions. So, listing down, making up the questions ... you know will get them to talk and they will ask the teacher..alright.. So it's a very very interactive way of doing things rather than..you know.. listening ..passive listeners or just listen to the teachers…"

This seems to coincide with what has been mentioned by Walia (2012) the practical situation is one of the a fundamental features of CLT when it assumes learners to apply language learning in realistic settings which means CLT is often seen to prefer interaction and practical over theoretical learning in acquisition the other language.

Research Question 2

How do IFLA English teachers implement CLT in their classes?

Shifting from the theoretical side of communicate language teaching CLT to the practical and functional sides. The interviewees were asked on how do implement CLT in their English classrooms. The findings revealed five main themes in accordance with their engagement with CLT came to light. Firstly, the informants stated that they do not rely solely in CLT; however, they sometimes shift to other teaching methods, as mentioned by informant 1. *"..I cannot use single method to my students...I must use all .. I must mix and match all the…skills to meet the students need..".* Informant 5 similarly stated that *".. yeah.. we mix it but also depends in different teachers because our focus is not necessarily CLT but we yes in our approach in teaching we use CLT …"* . This seemed to corroborate with what has been found by Raissi *et al.* (2013) English teachers cannot rely in CLT alone in teaching English in the Malaysian context.

Secondly, as a practical step for their understanding for CLT characteristics the informants stated that they put students in groups for discussion so that the students communicative skills can be improved. Informant 3 reported that;

"..so you can aaa a create aaa a situation where the student..students alright have a debate..alright..you give them a topic and you divide them into groups..you know so this group is for the topic and the other one against the topic. So, not only I encourage them to do research but I encourage them to be able to aaa emm use the English language to convenes the others…". Informant 2 also stated that *"…ask students you know .. to discuss after establishing the the content...ask student to discuss with their friends or partners…".*

Moreover, the informants illustrated that they facilitate students learning. So, students rather than being spoon-fed by the teacher, they can explore knowledge themselves and find their own answers. This was clear in informant 2 illustration *"..okay...as a teacher you stay as facilitator ..okay.. you just facilitate and then..you you.. let students take the initiative.."*

Informant 1 likewise stated that

"…when I facilitate sometimes they will make notes. I will ask my students to make points. So, I tell them I do not want one word.. I want full sentence. For example, what is not okay in Malaysia that is okay in your country. For example, write , you must write in in Malaysia the people queue. So I want to see this sentence.. So that I can correct them. No, this one is wrong. this one supposed to be in plural not in singular. So, they learn that. Then, they will practice…"

Furthermore, informants pointed out that students were given autonomy during their implementing CLT so that students and teachers play different roles than those in the traditional classrooms. Instead of waiting for the teacher to make decisions for them, students take the initiative and responsibility for their own learning.

"….. alright from this exercise and then the freer practice is for them to be comfortable to use this ..So, with this errr activities they will learn better and if the teachers can come…"

Additionally, informants revealed that they use topic from real life so that students will be prepared for outside life. Informant 1 stated that "…*I always prepare them for outside challenges. For example, like..aa.. Last week I taught them parts of speech aaaa speech and that I always ask them to use imagination. Imagine if outside you have to speak in front of people and what not and if you want to persuade people to hire you..this..*" . This is in accordance with what has been mentioned by Littlewood (2007) one of the most significant features of CLT is that, this method primarily emphases on the purpose of the language in real life situation context and it helps learners to learn the language in a realistic environment.

Finally, the informants mentioned that all the four skills being taught in integrated way. This was succinctly described by Informant 5, who said, "*…they all links.. all the skills are links..if you are teaching reading , at the end of the day they have to do speaking.. if you are teaching writing, the end of the day they have to do speaking…*".

Research Question 3

What are the challenges that face IFLA English teachers while using CLT?

The findings of this study revealed a number of challenges that affect IFLA English teachers in relation to CLT. Although the teacher have positive understanding of CLT attributes and acceptable steps for implementing CLT, they find some challenges and issues around CLT that directly or indirectly hinder the implementation of CLT in pre-university level . These challenges include *students different culture*s, *large classes*, *controlling students* and *inexperienced teachers*. Regarding the first challenge which is the inconsistency between the students culture and CLT as western teaching method. All the three informants confirmed the culture as an obstacle for them to implement CLT in their classes. As stated by informant 4

"*…. and teaching Middle East students the way different from Asian students , Middle East students, they more interactive they willing… maybe because of their .. how to say..they really are willing to to answer the questions they volunteer themselves as compare to Asian students may be because the culture itself..*"

Regarding the culture as a constraints for implementing CLT. Since IFLA has students from different countries, this was a challenge for English teachers because they have to deal with every group of students according to their own culture. Asian students for example are more bashful from their Middle East counterparts. This challenge seems to concurs with Howard and Millar (2009) findings that Asian students are mostly do not like to be involved in groups work. However, when we discuss female students culture, female students do not mostly prefer to be in groups with male which add another cultural problem for teachers. Informant 2 revealed that

"*…and then she put these students in aaa in groups...so she put she mix men and women ...boys and girls in the same..you know.. she put in a group.. So, there is a lady who does not want to be in the group. //Okay// ...for her , her culture aaa they have this…*"

All three interviewees (T1, T2 and T3) stated that large classes is one of the hindrances for employing CLT in IFLA English classrooms. The interviewees mentioned that it is challenging to put students in discussion groups with more than 20 students as well as it is impossible for them to give every student opportunities to practice English. Also, it is more difficult to monitor classroom activities in large classes than small classes.

