The Common Methods Adopted for English Language Teaching in the Gulf Region: State of the Art

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Abstract. Teaching a foreign language, particularly English as a second/foreign language, to young-aged learners, has become more popular around the world, especially in the Arabian Gulf region. Moreover, a foreign language teaching has the potential to make significant contributions to the economic as well as the political development of the middle east countries and beyond. This article reviews the literature on English education among young learners in the Gulf region. We begin by reviewing the most critical literature for each gulf country separately to emphasize the importance of the English education socially and politically, highlighting main policy worries. Then, we focus on some empirical studies about teaching and learning the English language, putting them according to their relevance to the aforementioned policy concerns.

Keywords: *Teaching Methods; Gulf Region; CLT; Language Teaching.*

1. Introduction

There are many factors that contribute in making the English language as the universal language of technology and communication worldwide. Among these factors, we can mention the immigration, the globalization traveling. However, the importance of acquiring English spelling is not only required for native speakers of English, but also English second language learners as well. Allaith and Joshi (2011) pointed out that there are relatively few studies on the connection between first and second language in comparison with the amount of research available on first language orthography in English. Furthermore, as English learning has to understand language details better and easier, there are many theories of learning with principles to get to grips with this procedure and understand how people learn languages. These principles are used to select the appropriate tools and strategies for learning (Moeller and Catalano, 2015).

According to Lee (2014), the Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT) is an integrative approach that emphasizes different teaching practices. Moreover, the CLT highlights the importance of developing and implementing methods and techniques in teaching a second or foreign language by improving the learners' intake through direct involvement in authentic communication. Moreover, Savignon (2007) claimed that the core thing of CLT is the realization of the educational and political issue of language learning. In the first place, the immediate context or context in which EFL instruction should take place will be the first step in determining such aspects as the teaching method and materials that conform with the objectives of the EFL instruction (Gilakjani and Ahmadi, 2011). For that reason, CLT is considered as an approach rather than a method that maintains a certain degree of consistency in the theoretical framework with far greater freedom for individual interpretation and variation than are commonly possible concerning design and procedure decisions.

Today, teaching a second or a foreign language requires implementing methods and techniques that focus on authentic interaction; giving learners the appropriate opportunities to enhance their knowledge; tolerating students' errors as a good sign of progress in promoting communicative abilities; integrating the four language skills (speaking, listening, writing and reading) and permitting students to learn the language. In this respect, Richards and Rogers (2010) believed that significant education aims to develop the communication skills of language learners, by focusing on authentic language utilization and encouraging learners and peer-dealers to negotiate to mean, by promoting the risk-taking of learners and by focusing on fluency and not correctness, as well as attribution of importance to the self-employed. Baleghizadeh (2010) undermined the importance of form-oriented instruction (FOI) that is characterized by accuracy, error correction, and explicit grammatical instruction.

2. Literature Review

A considerable amount of literature and empirical studies have been published on the methods adopted in teaching the English language in the Gulf Arab countries.

2.1 Saudi Arabia Studies

Elyas and Picard (2010) critically examined the education history and its influence on modern teaching practice in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In an increasingly complicated context, the authors explored the relation between traditional practices, teacher identity, and English language teaching. The document showed a direct connection between historical teaching and the existing teaching of English in early Saudi Arabia. It also proposed "hybridity" as a way to build identities for local teachers who responded to contextual challenges.

Javid, et al (2012) carried a study at Al Taif University examining the factors that prevent the use of effective English Language Teaching (ELT) in Saudi educational institutions and finding out suggestions and remedies to improve the situation of the education system. There were 134 participants who took part in this study (103 undergraduates in English and 31 English teachers in the department of foreign languages). The summary of the findings can be summarized in the following points: there is a need for more interactive classrooms. Also, the teaching resources need to be updated. Besides, the study showed that the level of the students' English proficiency for joining the University of Taif is reduced. Therefore, the students must take English proficiency examinations in order to qualify for the next year and the school department should begin remedial courses for the weaker students using intensive courses that should be interactive.

