

Particularity, Practicality and Possibility: An Investigation Into The Awareness And Use Of Communicative Language Teaching Methodology In A College Of Higher Education In Oman

By

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS WITH SPECIALISATION IN TESOL
(TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: Prof. Brenda Spencer

February 2011

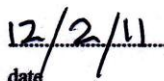
DECLARATION**Student Number-32824963**

I declare that: "Particularity, Practicality and Possibility: An Investigation Into The Awareness and Use of Communicative Language Teaching Methodology in a College of Higher Education in Oman", is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



Signature

(Mr A C McLean)



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to Dr Christine Marshall who untiringly and patiently advised me during the initial phase of this project until her retirement. My gratitude goes to Prof Brenda Spencer for providing valuable and constructive guidance throughout the course of this work. Secondly, I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness and gratitude to those colleagues and students who worked with and assisted me enabling the realisation of this research.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates awareness and use of communicative language teaching methodology (CLT) in a foundation programme at an institution of higher learning in the Sultanate of Oman, where rapid expansion and a reliance on expatriate skills has resulted in the employment of predominantly native English teachers, many with inadequate formal teacher training. The qualitative research methodology employed involved a core of five teachers using three data-gathering instruments and ten additional English language teachers who responded to a questionnaire. The study finds that the majority of teachers have inadequate knowledge of the CLT approach and do not use it in the classroom. The findings suggest that an adapted version of CLT which embraces local contextual and sociocultural conditions may be pedagogically viable. The study draws comparisons between the idea of a hypothetical, “adapted” version of CLT and the notions of “particularity, practicality and possibility” as suggested by Kumaravadivelu (2006).

KEY TERMS

Communicative language teaching, qualitative research, additional language learning, general foundation programme, native speaker, first language, second language, target language, education, non-native speaker, language proficiency, accreditation, classroom observation, teaching methodology.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS DISSERTATION

ALM	Audio-lingual Method
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BANA	Britain Australia and North America
CELTA	Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults
CELTA YL	Certificate in Language teaching to Young Learners
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
COLT	Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching
DELTA	Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English language Teaching
ENL	English as a Native Language
ESL	English Second Language
ESOL	English to/for Speakers of Other Languages
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GFP	General Foundation Programme
HEP	Higher Education Provider
IL	International Language
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
MA	Master of Arts
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
NELP	National English Language Policy Plan
NEST	Native English Speaking Teacher
NNEST	Non Native English Speaking Teacher

NNS	Non Native Speaker
OAC	Oman Accreditation Council
PGC	Postgraduate Certificate
PPP	Practice Present Produce
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TBLT	Task Based Language Teaching
TEFLA	Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Adults
TESEP	Tertiary Secondary and Primary Education
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Study

The communicative language teaching approach (CLT) has been embraced by many scholars in the additional language learning industry. Some of the first researchers in the field of linguistics to discuss the concept were Hymes (1971) and Canale and Swain (1980). Since then the popularisation of the approach has resulted in the term “CLT revolution”. This strong description arose out of the positive reception received by CLT from its nascence and popularity throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s until the present era in which its popularity as a tried and tested approach remains relatively stable. For example Kumaravadivelu notes that, “During the 1980’s, CLT became such a dominant force that it guided the form and function of almost all conceivable components of language pedagogy” (2006:61). However, currently there seems to be a move away from CLT towards a *pragmatic eclecticism* approach towards additional language teaching. Mellow (2002) defines pragmatic eclecticism as, “coherent, pluralistic language teaching”. Lowe (2003) prefers the term “principled integration” over “principled eclecticism” as eclecticism “suggests picking things from the selection available” while “...integration forces us to remember that everything has come from what has been before....” However, eclecticism should be approached with caution as Kumaravadivelu points out:

Eclecticism at the classroom level generally degenerates into an unsystematic, unprincipled, and uncritical pedagogy because teachers with very little professional preparation to be eclectic in a principled way have little option but to randomly [sic] put together a package of techniques from various methods and label it eclectic (1994:30).

In conclusion, the move towards a principled eclecticism in which the teacher draws on multiple approaches bearing in mind the classroom context, local and regional factors as well as the needs of the learners, should be employed with skill and insight.

Extensive research has been published that examines the definition of CLT and its relationship to the pedagogical context of additional language acquisition.

Researchers such as Savignon (1991), Bachman (1990), Brown (1994) and Kumaravadivelu (2006) have published texts that highlight the perceived strengths as well as the weaknesses of this approach with regard to its application in the classroom.

The present study takes place in Oman, and examines the knowledge and application of the CLT approach by teaching staff in the English department of a tertiary education institution.¹

Students studying in Higher Colleges of Education and Universities in Oman, the context for this study, normally enter such institutions with an extremely low level of proficiency in English. Although little research has been done on the topic (Al-Issa: 2005), students' competency in English is well below the level that is needed in which English is the medium of instruction for science majors in fields such as medicine, business or engineering. In addition, according to anecdotal evidence as well as the observations of the researcher, not many individuals would be able to attain an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 4.5 or above without intensive training. (See appendix A for IELTS test level descriptors). This is vital as most of the tertiary education institutions in Oman exempt students from completing their General Foundation Programmes (GFPs) if the candidate can produce a recent IELTS score of between 4.5 and 6.5 depending on the field of intended study. There are a number of reasons for this, according to Al-Issa:

English is considered as another fact based school subject to memorize and pass and is characterized as textbook based, production-oriented and teacher-centred. Moreover, classes are large (35 - 45 students in each classroom) with students of mixed ability. Furthermore, resources allocated to ELT are below satisfactory lacking educational technology facilities such as multi-media labs - and largely hinder communicative and interactive teaching (2002:9).

To address this problem students are required to complete a foundation programme aimed at increasing English additional language proficiency to the level required for academic study at tertiary level which varies from institution to institution but remains

¹ The name of the organisation has been withheld for confidentiality reasons. The term "the institution" is used throughout this document to refer to the specific institution evaluated in this dissertation.

between 4.5 and 6.5 on the IELTS level descriptor bands. A band 4 on the IELTS scale is described as a “limited user” while a band 6 is described as a “competent user”. Most Omani nationals speak the local dialect of Arabic as well as Swahili, Urdu or Baluchi, depending on their ancestral history. Therefore, English is often a third or, sometimes fourth language for many students in the TESOL (Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages) classroom at the institution where the research took place.

A typical foundation programme addresses the four strands of language namely: reading, writing, listening and speaking. In most cases these four strands are taught individually and not in an integrated fashion. For example, a student timetable will typically have four fifty-minute lessons of English per day in addition to Mathematics, Information Technology and perhaps a “Soft Skills” lesson such as “Critical Thinking”. A certain number of classroom hours per week are allocated to each strand of English Language. The rubric “Core” denotes the content of the notional/functional textbook series, *New Headway*, which forms the basis of each level of proficiency. Grammar is taught as a separate strand as is reading and writing. Grammar lessons are normally linked to the linguistic structures taught in each unit of the textbook. More contact hours are allotted to the core and grammar strands which would seem to suggest that the mastery of these two strands is either more important or more difficult than the functions of reading and writing as well as the skills of listening and speaking which are only taught at the IELTS preparation level.

1.2 Teaching Staff Demographics

The majority of ESL (English Second Language) teachers in Oman are from the Indian sub-continent, Egypt, Sri-Lanka and Sudan with a small percentage of native speakers from various countries such as Canada, South Africa, the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK). Actual figures regarding the nationalities of expatriate teachers working in Oman are difficult to obtain due to the fact that there is no accessible database reflecting this information. Secondly, due to the high turnover rate of expatriate teachers, it would be almost impossible to maintain accurate records of such nature. However, the following table provides a

breakdown of expatriate teaching staff nationalities in the institute under examination at the time the study took place.

Table 1

Expatriate Teaching Staff Nationalities

Nationality	American	Canadian	British	South African	Egyptian	Indian
Number	1	1	5	4	2	11

During the course of a two-year tenure period at the institution where the research took place, it became apparent that the staff turnover rate was much higher for nationals from western or “developed” countries than for that of others. For example, over a two-year period 11 native speakers left the institution in comparison to 3 non-native speakers. English as a native language has been defined as the language of people born and raised in one of the countries where English is historically a first language. These countries are most commonly the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Kachru (1992:356) cites these Inner Circle countries as being “the traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English.” Also, there seemed to be an unofficial two-tier salary scale in operation in that all English second language speakers received considerably lower salaries than first language speakers. For example, Al-Issa (2002) makes a comparison between native English speakers (NESTs) salaries and non-native speaking English teachers’ salaries (NNSETs) at the school teaching level. “These NESTs are paid more than their NNSETs counterparts in other schools. A NEST is paid a minimum of US\$ 2,000 per month as compared to a maximum of US\$ 1,500 paid to the NNSET.” (Al-Issa 2002:12) This is a common occurrence throughout the Gulf States. The inference to be drawn is that a greater intrinsic value as well as face value is placed on western qualifications, in that students (and their parents or sponsors) are attracted to institutions with large numbers of Caucasian staff.

1.3 Curriculum Delivery and Quality Assurance

One problem common to most foundation programmes in Oman is that they have been designed and centred on a series of textbooks of the notional-functional type, which typically progress from the elementary to the upper-intermediate level. Notional-functional syllabuses originated from the work of the Council of Europe during the late 1960's and can be said to have been one of the first branches of CLT. According to Brown (2000) "notions" denote abstract social contexts such as leisure, travel, shopping and sport. Lowe (2002) indicates that "functions" refer to communicative functions such as requests, apologies, and advice. The result is that the textbook becomes the cornerstone of the curriculum and the emphasis is placed on learning vocabulary lists and grammar structures. The acknowledged better way to engage with the process of curriculum design is to start with the learning objectives or "outcomes" and work backwards ending with the selection of teaching materials and finally, lesson plans. This "design down" method as advocated by Dreyer (2008) is a logical and efficient approach to curriculum planning. It also makes it easier to clarify assessment standards and criteria. Also, many people involved in the teaching process wrongly believe that by merely using a notional/functional type text book, one is teaching using the CLT approach. This does not necessarily hold because many teachers use notional/functional textbooks as course material but they teach the material using a Grammar Translation or Audio-lingual approach. Many textbooks may be advertised as embracing the CLT approach, a fact that may be true, but it is ultimately the teacher's decision which approach is used in the classroom. Secondly, even in the case of foundation programmes in which the English Language curriculum is stated in terms of "objectives", or "outcomes", teachers tend to approach teaching in terms of covering pages of a unit or chapters in a book. In addition, the teaching timetable is divided into lessons that treat each strand of the language separately. This means that a certain weekly quota of hours will be reserved for teaching grammar, speaking, reading and writing. It is this division of the strands of language into different classes or teaching slots, which makes it difficult to teach language in an integrated fashion. Hence, there exists a fundamental paradox in which textbooks designed specifically to facilitate communicative teaching methodology are being used by and large, in a manner that negates their purpose. This paradox is fundamental to the core hypothesis of the study which is an exploration of the lack of

awareness of CLT methodology among the teaching staff at the institution. The following paragraphs outline the main features of pedagogic activity that display a lack of concord with the basic tenets of the CLT approach.

Firstly, there is a “disconnect” between the textbook design and the method of syllabus delivery. The units of the textbook are designed to be delivered in an integrated fashion. That is to say exercises involving reading, writing, listening and speaking skills are included in each unit of the textbook. These exercises are linked to themes that characterise what has been termed in the applied linguistics field, “notional and functional” syllabi. The term “notional” is used to describe themes common to everyday life such as health, the workplace, travel and leisure, the environment and others; whereas “functional” denotes pragmatic use of language in discourse such as asking for directions, meeting people, discussing personal likes and dislikes. As previously mentioned, the nature of the curriculum is restrictive and prescriptive in that it stipulates that out of the weekly total of 20 hours, 8 hours should be devoted to grammar, 4 hours to reading, writing, listening and speaking respectively. What can happen then is that one teacher will teach the reading passage of a particular unit during the reading class while yet another teacher will teach the grammar section of the same unit during the grammar class and so on. In summary, the result is that units of the textbook are delivered in piecemeal fashion as opposed to an integrated manner, which is the cornerstone of the design of the *New Headway* series.

Secondly, the curriculum is designed around teaching units or chapters of a book as opposed to being described in terms of measurable learning outcomes that learners should achieve in order to progress to the next learning level. Likewise, assessment strategies are not planned on a “design down” basis, beginning with the required outcomes of the course and creating assessment criteria based on the outcomes. Instead the assessment is planned around the units of the textbook that teachers managed to teach during the allotted teaching timetable.

Thirdly, the teaching that takes place is characterised by a deductive, rule-bound structural approach in which more emphasis is placed on form than on function. In this study, I explore the extent of the lack of awareness of CLT and the benefits of

CLT at an institution that provides higher education in Muscat, Oman. The study is designed to provide insights into problematic variables surrounding the implementation of CLT teaching methodology in Oman. Although the research took place at a particular institution the findings will be of interest to other institutions where similar circumstances prevail. The aim is to raise awareness of problems surrounding implementation of CLT.

1.3.1 Quality Assurance

At this point a number of factors surrounding the aspect of quality assurance of the teaching programme at the institution may be noted. To frame this discussion it is important to note that systemic evaluation is integral to the enhancement of any educational programme, course or learning cycle. Apart from the assessment and evaluation of the learners in order to see if they have achieved the required outcomes, there are two other types of evaluation that are important to the health and well being of an educational institution. These two types of evaluation are diagnostic in nature and contribute towards the development of teachers as well as the betterment of the course or programme. The following paragraphs focus on evaluation of the system as an entity as well as the evaluation of individual staff members at the institution where the research took place.

Firstly, there is “*systemic*” evaluation. “Systemic evaluation is used to evaluate the appropriateness of the education system. Its purpose is to determine whether the intentions and expectations of policy are being realised in practice.” (Dreyer 2008:60) The importance of such a mechanism is evident in that it creates the possibility for administrators and policy makers to implement changes to a curriculum or syllabus if any problems are observed. Quality and efficiency cannot be achieved in a system that is allowed to run without any empirical oversight mechanism. Changes that are based on ad-hoc decisions will not be able to improve a learning programme. However, changes which are brought about due to decisions and conclusions reached by means of insightful, professional investigation stand a far better chance of increasing the efficacy of a learning programme. The sole means of systemic evaluation at the institution consists of regular monitoring of the pass rates of the students who write the IELTS exam at the British Council. The rates are collated and compared using

percentages from semester to semester, as each cohort of students return with their results to the college in order to register for credit courses.

The institution has dedicated the task of quality control to a single member of staff whose designation at the time of the study was “quality control officer”. There is little interface between the quality control department and the teachers. The second type of evaluation mentioned in the previous paragraph is the evaluation of the performance of the staff. There are a number of methods of evaluating performance with regard to the above, such as peer-evaluation, self-evaluation, and classroom observation as well as student feedback. The use of a mix of evaluation methods is commonplace in many institutions according to Dreyer (2008) as more accurate results are gained by the use of a variety of assessment instruments. Unfortunately, the system of teacher evaluation at the institution investigated consists of only a single assessment tool in the form of student questionnaires which are private and confidential. There are a number of disadvantages to this system. Firstly, the questionnaires are handed out during class time, during which the teacher is asked to leave the class. In this case the disadvantage is that not only is the lesson disrupted but the students’ minds may also be distracted by what has been happening during the lesson. Secondly, the design and content of the questionnaires may elicit the wrong type of response. One may well ask what professional knowledge or training a school-leaving student possesses in order for him/her to make accurate and fair judgements with regard to a teacher’s professional capability in the classroom. A number of local SLA industry related commentators such as Al-Issa (2005) and Al-Sulayti (1999) have pointed out the fact that Omani students, like many other students in the Arab world, are taught Arabic by rote and drill. Speaking of the manner in which students are taught grammar Al-Issa explains that:

[I]t is taught explicitly in the classroom. Structural items are analyzed, discussed and practiced through making sentences that contain the target structural item (2005:356).

According to the my own experiences and that of anecdotal evidence gained in discussions with colleagues, when confronted with a situation where a teacher emphasizes that knowledge of the rules is necessary but not paramount, students tend to disregard the teacher as lacking in knowledge of the subject because they are

unaccustomed to inductive learning and teaching styles. In fact there is a large body of evidence Abed (2004), Al-Misnad (1985), Al-Sulyati, (1999), Ayari (1996) Al-Issa (2005), Syed (2002) that describes the problematic area of teaching methodology in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to which Oman belongs. Of relevance is the following observation by Watson (2004) who quotes Al-Sulayti (1999:273) “Education in the GCC countries is criticized for its emphasis on routine, learning and memorization, for its high attrition and for repeaters’ rates which have reached 31 percent in some secondary schools”. Watson then makes the following observation:

The issue of quality teachers is one that has been around for decades. Sheikha Al-Misnad published a book in 1983 entitled *The Development of Modern Education in the Arab World*, in which she decries the quality of education, educators, books, materials and curricula in the Arab world. She describes the teachers as poorly trained and able only to teach in a traditional teacher-up-front approach with reliance on the blackboard and textbooks and with a focus on examinations designed to allow the learner to proceed to the next level (2004:31).

What is perhaps not obvious is that the students in secondary schools become conditioned to a structural learning and teaching style that is characterised by routine and memorization. This learning style (with all the accompanying expectations) is then carried by the learner into the context of formalized higher education. Hence, difficulties are created for the teacher who encourages independent and analytical thinking skills, likewise for one who attempts a pedagogy based on the CLT approach. Finally, the quality control department does not provide any form of feedback on the teacher evaluation exercise. The lack of feedback has two negative consequences according to the anecdotal evidence gained by the researcher in informal discussions with the teaching staff. Firstly, it leaves the teaching staff with the impression that they are being “spied” on as neither positive nor negative feedback is given after the appraisal exercise. Secondly, much of the possible value of the exercise is lost in the scenario as the teachers are not provided with constructive criticism in order to enable them to improve on their teaching performance. Watson (2004:53) found in her United Arab Emirates-based study that, “... [i]t would seem that the only way to determine the performance of teachers is from student end-of-year exam results”.

In conclusion, the system of quality assurance at the institution is totally inadequate and the result is that the student evaluation of the teachers has the net effect of a popularity poll rather than a mechanism whereby the performance of a teacher can be measured. In addition, an inductive teaching style that encourages critical thinking skills is normally given a negative rating as students experience a cognitive dissonance with any approach that detracts from the “norm”; the “norm” in this case being their past experiences of how lessons were conducted in the classroom during the secondary school phase. Moreover, the teacher evaluation exercise can be used to give a negative rating to strict teachers or teachers who are not liked for personal/subjective reasons rather than for objective reasons. Al-Husseni in a 2006 study of English Foundation Programmes that in the Sultanate of Oman mentions that “...[s]tudents’ opinions are not always built on true understanding”, (2006:39) furthermore, he quotes Brown *et al* (2000) as noting that, “...[t]he teachers’ credibility is influenced by their [students’] perception of the teacher’s race and gender”. To sum up, it is doubtful whether valid insight can be gained from student surveys as a measure of teaching ability, particularly when this serves as stand-alone function. Methods such as peer-evaluation, classroom observation and self-evaluation are effective and valuable instruments in the domain of quality control at the institution and these should be employed alongside student evaluation.

At the time this research was done, from 2006 to 2007(although this may have since changed) the only method of judging the effectiveness of the GFP was by keeping a tally of the student percentage pass rates of the IELTS exam from semester to semester. By comparing these rates management could draw only general inferences about the effectiveness of the teaching programme. Secondly, systemic evaluation was not employed and thus there is little means of evaluating the effectiveness of the teaching and learning programme.

