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## THE APPLICATION OF THE COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING METHOD IN THE LIBYAN CLASS AT A UK UNIVERSITY: LESSON PLAN, RATIONALE AND EVALUATION

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### Abstract

*This study provides a rationale for a lesson plan about the implementation of the communicative language teaching method (CLT) in the Libyan class at a UK University. The aim of the lesson plan is to develop learner's reading skills and to develop oral fluency. The lesson is aimed for adult learners at pre-intermediate level who are studying English for general purposes. The topic of the lesson is about the types of food that are eaten around the world and the geographical, economical, and lifestyle reasons for this. The resource is adapted from Libyan school's curriculum course book and I have amended it slightly to that it is suitable for adult learners. The topic is likely to be appropriate as it is general topic, and this may enable students to enjoy it. This view is affirmed by Nuttall (1996), who believes that the best teaching should not ignore the interest in reading and this is the reason for choosing the subject "Food around the World". Consequently, students have motivation to tell others about their famous dishes and this may possibly lead them to develop their speaking skills.*

### Keywords

Shared Activities, CLT, Group-Work, Fluency, Communicative Competence, Fluency, Motivation, Facilitator, Communication, Feedback

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## 1. Introduction

Given the political crisis in Libya, the recent armed conflict and the effect on its higher education system, “Libyan students” face many challenges at this time. As a case, they represent a group of people seeking higher educational experiences, but coming from a country that is a post-conflict and at a point of development and change. Rehema and Miliszewska (2012) indicate that Libya is facing major challenges following the 2011 armed conflict, which has forced it to ‘start from scratch’ in building up its infrastructure and services, particularly the reconstruction and redevelopment of its higher education system. Sponsorship presupposes that Libyan students studying in the UK will take advantage of this experience to contribute in rebuilding the education system and improving access to higher education such as teaching and learning.

Rhema and Miliszewska (2012) point out that the 2011 armed conflict in Libya has transformed every aspect of the country’s daily life. The impact of this conflict on many Libyan cities includes: (1) damage and destruction of buildings (schools, universities, libraries and laboratories); (2) power outages; (3) destruction of educational infrastructure and equipment (computer networks and internet services) and (4) closure of educational institutions due to killing or detention of students and instructors. This is likely to have a lasting effect on Libyans and Libya in all sectors, especially the education system.

According to Rhema and Miliszewska (2012), students are not trained to discuss, so that has to change if Libya wants to create an effective generation who are open-minded. Teachers and students are required to get rid of traditional methods of teaching such as grammar translation method and rote learning (i.e. repetition and memorization). Teaching methods should focus on critical thinking and encourage interaction and expressing thoughts and ideas in the target language (Sweeney, 2012). This study is conducted in order to develop Libyan students’ communicative competence.

According to MHE (2012), the new government emphasises on the urgent need to have partnerships with international organizations to help Libyans deal with the post-war situation. National conference holds in many Libyan cities in order to discuss all education-related issues, including evaluations and assessments, the curriculum, and teaching methods. These conferences have the potential to assist educational leaders to have a serious and transparent perception about how to focus on quality and develop the education system. Mikail (2012) indicates that Libya is an oil-rich state, so it has sufficient resources to finance future for Libyans. The development and rebuilding the infrastructure in education, health, science, technology and economics are important priorities for the new government. According to UNESCO (2012), the Libyan leaders,

the new government and Libyans are motivated and eager to reform their education system because they believe that education is a powerful tool by which politically, economically and socially Libyans can develop themselves and participate fully as citizens.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The most important aim of CLT is that learners can communicate in the target language in real situations (Candlin and Mercer, 2000). Harmer (2007) points out that the assumption of communicative language teaching is that if students are involved in communication, then learning will take place of itself. In fact, the opportunities to use the language may give rise to the development of learner's knowledge and skills. The activities which are typically associated with CLT such as discussion are more likely to promote real communication. He also indicates that the most significant features of CLT are as follows: the desire to communicate, purpose for speaking, attention to the content, variety of language rather than chunks of language without knowledge how to use them in communication, no teacher intervention, and no control material. By contrast, other methodologies such as grammar-translation method, suggestopaedia, total physical response, and silent way may have no desire to communicate. Furthermore, they may focus on the form and they are more likely to be controlled by the teacher (i.e. teacher-centred). However, the essential goals of CLT are to develop communicative competence which is concerned with what the speakers have already known and are able to use the goal of language teaching and to develop the four skills. The key issue is that language is learnt through communication by using English to learn it (Richard and Rogers, 1986). Littlewood says that: *'one of the most characteristic features of CLT is that it plays a systematic attention to function as well as structural aspects of language'* (Littlewood, 1981, p.1).