Al Refaai and Khalil (2013) investigated the proper guidelines for the effective use of the foreign language translation and education. The study was carried out at the King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia, English Language Center (ELC). The respondents included 19 lecturers who are native Arabic speakers and who are teachers of English for primary students. The results of the study showed that translation can enhance language skills and correct the students' performance. Accordingly, both teachers and students prefer to use a foreign language translation and education methods. Furthermore, the use of both the first and second languages together meet the learners' needs.

Another study was conducted by Hamouda (2013) at the University of Al-Qassim, (Southern region in Saudi Arabia). He attempted to investigate the problems of listening to a group of major English students in the first year at university. The study included 60 students who had taken a listening course in 2012-2013. In addition, the data was collected through interviews and questionnaires. The study findings show that the main problems of hearing understanding experienced by EFL Saudi students include accent, pronunciation, the speed of speaking, insufficient vocabulary, different speaker accents, lack of concentration, anxiety and poor reporting. Understanding the learning issues of students can help EFL teachers to develop effective learning strategies and finally enhance their English listening skills. There are suggestions as to how teachers can help their students to overcome hearing problems. The results of this study can also help those who are interested in the field.

Al Seghayer (2014) focused on the obstacles of teaching the English language in Saudi Arabia. He also claimed that these limitations were observed in many fields, including student beliefs, curriculum aspects, pedagogy, and administrative processes. According to him, addressing those considerations will allow

people to move forward in the right direction, and will also help them realize that the need for curriculum reform is to identify, analyze, and propose corrective actions to address existing problems or issues. In addition, knowledge will also help to acquire resources to ensure a better future for English in Saudi Arabia as a foreign language, raise high hopes for the country, and enhance the capacity for the country to participate in Saudi Arabia actively.

On the other side, Shah, et al (2013) conducted a study on the main factors that influence EFL in Saudi Arabia. The study used the semi-structured interviews in order to get ample data from five EFL teachers. The participants shared their experiences and ideas regarding factors that had a positive or negative effect on the pedagogical process. The study's findings showed that EFL education is called into question by three key factors, which involve social, cultural and religious sensibilities; lack of motivation for students; and unfavorable institutional policies and methods.

Al Asmari (2015) carried out a research that emphasizes the problems and challenges faced by the EFL teachers during CLT implementation. CLT implementation challenges in Saudi Arabia have been limited in aspects such as teachers, students, the educational system and CLT. Relatively, despite the many challenges proclaimed, most of the EFL teachers supported the use of CLT in their classrooms. Several misunderstandings have been found common among teachers of EFL who have been supposed to develop under the influence of traditional methods of teaching. These misunderstandings such as 'no grammar teaching' and 'only speaking' are based on inadequate knowledge of and exposure to the CLT approach.

On the same side, Liton (2012), during the talking about EFL Teaching, took advantage to explore the potential corridors within the field of language learning in order to develop and integrate the teaching-learning affairs of EFL and attempts in Saudi colleges to diagnose the difficulties of EFL learning through survey questionnaires for both students and teachers. The data were collected from a total of 380 students and 94 teachers in renowned schools of all the Kingdom regions using questionnaires.

Farooq (2015) presented a study about teachers' perceptions and practices of the CLT and its effect on the communicative abilities of the learners. Data was collected from respondent teachers by means of questionnaires as a data collection instrument. The study revealed an awareness among EFL teachers towards the CLT features, its practices as well as its influence on the students' communicative skills. Moreover, the study showed that the participant teachers were all willing to apply the CLT in their daily classrooms, although the different and various obstacles that they may face such as time constraints, large classes, the shortage of teaching materials

Alharbi (2015) emphasized the historical and political along with the discourse relation to the teaching of English in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the researcher not only argued the concerns and discussions around the usefulness of the English language, but he also examined its implementation in all educational institutions in order to meet the students' needs to grasp the language.

2.2 Sultanate of Oman

The only official foreign language, other than the Arabic as a mother tongue, is English in Oman. The Government, which has defined its place on social hierarchy, has received political, economic and legislative backing. It has institutional fields such as mass media, education, and industry.