1.4 Thesis Statements

This study tests the following assumptions or thesis statements:

1. The lecturers in the English Language Department of the institution have limited knowledge of the CLT approach.

2. The lecturers in the English Language Department of the institution do not use the CLT approach in the classroom.

The study attempts to confirm existing research findings from a number of locations with that of the context of Oman, about a current widespread lack of use of the CLT approach in additional language learning and teaching. Gatbonton and Segalowitz (2005:1) mention that the resistance to the use of CLT may be due to “unresolved issues”. In the same journal article the authors mention that “genuinely communicative classrooms still seem to be in the minority”. In addition, a number of researchers such as Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Karavas-Doukas, 1996; D. Li, 1984; Nunan, 1987; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999 have reported similar findings concerning the lack of genuinely communicative classrooms.

With regard to teacher training in Oman, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) is the only university that offers teacher training programmes. Al-Issa (2005) mentions:

Teachers graduating from SQU have come under scrutiny (Al-Issa, 2002) and found lacking language and methodological competence. This has been partly attributed to several shortcomings in the overall structure and quality of delivery of the ELT academic and training program they have been attending at SQU (Al-Toubi, 1998; Al-Issa, 2005a, b) and partly due to the overall structure of the education system (2005:15).

Furthermore, it is not uncommon to find a discrepancy between administrative policy and implementation as Watson (2004:43) observes, “... [t]here is also a gap between what school principals and administrators say they will do - teach communicatively - and what they are comfortable to see happening in their classrooms.” In addition, “...[w]hen more confident or experienced teachers try to foster spontaneous communication in the classroom and attempt to change the layout to reflect a communicative classroom, they are criticised for playing games and asked to return to the traditional class”(2004:52). As a teacher in the English Language Department I experienced firsthand the situation described by Watson.

During the first month of tenure at the institution I became used to the learners always asking for “the rules first”, each time a new feature of grammar was introduced. For example, if I explained at the beginning of a lesson that unit 2 of the book which we

were going to study that day involved the use of the future perfect tense, the learners would immediately ask for the rules. I tried to encourage them to embrace a more inductive learning style in which they could infer a rule or rules from a number of examples, but this only frustrated them. I explained to them that the “rules” in the book should be seen as guidelines and that more often than not there were more exceptions to ‘the rule’ especially with regard to the fickle nature of the English language. The researcher also explained to them that often the rules were complicated and would need an advanced knowledge of linguistics to be understood. For example, most intermediate level ESL learners in the Omani context would understand A of the following explanation of transitive and intransitive verb use; some learners may understand B, but most learners would be confused by the linguistic jargon used in C. Example of rule: Verbs may be transitive or intransitive depending on the type of object they take.

A. Example of rule application: The committee named. = Incomplete sentence. The committee named a new chairperson. = Complete sentence.

B. Example of rule: An intransitive verb, on the other hand, *cannot* take a direct object:

Example of rule application: This plant has thrived on the south windowsill.

C. In depth example of rule application: The compound verb "has thrived" is intransitive and takes no direct object in this sentence. The prepositional phrase "on the south windowsill" acts as an adverb describing where the plant thrives.

Returning to the subject of rule-based teaching and classroom methodology it became apparent to me that a CLT-based approach classroom methodology was frowned on. During this period a staff meeting was held in order to inform teachers that Arab learners were more comfortable with a structural deductive learning style and that teaching staff should refrain from using any kind of CLT approach. However, when I located the softcopy description of the syllabus on the internal drive of the institution, it stated that the policy regarding teaching methodology envisaged the use of the CLT approach and CLT based teaching material. It is ironic to note that the use of CLT methodology and material was embraced at a policy level in the institution. However, at the classroom interface, the reality of CLT in practice displeased the management and did not satisfy the learners’ expectations with regard to learning styles. In the

scenario outlined above it is helpful to bear in mind Kumaravadivelu's (2006) pedagogical and ideological barriers that are discussed in the following paragraphs.

In 1987 Nunan, Tyacke & Walton researched ELT in Oman; the result of which was a paper entitled "National English Language Policy/ Plan", or NELP. Of this document Al-Issa says:

The authors of NELP thus describe language as a "complex, multifaceted, multifunctional entity" with various factors governing its development. They would, hence, like to see teachers in Oman teaching English communicatively. The three writers look at grammatical competence as very important and consider it a part of the overall communicative competence demonstrated by the language user. However, they do not see that it should be taught *per se* (20005:3).

The findings outlined in the NELP paper brought into focus the use of CLT in the Omani context. The next significant milestone with regard to teaching methodology and curriculum design was the "Oman Academic Standards for General Foundation Programs" 2007. (See appendix B). This document is significant in that it sets out clearly a number of desirable learning outcomes for the English Language subject area in General Foundation Programmes. This type of standardisation is necessary in order for the large scale accreditation programme envisaged by the education authorities in the Sultanate, to take place. According to the (2007) GFP document, "...accreditation lasts for six years. At the end of that time accreditation will lapse." For the first time in the history of higher education in Oman, there will be an oversight mechanism in the form of the Oman Accreditation Council. In summary, all Higher Education Providers (HEPs) will be monitored for compliance to a number of standardised benchmarks.

1.5 CLT to Post method Paradigm Shift

A number of ELT practitioners, most notably Kumaravadivelu (2006), Prabhu (1990), and Bell (2003), currently propose a "post-method paradigm shift". Kumaravadivelu best explains the link between *method* and *post-method* by asserting:

...[t]he concept of method has only a limited and limiting impact on language learning and teaching, that method should no longer be considered a valuable or viable construct, and that what is needed is not an alternative method but an alternative to method. This growing realization coupled with a resolve to respond has created what has been called the *post-method condition* (2006:67).

Kumaravadivelu (2006) lists three principal features of post method pedagogy namely, post-method condition, post-method pedagogy, and post method predicament. An interesting three-part framework outlined under the rubric of post method pedagogy consists of particularity, practicality, and possibility. Particularity denotes factors surrounding the teaching context such as, people, local knowledge, physical settings, course and institution nature, time and teaching resources. Practicality denotes the link between theory and practice. Lastly, possibility pertains to macro-social factors such as institutional, social, economic, cultural, and political environments which shape identity formation and social transformation. However, Kumaravadivelu remains aware of constraining factors such as pedagogical and ideological barriers but points out that local knowledge and culture should be considered as resources and not limitations.

What can be safely said is that the notion of “method” and the obsession with the discovery of the “best method” has come into question. Prabhu, in his groundbreaking (1990) TESOL Quarterly article, coined the phrase “*sense of plausibility*” in order to describe how teachers should learn “to operate with some personal conceptualization of how their teaching leads to desired learning” (1990:175,176). Bell for example, has characterized post-method as a... “more holistic, redefined communicative language teaching” (2003:326). Therefore, it seems feasible to conclude that a “narrow” approach to CLT would be one which is adapted to meet regional requirements as opposed to the “broad” approach in which CLT has its origins that focused on second language teaching in a European or American context.

From the above comments on the “post-method paradigm”, proponents of this approach advocate the adaptation of CLT to meet the needs of the local context. It may be true that rote learning, memorisation and a structurally orientated pedagogic paradigm have characterised education in the Arab world in the past, but it cannot be

disputed that in many Gulf countries the relevant authorities have identified the drawbacks of this approach and have sought to redress the problem in a number of ways, namely through policy creation and the retraining of local teachers abroad. Al-Issa mentions that “...the Ministry of Education has signed a multi-million US dollar agreement almost five years back with the University of Leeds in the U.K. to run an in-service teacher training programme in the Sultanate...” (2006:212). For example, a multi-million dollar teacher training deal has been struck with Leeds University in the UK. The Leeds programme involves training Omani teachers towards a bachelors TESOL degree. Leeds University sends trainers to Oman and the programme is ongoing with a number of cohorts having already obtained their degrees. *The National Report on Quality Education in Oman* (2004) released by the Ministry of Higher Education outlines efforts that have been made to upgrade teaching capacity in the Sultanate:

The policy for the Omanisation of the Sultanate’s economy was introduced in the country’s Third National Development plan 1980 – 1985. It proposed the replacement of expatriate labour with similarly skilled, trained and highly educated Omani nationals (2004:17).

In summary, the CLT approach seems not to have escaped the notice of the education authorities in the Sultanate of Oman. However, whether this approach has been embraced due to its popularity in the applied linguistics and TESOL industry or because of its innate efficacy and track record in second language acquisition (reasons fall under Bell’s broad approach) is unclear. In contrast Kumaravadivelu has outlined vital points in his post-method paradigm, notably those concerned with the exploration of local resources and the explosion of the myth of “method”. Whether it is possible or fruitful to transcend formulated methods underlying approaches to additional language teaching remains to be seen. Nonetheless, Kumaravadivelu’s (2006) advice that, “Any actual post-method pedagogy has to be constructed by teachers themselves by taking into consideration linguistic, social, cultural, and political particularities” (2006:69). Kumaravadivelu’s observation resounds with Holiday’s (1994) distinction between a *narrow* and a *broad* approach to CLT. The broad approach, more suited to American and western European contexts is characterised by small class numbers where group work, role play and pair work can be utilised more effectively. In addition, more use is made of digital technology in the

classroom. The narrow approach Holiday (1994) advocates, is suited to developing countries that are typically constrained by large class sizes, limited availability of technology and more importantly, differing learner/administration policy expectations with regard to teaching methodology.

1.6 Defining the Communicative Approach

The CLT approach has been notoriously difficult to define although a number of dominant features of the approach are easily identified. Role play, group work, pair work, emphasis on function rather than form, minimal error correction and the stimulation of discourse in “true to life” scenarios are some of the most common features. Language should be taught in an integrated, holistic manner and not divided into separate skill components such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. Learners should engage in activities that help them create meaning rather than develop ‘perfect’ grammatical structures or strive to acquire the elusive native-like pronunciation. Assessment should focus on how well learners have developed their communicative competence which can be defined as ability to apply knowledge to both formal (grammatical) and sociolinguistic aspects of the additional language. Classroom activities are centred on sharing information and negotiating meaning. Bell defines CLT as:

...a set of diverse principles that essentially stress the engagement of learners in authentic, meaningful and fluent communication, usually through task based activities that seek to maximize opportunities for the interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning in integrated language skills contexts; and that facilitate inductive or discovery learning of the grammatical, pragmatic, sociolinguistic, strategic and discourse rules of the language with the ultimate goal of developing communicative competence (2003:328).

Nunan lists five features of CLT:

1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus not only on language but also on the learning management process.
4. An enhancement of the learner’s own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.

5. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom (1991:58).

Another definition provided by Brown identifies four main features of CLT, namely:

1. Classroom goals are focused on all the components of communicative competence and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.
2. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.
3. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.
4. In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language productively and receptively in unrehearsed contexts (2000:266).

In relation to the fourth aspect, which he describes as students using the target language “productively and receptively in unrehearsed contexts in the classroom”, he makes the following observation:

The fourth characteristic of CLT often makes it difficult for a non-native speaking teacher who is not very proficient in the second language to teach effectively. Dialogs, drills, rehearsed exercises, and discussions (in the first language) of grammatical rules are much simpler for some non-native speaking teachers (2000:267).

The above observation from Brown has relevance with regard to this study in that a number of the subjects of the study were non-native speakers of English. In addition, I have experienced over a fifteen year English additional language teaching career that gap-fill worksheets and language drills in which a grammar rule is explained then applied to a number of examples involves a lot less effort than conducting a genuinely communicative based type of lesson. The former is easier to conduct and control in that there is more structure to the classroom activities while the latter approach demands an element of “controlled anarchy” and may appear to both the learners as well as any third party observer, as chaotic and lacking in formality. In teacher-centred lessons the locus

of control resides with the teacher whereas in the learner-centred classroom the locus of control rests with the students. Learners in developed countries may operate effectively with this learning style as they would mostly be accustomed to it. However, for learners in developing countries this may seem unprofessional as teachers abdicate their traditional authoritarian role. Moreover, the effect is magnified in situations where the majority of learners have spent approximately 10 to 12 years of primary and secondary school education accustomed to authoritarian teacher-led and grammar-based learning then are abruptly confronted with a learner-centred classroom situation in a tertiary education situation. As Al-Issa maintains, “If you introduce another language without paying attention to its grammar the students might not take it seriously [the reason for this is that]... Arab speakers ... have grown up with a lot of respect for learning grammar” (2002:356). In summary, the CLT approach emphasizes the importance of function (the ability to communicate meaningfully) over form (grammatical accuracy). However, the CLT approach places a higher demand on the teacher and has not yet been fully accepted as a recognised teaching method in many parts of the developing world including the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states.

This study explores two underlying assumptions firstly, that most teachers at the institution where the research took place do not use CLT in the classroom. Secondly, the research study tests the assumption that the majority of teaching staff at the institution are not aware of the CLT approach. This lack of awareness of the CLT approach makes it difficult to utilise the prescribed teaching materials in an effective manner. The result is that the teachers and the learners become comfortable with a top-down approach to learning which is characterised by learning of grammar rules, memorisation of vocabulary lists and drills resulting in a low level of communicative competency.

1.7 Background to Research Problem

Oman has developed rapidly over the previous three decades, and like many other Gulf countries, has found it necessary to import skilled expatriate labour to help facilitate development. Because of existing demographic factors mainly due to population increase, globalization and the need for local skilled workers, the demand

for education in the Middle East is high. In an article on growth and reform in the Arab world, Rugh (2002) emphasises that there is an ever increasing number of students entering the higher education systems of the Gulf States. In the same article Rugh also notes that there has been a vast increase in access to higher education in the Middle East over the last four decades. This accelerated development exists due to a combination of high birth rates and a general increase in affluence of the region's population that has accompanied the economic boom occasioned by the development of the oil industry. In its 2009 *white paper* entitled "The GCC in 2020: The Gulf and its People" the Economist Intelligence Unit sketches a future population growth scenario:

...[E]ven with these assumptions, [slight population growth slowdown] however, the GCC's population would grow from an estimated 39.6m (million) in 2008 to 53.4m in 2020 - a 33% increase over 12 years. This level of population growth will require considerable investment in infrastructure and services, including power, water, transport, housing, healthcare and education (2009:5).

The same report mentions that most of the GCC's population is under the age of 25 and that an enormous expansion of spending on education is happening throughout the GCC, as many member states are currently trying to address the problem of labour shortages (The Economist Intelligence Unit:2009). The following table adapted from Oman Ministry of National Economy (2008) supports the findings of the Economist Intelligence Unit with regard to the large number of people under the age of 25. Of significance is the fact that this segment of the GCC population will need quality education in order to address the skills shortages. The current primary and tertiary education facilities will be inadequate to meet projected exponential population increases.

Most institutions in Oman providing tertiary education are government owned and a minority is co-owned by government and private-sector companies. A number of factors such as: harsh climatic conditions, cultural aspects, and differences in labour law in comparison to developed countries cause a high rate of labour turnover. The result is a lowering of entry-level criteria with regard to teachers entering the teaching profession especially in the higher education sector. Al Kharusi writing in the *Times of Oman* writes in an editorial about the prevailing climate at Sultan Qaboos University, the Sultanate's premiere educational institution:

You see students passing off plagiarised material as term papers or theses and faculty acting oblivious to the deed. Students showered with inflated grades as if they were confetti in a fair...Faculty trying to be conscientious are subjected to interrogation and writing reports to justify low grades ... Administrators sincerely wishing to effect positive change face institutional bureaucracy and an intellectual aridity(2009:5).

The syndrome is manifest in the education sector in that almost anyone with a bachelor's degree or a master's degree is accepted by the Ministry of Education to be allowed to teach. The net effect is that many people with little teaching experience and qualifications in areas unrelated to teaching end up in the profession.

According to Campbell, Ghali & Imhoof (1975), a simple solution to the teacher shortage in Saudi Arabia has been to lower the prerequisite qualifications for workers entering the industry. The situation in Oman is exactly the same where the majority of people throughout the entire spectrum of the teaching profession do not actually have qualifications that pertain to the field of education. Contracts have also evolved in many of the GCC countries over the past decade. The current trend shows a number of countries issuing teaching contracts for periods ranging from 6 months to a year. These types of contracts are shorter than the traditional two-year contracts with all inclusive benefits such as medical aid, free housing and round trip air fares. Such changes in the nature of the contracts indicate an increase in the turnover of the labour force as well as an unstable environment for the average employee. It could be termed an, "easy to hire and easy to fire" policy.

With regard to demographics of the teaching expatriate labour force in Oman, Nunan, Tyacke & Walton state in the NELP document:

The expatriate teaching force is recruited from a number of countries, with Sudan providing some 30% of the teachers, Jordan and Sri Lanka approximately 20% each. The remainder is composed mainly of Indians, Pakistanis and Egyptians. ... The quality of teachers varies greatly. The various cultural and religious backgrounds of the expatriate teaching force, together with the different training and experience which they have, especially with regard to teaching methodology, presents problems which need to be tackled (1987: 3).

It is interesting to note the reference made to “different training and experience...especially with regard to teaching methodology”. Here the inference can be made that teaching methodology presents a problem. This study will hopefully clarify some of the issues surrounding teaching methodology used in the classroom by expatriate teachers of different origins.

The institution where the research took place has been in existence for almost two decades but has witnessed exponential growth in both student and staff numbers over the past five years. The institution offers credit courses as well as diplomas in banking and is also affiliated with the universities of Strathclyde and Bradford in the UK. In addition the institution is also linked with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants in the U.K., the Institute of Canadian Bankers in Canada and the National Computing Centre in the U.K. Before students are able to register for any of the courses, they need to obtain a score of between 4.5 and 6.5 on the IELTS (International English language Testing System) from the British Council. The entry level IELTS requirement score differs from course to course. For example, the MBA (Master of Business Administration) which is provided by Strathclyde University requires a minimum of a 6.5 IELTS band score

On initial application to the institution, students are required to undergo an English language placement test, the result of which will decide their entry level to the English Department Foundation Programme. The Foundation Programme is graded according to eight levels of increasing difficulty ranging from elementary to upper-intermediate. The ninth and tenth levels are focused on training language skills

specifically for the IELTS exam. Each level or “band” lasts a month after which the students’ progression to the next level is decided by an exam for which the pass mark is 60%.

At the time of research the English Department employed a staff of approximately 15 to 20 lecturers, including people hired on a part-time basis. During the period this study was done the part-time staff were 5 in number. A possible shortcoming of the system is that there is no induction for newly hired staff, especially in relation to teaching methodology and approach which is the cornerstone of pedagogic activity. New teachers are given a timetable and a set of textbooks and from then on it is a matter of entering the classroom and teaching. Thus, because of a lack of policy with regard to approach and methodology, the pedagogic process takes place in an *ad hoc*, *laissez-faire* manner, with the course textbook acting as the foundation of the curriculum. The students are required to learn the vocabulary lists pertaining to each unit in the textbook. In addition, a number of possible essay topics are given which are usually related to the thematic notions found in the textbook. More often than not, students draft essays and submit them to teachers for correction. The corrected essays are then memorized verbatim and reproduced in the exam. Grammar is taught by means of deductive, rule-based instruction. The end result is that many students encounter problems when faced with the demands of producing assignments or texts that are required to conform to the conventions of academic writing.

1.8 Delimitations

This study focuses on the teaching activities of the ESL Department at the institution where the research took place during the period of June 2006 to December 2007. The survey is limited to the teachers who were actively employed in teaching at that time. The part-time English teaching staff was not included in this study. The teachers were from a variety of countries including the UK, the USA, South Africa, Canada, India and Egypt. Although the majority of the teachers were from the Indian sub-continent, the study does not focus on one particular nationality or ethnic group. The data are drawn from a core group of teachers of mixed nationalities, who were willing to participate in the survey.

Ethnographic research has often been described as understanding human behaviour from the viewpoint of the observer, or the researcher. Nunan (1992:4) remarks that, “...qualitative research is grounded, discovery oriented, exploratory, expansionist, descriptive, and inductive.” With regard to the deductive aspect the researcher began the study with general questions in mind and proceeded to form questions with a specific focus on the lack of application of CLT in the classroom. Therefore, with the application of classic ethnographic type research methodology, it could be argued that the researcher’s presence in the field increases the validity of the study.

