

Omani Students' Perceptive of Communicative Language Teaching Approach in Higher Education in Oman: Its Practice [†]

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Abstract: This study aimed to analyze and understand learners' attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in a foreign language context in higher education in Oman. In the literature review, learners' attitudes play a strong role in determining the success of innovations in instructional practices (Savignon and Wang 2003). In addition to that, this study is considered as an evaluative study to explore teachers' implication of CLT and the impact of this implication on students "communicative competence", which is considered as an ultimate goal of communicative language teaching in a foreign language context (FL). The importance of this study is due to its significance to come up with a clear understanding of Omani learners' beliefs considering teaching and learning process. It also aims to specify the impact of CLT as an effective teaching approach in English as a foreign language (EFL) among higher education students and to specify any difficulties or challenges that might hinder CLT implementation in the Omani context. To achieve this, a quantitative study had been used to collect data from both teachers and learners. The participants of this study were 631 students (189 male and 391 female) who were enrolled in Intensive English language programs (IELP) in Foundation Institute (FI) in two Universities (210 students from public university and 421 students from private university) and those participants were from three different English proficiency levels (247 level 1, 155 level 2 and 229 level 3). The analysis revealed that students perceived classroom's practice to be more oriented towards using strategic and grammatical competence and less towards sociolinguistic and intercultural competences. Additionally, Omani learners reported statistically significant correlation between CLT practice. The students' gender, language proficiency and education context affected how students perceived classroom practice.

1. Introduction

The study aims to reach for the following objectives which are to find out students' perception of CLT and analyze their beliefs and attitudes towards CLT practice in classes and to identify potential sources of differences in these beliefs and attitudes, as gender, age, background, etc.

In order to achieve these objectives, the research questions were stated as following:

1. What are students' perceptions of CLT practice with respect to the CLT concept and its principles?

2. Research Design

This study used quantitative method to investigate the topic of research.

In this study, the population was Omani students who were taking Intensive English language programs (IELP) for academic years (2014–2015) in foundation institutes (FI) in two Universities Sultan Qaboos University and Nizwa University in Omani context; The sample was selected to be only first year students who joined universities and they get Intensive English Language Program (IELP). In addition to that, the current study was using “A nonprobability”. In our study, convenience sampling was used to select the participants of the study. This study used Cronbach’s Alpha index, for analysing the degree to which a scale is internally consistent. The results showed that the students’ questionnaires which had been divided into two main sections which explored CLT practice was reliable and the Cronbach’s Alpha scored relatively high results (0.945). The instruments which had been used for this study had been checked for its validity. The importance of next stage is to provide each category as a result of factor analysis with a name based on the relation between different statements. KMO (0.916) and Barlett’s tests (sig. = 0.000) provide good results for proceeding with this factor analysis too. Students’ questionnaire factor analysis—variance.

3. Results & Discussion

This section presents the findings associated with research questions stated in students’ surveys. The results were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Students’ Perception about CLT Practice

The results of descriptive statistics as seen from Table 1 showed that mean responses of students perception associated with CLT practice of strategic competence recoded the highest mean responses (\bar{x} = 4.01 and s = 0.802). Then, the mean responses of students preference associated with CLT practice of grammatical competence recorded lower mean scores compared to other competences practice on the scale (\bar{x} = 3.51 and s = 0.886). These results indicated that from students’ perception, there was less practice of using English language for communication and using authentic materials and additionally there was a less practice of intercultural competence aspects in English classrooms. In the following section, a descriptive analysis (mean and standard deviation) will be provided to record differences among CLT practice associated with competences and CLT principles.

Table 1. students’ perception of CLT practice.