Al-Issa (2014) submitted a study with a particular reference to the Omani ELT context on critically examined factors that underlie EFL motivation. The study triangulated data from various half-structured surveys of the relevant literature, Omani, NELP and OWTE with various informants involved in the Omani ELT system. The results showed that ELT theory and practice move in two parallel lines within the Omani ELT education system. This can have a negative effect on the preparation of competent Omani English users who can help to implement an organization efficiently.

Another study carried out by Al Fakri and Siddiek (2013) involved how English teachers use oral corrected feedback at Cycle2 and post-basic levels in Oman aimed at comparing the attitudes and actual performance of those English teachers towards oral correction feedback. Also, the study examined the kinds of oral feedback techniques which C2 and PB students prefer to use to help their teachers learn.

In a fundamental programme, in a higher learning institution in the Sultanate of Oman, Mclean (2011) investigated the use of communicative language teaching methodology (CLT). While the quick increase and reliance on expatriate skills has led to employment, many have improper teacher training, of predominantly native English teachers. In this study, a core of five teachers used three data collecting instruments was included in the qualitative research methodology and ten additional English language teachers answered the questionnaire. The study which was carried out by the aforementioned researcher showed the importance of the pedagogical growth of the CLT. The study also compared the notions of "practicality, particularity and potential "with what Kumaravadivelu (2006) suggested in the hypothetical "adapted" version of the CLT.

In addition, Ali and Salih (2013) carried out a study at Al Buraimi University. There were 55 respondent EFL teachers from different colleges who agreed to take part in the study. The results of the study showed that data need to be analyzed and that ESP / EAP written materials are of extreme importance. The results of this study showed that the vast majority of teachers from EFL support the use of requirements analysis in ESP / EAP written materials and believe this to be an essential factor in the successful development of ESP material.

Al Mahrooqi (2012) examined the teaching of English as well as communicative abilities from the Omani students' points of view in schools and universities. In this respect, Al Issa (2015) indicated that graduates in Oman lack English communicative abilities. Nevertheless, the reasons behind this weakness have been studied by the students themselves. (Al-Issa, 2015). Also, the researcher used written protocols from 58 respondents to investigate the communication skills of students and to explore their ideas, their importance and how they were taught in institutions of school and higher education. The findings also showed that these critical skills were not actually taught or indirectly learned, which helped explain the deficiency among the Omani learners.

Like many countries around the world, Oman has given great importance to the English language. For that reason, the government has undertaken many actions and measures to enhance both the teaching and learning of the English language. In 1970, Oman declared that English is the second official language in all its organizations and institutions. Nevertheless, after three decades, the graduated students from the ELT system faced different deficiencies when it comes to their performance in the English language. This has had a direct negative impact on the nation's development. Accordingly, the Omani government tried to make a real revolution on ELT by setting forth a reform plan- Basic Education System (BES). In this frame, Al Issa (2012) conducted a study through which he investigated the viewpoints of 141 Omani respondents, who have finished their BES and moved to the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in 2009. The study revealed that there had been no clear changes in the BES reform plan as compared to the old system- General Education System (GES).

Likewise, Al-Balushi (2016) studied the effectiveness of using the Reader Response Theory (RRT) on the understanding of short stories and their behavior towards the methods employed in short stories for Omani secondary school students. The study adopted two instruments: a reading understanding test and a questionnaire. To achieve this purpose, the analysis of the data obtained from the two instruments were very useful.

2.3 Qatar

A comprehensive Education Reform (Education for a New Era) was started in 2001 by the Government of Qatar, based on the recommendations and options from the Research And Development Cooperation (RAND) to build a system of education that addresses the country's changing requirements. The educational landscape in Qatar changed considerably nine years later. Among these changes, we can find the establishment of teacher and school leader professional standards, the first registration and licensing system in Qatar to teachers and school leaders directly linked to professional standards. A study carried out by Al Balushi (2012) analyzed the views of school leaders on the Qatar National Teacher and School Leaders Standards as well as a recent one.