Qualitative/ethnographic case study type research designs require the presence of the researcher. Nunan (1992:55) states ethnographic research has to do with, “the study of the culture/characteristics of a group in real world rather than laboratory settings”. It cannot be denied that working with the participants in the survey enabled the researcher to gain a deep insight into the teaching activities, especially in the domain of peer observation and evaluation. Also, my presence in the college enabled personal interaction with students making it possible to gain feedback on the perceived efficacy of different teaching methods. For example, by teaching grammar with a deductive, rules first approach and then switching to an inductive, communicative approach, I was able to observe the students’ reactions to both approaches in the classroom.

1.9 Research Aims

As previously stated there is a broad mix of teachers/lecturers practising in various educational institutions in Oman from pre-primary through to the tertiary level. Watson, in her unpublished Masters Dissertation concerning the use of English in education in the U.A.E., best describes a dilemma common to most Gulf countries when she says:

[F]ew teachers or principals are comfortable with the communicative classroom or its requirements (Enright and McCloskey: 1985). Teachers are more inclined to use the Grammar-Translation approach with which they themselves were taught or an ‘eclectic’ mix of methodology (2004: 52).

The aim of this case study is therefore to highlight the lack of awareness of and the lack of the use of the CLT approach so that all stakeholders in the education system

may perhaps endeavour to direct more effort toward the enhancement of the quality of education through effective methodology as outlined by the CLT approach. Secondly, in 2009 the accreditation authorities in Oman launched the first phase of an accreditation exercise involving tertiary institutions. The second phase has been planned for 2011. The first two accreditation exercises will be optional, but thereafter accreditation will become mandatory. However, the education authorities in Oman have decided that if an institution does not meet with the accreditation standards of the exercise the institution will still be allowed to run the GFP. The underlying rationale is that even a poorly presented GFP would in the very least build on the academic skills of school leavers in Oman.

Prerequisites for official accreditation prescribe an outcomes based curriculum that is closely linked to the CLT approach. It is clear then, that the institution will have to adjust teaching and learning approaches as well as assessment methodology if the institution wishes to comply with the accreditation criteria.

In addition, it is hoped that the research study will raise awareness of the benefits of approaching the future design of foundation programmes from a more holistic perspective by introducing an integrated, communicative methodology especially in the domains of curriculum design, assessment strategies, teaching methodology and classroom activities. Adrian Holiday makes an interesting distinction in his advocating of a *broader* version of CLT:

However, there does exist a broader version of the communicative approach which has within it the potential to adapt to all types of classroom context, provided it is informed by local knowledge. Teachers in state education already have this local knowledge about their students and the realities of their classrooms. Their experience must be capitalized upon and incorporated into a more environment sensitive communicative approach (2004:3).

Holiday (1994:4) makes the distinction between instrumentally oriented ELT in the “BANA” countries [Britain, Australia and North America] and institutionally influenced ELT in “TESEP” [tertiary, secondary and primary education] countries. CLT emerged in the BANA countries where ELT is characterised by a private language school ethos and classroom conditions have been shaped to suit market needs. In addition, the ELT learner is in an immersion situation as opposed to a non-

immersion situation where the target language is not used much in the broader society as in the expanding circle countries. Therefore, because English is taught, "...as part of a wider curriculum... [it is]...influenced and constrained by wider educational, institutional, and community forces quite different from those in the BANA sector" (1994:4). Moody (2008:101) adds, "The failure to consider local realities is surprising in the light of the stress that has been placed on communicative language teaching (CLT) over the past thirty years, a period coinciding with the time of rapid expansion of ELT in the Gulf". Moody (2008) also mentions the failure of Gulf-based ELT industry practitioners to take into account the purely instrumental motivation by most Arab learners, as a factor contributing towards the failure of the implementation of the CLT approach.

This research is aimed at raising awareness surrounding the implementation of the CLT approach in a manner that takes into account local conditions and resources such as sociocultural, motivational and linguistic factors as well as constraints imposed by institutions and curricula. Finally, Kumaravadivelu's (2006) notions of particularity, practicality and possibility are linked to the context of the research. Particularity includes factors related to teaching context, local knowledge, physical settings, as well as course and institution nature. Practicality denotes the link between theory and practice while possibility refers to macrosocial factors that shape identity formation and social transformation. (2006:69).

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In the discussion that follows a background surrounding the development of CLT against the broader framework of the historical development surrounding theories of second language acquisition in general is presented. Thereafter, the historical development of CLT as an approach as well as a method of teaching English is described. The notion of native versus non-native speakers in the additional language industry is analysed. A close discussion of the underlying philosophy of CLT is provided and the implementation of CLT in the classroom is examined. In addition, the role of English in Oman is explored and the limited research that has been done in Oman is outlined.

2.2 Development of CLT

The communicative language teaching approach came into being because both language teachers and sociolinguists realised the need to, “move from discrete point structural analyses to language use in discourse” (Schultz 2006:252). The birth of CLT approach was significant in that it abandoned the behaviouristic belief that language learning was a habit forming process that involved mimicry. Instead the focus shifted toward the goal of language - communication. The production of meaningful discourse in appropriate social settings was seen as the main functional goal behind additional language acquisition. As the CLT “revolution” came into vogue many other older methods such as the Audio-lingual and Grammar Translation methods of language fell out of favour. The sociolinguist Dell Hymes (1972), was one of the first theorists to discuss communicative competence while Canale and Swain (1980) explored the implications of communicative competence for language teaching by identifying four underlying components of the construct namely, grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. Grammatical competence refers to knowledge of morphology, syntax and lexis while discourse competence involves the maintenance of cohesion and meaning in larger sections of written or spoken language. Sociolinguistic competence denotes an understanding of the social context in which communication takes place

and strategic competence implies the ability to sustain communication given incomplete mastery of a language. Furthermore, Hymes argued that transformational school linguists were too concerned with structure of language and did not focus on the more relevant aspect of how language is used as a means of communication. Hymes also pointed to four aspects of communicative competence that formed an integral part of linguistic interaction namely: whether something is formally possible; whether something is feasible; whether something is appropriate and whether something is in fact done. Hymes's views represented a paradigm shift in second language acquisition in that it was a move away from the study of language as an analytical system to the study of language as a social communication tool. This shift naturally has implications for second language teaching approaches and methodologies.

Bachman (1990) outlined a theoretical framework describing communicative competence. This framework is composed of five constructs namely: knowledge structures, strategic competence, psycho physiological mechanisms, context of situation and language competence. Furthermore, Bachman divides language competence into organisational competence and pragmatic competence. Organisational competence pertains to grammatical ability and pragmatic competence to sociolinguistic ability. In this sense CLT can be said to be multidisciplinary as it draws on ideas from a number of disciplines such as linguistics, sociology, educational research and philosophy.

Earlier approaches to second language teaching such as the Grammar Translation and Audio-lingual Approach were based on synthetic syllabi in which language is seen as the object of the study. Hence, linguistic forms were taught explicitly and in isolation as opposed to the methodology of analytic approaches that advocate teaching implicitly through a focus on meaning. However, Harley and Swain (1984) and Swain (1985) conducted research on French immersion programmes that found ample exposure to meaningful language input in itself did not necessarily guarantee high levels of communicative competence. After years of exposure to immersion many speakers achieved high levels of proficiency but did not achieve native-like proficiency. Early research showed the value of adding communicative activities to grammar-based instruction. (Savignon 1972; Montgomery & Eisenstein 1985). These

studies that were based on the addition of communicative activities to students' regular grammar drills concluded that students who did the communicative activities systematically outperformed those who did not.

Halliday is another theorist who made a significant contribution toward the notion of CLT. He proposed a functional account of language use for young learners learning their first language. Richards & Rogers (1986:70-71) classified them as:

- The instrumental function-using language to get things
- The regulatory function-using language to control the behaviour of others
- The interactional function-using language to create interaction with others
- The personal function-using language to express emotions and meaning
- The heuristic function-using language to learn and discover
- The imaginative function-using language to create a world of the imagination
- The representational function-using language to communicate the information

The functions proposed by Halliday contributed towards the development of notional-functional syllabuses popularised in many CLT textbooks currently in use.

Widdowson (1978) addressed the communicative and social value of language. He distinguished between the formal, structural quality of language and language used as a tool for communication or a means of discourse. He proposed a shift in language teaching away from the sentence level to the sentence in context. This proposal takes note of the difference between 'cohesion' and 'coherence' in discourse. Cohesion denotes the linguistic markers that establish links in discourse while coherence describes the links that are established through the meaning and context of the message. Canale and Swain (1980) saw the term communicative competence as referring to the relationship of grammatical and sociolinguistic competence. According to Canale and Swain (1980:6) "If a communicative approach to second language teaching is adopted, then principles of syllabus design must integrate both grammatical and sociolinguistic competence." They identified four components of communicative competence namely: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competencies. These competencies were regarded by Canale and Swain as "...a synthesis of knowledge of basic grammatical principles, knowledge of how a language is used in social context to perform communicative functions and

knowledge of how utterance and communicative functions can be combined according to discourse” (1980:20).

Richards & Rogers saw the characteristics of communicative language teaching as “...a system for the expression of meaning. The primary function of language is for interaction and communication. The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses. The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse” (1986:71). Larsen-Freeman notes “...we learn to communicate by communicating” (1986:131).

In conclusion, language teaching has become more demanding and sophisticated under the influence of CLT. Syllabus design has to account for not only structural aspects of language but also human and social factors. Methodology has been refined to eliminate drill and rote teaching and to include engaging activities. According to Breen & Candlin (1980) greater demands are placed on teachers as organisers of these activities and have described the teacher in a multiplicity of roles such as facilitator, researcher, participant and learner.

2.2.1 Grammar Translation Method

The Grammar Translation Method focuses on analyzing language rather than using it for communication. It is characterised by learning of grammar rules and memorisation of vocabulary items. Written exercises and translation of texts are the main learner activities. Error correction is predominant and classes are taught in the mother tongue. Language and vocabulary are often learned and practised using discrete items and without context. Translation from the target language to the mother tongue is the primary aim of this method. Little demand is made on the teacher as grammar rules are transmitted and the focus is on the learner to digest and apply the rules. Assessment is objective; tests are simple to develop and easily scored as items are either correct or incorrect.

Grammar Translation may be criticised for its focus on form over function. Rote memorisation and the deduction of rules are perhaps valuable to a degree in the case

of adult learners who have the metalanguage to support this learning, nevertheless the learners' cognitive abilities with regard to hypothesising and formulating their own rules are neglected. In addition, socio-cultural factors that play a large part in additional language learning are not taken into account. Research has found the Grammar Translation Method is still widely used to this day. For example, Thornbury (1998:110) states that, "CLT is still shackled to a largely grammatical syllabus...[T]he phenomenal success, for example, of courses such as *Headway Intermediate* (Soars & Soars, 1986), virtually every unit of which begins with a grammar presentation...". The grammar translation method was succeeded by a number of other methods notably The Audio-lingual Method, The Direct Method and a host of others termed by Brown (2000) as "the designer methods" of the 70's.

2.2.2 The Direct Method

The Direct Method was pioneered by Francois Gouin in the late 18th century, but it was popularised by Charles Berlitz at the dawn of the 20th century. The approach is based on the assumption that additional language learning takes place in a similar fashion to that of the mother tongue. Learning is characterised by inductive grammar teaching by means of generation of meaningful sentences in order to gain functional knowledge of grammar rules. There is an emphasis on oral production in the form of speech and listening comprehension. Oral proficiency of the target language is encouraged before instruction in reading or writing texts are taught. Vocabulary items are explained using objects and demonstrations. Learners build on pre-existing knowledge in a step-by-step manner in question-and-answer sessions and are encouraged to absorb a small number of vocabulary items each lesson. The Direct Method is similar to the CLT approach in that grammar is learned inductively and there is a focus on the production of meaningful discourse.

2.2.3 The Audio-lingual Method

The Audio-lingual Method (ALM) originated in the United States during the late 50's and 1960's partially in response to conditions arising from the outbreak of the Second World War. According to Kramsch (2006:249) it has also been termed the "drill and kill" method. Material is presented in oral form by means of dialogues and drills.

Communication in the target language is encouraged while use of the mother tongue is kept to a minimum. Audio material such as tape recordings, speech and the use of language laboratories are a dominant feature in this approach. A notable difference between the Grammar Translation and the Audio-lingual method is the fact that the former teaches grammar deductively, but the latter teaches grammar inductively.

One of the problems with the ALM was the failure to provide for the use of language in natural contexts. Another problem was the focus on form with too much emphasis on immediate error correction and correct pronunciation, at the cost of achieving functional communicative competence. Perhaps the most salient feature of ALM is its reliance on the flawed structural behaviourist concept that language is a process of habit formation.

2.2.4 Language Learning Trends of the 70's

The decade of the 1970's saw the introduction of a number of new, innovative approaches to additional language learning. From a historical point of view, it could be claimed that the decade of the 70's was the point in time when additional language learning ceased to exist as a branch of linguistics and came to be seen as a separate discipline. Many of these approaches borrowed segments of theory from pre-existing approaches and fused these theories with new ideas. Some examples are: Total Physical Response, The Silent Way, Community Language Learning, The Natural Approach and Suggestopedia.

The methods of the 70's and early 80's underwent a decline in popularity as the decade of the 90's saw the consolidation of the CLT approach hand in hand with the realisation that language learning is unique and different from situation to situation and takes place in a cultural context in which many variables need to be taken into account. In the absence of empirical knowledge about how language is acquired, it is difficult to prescribe a definitive "approach" or "method" of language learning.

2.3 Current Language Learning Perspectives

A number of language learning methods that share characteristics with the CLT approach are the following: learner-centred instruction, cooperative and collaborative learning, interactive learning, whole language education, content-based instruction and task-based instruction. Kumaravadivelu (2006) maintains that Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT), "...is not linked to any one particular method...it is a curricular content rather than a methodological construct" (2006:65). According to anecdotal evidence gathered by the researcher, many teachers view TBLT as a similar approach to that of the *Present, Practice, Produce* (PPP) approach which follows a deductive pedagogy in that rules are first explained (presented) then applied to discrete examples (practised). Finally learners are expected to apply their skills (produced) in reading, writing or a mixture of activities. In addition, the post method paradigm (see 1.3.1) has been proposed by Kumaravadivelu.

In summary, theorists have realised that the dynamic and abstract nature of language learning requires what has been termed "an enlightened, eclectic approach" (Brown: 2001), in which the teacher adapts and refines the method used in the classroom to suit the prevailing variables. Furthermore, education takes place for a purpose. Littlewood (1991) describes three categories of educational purpose which also relate to foreign or second language acquisition. These may be summarised as follows:

1. Contribution to the transmission of valued knowledge and skills:

Knowledge of a different language system; as a result, a better understanding of one's own language; knowledge and understanding of a different culture and civilisation; general intellectual skills e.g., analysis and inference.

2. Contribution to the individual's preparation for life as a member of society:

Knowledge of an additional language is a useful skill for many kinds of work; extended opportunities for independent travel; wider and better possibilities for communicating with others; a better understanding of other members of society.

3. Contribution to the development of the individual:

A less restricted perspective on the world; more ways of expressing one's own self; more possibilities of future learning; a

richer interpersonal network for one's existence. (Adapted from Littlewood 1991:15)

With regard to the above categories it is not difficult to see that there is an element of overlap in some areas. For example, improving communication skills through learning an additional language could have the instrumental result of improving one's employment possibilities as well as broadening one's perspective on life. However, it is interesting to note that divergent teaching approaches would be better suited to different learning contexts categories. The categories described under the second point would perhaps best be met by a communication oriented approach, while the categories under the first point would best be addressed using a Grammar Translation approach.

Kumaravadivelu (2006) argues that the CLT approach came to exist due to inadequacies and dissatisfaction with the earlier structural approaches such as Grammar Translation and the Audio-lingual method. During the late sixties, applied linguists began to question Chomsky's notion of competence. An argument was made for the distinction between "linguistic competence" and "communicative competence". Chomsky's linguistic competence emphasised the ability to construct grammatically correct sentences based on an individual's knowledge of rules and structure of language. Influences from other fields of the humanities; mainly sociology, psychology, ethnography as well as discourse analysis, highlighted the fact that language is used in social contexts, and cannot be seen to exist on its own. Although there is an emphasis in CLT to use language meaningfully in a realistic social context, this does not imply that one should disregard the underlying structural /linguistic aspects of language.

Stephen Krashen (1982) developed the "input hypothesis" which maintains that processing of input is a central function in second language acquisition. Krashen proposed that learners should be exposed to "comprehensible input" that is focused on meaning rather than form. Also, the input should be at a level slightly more complex than the learners' current level of understanding. Krashen's hypothesis may be formulated as; $i + 1$, where i is equal to input and one is equal to a level of higher complexity. In this scenario, knowledge of grammar rules may be useful as a

“monitor”, or means of editing one’s output. Thus explicit grammar rules do have a useful function in additional language learning but are not seen as the core of language teaching pedagogy. Although Krashen’s theory may be criticised for being too simplistic, and applicable to younger learners as adult SLA learners employ a wider variety of strategies, it has nevertheless served as a thought provoking foundation on which to construct further theories.

Thompson (1996) outlines four misconceptions surrounding the CLT approach. He argues that one of the misconceptions that resulted from the theories surrounding CLT is that grammar should not be taught at all. This misconception has been behind the pendulum swings in grammar instruction from all important, to neglected, to a position of renewed and balanced importance. Initial CLT classroom activities were based on communicative functions. In other words if the outcome of a lesson is to make a hotel booking, then as long as the learner is able to perform the communicative function, no explicit discussion of grammar rules should be necessary. However, Thompson (1996: 11) also advocates teaching grammar by the following method, “learners are first exposed to new language in a comprehensible context, so that they are able to understand its function and meaning”. Thereafter the grammatical forms and their relationship to the expression of meaning may be discussed and thereby learners become active participants in the learning process and also have a degree of control in the process. This stands in contrast to the explicit grammar instruction method where students often try to memorise rules, and are subject to error correction by the teacher.

In conclusion, it is clear that language is more than simply the sum of its parts, neither is grammar homogenous in that it exists as a system of loosely related elements. Beyond the sentence level, grammar contains illocutionary and propositional functions that vary according to context. For these reasons it is difficult to propose an exact method that describes the role of explicit grammar instruction within the CLT paradigm.

2.4 Criticism of CLT

It is true to say that the “CLT revolution”, has met with scepticism and problems of implementation. Over the past decades many trends in SLA have arisen, come into vogue and finally, been abandoned. Many current practitioners in the SLA industry dismiss CLT as simply another trend with its concomitant strengths and weaknesses. The approach has been surrounded by confusion, frustration, misconceptions as to its nature, and in many cases has been rejected altogether. For example, subjects A, C, D and E from the Core Group in this research display a wide variation with regard to their understanding of what is meant by the CLT Approach. Further criticisms of CLT include the fact that it is costly and time consuming to implement; also that it places a great demand on the facilitator with regard to materials development, and finally that it is not at all practical in situations involving large groups of learners. In summary, the CLT approach has been criticised from two broad perspectives; namely, the methodological domain, and the implementation process.

With regard to the implementation process Kramsch (2006) outlines the metamorphosis that has taken place in the field of CLT over the last two and a half decades. She outlines the drift from the “affective involvement” of the learner as first envisaged by Hymes. “Foreign language education (is) under pressure to show evidence of efficiency and accountability...is being put to the service of instrumental goals” (Kramsch 2006:250). Jarvis and Atsilarat (2004) mention how, despite the Thai government’s endorsement of CLT, many teachers consider the approach unworkable. The authors suggest that TBLT has eroded the popularity of CLT because the latter approach is not in touch with local linguistic, social, cultural and political realities. However, it is important to note Kumaravadivelu’s (2006) observation that TBLT is not a methodological construct but rather it forms part of curricular content. Thornbury (1998) outlines how he has observed ESL classrooms and training courses in a wide range of contexts, including western Europe, Egypt, the USA, Australia and New Zealand and concludes that, “from a communicative perspective, CLT is not only weak but very weak” (1998:110). If Thornbury’s observation about the weakness of CLT is correct then it is possible that the reason for this could be the failure to consider local realities as Moody (2008) mentions. Similarly, a lack of consideration of factors denoted by Kumaravadivelu’s notion of “particularity” that denotes factors surrounding teaching context, people, local knowledge, physical settings, resources and course and institution nature.