According to Willis (1996), CLT can promote effective learning in many ways: 1) The exposure and comprehensible input may increase as the teacher speaks and students listen, 2) there are opportunities for the real use of language since learners are free to say and express their opinions and 3) students are quite likely to have motivation, especially when they achieve the task.

However, it has been suggested that the integration of the four skills can develop communicative competence as the emphasis is on real-life interaction. Moreover, reading and listening are receptive skills that may help to receive input, whereas writing and speaking are productive skills which may help learners to produce output (Flora, Doris and Wendy, 2006). Davies and Pearse (2002) indicate that integration of the skills can activate the lesson. Nunan believes that: *"There will never be a method for all, and the focus has been on the development*

of classroom tasks and activities...in keeping with the dynamic of the classroom” (Nunan, 1999, p 228). Working on a task such as discussion is more likely to develop skill integration as Harmer states that: ‘it is impossible to complete a task in one skill area without involving some other skills’ (Harmer, 2007, p 267). Speaking is almost certain to connect with listening and in many cases when students get involved in writing, they will probably be speaking, listening, writing and reading. It is quite certain that integration among the four skills is the same as interaction between top-down and bottom-up strategies of reading (Richards and Renandya, 2002). This is shown in my lesson plan in cooperative writing (in pairs or small groups).

According to Scrivener (2005), there are options in the error correction either immediately, after few minutes, or at the end of the lesson. To some extent this may possibly be true, but it is better to delay the correction until the end in order to avoid embarrassing students that may lead to anxiety. This view can be supported by (Huimin, 2008) as a result of survey, afraid of errors and teacher correcting errors are most effective reasons of anxiety. In addition, Scrivener believes that ‘if the aim is fluency, then lengthy, immediate correction that diverts the slow of speaking is less appropriate’ (Scrivener, 2005, p 299). This may mean that because CLT focuses on fluency, so it is better to let the correction at the end.

## 2.2 Criticism of CLT

The CLT is challenged, because the focus on communication can lead to an increase in the use of ungrammatical language compared to some other methodologies (Harmer, 2007). Another drawback is that CLT may ignore the grammar and this may result in an increase of fluency at the expense of accuracy since according to Willis (1996), it is possible to fill our language lesson with tasks, where learners talk to each other, but the risk is that learners are quite likely to obtain fluency detriment to accuracy. What is more, CLT is learner-centred as Candlin and Mercer state that: ‘learners direct their own learning and interact as themselves’ (Candlin and Mercer, 2000, p 158). This may mean that learners are responsible for their own learning and the teacher is more likely to act as a monitor and facilitator.

## 3. Method

Since the aim of this study is to enhance adult Libyan students’ communicative competence through using the CLT method, the researcher as a teacher prepared a lesson plan as the following:

**Table 1: Lesson Plan**

<p><b>General Aims for the Lesson:</b></p> <p>To develop learner’s understanding of the methods and strategies for developing learner’s reading skills.</p> <p>To practise oral fluency.</p>
<p><b>Objectives:</b> By the end of the session, learners will be able to:</p> <p>Explore activities for developing learner’s reading skills.</p> <p>Read a short text for gist and detail information.</p> <p>Discuss questions about food.</p> <p>Use correct vocabulary to name features and tools of food</p>