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
sf01-CLT classroom practice-Grammatical-competence-Students’ perception	631	3.9195	0.84363
sf02.1-CLT classroom practice-Sociolinguistic-intercultural-competence-CLT principles-Students’ perception	631	3.5161	0.88647
sf02.2-CLT classroom practice-strategic-competence-CLT principles-Students’ perception	631	4.0186	0.80226
Valid N (listwise)	631		

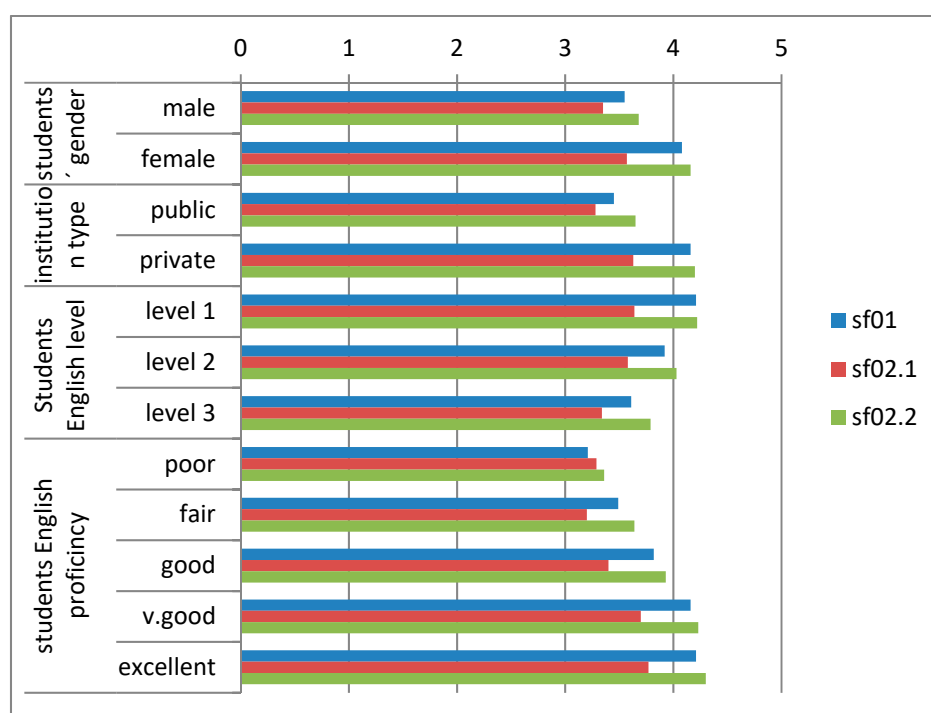


Figure 1. students background and CLT practice in classroom.

Students' background and CLT practice in classroom

- As it is seen from Figure 1: The descriptive analysis indicated that female students reported higher mean ratings in terms of CLT practice compared to male students who reported lower mean responses.
- In the private university, students' perception about CLT use and practice were over 3.50 which could be considered as higher mean scores which means that students who were enrolled in private university reported that CLT had been practiced frequently in their classes.
- The results indicated that excellent participants reported higher mean responses associated with different aspects of CLT compared to participants who described their performances as poor so they reported lower mean responses.
- The statistical findings revealed that lower level, students were enrolled in, and it resulted in higher mean responses of CLT practice of communicative competences and CLT principles.
- To determine if such difference between mean rates were statistically significant, an independent t-test and ANOVA were used. Overall analysis of findings showed that the gender of students, institution context, students' self-evaluation of proficiency level of English and students' current English level had a statistically significance effect on students' perception of CLT practice (every p value is <0.05) which means that the differences we can see in the sample can be translated to the population.

4. Conclusions

To conclude with, investigating students' beliefs and perceptions towards Communicative Language Teaching is a valuable source of knowledge for practitioners and stakeholders to improve the quality of language teaching, to improve the curriculum and to develop the teaching methodologies. That would not be achieved unless more future studies conducted to explore practice of communicative language teaching approach in English language classes and how it is applicable for our students. Additionally, there should be more studies focusing on finding out why Omani students who joined higher education still struggle with English and those studies should involve students to give their own opinions and how to overcome such challenges.



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