It is interesting to note, at this point, the doubts of Whitley, as regards the gap between theory and implementation of CLT: "...[d]espite its active promotion in journals, conferences and teacher training, most teachers have only a vague notion of what it entails, and visits to their classroom often reveal a continuing reliance on earlier or idiosyncratic approaches, and even a determined preference for them" (Whitley 1993:137).

With regard to the methodological domain Sato and Kleinsasser observe that, "despite the theoretical developments and policy acceptance of CLT for numerous L2 learning environments, many questions linger concerning how teachers think about and use CLT in the classroom" (Sato & Kleinsasser 1999: 498). Rifkin voices concern that, "...instruction focused on the development of students' communicative competence devotes too much curricular time to transactional oral language use at the expense of the development of students' literary skills" (2006:262). However, it is important to note here Kumaravadivelu's notion of "possibility" which, "seeks to tap the socio-political consciousness that students bring with them to the classroom so that it can function as a catalyst for identity formation and social transformation" (2006:69). The way in which teachers interact in the classroom is shaped to a large extent by their existing values, beliefs and ideologies. English additional language teachers need to be careful of imposing foreign value systems on learners. This can be done by blending students' own cultural and linguistic resources into the curriculum and thus avoiding falling into the trap of linguistic imperialism.

Jacobs and Farrell (2001), discuss eight core elements that form the foundation of the paradigm shift towards communicative language teaching. The elements are summarised in the table below.

Table 3

Core Elements of CLT

Learner autonomy	Cooperative learning	Curricular integration	Focus on meaning
Diversity	Thinking skills	Alternative assessment	Teachers as co-learners

In their discussion Jacobs and Farrell express the opinion that the paradigm shift towards CLT has failed to take hold because it has been implemented in a “piecemeal fashion”. Furthermore, according to Jacobs & Farrell (2001:11), “there seems to be a great deal of variation between countries, **institutions within the same country** and even **classrooms within the same institution**”(Own emphasis). Pertinent to this research are the points in bold from the above quote. Their salience in the study will be discussed in the following section.

2.5 Positive Application of CLT

Three crucial variables have been identified in the field of SLA research, namely cognitive, affective and age factors, which play an important role in second language acquisition. With regard to the age factor, Krashen and Seliger (1975: 173) state in their research they found that “for adults, formal instruction is in general of more benefit for second language learning than is exposure to and use of the second language in ‘natural’ situations.” The age of students enrolled in ESL foundation programmes, in the Sultanate of Oman, varies from eighteen to thirty although the majority are from the seventeen to eighteen, school leaving age cohort. Hence it would seem that “formal instruction” would be especially well suited to this particular age group, but exactly what method of formal instruction should be used, remains an open question. With regard to the cognitive domain, Krashen and Seliger (1975: 178) maintain that the efficacies of deductive and inductive teaching methods are linked to learning styles. For example, they suggest that deductive/explicit type teaching methodology is best suited to left brain learners. In addition, their research showed that deductive teaching methodology proved superior to the inductive method with regard to retention.

Research findings from Krashen and Seliger both illuminate one difficulty of using explicit/deductive style teaching methods in that the linguistic explanation often exceeds the metalinguistic knowledge of the learner as is illustrated in the following quote by Seliger:

Knowledge embodied in formal linguistic descriptions, while more complete, is far too complex to be absorbed by the learner. This

knowledge, while useful to the teacher for understanding the language concept to be taught, cannot be useful to the learner until he is cognitively prepared for it. Paradoxically, if learners were able to use all the information necessary to explain their performance in the form of a complex pedagogical rule, they would no longer need such a rule because they would have to be native speakers, probably professional linguists (1997: 366).

Another important factor to consider is that there are many cases in the English language, where it is not possible to formulate pedagogical rules. The most obvious example is that of irregular verbs, knowledge of which is mostly acquired by input that is converted to uptake by means of production, practice and error correction. In addition, language exists in a permanent state of flux and therefore the issue of correctness becomes problematic especially when one is dealing with a variety of English that is en route to being a recognised variety of the language.

Research findings and other factors seem to indicate that an inductive teaching style would be a more suitable pedagogical approach than a structural/deductive approach, especially with regard to the cognitive and age domains of the learners at the institution as well as other institutions in Oman. When discussing learner expectations Scott Thornbury has the following to say:

In their defence, many teachers will attribute their supposed conservatism to the conservatism of their learners, who unfamiliar with the theoretical underpinnings of CLT, expect, even demand, what Celce-Murcia et al. term 'direct, knowledge-oriented (p.148) approaches to the teaching of English' (1998:112).

Thornbury's statement agrees with my experiences in that I experienced first hand the frustration of attempting to introduce CLT methodology into a classroom of learners whose prior language learning experiences had been restricted to in depth focus on rule-bound grammar and teacher-centred rote and drill methodology. In the same journal article Thornbury explains, " we have to think of the possible and the appropriate not as fixed in reference to native speaker norms, but related to the feasible in classroom contexts...[this will]...depend on local cultural and linguistic factors." (1998:219). In contrast to Thornbury's views, I found that students would be quite receptive to an inductive, communicative based learning style if I explained the philosophy

behind the approach in a manner that they could understand. Furthermore, it is important to note that a balanced approach comprised of a mixture of grammar drill activities skilfully interwoven with communicative type teaching activities constitutes a workable compromise in classroom situations where learners insist on traditional type teaching approaches. In addition, Syed emphasises the importance of the cultural context in an article on ESL in the Gulf. “The challenges EFL teachers face on a daily basis [motivation, literacy, underachievement, rote learning, and learning strategies] have their roots in the contextual framework of language learning” (2003:340). From the above statements it is possible to conclude that cultural and local contextual factors are crucial variables in additional language teaching. In addition, it is necessary to consider these factors with regard to the implementation of teaching methodology in the classroom.

2.6 An Urgent Need for Change

The 2007 Draft Version of the Oman Academic Standards for General Foundation Programs (GFPs) explains in detail the academic standards that have been set as minimum requirements for Higher Education Providers (HEPs). The salience of the academic standards described in the draft document lies in the fact that in 2009 all HEPs were asked to submit their GFPs for appraisal by the Oman accreditation Council (OAC). The accreditation process will take place for a second time in 2011. Although the first two accreditation exercises will be optional, it is expected that after 2010 the OAC will declare the accreditation process **mandatory** for all HEPs. Accreditation of a GFP will remain valid for six years and thereafter will require a review. Subsection [f] of the abovementioned document states:

Each HEP will have the responsibility for developing its own methods of assessment against the student learning outcomes in these (Oman Academic Standards) standards. The HEP must demonstrate that the chosen assessment method is effective in determining whether the student has attained the required learning outcomes (Draft Version of the Oman Academic Standards for General Foundation Programs 2007:8).

Hence it may be concluded that many HEP's that have up until the present been operating without any external oversight mechanism, will for the first time in the history of Oman come under scrutiny. In reality many institutions will have to restructure and align their GFP's in order to meet the accreditation criteria. Perhaps one of the most crucial elements in all GFP's is the "exit exam" which is the English language proficiency benchmark. Successful completion of the exit exam will allow a candidate entrance to diploma or degree courses offered by an institution. Thus, the exit exam may be considered a "high stakes" assessment. The 2007 Draft document recognises the importance of the exit exam as well as the need for alternative assessment. Therefore, in an attempt to generalise the expected standard of proficiency, a candidate with an IELTS score of 5.0 or a TOEFL score of 500, should be considered proficient enough in English to enter diploma or credit course studies according to the MoHE (Ministry of Higher Education) requirements.

In framing the developments surrounding the CLT approach by means of a timeline from 1970 when education in the Sultanate was virtually non-existent up to the present, a general trend in increase of awareness may be identified as the table below shows.

Table 4

Development of Education in the Sultanate of Oman (1970-2002)

Description	School Academic Year						
	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2002
Students (000)	0.91	49.7	96.2	197.3	333.0	498	578
Schools	3	183	382	588	801	953	1,091
Classrooms	ND	1387	3214	6297	11000	15000	19000
School Teachers, Technical & Admin. Staff	30	2138	5007	9776	17,570	22,000	30,000
Sultan Qaboos	—	—	—	1000	3000	3000	8000

University							
Students							
Govt.	ND	ND	ND	102.3	124.3	163.8	255.4
Expenditure on Education (Millions Omani Rial)							

Initially, the first needs assessment conducted by Nunan et al. (1987) resulted in the publication of “Guidelines for the Omani English Language School Curriculum”, which only suggested the use of CLT in primary and post secondary education. It must be noted that the study did not involve institutions of higher education. Now it seems current MoHE policy is set to ensure that pedagogic elements compatible with CLT are implemented in institutions of higher education. Moreover, institutions risk loss of official accreditation if their operational procedures do not comply with ministerial criteria. Five elements contained in MoHE policy that may facilitate the use of the CLT approach are listed below:

- Outcomes-based curricula
- Academic standards linked to learning outcomes
- Continuous assessment using formative and summative methods
- Criterion referenced assessment
- Introduction of field related staff requirements.

2.6.1 Compliance with Academic Standards at the Institution

The GFP policy at the institution dictates that students obtain an IELTS score of 5.0 to enter credit course studies. The decision to adopt this policy has helped the institution maintain high academic standards in the foundation program for two reasons. Firstly, the validity and reliability of the assessment that is done by an internationally recognised institution, the British Council, as a transparent and objective assessment body, ensures the credibility of the process. Institutions that make use of in-house assessment are open to negative perceptions from the public, students and other

academic institutions because of the lack of transparency and uncertainty about the quality of the assessment procedure.

Secondly, for a relatively low fee (the cost to write the exam at the British Council) the institution has managed to avoid a large expenditure of time and effort that is normally taken up with the development, administration, moderation and recording of results that is required using in-house exit exam assessment methods. The current cost of 68 Omani Rial to sit the IELTS test at the British Council or the Hawthorne Institute, is cost effectively built into the institution's student fee structure.

2.6.2 Non – Compliance with Staffing Requirements at the Institution

The 2007 MoHE Draft document makes clear specific requirements with regard to the hiring of ELT teachers. In subsection 3.3.1 under [b] it states:

The minimum requirements for GFP English Language teaching staff is either a Bachelor's degree (in a relevant subject and taught in English) and a qualification in English Language Teaching (ELT, e.g. CELTA, Trinity TEFL certificate), or a Master's degree (in a relevant subject and taught and assessed in English) (2007:8).

It is not easy to find teachers who comply with the above requirements and at the time of this research most of the staff in this study possessed qualifications which did not comply. This is an aspect that the institution will have to act on in order to fulfil the upcoming accreditation process.

It is relevant to note, of the staffing criteria, that most of the prerequisite qualifications are relatively current and most deal with the CLT approach to some degree. Therefore teaching candidates who comply with the requirements could be expected to have gained some knowledge of the approach as well as other current second language acquisition theories.

2.7 Areas of Concern

The following sections outline two areas of concern surrounding the use of CLT in the GFP context, namely age and appropriacy factors as well as issues pertaining to native and non-native English instructors.

1.7.1 Age and Cultural Factors

With regard to the differences between first and second language acquisition, Stratton raises an interesting point as she highlights the findings of the psychologist Piaget that propose several incremental steps of cognitive development linked to various age groups. Stratton maintains:

.....it does not seem likely that they (young learners) will be able to perform the complex mental operations demanded by the communicative syllabus. Thus, for the initial stages of learning English as a second language, the structural/situational syllabus is both more feasible and effective (1977:136).

In the same article Stratton (1997) expands on her view of the age versus appropriacy argument with regard to implementation of CLT, by stating that in institutions of higher learning it is more feasible to use CLT as, “the structural/situational approach is merely a boring repetition of the majority of the students’ former English classes and at this level of development seems totally unrelated to their actual use of English” (1977:140).

Thompson (1996) discusses the grey area that exists in between the theory and practice of CLT, namely, the general misconceptions that CLT should exclude grammar teaching, that CLT practitioners should only teach speaking, that CLT involves mainly pair work and role play, and that CLT places a great demand on the teacher. These common misconceptions probably exist because of two factors. Firstly, the lack of a singular, concise, generally agreed on definition of CLT in the field of linguistics and second language acquisition. Secondly, the diverse backgrounds of the many ESL and TESOL teachers worldwide, many of whom have had no specialised training in the field of SLA. The second category of teachers, it would seem, develop their approaches through a process of osmosis and synthesis by means of direct exposure to the teaching environment. Their teaching methodologies are formulated through a trial and error process that includes what they may learn from colleagues and what they find works best in the classroom. In a journal article on ESL in the Gulf Syed remarks that:

Although foreign teachers bring diversity into the classroom, and although some use contextually situated pedagogy, there are wide gaps in the expatriate educators' (especially non-Arabs') knowledge of local sociocultural communities and languages...[t] there is a pressing need to invest in teacher education programmes for nationals and professional development programmes for expatriates (2003: 338-339).

In her study of monolingual (non-Arabic speaking) and bilingual (Arabic speaking) teachers in Oman Husna Al-Jadidi mentions that, "The pedagogical techniques they [non Arabic speakers] utilized were useful and effective and gave me some good ideas. I also learned from monolingual teachers that if one-way of teaching doesn't work they could try and use other ways that may work better for students" (2009:163). This seems to concur with the "diversity" mentioned by Syed. However, engaging learners in an interesting and energising lesson and being knowledgeable about local sociocultural contexts and languages are two separate issues.

2.7.2 Native Speaker versus Non-Native Speaker Dilemma

In the vast global ELT industry, most of the latest developments with regard to curriculum development, training, testing and planning originate from the so called "Centre" countries, (developed, western world) and spread to the "Periphery" (developing countries). Peyton (1997:2) feels that "maintenance and improvement must be an ongoing process"; in an article that discusses the professional development of teachers in the United States. Canagarajah (1999), quoted in Al-Issa, best describes the problem of diffusion or transmission of ideas and the hegemonic effects this has when he states:

In fact teacher trainers, curriculum developers, and testing experts are predominantly from the Center [sic] Language teaching consultants have to make periodic trips from Center [sic] academic institutions to guide, counsel, and train Periphery professionals on the latest developments in teaching. The native speaker fallacy appears to legitimize of Center [sic] professionals/scholars in the circles of expertise (2006:3).

That it is generally preferred to employ native speakers of English in the teaching profession in the Middle East, is a tendency that has persisted for decades albeit one that may be based on false perceptions. Widdowson (1992) suggests that non-native

English speaking teachers may be well informed about the language, but they do not necessarily make better instructors. Al-Issa (2005:8) mentions in an article on policy implementation and non-native speakers in the Omani context, “There are powerful ideologies about the role of the English teacher as someone who is able to demonstrate competence and skill in language use and teaching methods and techniques.” Extensive research has been done on the phenomenon of non-native speakers and native speakers with regard to language teaching. It has been argued that native mother tongue speakers, who are proficient in English and familiar with SLA teaching methodology, make good teachers in the “starter” or “elementary” levels because their bilingualism is an advantage when it comes to explaining grammar concepts and lexis. Common sense and logical reasoning also indicate that it is not necessarily true that a native speaker of English would make a better teacher than a non-native speaker. Knowledge of a language and ability to communicate in that language do not necessarily make one a good teacher; pedagogical skills and methodology also constitute a vital role.

Jenkins (2006), Kachru (1992), and MacArthur (2001), are leading researchers who have attempted to clarify issues surrounding the terms *World English (es)*, *Global English* and *International English*. Jenkins observes that it is difficult to define a standard variety of English as, “...the closest I can find to a definition is that of Honey (1997), who argues that standard English is the variety used by educated native speakers and that the way to identify an educated native speaker is from their use of standard English: a circular argument indeed” (2006:171). Kachru (1985) proposed a model consisting of three concentric circles which was an attempt at describing, “the types of spread, the patterns of acquisition and the functional domains in which English is used across cultures and languages” (1985:12). The *Inner Circle* is composed of countries where English is the primary language of the majority. The *Outer Circle* refers to countries where English has a mainly colonial history and the *Expanding Circle* represents countries where English dominates foreign language learning and which is spreading as a result of teaching. In addition, the *Inner Circle* countries are said to use English as a native language (ENL) while the *Outer Circle* countries mostly use English as a second language (ESL) and the *Expanding Circle* countries use English as a foreign language (EFL). Furthermore, Kachru (1985) described the *Inner Circle* countries as *norm providing*, the *Outer Circle* countries as

norm developing and the *Expanding Circle* countries as *norm dependent*. However, Kachru noted that the model may be an oversimplification and that grey areas between the circles existed. For example, countries such as South Africa (multilingual) and Jamaica are difficult to place within the circles. McArthur (2001:8) points out that Inner Circle countries are not linguistically monolithic, “in such territories one can find interesting language mosaics, including hybridization, as for example, in the US, New Zealand, South Africa and Wales, and in such ‘world cities’ as London, New York, Sydney and Montreal”.

Table 5

Kachru's Concentric Circle Model – Classification of Countries

Inner Circle	Outer Circle	Expanding Circle
USA UK Canada Australia New Zealand	Bangladesh Ghana India Kenya Malaysia Nigeria Pakistan Philippines Singapore Sri-Lanka Tanzania Zambia	China Egypt Indonesia Israel Japan Korea Nepal Saudi Arabia Taiwan USSR Zimbabwe

Jenkins (2006) summarises the core problems surrounding the attempt at defining and standardising International English (IL) as she points out:

The main arguments presented against IL [international Language] theory are that outer circle English speakers are not attempting to identify with inner circle speakers or to produce the norms of an exonormative variety of English grounded in an inner circle experience. Such norms, they contend, are irrelevant to the sociolinguistic reality in which members of the outer circle use English, and attempts to label English of whole speech communities as deficient and fossilized are thus

unjustifiable as these labels ignore the local Englishes' sociohistorical development and sociocultural context. In a nutshell, they are the result of a monolingual bias that is unable to comprehend the bilingual experience (2006:11).

The perception that native speakers are in general better teachers of English than non-native speakers does not hold any logic for it may easily be argued that knowledge of a language and its idiomatic nuances do not necessarily guarantee that one has the skills to teach language. Neither is such high-level skill restricted to native speakers of English. Phillipson calls the assumption that native speakers make better teachers "the native speaker fallacy" (1992:194). Davies (1991) does not accept the idea that a native speaker is different from a non-native speaker. He maintains that L2 learners can acquire native linguistic competence from outside an L1 environment. Maum (2002) observes that "...much of the knowledge that native speakers bring intrinsically to the ESL classroom can be learned by NNESTs through teacher training. NNESTs can be good learner models, having gone through the experience of learning English as a second (or third or fourth) language.

At the time of writing, the population of Oman is not more than 2.3 million, of which 20% are expatriate labourers. In the context of Krachu's concentric circle model, Oman can be categorised as an *Expanding Circle* country with regard to English. Although English is widely understood and used in the Sultanate mainly by expatriates and a handful of educated Omanis, it is definitely a non-immersion context. In fact, the researcher has witnessed on countless occasions the lament of students in English foundation programmes that they do not have the opportunity to improve their English skills as once they leave the classroom they tend to use Arabic.