Time	Interaction	Teacher Activity	Learner Activity	Resources
2	T-sts	Explain aims and objectives of the lesson.	Students listen and ask questions if necessary	Whiteboard and pen
5	T-sts Sts-sts T-sts-T	Show students picture of famous dishes for different countries. Ask learners to brainstorm vocabulary about food in pairs or small groups. Elicit feedback and introduce new vocabulary if necessary. Write vocabulary on the board in the form of spider diagram. Check pronunciation.	Learners brainstorm vocabulary in pairs or small groups  Students from each group suggest vocabulary relating to food.	whiteboard, and pen
5				

10	<p>T- sts</p> <p>Sts-sts</p> <p>Sts-T-sts</p>	<p>Set gist reading task about food. Give limited time.</p> <p>Learners check answers in pairs or small group.</p> <p>Elicit feedback for the answer.</p> <p>Set reading for detail task about food. Ask learners for speed and give limited time.</p> <p>Learners check answers in pairs or small groups.</p> <p>Elicit plenary feedback</p> <p>Extra activity for learners who finish early.</p>	<p>Learners complete gist reading task</p> <p>Learners check answers with partner. Learner share answers with the group and with the teacher.</p> <p>Learners complete detail reading task</p> <p>Learners check answers with partner. Learner share answers with groups and with the teacher.</p>	<p>Hand out 2</p> <p>Hand out 2</p>
10	sts-sts	Set discussion activities with questions about food	Learners work in small groups to answer discussion questions.	Worksheets
5	T-sts-T	Elicit feedback	Learners share answers with the	



			groups and with the teacher.	
3	Sts – sts	Each pair is responsible for paragraph to high light four words that they do not know the meaning. Then, they exchange the meaning with other pairs.	Learners highlight four words from the paragraph.	Reading hand outs
5	Sts-T-sts	Elicit feedback	Learners share answers with groups and with the teacher.	
10	Sts-sts	Teacher asks students to write about the ingredients of their favourite dish.	Learners work in pairs or small groups.	Pencil and paper
5	Sts-T-sts	Teacher elicits feedback.		
5	T-sts	Ask them to high light the any relative clauses and try to put them in sentences from their own. Elicit feedback	Learners work in pairs or small groups.	Reading hand out
5	T-sts-sts		Learners work together and with the teacher	
5	T-sts-sts	Teacher writes up errors heard in the lesson on the board and tell learners that there is an error in this sentence.	In pairs learners correct the errors and with the teacher.	Whiteboard
5	T-sts-sts	feedback	Learners write notes.	

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The first stage of the lesson plan is a lead-in in which students are shown a picture of dishes to elicit vocabulary about food. Students work in pairs or small groups and write the words that are connected with food. This is likely to be CLT as the students work together, and, then, with the teacher who adds new words and checks pronunciation. The aim of this activity is to activate schemata, which can be defined as *'pre-existent knowledge of the world'* (Cook, 2008, p 69). Schemata can help to make predictions about the text to be easy to access. Ellis says that: *'learners who activate schemata...will able to predict that there will be information connected with the topic'* (Ellis, 2003, p.41). Furthermore, Glendinning and Holmstrom point out that: *'the more we know about the text, the easier to make predictions'* (Glendinning and Holmstrom, 2004, p.28). Nuttall (1996) says that schemata can help students to interpret the text by knowing the key words that may activate previous knowledge. Nuttall states that: *'schemata enable students to enjoy reading in the foreign language and to read without help unfamiliar texts at appropriate speed, silently and with adequate understanding'* (Nuttall, 1996, p. 31). Another goal of the lead-in is that to motivate and arouse purpose for reading. Nuttall believes that *'motivation for reading is powerful'* (Nuttall, 1996, p. 3). Indeed, schema may help to share assumptions about the world as reading process is an interactive process (Nuttall 1996).