"*..especially if my class right now in IFLA aaaaa I have right now 36 students in class..36 students So, it is quite impossible for me group them.. because CLT. I think..aa if you have three to four person in group it is possible, but six to seven person in group, there is no way you can you can ask them to have the CLT in their class..*"

This was in line with what has been found by Chang and Goswami (2011) that classes with large number of students is an obstacle for English teachers during utilizing CLT since students won not be given chances of practicing the language.

Furthermore, controlling students while implement CLT was revealed as a constraint that English teachers are facing since CLT does not give them the authority of controlling the class. Informant 1 mentioned that.

"…you must know how to control the class, you must know how to actually you must be a facilitator and be a teacher at the same time. Of course, CLT says that teacher just to facilitate, but to me both, you play both roles. So, aaa ..I am before this I always start that CLT is student centered, everything is about student, no.. I oppose that because if student centered it is how to actually control them."

Finally, it has been mentioned by the informants that teachers themselves can by a challenge while using CLT in teaching in case they are not creative enough to handle it. Informant 3 stated that *"….right I mean in order for you to have CLT teachers have to be creative enough alright.creativity does not come from students. in the first place, it has to come from the teachers …"*

This was also coincide with what has been found by Chang and Goswami (2011) that teachers lack of knowledge and skills is one of the constraints of implementation of CLT in English classrooms.

Research Question 4

What do English teachers suggest for overcoming the challenges that hinder their employing of CLT?

The findings provide some additional propositions on how English teachers can deal with the situational obstacles which face them whilst adopting CLT for students at pre-university level in multi-national Islamic environment. There are four major themes which emerged from the teacher interviews. Firstly, all of the interviewees stated that teachers should blend CLT with other teaching methods since CLT alone is not feasible. Informant 1 stated that

"….I must say using CLT alone, does not work for all the students, you must use all the approach together to make sure that they make your expectation and their expectations…".

The other two English language teachers confirmed the same idea of using other methods with CLT.

Secondly, three informants advocated that English teachers should facilitate the learning of their students rather than trying to teach them. Thus students can actively participate instead of becoming passive listeners. Informant 2 illustrated that *"...as a teacher you stay as facilitator ..okay.. you just facilitate and then..you you.. let students take the initiative."*

This link to what has what has been stated by Brown (2007) teachers' role with CLT is not a transmitter of information, he/she should work as a facilitator for student's interaction and activities inside the class.

Thirdly, it was also suggested by the informants that English teachers should adopt Islamized CLT while teaching in Islamic environment. This include considering students culture which is different from the Western culture where CLT came from.

"…so, as Muslims I think we inserting instead of copying what they have. We should also maybe creating thing from the Islamic perspective to come out with an approach that will be able to enhance..."

Finally, these interviewees recommended adopting computerized CLT in order to help English teachers in tackling the constraints for implementing CLT in their classes. Informant 3 states *"…with technology..alright..you have more interaction…right..So, you can also use technology..aaa in CLT..right."*

This corresponds with Raissi et al. (2013) that the computerized CLT is helpful in the Malaysian context.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was motivated to explore Institute for Language Advancement (IFLA) English language teachers' understandings and practices of CLT as well as the situational challenges which disrupt them at the same time as employing it in their classes. The findings revealed that English teachers grasp a satisfactory understanding of CLT attributes that mostly coincides the main characteristics of CLT. Concerning their engagement with CLT, the outcomes revealed that CLT has been implemented a long with other teaching methods in IFLA English classrooms. These answers exposed a satisfactory coincidence between teachers' theoretical understandings and

their authentic application of communicative language teaching. Although the findings showed positive understandings and practices of CLT among English teachers, the outcomes demonstrated some situational challenges which hinder the fully implementing of CLT in IFLA English classrooms. Future researchers however must note that the respondents in the paper are from Institute for Language Advancement (IFLA) and the findings of this study cannot be widespread to further educational settings. In addition, concerning the issue of generalizability, this study has other limitation, the interviewees of this research were not observed by the researcher to see the consistency between what they have reported and what they are practicing in their classrooms. Therefore, a further research with observations to be conducted would be helpful to see the real situation regarding English teachers in IFLA implementation of CLT. In a nutshell, further studies are suggested to observe English teachers in Islamic context engagement with CLT in depth and to see how understandings of CLT attributes effect their practicing it.

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