While most government sector jobs are occupied by Omani nationals, the majority of the expatriate labour force which is comprised of nationals from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Philippines, work in the private sector and make use of English for interlingual purposes. Employees of the teaching profession in the Higher Education sector are mainly from the abovementioned countries. There are currently fifteen private colleges and three private universities, some of which are termed university colleges. In nearly all of these institutions the medium of instruction is English. Al-Issa (2005) notes that the higher education system in Oman produces poor

quality teachers whose lack of skills impacts negatively on young learners in the TESOL classroom. One reason for this could be the relative immaturity of the higher education system in Oman as well as the lack of variety in and accessibility of teacher training facilities. At the time of writing Sultan Qaboos University was the only higher education institution in the Sultanate of Oman accredited to train teachers. Al – Issa (2005) cites lack of financial and career incentives as being the main reason behind the low local interest in entering the profession and hence the strong reliance on expatriate labour.

In addition to inadequate training and preparedness, a Chinese teacher/researcher Li Xiaojou, (1984) mentions psychological adaptation difficulties with regard to the CLT approach. Li's observation is further supported by Peter Medgyes (1983), a Hungarian, who is quoted by Bolitho as saying:

Most non-native teachers of English have split personalities. We find it a hopelessly perplexing task to teach this language which, like any other foreign language, is full of mystery to the non-native speaker. Sooner or later, every one of us regrets having chosen this career. Four or five hours a day, we have to face our students, attempting to teach something we ourselves invariably have a shaky knowledge of (1990:27).

In summary, although there is no empirical evidence to suggest that native English speakers make better teachers of English than non-native speakers, there is some evidence to suggest that non-native speakers may find classroom application of the CLT approach more demanding. In addition, a false perception exists in the Gulf region that native speakers make better teachers of English; also there is the added benefit of “face value” given to institutions employing native speakers. “Face value” in the preceding sentence describes the perception that an institution that employs mainly Inner Circle teachers is of better quality than an institution that employs teachers from the Outer or Expanding Circles. This shows the degree to which the hegemony of English and the power of the Inner circle is entrenched in the TESOL context in many of the Gulf States. This is ironic given the drive to become independent of the Western world in terms of teacher training.

2.8 The Role of English in Oman

There are two salient features that surround the role of English in Oman. The first factor could be described as English for academic purposes. This entails the motivation for learning English as an additional language as a means of obtaining a job in one of the higher status white collar professions, most of which are found in the public sector. The second factor is linked to national economic and social development goals, namely the government policy of “Omanisation”. The purpose of this policy is to reduce the Sultanate’s reliance on both skilled and unskilled expatriate labour. The driving force behind the policy is the education of nationals and their placement in key positions in public sector ministerial and oil industry related jobs.

2.8.1 English in the Public Sector

Although the governing authorities in Oman have embraced English as an official foreign language, it is generally accepted that one needs to learn English in order to enter the higher education system. Moreover, the need to react to the challenges presented by a rapidly globalising world has been realised:

[t]o survive in a globalised world, countries are being forced to restructure their economies and production processes. This restructuring is resulting in big changes in work practices and in the skills demanded from the workforce. The needs of the emerging global and national economies are for employees who are technologically literate, can engage in analytical thinking, and are skilled communicators (Ministry of Education, National report on Quality Education in Oman 2004:17).

Proficiency in English therefore has an instrumental value in that the Sultanate provides generous scholarships for tertiary studies abroad to graduate students with high scores. A number of students also study abroad at their own expense. Most of the public sector organisations are in some way linked to the petroleum development industry which accounts for approximately 60 percent of the gross domestic product. However, the private sector is beginning to play an ever increasing role in the economy of Oman mainly because it is one of the least oil rich of the Gulf States and the authorities have realised that development of and reliance on non-petroleum

related industries such as: shipping, tourism, insurance, banking services and education is a necessities. It is true to say that without diversification, the Sultanate risks becoming a poor “second cousin” to the other GCC member states.

2.8.2 English in the Private Sector

Private sector businesses in Oman are mainly owned and controlled by Omani nationals. It is only possible to do business if one has the necessary “sponsorship” of a local or if the business is a local-foreign joint venture. Private sector business is strictly controlled in Oman and it is not possible for foreigners to purchase freehold land. Of the importance of English in the private sector, Al-Issa has the following to say:

[i]t is believed that the private sector can contribute to the national development of the country as much as the public can. Recently in Oman stress is being laid on the private sector and the quality of contribution it can make to the country's national development. The private sector has been encouraged by the government to play a more dynamic, productive and active role in facilitating the Sultanate's development than it used to a decade ago in the past. This has been materialising steadily in the form of private colleges, universities, hospitals, more factories and plants and so forth. These enterprises are believed to provide and create more job opportunities for Omani graduates. English is also the medium of instruction in these newly opened private colleges and universities. This should help change the public and students' attitudes about the place of English internationally and domestically (Al-Issa: 2002: 52).

In summary, due to the increase in private sector business activity, there is a need for a skilled workforce, and with the increasing pace of “Omanisation” this skilled workforce will be characterised by well educated, English additional-language-speaking Omani nationals.

2.8.3 Lack of Research in Oman

Not much research has taken place, and not much has been published with regard to ESL teaching and the CLT approach in particular, in the Sultanate of Oman. The reasons given are that most people involved in higher education have heavy workloads in addition to lacking incentive. One of the most prolific researchers in the

field of ESL in Oman is Dr. Ali Al-Issa of Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat, the main teacher training institute in Oman, who has the following to say:

The Omani government has, therefore, opted for English as its only official foreign language... English has been considered a functional tool for “Omanisation” – a systematic and gradual replacement of foreign skilled labour by nationals. In fact, functional competence in English is a prerequisite for finding a white-collar job in the public and private sectors.Oman has hence, embraced English and placed it at the heart of its educational planning, which has led to the investment of multi million [sic] US dollars since His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said came into power in 1970 (2006: 4).

In the same research article Al-Issa laments the lack of Oman’s self-sufficiency with regard to qualified English teachers and reinforces his comment by stating that the annual number of teachers who graduate from Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), which is the only teacher training institute in the country at present, does not exceed 120. Al-Issa cites lack of financial and career incentives as being the main reason behind the low local interest in entering the profession. Given these statistics it is not difficult to understand the Omani reliance on skilled expatriate labour. In addition, Al-Touibi (1998) conducted research at the primary and secondary levels of education that included eighty-two teachers of English of various nationalities. His research findings concluded that the Omani curriculum is inadequate in preparing learners for communication in English as it lacks authentic materials and communicative language practice activities. Indeed Holiday’s (1994) idea of a broad approach to CLT comes to mind. The broad approach “has within it the potential to adapt to all types of classroom context, provided it is informed by local knowledge” (Holiday, 1994:3). This approach stands in contrast to a narrow approach which is more suited to the Western European context. Most of the current ESL textbooks available on the market such as *Cutting Edge*, *New Headway*, *Total English* and a host of others are grounded in Western contexts that local students who have never travelled may find difficult or irrelevant. It is interesting to note that the use of textbooks containing content that is unrelated to the local context may be classified as a factor that clashes with the notion of “particularity” in that there is no link between the content of the textbook and the local context.

It seems that a precedent of emphasis on the structural, deductive approach to teaching during the primary and secondary phases of ELT in Oman has been set. Al-Issa (2006:228) argues, citing Saur and Saur (2001), that "... the kind of English presented in secondary school is different from the kind of English students need for entry to an English medium college or university". This is something that has been repeatedly heard in informal discussions with students, who maintain that there is a large gap in the level of complexity between school exit-level English, and the English that they encounter in the foundation programme. One element that does remain constant however is the reliance on deductive, rules-first type instruction, which is perhaps a residual effect of the teaching and learning styles practised in the school system.

2.9 Conclusion

In summary, the above discussion is relevant to the research focus, in that valid suggestions are put forward as to why the practice of CLT [or other more recent approaches such as the *broad* approach as advocated by Holiday (1994), or a postmodern pragmatic eclecticism proposed by Kumaravadivelu (2006)] may be less apparent in a developing country such as Oman in contrast to the "westernised" or Inner Circle countries. Also, although the research comparing native and non-native speakers in the ESL profession seems to be inconclusive, there is an indication that non-native speakers may encounter more difficulty in using the CLT approach for the same reasons that Brown (2000) provides (see 1.2 of this text). These reasons are that it is easier for non-native speakers to use dialogues, drills and grammar exercises in the classroom. Even proficient English first language speaker instructors may find the implementation of the CLT approach demanding in that flexibility and fluency are needed to cope with the use of the approach in the classroom context.

3 RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the research method of the study is discussed. Firstly, a background to the research situation and associated constraints is given. Secondly, ethical considerations are highlighted and finally, an overview of the subjects and research instruments is provided. Finally the method of data analysis is clarified.

The research context was the English department of an institution of higher learning that offered bachelors, honours and masters degrees in an industry-specific sector. The medium of instruction for all the courses was English. Students took preparatory courses in Information Technology and Mathematics. The English department was responsible for the delivery of a General Foundation Programme in which the goal was to prepare prospective students for the demands made by higher education as opposed to secondary school level English. At the time the research was conducted the English department started classes at 8.00am and finished classes at 8.30pm. With a student body of almost one thousand, the corridors and classrooms of the institution were busy as staff and students went about their daily activities.

Nunan (1992:106) describes product-process research as “[s]tudies...which attempt to establish causal links between classroom processes and learning outcomes”. He then adds that these types of studies are “notoriously difficult to carry out” (1992:106). Due to intensive time constraints with my own teaching schedule and those of the other teachers, it was not possible to obtain large enough samples of data to enable the researcher to draw tables, graphs or make meaningful use of statistical, quantitative type research methods. For example, the teachers were given a one-week deadline to respond to the questionnaire. A further one-week extension was given on this deadline due to the initial poor response. In addition, it was not easy to find teachers willing to allow me to sit in on their classes in order to conduct observation. Finally, I found a core group of five teachers who were willing to allow me to observe their classes and who were also willing to allow me to conduct an unstructured interview. I realised at this point that the best research design for this study would be a qualitative case-study type research exercise. Nunan (1992:88) remarks that “[t]he case study has a great

deal of potential as a research method in applied linguistics, and has already established itself in the area of second language acquisition”. In addition, qualitative case-study type research is subjective, grounded, discovery orientated and normally provides deep, rich data enabling the researcher to understand behaviour from participants’ perspectives (Nunan 1992: 4).

This type of research is a case study and qualitative in nature therefore it begins with a thesis statement and proceeds in an inductive fashion to search for evidence to refute or support it. Blaxter et al observe that, “Qualitative research can be used for testing hypotheses and theories, even though it is mostly used for theory generation” (2007:65). Thus, although it is the path less travelled, in this dissertation I have formulated thesis statements explicitly, even though this is a qualitative study. The first is that the lecturers in the English language department at the institution had little or no knowledge of CLT at the time the study was done. The second is that lecturers who had knowledge of the CLT approach did not apply the approach in the classroom. As the study progressed through the phases of data gathering, analysis and recording of the results, I became aware of a factor that I had not anticipated. It appeared as if the participants were afraid to disclose a lack of knowledge of the underlying theoretical framework of CLT or to admit to not using this approach in the classroom. With the progression of time I became aware that there was a possibility of a mismatch between the information provided by the participants in the questionnaires and the unstructured interviews and what actually took place in the classroom. Thus the triangulation of data was invaluable.

3.2 Ethical Considerations

Academic research demands intellectual honesty, professionalism, objectivity, integrity, care and openness in order to maintain validity as well as to respect the privacy of the participants. Before conducting this research project, consent was obtained from the dean of the institution as well as the Head of the English Department. Participants were assured of their anonymity in writing in all three types of data gathering exercises, namely: the questionnaire, the classroom observation and the unstructured interview. The questionnaires (see appendix C) were distributed in

hardcopy as well as softcopy and were returned in both formats. In order to preserve the subjects' anonymity their identities are indicated by means of letters.

3.3 Method

This research is a case study. The method was chosen as it was appropriate to the nature of the study in that a range of methods are used for collecting and analysing data. Case studies provide in-depth and holistic descriptions and analyses of phenomena. In this instance the knowledge and use of the CLT approach in the classroom is the phenomenon which is investigated. Nunan describes qualitative research as, “grounded, discovery oriented, exploratory, expansionist, descriptive, and inductive” (1992:4). Professor Brian Haig of Canterbury University (1995) points out that “Grounded theory research begins by focusing on an area of study and gathers data from a variety of sources, including interviews and field observations...when this is done theories are generated, with the help of interpretive procedures, before being finally written up and presented”. In the case of this research the area of study that I focus on is the use of CLT or the lack of use of CLT in the classroom. I analyse the data by using coding procedures based on categories adapted from the COLT (part A) observation instrument. Next, I use the analysed data to determine whether my thesis statements are valid or not. In this final step I diverge from the traditional grounded research procedure in that I do not generate a theory or theories. Although it would seem that a qualitative research design may be best suited to the testing of the thesis statements, I believe that the abstract and ‘difficult to measure’ nature of ‘knowledge’ as a construct precludes the use of quantitative research methods and fits better with the ‘thick explanation’ that often emerges from grounded theory research. Grounded theory does not necessarily aim for the truth per se. However it does try to conceptualise what is going on by using empirical data. Grounded theory is an approach that looks at mostly qualitative data such as transcripts of interviews or observations and subsequently generates theory. The term “grounded theory” was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1998) in the late 1960’s and makes use of categories and coding of data. The research principle combines inductive and deductive methodology in order to create a research practice in which data sampling, analysis and theory development are embraced in synthesis with the goal of describing and

explaining the phenomena under research. The coding procedures are explained by Strauss (1998:13) as follows:

- Build rather than test theory, [although the latter alternative is relevant here]
- Provide researchers with analytic tools for handling masses of raw data.
- Help analysts to consider alternative meanings of phenomena.
- Be systematic and creative simultaneously.
- Identify, develop and relate the concepts that are the building blocks of theory.

The study aims at reaching a conclusion by exploring and describing the actions, thoughts and experiences of the subjects. Moreover, this study aims at deriving theory from data in order to prove or disprove the veracity of the hypothesis. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) mention that:

In grounded theory coding we create codes as we study our data. We do not, or should not, paste catchy concepts on our data. We should interact with our data and pose questions to them while coding them. Coding helps us to gain a new perspective on our material and to focus further data collection, and may lead us in unforeseen directions. Unlike quantitative research that requires data to fit into *preconceived*, standardised codes, the researchers' interpretations of data shape his or her emergent codes in grounded theory (158).

The research also makes use of “thick explanation” (Nunan 1992:58) which is research that is characterised by the accounting for all factors that may affect the phenomena or phenomenon being studied. The data gathering was undertaken in sequential phases. Firstly, the questionnaire containing 14 open-ended questions (see Appendix C) was distributed, completed and returned. An extension of a week was needed on the initial week deadline. The questionnaire set the tone of the research in that by engaging with the questions the participants had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the type of information the researcher was seeking to capture in all three data-gathering exercises.

In the second phase the subjects took part in the classroom observation sessions. The classroom observation sessions were all conducted within a week in order to cause minimal disruption to the teaching activities and to preserve the “freshness” of the data in the mind of the researcher. The final phase involved the semi-structured

interviews. These were spread over a two-week period due to the time constraints of the participants as well as the teaching obligations of the researcher. The interview notes were transcribed immediately after the interviews with a view to capturing the most salient information. The underlying rationale of the phasing system allowed the researcher to use the semi-structured interview to clarify data accumulated by means of the first two instruments.

3.4 The Subjects

The subjects of the study were 15 full time teachers from the English language department at the institution. The teaching staff consisted of different nationalities, namely British, Canadian, Indian, and South African. I divided the subjects into two groups namely, the “*core*” group and the “*auxiliary*” group. The core group consisted of participants who participated in all three data- gathering exercises, the questionnaire, the classroom observation and the semi-structured interview, whereas the auxiliary group consisted of the subjects who completed and returned the questionnaire only. I believed that the data elicited from the core group would be more detailed and reliable as three data gathering instruments were used as opposed to one instrument in the case of the auxiliary group.

A number of pertinent variables exist with regard to demographics. The gender division was 70 percent female and 30 percent male. Age and experience and educational and cultural backgrounds are factors that could influence the way in which the teachers interacted with students as well as their approach to classroom methodology. For example, a number of older teachers would have finished their education in the late 1960’s to mid 1970’s when Chomsky’s theories on linguistics and additional language learning were in vogue. These teachers may or may not have kept up to date with the latest research findings in the field of TESOL. During the period of research it was noticed that two of the teachers in the survey were strict in the prohibition of the use of any language other than that of the target language (English) in the classroom. Both of these teachers were in their late 50’s. When the issue of use of multiple languages in the classroom was discussed in formal meetings, the teachers maintained that it was common knowledge in additional language learning that only the target language should be used in the classroom. Nevertheless,

the following day other teachers produced current research material by prominent figures in the TESOL industry showing findings that indicated the use of the native tongue may be useful in many classroom situations. A number of younger teachers who had recently graduated and specialised in TESOL studies would have been exposed to a wider and more recent body of knowledge surrounding additional language learning, therefore there was an expectation from the researcher from the outset of the study that age and educational background would be an important variable with regard to teaching approaches.

In conclusion, the subjects in this research were from a broad demographic background with regard to age, gender, nationality and educational background. However, due to timetable constraints and the uneven male/female gender distribution², the semi-structured interviews and the classroom observation was comprised mainly of female teachers with the inclusion of a single male teacher. Although this sample is not representative of gender this factor should not be considered as one that would affect the validity or reliability of the study for the reasons outlined in 3.4.1. The table below provides a demographic profile of the participants in the survey according to their degree of involvement in the research. Not all of the research participants supplied exact details of their subject areas with regard to their qualifications, although others were quite specific.

Furthermore, insofar as additional language certifications are concerned, many subjects indicated simply TEFL/TESOL certificate whereas others specified the type of certificate such as the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) or, (Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA). Benchmarking of TEFL/TESOL teaching qualifications outside of those issued by recognised universities, is a difficult task. This is mostly due to the enormous number and broad range of quality of TESOL qualifications available within the teaching industry, especially in the domain of “*online*” TESOL/TEFL certification as well as numerous private institutes worldwide. The quality of many of these qualifications remains unverifiable for a number of reasons.

Firstly, there is the issue of accreditation. Many institutes offering TESOL/TEFL courses, although legally operative, lack any type of accreditation on a

national/regional basis. That is to say, such institutes lack accreditation by a national qualifications framework oversight body. Secondly, there is the issue of “*scope*”. This refers to the difference between a two week TESOL/TEFL course for example, and a year or more postgraduate study in the field of applied linguistics or second language acquisition, which results in a formally recognised degree. In other words, mentioning that one has a “*TEFL*” certificate on a survey questionnaire does not provide much valuable information to the researcher. In contrast, the globally recognised TESOL/TEFL qualifications such as the CELTA or DELTA provide meaningful credentials with regard to additional language teaching qualifications.

Table 6

Demographics Research Participants Core Group

Subject & Gender	Years Teaching	Qualification/s Nationality	Questionnaire	Interview	Observation
A/Female	2	BA, MA History British	yes	yes	yes
B/Female	4	BA, MA French	yes	yes	yes
C/Female	5	MA English Teaching, Indian	yes	yes	yes
D/Female	8	BA Hons., Linguistics, MA, CELTA, South African	yes	yes	yes
E/Male	4	BA, MA Mass Communication, Sudanese	yes	Yes	yes

Table 7

Demographics Research Participants Auxiliary Group

Subject/Gender	Years Teaching	Qualification/s Nationality	Questionnaire
F-female	5	Mid 40's-CELTA, CELTA YL, BA Hons., MA-British	Yes
G-male	4	Late 50's-DELTA, BA-British	Yes
H-male	13	Mid 60's-BA Hons., TEFLA Diploma-British	Yes
I-male	6	Early 30's-DELTA-British	Yes
J-male	40	Mid 60's-BA, BeD, MeD-South African	Yes
K-male	8	Late 40's-BA TESOL-Omani	Yes
L-female	30	Early 60's-MA-Indian	Yes
M-female	12	Mid 50's-BA Hons., PGCE-South African	Yes
N-male	4	Mid 30's-BA-Egyptian	Yes
O-female	5	Late 30's-BeD, MA-Indian	yes

3.4.1 The Role of Demographic Variables

I anticipated that some of the demographic variables would have an effect on the hypothesis of the study. For example, age is a demographic variable that is linked to education in that older teachers (50 years and above) would be less likely to be exposed to more recent theories in additional language learning than would younger teachers (30 years and below).² Educational background was expected to have a strong influence on the data in that teachers with education or linguistics/TESOL training would be expected to have more exposure to CLT methodology than teachers without any teacher training or TESOL-related qualifications. In addition, nationality may be linked to cultural contexts which in turn may have an effect on teaching styles. For example, teachers from traditionally *individual* orientated cultures may

² Note the example given earlier in the previous paragraph involving the use of multiple languages in the classroom

interact differently in the classroom to teachers originating from traditionally *collectivist/group* orientated cultures. With regard to gender, Susan Basow (1998) claims that it is not known how gender issues affect teaching styles. Sprague and Massoni (2005:779) argue that “a more careful reading of the research literature reveals that the evidence (regarding gender and teaching styles) is mixed”. In conclusion, it is possible that gender may affect teaching styles but it is unlikely to be a factor that would aid or inhibit an individual’s awareness of the CLT approach which is the central focus of this research.