The second stage of the lesson involves reading activities. The first reading is a gist reading activity in which "skimming" is used as a "top-down" process to get general impression of the text through reading rapidly and concentrating only on the first line of the paragraph "topic sentence" (Hedge 2000). This belief is supported by Nuttall, who says that: *'a reader adopts an eagle eye of the text'* (Nuttall, 1996, p.16). This is illustrated in my lesson plan when students are given titles to match with the paragraphs. By contrast, the second reading is a detail in which "scanning" is used as "bottom- up" approach by flicking quickly to find specific information (Hedge, 2000). Nuttall claims that *'the reader builds up the meaning from the black marks on the page: recognising letters and words, working out sentence structure...we can make use of it when an initial reading leaves us confused... the reader has magnify class'* (Nuttall, 1996, p.17)

This is shown in my lesson plan when students are asked to look for one word. Both strategies of reading are used in reading the text in classroom in order to help learners to choose the paragraphs that they are worth spending time on (Nuttall, 1996). Students are given limited time to do the task to confirm that the task can be done by skimming and scanning (Nuttall 1996 and Scrivener 2005). Also, students may be asked not to stop on each word as the aim is to understand words in the context in which they occur rather than careful reading (Brown and Yule 1983). Furthermore, there is a relationship between speed comprehension and motivation. For



instance, learners read quickly, because they might comprehend easily and vice versa. Similarly, the motivation may encourage learners to complete the text; it might be because of its interesting (Nuttall 1996). The most important point is that whenever learners read or speak, they should have purpose for reading or speaking (Hedge, 2000). This is clear in my plan when students are given questions to discuss.

The teacher may give extra activities for the group that finish early to be happy and not boring, while they are waiting as Nuttall states that ‘In order to engage every member of the group and promote discussion...you may supply extra tasks’ (Nuttall, 1996, p 165). However, if all groups finish apart from one group, the teacher should stop the activity as it is unfair to keep the class waiting (Ellis, 2003).

The third stage is follow up activities such as discussion or in pairs or small groups can promote communicative skills and give learners the chance to speak confidently (Ur, 1987). Moreover, these activities can be motivating and they may allow self-stem students to express freely (Harmer, 2007). Learning as social participation with others can assist students to comprehend and to develop knowledge and skills (Chen, 2018). Harmer (1998) points out that small groups or pairs are likely to give students the opportunities to be independent, because they work together without intervention of the teacher. He also indicates that learners may work with neither pressure nor control as they might share responsibilities. They may allow the teacher to work with one pair, while the other pairs continue working. In fact, pair work is quite certain to be quick and not difficult to manage (Bygate, 1987). De Nazaré Castro Trigo Coimbra and Dimitre Dias Alves (2017) indicate that shared activities have the potential to promote professional development of teachers and develop students’ skills.

However, sometimes students may not like others who are grouped with. Further, it is common that extrovert characters may dominate, while others may be silent. Another point is that, if the students have the same mother tongue language, this might give rise to noisy. On the top of that, not all students enjoy it as they may prefer to be teacher attention (Harmer, 2007).

Teacher talks to students may lead to absorption the language by interaction as the time that teacher talks to the students can be useful time than talking to another student (Scrivener 2005). To some extent this may be true, but if the teacher talks all the time, how much will learners have the chance to speak? For this reason we have to take care of teacher talking time (TTT). The aim is to encourage the learners to speak as much as possible as Bygate indicates that ‘we could maximise learner speaking time at certain points of the lesson by putting them into pairs or small groups and getting them to talk together’ (Bygate, 1987, p 85). While students are working together, the teacher listens and writes notes without disturbance of the groups. The teacher may give suggestions that may encourage students to talk together in order to create

communicative atmosphere (Paltridge, 2001). This is shown in my lesson plan in discussion and jigsaw activities.

Finally, the teacher writes the errors that are heard on the whiteboard. The teacher and students together correct the errors either by reformulation or chain. Then, the students write the notes.

#### 4.1 Evaluation

This evaluation concentrates on the first thirty minutes of the accompanying lesson plan as this was the focus on the microteaching. Trough out the lesson the brainstorm activity proved to be particularly successful, because students rehearsed and wrote down the vocabularies that were related to the picture about the food. According to Wilson (2005), it is an important to give students time to rehearse speaking in order to allow them to think about what they are going to say and how to say it (Wilson, 2005, cited by Harmer, 2007).