Al Buainain, et al. (2010) conducted a study at Qatar University, and that discussed the nature and frequency of the English majors of the Qatar University language learning strategies. The subjects were made of 120 Arabic students from the Department of Foreign Languages (1 - 4 years). Oxford Strategies Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire was used. The findings showed that students used

high to medium frequency learning strategies. They preferred to use the most (75.3 %) metacognitive strategies, whereas they showed the least use (58.6 %). Overall, the results showed that the level and competence of specific strategies differ. However, the differences are minor. The study concluded by recommending that further training is provided through their integration into regular classroom activities, using all strategies.

2.4 United Arab Emirates

In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the universities graduates need to have efficient communicative abilities in the English language.

University graduates should have adequate communicative skills in English as a foreign langue and are expected to study in the United Arab Emirates. However, although the UAE has exerted too much effort on teaching the English language to university students. Also, students with subjects other than English were below the expectation.

Moreover, Al Alami (2014) conducted a research project which consisted of two groups, experimental and control, taking an experimental design. The investigator determined and administered a pre-posttest to examine the efficacy of treatment. The pre-posttest was designed to measure the communication critical reading skills of subjects and the critical writing skills in communication in English. Based on the statistical findings, pre-post testing and pre-post testing experimental group students were significantly higher than their counterparts of the control group. The students of the test group were competent in communicative critical reading.

On the other hand, after four years of study, a retrospective panel used a test-testing method to examine score gains from the IELTS examination. Students and teachers have discussed in conjunction with the research findings how the EMI (English Medium Instruction) affects linguistic competence, the need for language assistance after entry and the selection and distributions of materials leading to recommendations for institutions whose main objective is to improve proficiency. This research that was conducted by O'Loughlin and Arkoudis (2009) dealt with an explorative research with regard to the score gains made in IELTS after the study. However, this study was located in a society in which students were outside universities and homes, we noticed that most of them do not use the language of communication.

The study also showed that all the four English skills that were tested for the participants in the IELTS examination after four years of EMI have significantly improved. The major improvement came from reading, writing and then listening and speaking. Moreover, the results of the interviews showed that students and teachers have various noted language skills as well as hindrances in relation to the use of the English language teaching.

From another perspective, teachers did not feel that their language skills met students' expectations and that their students were particularly weak in the field of writing and listening. Professors felt that they needed to adapt their language skills for the content of the courses and evaluation criteria. Rogier (2012) examined the need to set clear education goals, together with support systems for educators through all education experience and not just in pre-academic support programs, for institutions aimed at improving the language skills through EMI.

2.5 Kingdom of Bahrain

There are many studies that assess the great value of the English language in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Al Musawi (2016) pointed out that Bahraini students studied the strategic use of English translation in their learning processes. According to him, students of Bahrain studied the strategic use of English translation in their learning process. The author prepared and randomly administered the Arabic Version of the Inventory of Translation into a Learning Strategy (AITLS) to 372 undergraduate students who have completed English at the University of Bahrain College of Arts. The AITLS response revealed two contradictory trends towards using translation as a teaching strategy: the tendency to support medium-sized translations for learning the English vocabulary, reading, writing and understanding, and the

tendency not to use the English language, phrase, phrase, proverb or grammatical rules for learning. The pedagogical implications of the results are discussed for English teaching.

Al Mawoda (2014) investigated teachers' understanding of the treatment of culture in English language education in some secondary schools in the Bahraini government. This interpretative and explorative study is part of a socio-cultural context and can also contribute to research into teacher cognition. The empirical data consists of semi-structured interviews with 17 senior teachers in English as well as a survey of 197 teachers in English. The findings are presented following three pedagogies: information pedagogy; preparatory pedagogy and encounter pedagogy. The third perspective, which can be characterized as intercultural, represents a minority of participants. My study shows that a large number of teachers are uncertain how to correctly and up to date teach culture. This is partly due to a lack of insight, a lack of time and insufficient pre-or in-service training on the culture of education. The thesis concludes a lot of recommendations for developing ELT in a more intercultural way.

Alwadi (2013) explored the point of views of the non-native speakers'(NNEST) for their native-speaker colleagues which become a debatable issue in TESOL. The researcher showed that Bahraini (BELT) instructors have many differences in the teaching of English as well as similarities of their Native-Speaker (NEST) colleagues and those who belong to English-speaking society alone.