3.5 Methods of Data Collection

Three instruments were used to collect data, namely, a questionnaire, classroom observation and a semi-structured interview. Due to time and other institutional constraints the classroom observation and the semi-structured interviews were limited to five classroom observations and five semi-structured interviews whereas the questionnaire was distributed and returned by most of the English language teaching staff with the exception of the part-time staff. Fifteen staff members returned the questionnaire and five staff members volunteered to sit for a semi-structured interview. I was able to draw conclusions from the information given by the subjects during the interviews as well as compare the information given by each individual with their performance in the classroom during the class observation sessions. This was facilitated by the fact that those staff members who sat for semi-structured interviews were kind enough to allow me to observe some of their classes. One lesson of fifty minutes in duration was observed in the case of each teacher. In summary, the most valuable data was gathered from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews.

One problem with classroom observation is that of validity and reliability. When a class is being observed, both the teacher and the students are aware of the observer and this may result in what is known as “the observer effect”. Classroom observation is an obtrusive data collection technique and some theorists have outlined concerns with this methodology. According to the encyclopaedia of State University:

Observer effects may occur because teachers and students are aware their behaviours are being observed. The presence of an observer may change teacher or student behaviours, perhaps resulting in reactive effects. Teacher anxiety or teachers performing less well than usual can interfere with valid inferences of what normally occurs in the classroom. On the other hand, there is also some evidence that indicates that teachers' instruction may be slightly better than usual when they are being observed. Although some researchers like Donald Medley, Homer Coker, and Robert Soar maintain that observer effects are not serious problems, the possibility that this threatens the reliability and validity of data collected exists.

Available: <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1835/Classroom-Observation.html> [Accessed: 1/12/09]

In my own experiences of being observed in the classroom, the above quote rings true in that on one occasion, when I felt my job was threatened, I performed better than normal, perhaps due to the added pressure. However, on another occasion, I simply grew anxious and more nervous than usual, resulting in poor feedback from the students and a below average lesson delivery. In addition, according to Professor Woods (2006) of the University of Plymouth, there are certain advantages and disadvantages to non-participant observation "There are also practical and ethical problems about being a fly on the wall". In a lesson that is observed from the back of a classroom the researcher adopts a 'fly on the wall' position it may prove difficult to remain unobtrusive and the observer may not be able to capture the true reality of the event in that a lot may be happening at the same time and it is difficult to capture by scribbling down notes as a means of recording events. However, non-participant observation is less taxing.

In conclusion, I encountered a number of difficulties in conducting the research. Firstly, there is not much literature in the Oman context that relates to this area, and secondly, from a cultural contextual point of view, I felt that many of the participants were afraid to provide information. Watson, in her unpublished Masters dissertation involving subjects in the United Arab Emirates, a neighbouring Gulf State to Oman, encountered similar problems: "Due to the difficulties in acquiring information and the reluctance of subjects to go on record criticising, or even simply expressing their opinions...it was decided to adopt a qualitative and interpretative approach to the research" (2004:10).

In this case study, data gained from the three instruments were subject to careful analysis insofar as the aspect of originality was concerned. For example, hypothetically, a teacher participating in the survey who did not know much about the CLT approach would be likely to do a little research on the internet before responding to the questions. This would be done to mask ignorance or to give an appearance of knowledge on a topic that is central to the profession. A quick “Google” search of *Communicative Language Teaching* yields a vast amount of information that could be reproduced in response to questions, either written or oral.

3.5.1 The Questionnaire

Two advantages of questionnaires are that they are inexpensive and easy to administer. The questionnaire contained 14 open-ended questions. The questions were grouped thematically in order to address the research question as well as facilitate analysis of the responses. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in appendix C. According to Nunan, a questionnaire, “...enables the researcher to collect data in field settings, and the data themselves are more amenable to quantification than discursive data such as free form field notes, participant observers journals, the transcripts of oral language”(Nunan 1992: 143).

The thematic grouping of the questions enabled me to analyse systematically and categorise the respondents’ data for the purposes of “...understanding human behaviour from the actor’s own frame of reference” (Nunan 1992:4), which is a cornerstone of qualitative research. In addition, the creation of themes enabled me to focus and interact with the data as proposed by Denzin and Lincoln (2003). A framework for the basis of the questions provided in the questionnaire is as follows:

- Approaches to additional language teaching; attitudes and conceptions
- Teaching methodology and implementation; classroom activities
- Additional information relevant to teaching methodology; demographics, qualifications, experience

The questions and a brief discussion of their underlying rationale are found below.

Questions dealing with *approaches*, *attitudes* and *conceptions*:

Question 1: In general, how would you describe your approach to teaching English?

Question 2: Do you have a preferred method/approach to teaching English as a foreign or second language? Please name this approach/method.

Question 3: Could you briefly describe this approach/method?

Question 4: Do you ever use a variety of approaches /methods in the classroom; if so please explain why?

Question 5: Do you have any awareness of the CLT approach? If so please briefly explain what this approach means to you with regard to teaching methodology.

Question 6; If your answer to the above question was yes then please describe how you learned about CLT; whether it was through formal teacher training or informal means such as research on the internet or journal articles.

Question 13: Do you try to keep up to date with current research findings in second language teaching methodology? If so please explain how you do this.

Questions 1-6 deal with approaches toward “classroom methodology”. Question 13 can also be grouped under the “approach” category in that both negative and positive responses to this question would be relevant to the respondent’s attitudes and conceptions surrounding teaching approaches.

Questions dealing with, *teaching methodology, implementation and classroom activities*:

Question 7: Do you think that it is important to teach learners rules of English grammar? If so please briefly explain why you think this is important.

Question 8: In your opinion is it effective to teach the different skills such as grammar, reading and writing separately, or do you think it is more effective to teach these skills in an integrated fashion? Please explain your answer.

Question 9: What would you say the main obstacles are with regard to implementing your preferred teaching style in the classroom?

Question 10: Do the course textbooks and teaching materials affect your teaching methodology in any way? Please explain.

Question 11: Do you think that the “PPP” or Presentation, Practice & Production, method of additional language teaching is an effective approach? Please clarify your answer.

Questions 7-11 can be grouped under the category of “implementation of teaching approach” in that the questions are designed to elicit responses that deal with factors such as inductive versus deductive methodology, teaching skills in an integrated or separate fashion, classroom obstacles and constraints as well as textbooks and learning resources.

Questions dealing with *additional information*: Question 12: Please state what your qualifications are.

Question 14: In the space below please provide comments or indicate any factors that you may find relevant to your teaching methods.

Questions 12 and 14 can be grouped as auxiliary or additional relevant information and were included for the following reasons: Question 12 asks the respondent to state their qualifications and question 14 asks for any additional information regarding teaching methodology. An insight into the qualifications of the respondents is a vital indicator of prior knowledge of various additional language teaching approaches. For example, a respondent indicating a bachelors or masters degree in sociology would be far less likely to have knowledge of the CLT approach than a respondent indicating a qualification related to education or linguistics.

In a number of cases the researcher found that respondents provided information that was “off-topic” in response to question 14. Perhaps the question was too open-ended as it was found that respondents took the opportunity to air grievances about past work-related experiences or to comment on general issues surrounding education in Oman. This information, while having intrinsic value in itself, was not related to the research topic and had to be discarded. However, a number of respondents did provide information relevant to the study in response to the final question (question number 14).

3.5.2 Classroom Observation

I observed five classes of 100 minutes each. Each lesson at the institution was timetabled as being 50 minutes in duration and all the lessons were “double” sessions.

That is to say there were no single lessons of 50 minutes in duration on the timetable. Students were expected to be present in the classroom at least 5 minutes into the allotted time slot. Students were required to keep their mobile phones switched off during class time. The researcher was seated at the back of the classroom and used field notes to document the events in the classroom.

It was decided to use a categorisation framework adapted from the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) model originally developed by Allen et al. (1984). This observation instrument was designed to measure features of CLT that occur in the classroom. The COLT framework consists of two parts, namely part A and part B. Part A contains categories that are concerned with classroom activities while part B focuses on classroom language.

I found that for the purposes of this qualitative case-study type research to adapt the categories in part A for the study as these categories are more suited to grouping or coding schemes as embraced in grounded theory and “thick” explanation which is, “the collection of data on all of the factors which might impinge on the phenomena under investigation” (Nunan, 1992:58). The categories adapted from the COLT (part A) observation instrument used in this research are given below:

Classroom Observation Categories

➤ Activity type:

- drill, role-play, explicit instruction, worksheet, gap-fill or cloze exercise try to align (here and below)

➤ Participant organisation:

- Teacher works with whole class
- Students work in groups, pairs or individually
- Organisation of group/pair work

➤ Content:

- Focus of lesson, form, function, inductive, deductive, classroom management, discourse or other?
- Range of topics, selected from course book or other?
- Selection of topic, students, teacher, mutually negotiated?

➤ Student modality:

- Students involved in listening, speaking, reading, writing or a combination of skills?

➤ Materials:

- Types of materials
- Source and purpose of materials
- Control and use of materials

I used the five categories and sub categories to gather data and create notes surrounding each of the classroom observations in order to create a profile of each lesson. The data from the notes was reviewed and expanded immediately following the observations in order to capture events as clearly as possible and reduce the risk of loss of data due to time/memory lapse. In addition, the data gathered during the classroom observations was collated with the information the subjects had supplied on the questionnaire as well as the semi-structured interview.

The adapted COLT categories collate with questions 1-8 on the questionnaire that deal with teaching methodologies, implementation and classroom activities. The collation of these questions with the classroom observation data was of particular importance to the research in that it provided an indication as to the extent to which teachers put into practice the ideas and beliefs they had articulated in the questionnaire.

3.5.3 The Semi-Structured Interview

Nunan (1992:149) maintains that, “Because of its flexibility, the semi-structured interview has found favour with many researchers...”. I interviewed each of the subjects for a period of 30 to 45 minutes and took notes during the interview. It was decided not to use an audio recording because of the time consuming task of transcribing the notes as well as the possible data overload. A set of twenty questions were developed and refined (see appendix D) that were designed to elicit information about the subjects’ knowledge and use of CLT in the classroom. Some of the questions corresponded closely with the questions asked in the questionnaire. In addition, questions were formulated to meet the requirements of an open-ended interview which allows space for the subjects to provide unsolicited information. Semi-structured, open-ended interviews permit, “...greater flexibility than the close-

ended type and permit a more valid response from the informants' perception of reality" (Burns 1997: 330). Also, the semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to, "...probe for information and obtain data that often have not been foreseen" (Seliger & Shohamy 1989:166).

Finally, the semi-structured interview with the group of core subjects allowed the subjects to build on and clarify information provided in the questionnaires. I kept a copy of the subjects' questionnaire as well as the notes of the classroom observation at hand. This enabled me to clarify any unclear information as well as provide a prompt in order to elicit information. For example I would elicit information in the semi-structured interview by mentioning that the subject had indicated having undertaken formal training in the field of CLT. I would then ask the subject; "Could you please expand on the type of formal training you received in CLT methodology?" On more than one occasion, the clarification of data by this means provided valuable information that would have otherwise not been accessible by means of the questionnaire alone.

3.6 Data Analysis

In order to analyse the data I formed profiles of the core group of participants in the survey. In the case of the *core group* the data collected consisted of:

- The questionnaire;
- The classroom observation sessions;
- The semi-structured interviews.

The data collected for analysis in the case of the *auxiliary group* consisted of the questionnaire only. The small size of the sample did not allow me to make a statistical analysis. Instead, profiles of the subjects that included demographic data as well as data gathered from the questionnaire, the classroom observation and the semi-structured interview were created. The profiles were divided into two groups namely, the core group and the auxiliary group. The data from each group were then analysed using an inductive analytical approach based on the following scheme:

- Evidence of factors influencing awareness of CLT approach
 - Formal qualifications and training
 - Other training and professional development
 - Beliefs and attitudes towards teaching approaches

- Evidence of implementation of CLT approach
 - Pedagogic modality
 - Constraints on implementation of CLT
 - Other factors

Findings based on the data of each group were analysed with the data from the core group being seen as more central to the research hypotheses than the data from the auxiliary group. The rationale was that the use of three data-gathering instruments in the case of the core group allowed for a richer, more holistic and intense view of the subjects' pedagogical *modus operandi* in order to address the hypothesis and the sub hypothesis of the research.

4 FINDINGS

This chapter outlines the findings of the research study. Firstly, the data gathered from the core group are recorded in a series of profiles that create a record of the information gathered of each subject's participation in the research. Then, a discussion of the findings with regard to each individual subject in the core group is presented. The discussion focuses on the relevance of the data to the research focus. Following that, a series of profiles of each of the participants in the auxiliary group is documented. The data gathered from this group are based on information gleaned from the questionnaire only, and are used to create profiles about the participants' knowledge and application of the CLT approach in the classroom. Lastly, the findings of the data surrounding the auxiliary group are discussed with a view to confirming or disconfirming the research hypotheses.

4.1 Core Group Profiles

The following subsections outline the data with regard to the core group participants who are identified by means of the letters; A, B, C, D and E in order to preserve their anonymity. The profiles are comprised of three sections namely; section 1 (Questionnaire), section 2 (Class Observation), and section 3 (Interview). These three sections denote the information gathered using each of the research instruments, namely; the survey questionnaire, the classroom observation and the semi-structured interview. In order to present the facts as clearly as possible the data have been presented verbatim in the case of the questionnaire. The data gathered during the classroom observation and semi-structured interview have been presented as transcribed from the researcher's notes made during these data-gathering exercises. Many questions from the semi-structured interview were similar to those of the questionnaire. The purpose of the semi-structured interview was to allow the participants to expand on information provided in the questionnaire and to allow me to clarify factors surrounding the participants' knowledge of the CLT approach. Therefore only the most salient points from the interview are described. These are the points that clarify conflicting or unclear information provided on the questionnaire as well as other information pertaining to the research hypothesis.

4.1.1 Profile Subject A

Section 1 Questionnaire

The responses from subject A to the survey questionnaire were as follows:³

1 In general, how would you describe your approach to teaching English?

Answer: "Depends on the level, students, group size, requirement of student etc. what I do."

2 Do you have a preferred method/approach to teaching English as a foreign or second language? Please name this approach/method.

Answer: "No".

3 Could you briefly describe this approach/method?

No Answer.

4 Do you ever use a variety of approaches/methods in the classroom; if so please explain why?

Answer: "Yes, because different learners need different approaches".

5 Do you have any awareness of the CLT approach? If so please briefly explain what this approach means to you with regard to teaching methodology.

Answer: "Yes".

6 If your answer to the above question was yes then please describe how you learned about CLT; whether it was through formal teacher training or informal means such as research on the internet or journal articles.

Answer: "No idea".

7 Do you think that it is important to teach learners rules of English grammar? If so please briefly explain why you think this is important.

Answer: "Yes because if they don't they will never become fluent".

8 In your opinion is it effective to teach the different skills such as grammar, reading and writing separately, or do you think it is more effective to teach these skills in an integrated fashion? Please explain your answer.

Answer: "A class may be scheduled as 'grammar', but all skills will be used e.g. reading text, listening to classmates, teachers".

9 What would you say the main obstacles are with regard to implementing your preferred teaching style in the classroom?

Answer: "Mixed ability classes".

10 Do the course textbooks and teaching resource materials affect your teaching methodology in any way? Please explain.

Answer: "No idea".

11 Do you think that the "PPP" or Presentation, Practice & Production, method of additional language teaching is an effective approach? Please clarify your answer.

Answer: "Yes, but constraints such as timetables and curriculum requirements often make it more difficult to do".

12 Please state what your qualifications are.

Answer: "BA, MA History, TEFL".

³ All responses are given verbatim and unedited. The font and line spaces have been changed to distinguish the primary data from the discussion sections.

13 Do you try to keep up to date with current research findings in second language teaching methodology? If so please explain how you do this.

Answer: "Web".

14 In the space below please provide comments or indicate any factors that you may find relevant with regard to your teaching methods.

No Answer.

Section 2 Class Observation

The transcripts from my notes following the classroom observation session are as follows:

The lesson involves 27 pre-intermediate students. The class is composed of 9 males and 18 females. Class members are seated in the traditional rows of seats with females clustered on one side of the classroom and males on the other. For the larger part of the lesson students remain seated in their rows although during the worksheet and gap-fill exercise some of the students push their chairs together in order to work in pairs. This happens randomly with most of the students having chosen seating arrangements in close location to a friend or friends. They work quietly and talk softly in Arabic, their mother tongue. The lesson is reflected as "Core" on the timetable which means that the class will be using *New Headway* textbook which is the prescribed course book. The teacher introduces the aspect of grammar (present continuous tense) that the students started to work on in a previous lesson. Initially the teacher works with the class as a whole, first reminding them of the structural aspects of the present continuous tense and the appropriate contexts in which the tense should be used. Then she asks the students to check their own answers to the homework that had been given. Occasionally a student raises a hand and requests clarification; in return the teacher provides an answer or looks at the individual's work to check on the problem. Gap-fill worksheets are given to the students and they are required to fill in the correct form of the verb as well as choose (by means of deducing from the context) the correct tense. The gap-fill worksheets take up approximately an hour of the lesson time.

When the gap-fill worksheets have been completed the teacher then asks the students to check their answers as she writes them on the whiteboard. From time to time students raise their hands to request clarification mostly about the use of the verbs or the spelling of an irregular verb. When the checking of the worksheets is complete the teacher then refers the students to a reading passage in the relevant unit of the

textbook and calls on individual students to read out loud while the others follow. Some students are better readers than others and many of the weaker students find great difficulty in reading the text out loud. The majority of students including the better readers tend to pay little attention to punctuation and intonation with the result that the reading sounds monotonous with no pauses in between sentences. When the short reading text is finished the teacher then sums up the content of the text and refers the students to the questions in the text book pertaining to the reading. The teacher takes her seat at a large table in front of the class after telling the students that they have 15 to 20 minutes in which to answer the questions and that they should do this individually in silence without “cheating”. The teacher busies herself with other work as the students busy themselves with answering the questions. The time passes and the lesson finishes with the teacher telling the students to finish the questions to the reading for homework which will be checked the following day. The class is then dismissed.

Section 3 Interview

Salient points of the interview:

This subject has been teaching for 2 years in Europe and Oman. Despite having stated that she had knowledge of the CLT approach, she mentioned (in the questionnaire) that she had “no idea” how she learned about it. The subject believes the CLT approach is “to get the students talking and communicating in English”. She has not formally studied the CLT approach but “...read about it on the internet’ and has attended “workshops” on the approach at ESL conferences. Grammar rules, pronunciation and fluency seemed of paramount importance to this subject. When I explained the paradox that many native speakers who would be considered fluent often have only a limited knowledge of grammar rules, the subject replied that this was because they were native speakers and had “...learned English naturally”. The students at the institution were native Arabic speakers and therefore had to learn English “...in another way...by knowing the rules they will learn to speak more accurately”.