The gist and detailed reading activities were also effective as the students skimmed and scanned the text in five minutes and they understood the meaning of words from the context in which they occur rather than asking for the meaning of each word. Skimming and scanning the text may give rise to students' confidence and it may also help them to reduce focusing on the form of the word (Richards and Renandya, 2002). Skehan states that: '*in performing a task under time pressure, learners may place emphasis on communication in order to complete the task quickly*' (Skehan, 1996, cited by Hedge, 2000, p 60).

Further, discussion activity worked well, because students engaged in the task in pairs and in small groups and they expressed freely about their favourite dishes in a cooperative atmosphere. Students learn from another's attempts and weak students as this is where students can use scaffolding to push other students to their level (Nuttall, 1996). In addition, each group was given one sheet to share with the other group in order to encourage oral communication. The worksheets can be considered as the most successful way in CLT as they may force the students to work in small groups or pairs, particularly if there is only one for each group (Nuttall, 1996).

What is more, the extra activity proved to be successful, because two of my students completed the reading task and asked for it. Paltridge (2001) says that extra activities may play an essential role in directing students to increase the interaction and avoid being bored.

Moreover, the feedback which was at the end of each activity between the teacher and the students was effective, because all students participated in the discussion and they were provided with the knowledge of how successful their performance had been. It is essential to give feedback on the students' work since this may certainly enhance students' motivation (Littlewood, 1981).

However, not all aspects of the lesson were successful. The students highlighted that I was very rushed in giving the instructions about gist and detailed reading. As a result, many students did not understand what to do next. I did not realise that during my lesson as I was a bit confused on what I was doing. Harmer says that: *'to make sure that the students understand exactly what they are supposed to do. This involves giving clear instructions and demonstrating the activity with students, so that no one is in any doubt about what they should be doing'* (Harmer, 2007, p 348). If I were to teach this lesson again, I would take into my account the clarity of my instructions by rehearsing the instructions before starting the lesson. Also, I would try to slow down and check that students understand what they need to do before they start.

The lead-in activity proved problematic, because the discussion with my tutor and students from the class indicated that the picture which I used was small in spite of being coloured. The selection of the picture is very important to facilitate learning and to engage students in the task. In fact, when we use the picture, we should take into consideration to be visible and big, so all students can see it (Harmer, 2007). If I were to teach this lesson again, I would use a big size picture to be clear for all.

Furthermore, the monitoring activity was less successful than discussion activity, because comments from my peers suggested that I disturbed them, while I was writing notes and giving explanations. According to Nuttall *'your job is to be available for consultation...showing them how to solve problems by themselves... listen without disturbing the work'* (Nuttall, 1996, p 165). In the future lessons, I would intervene only in giving suggestions to help them to solve problems rather than solving problems for them (Harmer, 2007).

Unfortunately, the speaking activity about ingredients of their favourite dish was rather disappointing as the boys embarrassed me when they said that *"We are men ... we do not cook, you can ask the female students"*. In future lessons I need to make sure that the questions are suitable for both genders (Paltridge, 2001).

On the top of that, I have allocated ten minutes for discussion activity, but after ten minutes students were still talking. The reality is that I stopped the activity to follow my lesson plan. However, it could be argued that in fluency activities the aim was to give students the chance to practise the target language as they could and by stopping the activity while they had desire to continue, I limited their opportunities to speak. The key area for improvement in the lesson was maximizing the time of speaking in the target language as much as possible to develop learners' oral fluency. Hedge says that: *'to be able to work effectively in the real world, students need plenty of opportunity to practise language in situations which encourage them to communicate their needs, ideas and opinions'* (Hedge, 2000, p 44). In addition, Harmer (2007)

says that stopping the activity can be very demotivating for students who have desire to complete the discussion.

## 5. Conclusion

To summarise, I believe that my lesson “Food around the World” was quite appropriate to develop students’ reading skills, practise their oral fluency; express freely about their favourite dishes and discuss questions about the food. This was due to both my choice of communicative language teaching methodology and ordering fluency activities in the lesson.

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