The objective of the report by the education system in Bahrain is to answer the question of why international program transfers do not lead to the expected results. It is claimed that the pressure generated by political borrowers was based on the political incoherence of the complexities between the new education policies, the economic vision of the Kingdom and the educational aspirations of many locals that have been shaped by old national political and employment settlements. A research done by Hayes (2017) showed that education was not a " magic magnet," which attracts global development.

2.6. Kuwait

English has a distinguished position when it comes to the Kuwaiti government. This is because of the impact of globalization along with the internationalization of local culture. However, two theses came out to the scene with regard to the use of English in Kuwait. The first thesis, which (Al Rubaie, 2010) talked about, dealt with the educational aspects of such influences, in which it examined the conceptualizations of English as an international language by students as a trainee and the effects of current teacher education views on the latest methodological trends, such as the delivery of global English and teacher knowledge. The research found that the connection between Kuwait's local and global affairs is a complex issue with social, educational and political implications through questionnaires and extensive interviews. Many of the functions and status of English within the local context was explained, and therefore alternative futures were developed against the backdrop of rapid Anglicization for Standard Arabic as the primary source and medium of local literacy and academia. The results can draw Kuwait's attention, and the hopeful outcome would be to inspire teachers in critical thinking and to challenge their realities; and promote the balance between the sources and target languages/cultures of Kuwait's policymakers, as well as to bring local expertise and knowledge to the fore. On the other hand, in the second thesis, (Habeeb,2014) wrote about the second thesis. The study was based on surveys that were given to five different school districts and kindergarten teachers (30 kindergartens) in Kuwait. Six hundred thirty-one surveys were completed providing teacher perceptions and perspectives for 1) early learning English, 2) the current English curriculum, 3) teacher education needs and 4) teacher challenges. For each declaration of the survey, the total agreement was tabled. The results were also subjected to a one-way analysis of the variance tests, in order to identify differences by the school district, training establishment and teaching experience length. The results showed that teachers usually agree that children are introduced to English at a young age. Their agreement was considerably weaker with the actual curriculum used for this purpose. At the same time, the findings indicated, in general, that teachers recognize that they do not currently have needs for English and that they are facing significant challenges in this role. The district, training source, and years of experience are linked to only a few statements. However, they helped to explain the source of individual teacher perceptions and what policymakers can do to improve teaching.

2.7. Yemen

The implementation of English in Yemeni public schools has been criticized for being inefficient because most school leavers have a poor level of language skills, even though their curriculum is six years old.

In this respect, Al-kadi (2015) investigated the recognition, understanding, and use of English idioms by students at Yemeni EFL. Its target was to identify the relationship between English skills and idiom skills of a sample of 63 pupils recruited from the Department of English at the Taiz University Faculty of Education. Three language tests and a questionnaire have been used to answer three research questions: a) How far do EFL graduates in Yemen handle English languages? b) How are idiom learning strategies used? c) What are the challenges in acquiring the language?

The study findings showed that high-level students have performed their low-level counterparts in language tests in high-level listening and speaking tests. The study highlighted some of the critical challenges for Yemeni EFL students and the strategies to address them. Some consequences and recommendations were, therefore, suggested.

Another study was carried out by Al Sohbani (2013) in which he explored the awareness among Yemeni teachers of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as well as the teaching practices of Yemeni English teachers in high schools with the constraints facing them while implementing CLT. The results of the study showed that the mother tongue was noticed as prevalent by both teachers and students. The significance of words was given in Arabic and teachers did not focus on fluency, but they instead focused on grammar. Additionally, the results of the study revealed that the participants did not have a clear idea of the principles and concepts of CLT and did not know what they had to do in the classroom.

3. Conclusion

The widespread of the English language all over the world has forced many countries to deal with this issue accordingly. The gulf countries, namely, Saudi Arabia, Unites Arab Emirates, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Yemen, as many other developing countries, they have given great importance to the teaching of the English language. All the countries above use various methods and techniques to implement the use of English as a medium of education in their educational institutions. However, some of those countries still do not successfully reach a suitable formula for the proper implementation of the English language. Thus, the Gulf countries should take some measures and actions to promote the teaching as well as the learning of the English language.

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