Mixed ability classes were a significant problem for this subject in that she felt she could not advance with the students as she had to, “...cater to the needs of the class as a whole”, and ensure that the weak students would pass the exams. The more

proficient students would then become bored and irritated with the lesson as the work was too easy for them. The subject acknowledged that students use the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing during any particular lesson therefore the target language is learned in an integrated fashion even though the lessons are scheduled as “grammar”, “reading” etcetera. The lesson focus may be on a particular skill, but all skills are used in any one lesson.

The subject is unable to explain why the timetable and curriculum constraints are obstacles to the “presentation, practice and production” method of additional language teaching. Subsequent discussion revealed that the subject is not familiar with this approach. With regard to the relevance of academic qualifications (MA history) to additional language teaching the subject feels that “...most educated native speakers of English should be able to teach the language quite well”.

4.1.2 Profile Subject B

Section 1 Questionnaire

The responses from subject B to the survey questionnaire were as follows:

1 In general, how would you describe your approach to teaching English?

Answer: “Student centred”.

2 Do you have a preferred method/approach to teaching English as a foreign or second language? Please name this approach/method.

Answer: “Communicative”.

3 Could you briefly describe this approach/method?

Answer: “I try to make the students talk as much as possible through ‘genuine’ interaction, for example, after the break I ask them what sandwich and drink they had. I don’t explicitly explain the grammar, just introduce a point and practice it in a book (student and exercise), then orally. We usually play games as well; spelling race between two contestants on whiteboard is a favourite.”

4 Do you ever use a variety of approaches/methods in the classroom; if so please explain why?

Answer: “I try to adapt my approach to the Omani context. The students come from a conservative teacher centred background, with up to 50 children per class; they are used to rote learning and uncomfortable with the communicative approach. They like the rules to be explained, just like in Arabic class, and they feel they are learning more efficiently when writing things down. I have learned to be more flexible in the classroom and accepting I should follow the methods they are used to. As a result I end up doing a lot of written exercises in class.”

5 Do you have any awareness of the CLT approach? If so please briefly explain what this approach means to you with regard to teaching methodology.

Answer: "It is student centred as opposed to teacher centred. It focuses on communicative competence rather than perfect grammar and pronunciation. The goal is to help the learners to be able to understand and to make themselves understood in a real life situation".

6 If your answer to the above question was yes then please describe how you learned about CLT; whether it was through formal teacher training or informal means such as research on the internet or journal articles.

Answer: "I studied three languages in secondary school in France; English, then German, then Spanish. My foreign language teachers always used the communicative approach. I then formally learnt about it at university when I trained to be a teacher".

7 Do you think that it is important to teach learners rules of English grammar? If so please briefly explain why you think this is important.

Answer: "As a learner I was always more comfortable".

8 In your opinion is it effective to teach the different skills such as grammar, reading and writing separately, or do you think it is more effective to teach these skills in an integrated fashion? Please explain your answer.

Answer: "The skills can be integrated very easily, they actually always are, with grammar and vocab being ubiquitous it feels unnatural to separate them but for testing purposes separation makes things easier."

9 What would you say the main obstacles are with regard to implementing your preferred teaching style in the classroom?

Answer: "Everything, from the students to the management (especially when Omani!)".

10 Do the course textbooks and teaching resource materials affect your teaching methodology in any way? Please explain.

Answer: "I follow everything by the book, focusing on what will be in the exam; this is what I am paid for".

11 Do you think that the "PPP" or Presentation, Practice & Production, method of additional language teaching is an effective approach? Please clarify your answer.

Answer: "Yes, but if students are not absolute beginners, as is the case here, where students have up to 10 years+ studying English, I shorten the presentation part as they are already familiar with everything".

12 Please state what your qualifications are.

Answer: "I have just completed an M.A. in applied linguistics I also hold a degree in English Literature, a certificate in teaching French as a Foreign Language and a PGC in TESOL".

13 Do you try to keep up to date with current research findings in second language teaching methodology? If so please explain how you do this.

Answer: "Yes by attending local ELT conferences, I might even present a paper myself one day".

14 In the space below please provide comments or indicate any factors that you may find relevant with regard to your teaching methods.

Answer: "I have been teaching English in Omani higher institutes for 4 years now and my approach has completely changed. When I arrived, I thought, like many of my also newly arrived colleagues, that the students would benefit from my western knowledge and experience. I was wrong. I even got into trouble at CBFS after a group

of students wrote a petition against me for being a slack teacher who never wrote anything on the board, thus not preparing them efficiently for the monthly test. I was somewhat traumatized by the experience (being called in the head's office who then came to my classroom to teach me how to use different colour markers) and am now very cautious. In this country the student is king and the teachers do not get much support from the management. We should not see ourselves as conquerors of the Omani educational system; Omani management adheres to the native speaker fallacy, yet they want us to follow their rules of the game. I have no problem with that (although when I see the students' general level in English I have strong doubts regarding the efficiency of their methods) I just wish I had been warned before I started by my Canadian employer/ agent. You live and learn. To conclude, I think western teachers and their communicative approach to language teaching are not suited for the Omani system as it is today. Arab and Indian teachers are much better, linguistically and culturally closer to the students".

Section 2 Class Observation

The transcripts from my notes following the classroom observation session are as follows:

The lesson is timetabled as a 'writing' class. The duration is 100 minutes. Approximately 15 minutes is lost due to students arriving late as well as the fact that the class is dismissed earlier than the appointed time having completed the activities for the lesson. The level is elementary and it is a mixed gender class of 22 students with 16 females and 6 males. Students are seated in small clusters according to gender. The teacher enters the class and introduces the topic. She instructs the students that they are going to learn about using time sequence linking words to write a short text. The students are given worksheets consisting of a series of pictures that depict stages in the process of making tea. The students are then told to sit in groups of threes or fours following which the teacher explains the task which is to arrange the pictures in the correct sequence. They take about fifteen minutes to do this as the teacher moves from group to group observing and discussing the process. As she moves from group to group the teacher provides the groups with a short explanation of the time sequence words (first, second, next, then, finally). Each group is asked to construct a short paragraph and to nominate a group member to read the text out to the class. The atmosphere in the class is informal and light-hearted whilst the readings take place.

The second phase of the lesson involves a reading text in which students are required in a race against the clock, to identify the time sequence words in the text (of which

there are a few more than in the first exercise). The first group to finish raises their hands, but has not identified all the correct words and hence is disqualified. The same occurs with the second group until finally, the third group identifies all the correct words. The final part of the lesson involves the writing of a short text using the linking words and the past simple tense. The topic is given and the students work individually in a more formal, concentrated fashion on their writing. Occasionally a question is addressed to the teacher as she circulates about the class. As the students finish writing their texts and hand them to the teacher they are dismissed from the class.

Section 3 Interview

Salient points of the interview:

The subject was able to discuss in depth theory surrounding the CLT approach including the reasons why she prefers using this approach in the class room. Interestingly enough, the main reason the subject offered as to her preference was that, “research has proven that this is the best method to learn a foreign language”. This particular subject seemed to have in depth academic training with regard to CLT; however she confirmed the fact that her teaching experience was rather limited in relative terms.

The link between her answer to question 4 in the interview, “I try to adapt my approach to the Omani context”, and the lengthy comment placed under question 14 which deals with teaching style in the local (Omani) context, formed the body of the interview discussion. In the questionnaire she, “assumed that students would benefit from her western knowledge and experience”. I asked the subject to explain briefly what she meant by, “western knowledge and experience”. Also, I asked her to clarify why she assumed students would benefit from this in that they possessed cultural values, a language and a belief system of their own and that making such an assumption, one is presupposing that western culture is superior to, or contains vital elements that the local culture lacks. The subject conceded the rationality of the argument, but added that in the context of language acquisition she felt that the CLT approach was the best method of enhancing their command of the English language thereby providing them with vital life skills.

“We should not see ourselves as conquerors of the Omani educational system; Omani management adheres to the native speaker fallacy, yet they want us to follow their rules of the game...I have no problem with that”. The subject also mentioned that she “has changed her approach to teaching” after she realized that the students perhaps simply needed English as a “tool for survival in the modern world” perhaps without the accompanying “ideological and cultural baggage”. After an unpleasant incident in which she was reprimanded by management for her teaching style she now tends to teach in a manner that is expected by learners and management. This “manner” entails more use of explicit, teacher centered instruction, “less games, more grammar drills”. However, she maintains that she doubts the efficiency of the traditional local approach which is characterized by memorization, teacher-centered lessons with a high value placed on deductive, grammar-based language learning. The subject believes that the general standard of English in Oman is quite poor in comparison with other countries in which students study English as a second language for a similar number of years. She attributes this to the learning approach. I ask the subject which countries she is making the comparison with; “China, Taiwan, Brazil, Korea, South Africa, various European countries”. She admits that her comparison is based largely on European countries and that there may be other factors involved in the general level of English as an additional language, aside from learning approach.

“To conclude, I think western teachers and their communicative approach to language teaching are not suited for the Omani system as it is today. Arab and Indian teachers are much better, linguistically and culturally closer to the students”. Here reasons are given as to why Arab and Indian teachers would be more suited to the local context however; the reader is left to make the assumption that these teachers would also be using traditional teaching approaches. The subject clarifies that this is the case.

4.1.3 Profile Subject C

Section 1 Questionnaire

The responses from subject C to the survey questionnaire were as follows:

1 In general, how would you describe your approach to teaching English?

Answer: “An eclectic method; a range of methods.”

2 Do you have a preferred method/approach to teaching English as a foreign or second language? Please name this approach/method.

Answer: "I like to use a range of methods whatever best to approach the students".

3 Could you briefly describe this approach/method?

Answer: "Meanwhile I teach reading and writing; so for reading, a grammar translation method, extensive reading, intensive reading etcetera. For writing, the writing process method and the Self-regulated Strategy Development Model of Harris and Graham, 1996."

4 Do you ever use a variety of approaches/methods in the classroom; if so please explain why?

Answer: "As previously mentioned I want to use a range of methods for two reasons; First of all to make the class interesting for the students and myself. Second, to get the information to the students by all means!"

5 Do you have any awareness of the CLT approach? If so please briefly explain what this approach means to you with regard to teaching methodology.

Answer: "It is the Communicative Language Teaching; I believe it is to teach the language to the learners unintentionally".

6 If your answer to the above question was yes then please describe how you learned about CLT; whether it was through formal teacher training or informal means such as research on the internet or journal articles.

Answer: "Got across the method when I was working on my Masters Degree but I don't really remember what it is about".

7 Do you think that it is important to teach learners rules of English grammar? If so please briefly explain why you think this is important.

Answer: "Definitely. English grammar should be taught and I believe intentionally is more effective. In the beginning, because the (students) would know some basics and then start to use them in their production either through writing or speaking".

8 In your opinion is it effective to teach the different skills such as grammar, reading and writing separately, or do you think it is more effective to teach these skills in an integrated fashion? Please explain your answer.

Answer: "Separately, because they are more focused on them".

9 What would you say the main obstacles are with regard to implementing your preferred teaching style in the classroom?

Answer: "Time constraints and the load of work on teachers nowadays, especially the unnecessary paperwork".

10 Do the course textbooks and teaching resource materials affect your teaching methodology in any way? Please explain.

Answer: "Not at all. I choose my own materials so I can mould them to whatever method preferred".

11 Do you think that the "PPP" or Presentation, Practice & Production, method of additional language teaching is an effective approach? Please clarify your answer.

Answer: "Yes, I believe that strongly, because this is basically what I do in my writing instruction".

12 Please state what your qualifications are.

Answer: "A Masters Degree in English Teaching Methodology/Writing Specialisation".

13 Do you try to keep up to date with current research findings in second language teaching methodology? If so please explain how you do this.

Answer: "Yes from time to time. I have subscriptions in [sic] some of the EFL journals".

14 In the space below please provide comments or indicate any factors that you may find relevant with regard to your teaching methods.

No Answer.

Section 2 Class Observation

The transcripts from my notes following the classroom observation session are as follows:

The lesson is timetabled as a double "reading lesson". There are thirty one learners in the intermediate level class, fifteen males and sixteen females. The students are seated in the traditional rows or desks formation with the females on the left side of the class and the males on the right side. The teacher waits for approximately five minutes for the students to enter and settle down. Students chat among themselves and the teacher makes small talk with some of the students. When everyone is seated she draws their attention to a reading text in the *New Headway* textbook. The atmosphere is fairly formal as the teacher explains to the students their task which is to read the text silently to themselves and consult their dictionaries in order to assist with difficult vocabulary items. Each student should compile a list of at least five words with the correct definition. In addition, the students have to answer the questions related to the text. The students commence their task in silence as the teacher takes her seat in front of the class at her desk and busies herself with some paperwork.

The allotted time for the reading task is 40 minutes. The teacher announces to the class that they have ten minutes to finish after which the answers will be discussed. When the time is up students are asked to put their pens down. Then the teacher picks out individual students to answer the questions and recite the words and their meanings in their "new vocabulary" list. As the questions are answered the teacher writes the correct answer on the whiteboard stressing the use of "proper full sentences" and "correct punctuation". When all the questions are answered the teacher compiles a list of new vocabulary words which she deems are central to the topic and are also important for exam purposes. (The final exam is comprised of a listening, reading, grammar, vocabulary and writing section. The students are required to know

the meaning of a certain number of vocabulary items which are normally listed by the teacher.)

For the remaining forty five minutes of the lesson the students are given a writing topic that is found under the “writing” section of the relevant unit in the textbook. They are told to finish the writing during the class time; otherwise to finish it for homework then hand it to the teacher the following day. The writing involves a short informal email text and the teacher sketches out a diagram on the whiteboard. The diagram consists of three rectangular boxes labeled respectively; introduction, body and conclusion. The teacher then elicits from the students information pertaining to the content of each of the “boxes”. She then corrects and sums up at the end of the elicitation. “The purpose of the introduction is to introduce the reader to the topic of the text”.

For the remainder of the lesson the students work quietly on their writing. Some students finish early, hand their texts to the teacher and are allowed to leave the class. Eventually the remaining students are told to finish their work at home and they are dismissed from the class.

Section 3 Interview

Salient points of the interview:

This subject was the second subject from the core group to state that time and workload constraints presented obstacles to the implementation of a specific teaching approach. I found this curious and began to wonder if perhaps a misconception surrounding the notion of *teaching approach* existed.

The subject confirms that she has a master’s degree in Education with English Teaching Methodology and Writing as specializations. The degree was obtained in India. The subject has heard mention of the CLT approach but is not too sure what it entails. She thinks that it may be a method of teaching in which students are supposed to “absorb the language”. The subject is asked to explain about her use of “an eclectic” method and a “range of methods” as stated in the questionnaire. She explains how she teaches the students writing by means of the *Self Regulated Strategy Development Model* of Harris and Graham. The explanation focuses on the underlying

tenets of the model itself rather than what takes place in the classroom. The subject does not relate to the term ‘approach’ as in the applied linguistics/SLA industry meaning. She clearly understands approach to mean the way in which she deals with or ‘approaches’ the students rather than an underlying philosophy behind the pedagogic method of delivery that takes place in the classroom.

The subject is asked to explain how time and workload constraints affect the choice of teaching approach. The subject cites a list of grievances regarding paperwork, assessment, and teaching load. It is evident that she feels these factors contribute toward stress levels and make the task of teaching between 24 to 30 hours a week a “hectic” undertaking.

4.1.4 Profile Subject D

Section 1 Questionnaire

The responses from subject D to the survey questionnaire were as follows:

1 In general, how would you describe your approach to teaching English?

Answer: “Lots of different approaches”.

2 Do you have a preferred method/approach to teaching English as a foreign or second language? Please name this approach/method.

Answer: “No, I think that students get bored with one approach. But I do use a bit of behaviourist drill, a bit of CLT, using models of writing genre approach, games. I also sometimes use Test, Teach, Test-especially with grammar”.

3 Could you briefly describe this approach/method?

Answer: “I broadly use a PPP approach but I try and throw in some fun things - games, competition. To teach writing, I use a PPP and part of the practice would be looking at examples of good and bad writing”.

4 Do you ever use a variety of approaches/methods in the classroom; if so please explain why?

Answer: “Yes, as I said before it makes it more interesting”.

5 Do you have any awareness of the CLT approach? If so please briefly explain what this approach means to you with regard to teaching methodology.

Answer: “Yes, using language and exposing students to language in natural settings. This would mean using authentic texts as far as possible”.

6 If your answer to the above question was yes then please describe how you learned about CLT; whether it was through formal teacher training or informal means such as research on the internet or journal articles.

Answer: “Formal. I did honours in Applied Linguistics and a Masters in ESL”.

7 Do you think that it is important to teach learners rules of English grammar? If so please briefly explain why you think this is important.

Answer: "Yes". "Awareness of rules is essential for students to monitor their own production. In higher education students have to be able to proofread and edit their own work and they cannot do this unless they know the rules and have had practice".

8 In your opinion is it effective to teach the different skills such as grammar, reading and writing separately, or do you think it is more effective to teach these skills in an integrated fashion? Please explain your answer.

Answer: "No-integration is important. Part of CLT is authentic use of language, language is not isolated. Why do we learn grammar? So that we can use language better. We need to practice the grammar in reading and writing, listening and speaking, otherwise students will think that we learn grammar for its own sake".

9 What would you say the main obstacles are with regard to implementing your preferred teaching style in the classroom?

No answer.

10 Do the course textbooks and teaching resource materials affect your teaching methodology in any way? Please explain.

Answer: "I don't use any".

11 Do you think that the "PPP" or Presentation, Practice & Production, method of additional language teaching is an effective approach? Please clarify your answer.

Answer: "Yes. If you go through each 'P', then you will have provided a coherent lesson How you manage each 'P' is up to each teacher, to make it as interesting as possible".

12 Please state what your qualifications are.

Answer: "Honours in Applied linguistics; Masters in ESL; CELTA".

13 Do you try to keep up to date with current research findings in second language teaching methodology? If so please explain how you do this.

Answer: "By reading journal articles".

14 In the space below please provide comments or indicate any factors that you may find relevant with regard to your teaching methods.

No Answer.

Section 2 Class Observation

The transcripts from my notes following the classroom observation session are as follows:

The class is scheduled as a grammar class and is comprised of 25 students. There are 11 males and 14 females. The students are studying at an upper intermediate level. The seating arrangement at the beginning of the lesson is configured in traditional "row" formation. The teacher greets the students and introduces the lesson topic which focuses on an aspect of grammar termed "the 3rd Conditional" or "talking about the unreal past" as given in the textbook. The teacher works with the class as a whole as she briefly goes over the structure of the 1st and 2nd Conditionals that the students are familiar with. She elicits answers from the class as she outlines the structural

aspect of each conditional sketching a diagram with matching examples on the whiteboard. This introductory portion of the lesson takes 15 minutes to complete.

The body of the lesson commences with the students' attention being drawn to the relevant unit in the textbook which is prefaced by a small "grammar box". The grammar box outlines the structural aspect of the third conditional and provides reasons and examples as to how and why this element of discourse should be used. Working with the class as a whole, the teacher runs through the grammar book explanation and fields a number of questions from the students. At this point the class is instructed divide into pairs; (friends push their desks together) and they start to work on the reading text that accompanies the "grammar box". The students work quietly as the teacher circulates around the class occasionally stopping to answer a question or to discuss the reading with a pair of learners. After matching some vocabulary items with their correct meanings, the students are then asked to compare answers with another pair of students. After approximately 15 minutes the teacher then elicits answers for the reading text as well as the vocabulary items from the learners.

The final stage of the lesson commences. The learners now work in their original pairs to un-jumble groups of words in order to make meaningful sentences. The sentences are formations of the 3rd conditional. While the students are busy the teacher distributes a worksheet that requires students to write sentences that are similar to examples provided. The class seems motivated as they discuss the work quietly in Arabic. The teacher moves around the class pointing out mistakes in grammar and clarifying answers. The class finishes with the students being told to complete the outstanding answers for homework which will be checked the following day. The teacher marks their names off on a register and dismisses the learners.

Section 3 Interview

Salient points of the interview:

The subject is aware of the CLT approach and is able to discuss at length the underlying philosophy behind the approach as well as to describe how this approach can be implemented in the classroom. The subject often likes to use a blend of approaches including "behaviorist drill" type exercises.

4.1.5 Profile Subject E

Section 1 Questionnaire

The responses from subject E to the survey questionnaire were as follows:

1 In general, how would you describe your approach to teaching English?

Answer: "Communicative, based on integrating all receptive and productive skills".

2 Do you have a preferred method/approach to teaching English as a foreign or second language? Please name this approach/method.

Answer: "Using background information to tackle any theme based on their prior knowledge and enabling them to elicit or deduct the topic and the rest of the lesson".

3 Could you briefly describe this approach/method?

No Answer.

4 Do you ever use a variety of approaches/methods in the classroom; if so please explain why?

Answer: "Drilling, deduction, especially in grammar, communicating without giving much attention to accuracy and sometimes cross cultural poetics".

5 Do you have any awareness of the CLT approach? If so please briefly explain what this approach means to you with regard to teaching methodology.

No Answer.

6 If your answer to the above question was yes then please describe how you learned about CLT; whether it was through formal teacher training or informal means such as research on the internet or journal articles.

No Answer.

7 Do you think that it is important to teach learners rules of English grammar? If so please briefly explain why you think this is important.

Answer: "Because students need to have some awareness of the inner structure of a set of chunks or words. Bearing in mind those rules and functions will enable them to better speak confidently and accurately".

8 In your opinion is it effective to teach the different skills such as grammar, reading and writing separately, or do you think it is more effective to teach these skills in an integrated fashion? Please explain your answer.

Answer: "Well at some stage student need to know the clear definition of each skill that is teaching them theoretically and then bridging them together and integrate them".

9 What would you say the main obstacles are with regard to implementing your preferred teaching style in the classroom?

Answer: "Crowded classes, mal-equipped classes, extra tasks to be done from an administrative point of view; a fully equipped language lab is needed to get students out of shells and speak freely and express themselves".

10 Do the course textbooks and teaching resource materials affect your teaching methodology in any way? Please explain.

Answer: "Well they server more or less as broad guidelines to follow when it comes to setting the exam theme and types of questions but usually I do create my own procedure and method of teaching".

11 Do you think that the “PPP” or Presentation, Practice & Production, method of additional language teaching is an effective approach? Please clarify your answer.

Answer: “Definitely is effective because it shows some kind of rationale behind teaching any topic or theme and as the teacher comes toward the end of the procedure his role fades away and students’ abilities would show”.

12 Please state what your qualifications are.

Answer: “BA in English language literature; one year Masters Course in Mass Media and Cross Cultural Poetics”.

13 Do you try to keep up to date with current research findings in second language teaching methodology? If so please explain how you do this.

Answer: “Following any workshops or conferences in the field”.

14 In the space below please provide comments or indicate any factors that you may find relevant with regard to your teaching methods.

Answer: “Background noise, a language background, stress free environment, literate environment, cross curricular subjects and syllabus, visiting knowledge centers, abroad trip, twinning with other schools or colleges or universities to get to know real life that is relating what students take in classes to everyday life”.

Section 2 Class Observation

The transcripts from my notes following the classroom observation session are as follows: The transcripts from the researcher’s notes following the classroom observation session are as follows:

The class is scheduled as a pre-intermediate “core” class. There are a total of 32 students comprised of 18 females and 14 males sitting in the traditional row formation with the males and females separated by a small space that forms a corridor running down the centre of the room. The class is quite active and chatty as the teacher enters. (Perhaps this could be attributed to the unusual presence of me, a third party, in the room.) The teacher greets the class and explains that they will be working on a certain unit in the textbook that deals with the past perfect simple tense. The learners are directed to the relevant page in the textbook. The teacher begins to draw a “timeline” on the whiteboard and explains to the students the form and function of the past perfect simple tense. The students are then instructed that they are going to listen to a short excerpt about a travel writer and that they should follow in their books as a pre-listening task while the teacher reads out the questions. The listening is in two parts and the teacher pauses in between parts to check the answers. He works with the class as a whole using explicit instruction with a strong focus on structural aspects of the language. (He pauses from time to time to explain by means of examples using the whiteboard throughout the entirety of the lesson.)

The body of the lesson involves the completion of gap-fill exercises, in which students have to write the correct form of the verb or choose the correct form of the verb from a number of options in order to form the past perfect tense. The students work individually although the teacher doesn't seem to mind if students consult one another. After a lapse of 20 minutes some students have finished their tasks and begin to get bored. The teacher notices this and alerts the class that they have 5 minutes to complete their tasks before the answers are checked. Finally, "time up" is announced and the teacher goes through the answers to the exercises eliciting responses from individual students by name and then writing the correct answer on the whiteboard.

Twenty minutes of the lesson remain and the class begins to work on a short reading text about "travel"; they then have to identify a number of adjectives and group them according to the senses. (Taste, auditory, touch, etcetera.) The final task for the lesson involves the creation of a mind-map that the class will use to write a short text about a place they have visited. The teacher elicits ideas from the students in order to create a spider-diagram type plan on the whiteboard as an example of a "pre-writing" exercise. The class then works in silence to finish their mind maps which they then present to the teacher for comment. They are then dismissed individually on completion of the task and reminded to complete the writing paragraph for homework.

Section 3 Interview

Salient points of the interview:

The subject provides a partial definition of the CLT approach by mentioning that it is based on "integration of skills". The integration of skills involves the use of speaking, listening, reading and writing in order to "communicate successfully using the English language". I ask for clarification to the answer in the questionnaire (question 2) regarding preferred teaching approaches. "...[u]sing background information to tackle any theme based on their prior knowledge and enabling them to elicit or deduct the topic and the rest of the lesson". The subject responds that "this is the way he teaches" because it is vital that the students use their existing knowledge in order to "relate to the topic of the lesson".

The subject believes in the use of grammar drills to teach the structure of English as he believes knowledge of the rules will help with the aspect of accurate production of

the target language. The subject is asked about the reference to “cross-cultural poetics” (question 4) and how this relates to language teaching approaches. He embarks on a lengthy discourse concerning ideological concepts surrounding multiculturalism and the link between “meaning” and “context”. English is used in a non-immersion context in Oman and because of the diverse cultural backgrounds of the teachers who teach the language; students may end up being confused as to which type of English they are learning. The example is given in which a comparison is made between Indian English known colloquially as “Hinglish”, and the standard British English, although both may be grammatically correct and acceptable forms of spoken and written English, they are nevertheless quite different in many aspects. However, the researcher is unable to establish a coherent link between the concept of “cross-cultural poetics” and its relation to the subject’s teaching approach.

With regard to obstacles that hinder teaching approaches (question 9) the subject mentions large class sizes and excessive paperwork. The subject believes a language laboratory would be an asset to the institution as it would encourage students to “communicate more freely”. Textbooks and teaching materials used do not really affect the subject’s method of delivery but they are necessary guidelines as one has to “teach the students to master what will be in the test and the test is based on the textbooks”.

4.2 Discussion of Auxiliary Group Findings

In this section the auxiliary group findings are discussed. The data for this group are taken from the questionnaire which was the only data-gathering instrument used for this group of subjects. The table below summarizes the point mentioned in 3.3 by means of which the data is evaluated in order to confirm or disconfirm the first and second thesis statements. In the absence of data based on classroom observation sessions in the case of the auxiliary group, it is impossible to confirm or reject the second thesis statement of the research that: “The lecturers in the English Language Department of the institution do not use the CLT approach in the classroom”. Therefore the data gained from this group will be used to confirm or reject the first thesis statement, namely: “The lecturers in the English Language Department of the institution have limited knowledge of the CLT approach”. However, in the cases

where it is possible to confirm the first thesis statement it should logically be possible also to confirm the second thesis statement because it is highly improbable that an individual with limited knowledge of the CLT approach would implement the approach in their teaching methodology.

Table 8

Data Analysis Factors

<u>Evidence of Factors Influencing</u>	<u>Evidence of Implementation of CLT</u>
<u>Awareness of CLT Approach</u>	<u>Approach</u>
<u>Formal Qualifications and Training</u>	<u>Pedagogic Modality</u>
<u>Other Training and Professional Development</u>	<u>Constraints on Implementation of CLT</u>
<u>Beliefs and Attitudes Towards Teaching Approach</u>	<u>Other Factors</u>

4.2.1 Questionnaire: Discussion of Findings Subject F

Subject F is a British female in her mid 40's who has been teaching for 5 years. The participant indicated on numerous occasions throughout the survey questionnaire that she was frustrated by the length, the phrasing of some of the questions and the fact that the participants could not simply tick boxes. The frustration of the participant may have had a negative effect on the quality of the information provided. However, the subject has a master's degree in an unspecified field, an honours degree in an unspecified field as well as a CELTA and a CELTA YL. The "CELTA YL" is a similar qualification to the CELTA with the focus on young learners. Given the lack of clarity with regard to the formal degree disciplines it cannot be assumed that the subject would have an awareness of the CLT approach. Although many institutes and organizations that offer CELTA training courses advertise the CELTA course as being delivered by means of the CLT approach, the approach *per se* is not taught as part of the curriculum according to the syllabus content and learning outcomes posted on the Cambridge ESOL website.

The subject claims to use a "*communicative student-centred/learner training*" approach in the classroom. In addition, she states that she has an awareness of the

CLT approach, through *“training”* but indicates that she is confused about the effect that this has on her teaching methodology. She likes to use a variety of approaches in the classroom according to *“needs and activity types”*.

The subject believes that teaching grammar rules is of relative importance. *“Yes, such as they are; i.e. ‘rules’ there is a time and place for such learning ...it’s not necessarily the most important.”* Furthermore, she believes that skills should be *“generally integrated depending on students needs”*. She acknowledges that the major textbooks are communicative in approach but is confused as to the question of how this affects her teaching methodology. Here it is important to note that the use of CLT based textbooks and material in the classroom does not necessarily guarantee that the approach used by the teacher would also be a CLT approach. Finally, the subject indicates that she does not experience any constraints as regards the implementation of her preferred teaching style.

The first thesis statement that, “the lecturers in the English Language Department of the institution have limited knowledge of the CLT approach”, is supported in this case. Despite claiming to use a *“communicative/student centred”* approach, there is no clear evidence that the subject actually has knowledge of the approach or any type of formal training that would encompass the transmission of this knowledge. In addition, the subject seems unaware of the distinction between approach and method as evidenced by the response to the second part of question 5. *“If so please briefly explain what this (CLT) approach means to you with regard to teaching methodology”*. Answer: Here the subject indicates confusion and does not attempt to answer the question.

The second thesis statement states that, “The lecturers in the English Language Department of the institution do not use the CLT approach in the classroom”. In the absence of classroom observation it is difficult to confirm this as there is no means of verifying what actually takes place in the classroom. The subject claims to use a *“variety of approaches”* in the classroom. However, it is unclear whether the subject understands the term *“approach”* as the underlying philosophy behind a *“method”* as used in the field of linguistics and second language acquisition, or in more general layman’s terms.

4.2.2 Questionnaire: Discussion of Findings Subject G

Subject G is a British male in his late 50's who has a Trinity College DELTA and a bachelors degree in English Philology who is familiar with CLT through his DELTA training and also because CLT , “...*has been for some time the predominant methodology in the UK TEFL ambit.*” The subject defines communicative language teaching as, “...purpose led language learning; that is language learnt to be used in a context where it will be meaningful”. He also believes in using a variety of approaches and setting up situations in class where students have the opportunity to use the target language appropriately. An interesting point is to note is that the subject believes it is important to keep the global nature of English in mind, “...*so that students can develop confidence in their own regional variety*”.

With relevance to constraints on implementation of CLT the subject cites the passive learning style characteristic of the cultural context as well as the obligation of covering the syllabus in a specific time frame as being problematic.

The first thesis statement of the research, in this case cannot be verified as the subject has demonstrated a reasonable understanding of the CLT approach and would have learned about this approach through formal training in the course of studying the DELTA diploma. The DELTA syllabus as described on the Cambridge ESOL website does mention the study of the CLT approach as one of the learning outcomes of the course. (See Unit 1, Learning Outcome 1.1) Cambridge, ESOL: *DELTA Syllabus*. Available: http://www.cambridgeesol.org/assets/pdf/delta_syllabus_2008.pdf (Accessed: 2010, 4 September).

With regard to the second thesis statement; it is highly probable that the subject does use the CLT approach in the classroom although the absence of participation in the classroom observation data gathering exercise precludes me from confirming this.

4.2.3 Questionnaire: Discussion of Findings Subject H

Subject H is a British male in his mid 60's with a bachelor's honours degree (French major) and a TEFLA diploma. (The TEFLA diploma is a predecessor of the current DELTA diploma). He describes his approach as, "*eclectic*" and has learned about CLT through formal teacher training furthermore, he keeps up to date with developments in language teaching methodology "*haphazardly*". In addition the subject states that he likes to use a variety of approaches in order to keep the students interested. He likes to use role play and pair work in the classroom and is conscious of the fact that learning in Oman takes place against the backdrop of a collectivist culture characterized by an emphasis on the group rather than the individual. The CLT approach involves, "*focusing on informal language to suit a particular purpose, for example study or vocational purposes*". In addition, it is more practical to teach language skills in an integrated fashion according to the respondent. "*The demands of the course and planning*", are constraining factors in the subject's opinion.

The subject mentions pair work and role play as preferred class activities and has some formal training in CLT methodology. Additionally, he believes skills should be taught in an integrated fashion and that students should, "*deduce*" rules and not be taught explicitly. Hence the first thesis statement of the research cannot be confirmed as this subject does not seem to have a limited knowledge of the CLT approach; he has a reasonable grasp of the fundamentals of the CLT approach according to the information gleaned from the questionnaire. Finally, although the subject states that he prefers to use role play and pair work in the classroom he qualifies this by citing his reasons, "*because auto correction is a skill that so many students appear to lack, it is also as close to a real communicative context as you are likely to get*". The link between auto correction, pair work/role play and "*a real communicative context*" is not clearly explained. In the absence of classroom observation data it is not possible to confirm or reject the second thesis statement.

4.2.4 Questionnaire: Discussion of Findings Subject I

Subject I is a British male in his early 30's with CELTA training although there is no mention of any other qualification on the survey questionnaire. The subject uses a "*communicative, student centred, task-based*" approach in the classroom. The subject learned about CLT through formal teacher training, reading and workshops, He uses a

variety of approaches to cater for “*different learning styles*” and believes that teaching grammar rules is important but should be done using “*a variety of approaches and based in context based discovery and emergence*”. In addition, it is important to teach grammar rules because, “*...accurate and understood manipulation of form is integral to a high level of language competence*”. Skills should be taught in an integrated fashion because it is “*... more reflective of how language is actually used*”. Course textbooks and teaching resources do not affect the subject’s teaching approach and the presentation, practice and production approach is particularly viable for lower-level proficiency learners, according to the subject.

The first thesis statement cannot be confirmed in this case as the subject displays a reasonable knowledge of the CLT approach despite having provided sparse information on the questionnaire. For example, question 3 which deals with the description of the subject’s preferred approach (communicative) has not been answered. For lack of in depth, explicit information it can only be confirmed that the subject has some knowledge of CLT and whether he uses it in the classroom or not would only be verifiable through observation.

4.2.5 Questionnaire: Discussion of Findings Subject J

Subject J is a South African male in his mid 60’s with forty years teaching experience and a master’s degree in education. He describes his approach as “*broadly communicative*”. He adds, “*I’m disinclined to use prescribed books and methods, and prefer what may be called an ‘interactive’ approach which may change according to circumstances. My preferred method may be best described as eclectic...needs based, taking the individual student into account.*” In response to question 6 concerning how the participant learned about CLT, the answer was as follows, “*I read Andrew Wilkinson’s book around 1972, when ‘English Across the Curriculum’ was in vogue. Over the intervening years I have tried to apply the principles of CLT in a variety of contexts. In my practice I have attempted to modify the sterility of theoretical CLT by introducing English literature. I find that the students often welcome this.*” In this subject’s view teaching grammar rules is important as “*students who have been exposed to traditional grammar teaching can often teach native English speakers, teachers and peers a great deal about grammar*

that has completely passed native users by. An understanding of some grammar rules is interesting for users and helpful in their use of the language.” The subject professes not to have heard of the “PPP” approach, but believes it is best to teach skills in an integrated fashion. Some obstacles to implementation of his preferred approach are “officialdom” and “ignorant previous teachers”.

This subject claims to engage in student-centred (needs-based) communicative teaching as well as to use an eclectic approach toward teaching. In addition to teaching skills in an integrated fashion, he takes the innovative approach of successfully introducing literature into the classroom. The first thesis statement cannot be confirmed in this case as a large body of evidence seems to exist that the subject is familiar with a variety of facets of CLT. However, without the benefit of classroom observation it can only be assumed that this subject uses CLT in the classroom. It cannot be confirmed.

4.2.6 Questionnaire: Discussion of Findings Subject K

Subject K is an Omani male in his late 40’s with a bachelor’s degree in TESOL and around 8 years teaching experience in Oman. He claims not to have a specific approach to teaching English although he mentions that his teaching is shaped by the textbook and he adapts the content of the textbook to suit the student’ needs and interests. He became aware of the CLT approach through teacher training and defines it as such:

The CLT approach is where the students learn the foreign language in class through tasks and activities that reflect the way it is used in real life situations. In such a case the FL is learnt and practiced in meaningful situations and for a real purpose. This accordingly, involves a lot of interaction among learners through which, by the end of the task, learners are expected to reach a real outcome. Problem solving and role play activities are examples of communicative language teaching.

The subject believes it is important to expose the learners to grammar rules so they become aware of how the, “*system of English functions*”. He also believes skills should be taught in an integrated fashion as this is how language functions in the normal course of events. Factors that count as obstacles towards implementation of

preferred teaching style are *“demotivated learners, class size work load, time constraints and administration issues”*. However, time constraints may be circumvented by making use of the PPP method although the subject believes this method is unfavourable because of its learner-centred nature. Additional comments made by this subject are the use of the L1 (Arabic) to support the learning of the target language by means of clarifying instructions, explaining vocabulary items and difficult grammar as well as teaching grammar inductively which the subject explains as, *“discovering the rules by doing a set of examples”*.

The subject provides a comprehensive explanation of the CLT approach in his answers to the questionnaire survey and has studied for a degree in TESOL. Thus it is not possible to confirm the first thesis statement in this case. With regard to the second thesis statement it is probable that the subject uses elements of the CLT approach in the classroom from time to time. This is evident from the answer provided for question 1, *“I would say that I don’t have a specific approach to teaching English as my teaching is shaped by the textbook. However, I always tend to adapt the content of the textbook to suit my student’s needs and interests”*. However, it is not possible to confirm this assertion without classroom observation.

4.2.7 Questionnaire: Discussion of Findings Subject L

Subject L is an Indian female who has 30 years’ teaching experience and is in her early 60’s. She states that her preferred approach to English teaching is based on a, *“combination of content based instruction and audio-lingual method with special focus on grammar using the traditional grammar approach”*. In addition, the subject describes her method as *“task-based learning”*. She describes task-based learning as, *“students engaging in a task in which they use language to achieve a specific outcome. Activities like conducting an interview, playing a game etcetera, are found to be effective”*. The subject describes the CLT approach, which she learned about through the internet, as emphasizing interaction with a focus on activities although she points out that the focus on games and entertaining activities have not been well received. *“The recent focus has been on teaching students using various activities that entertain and enlighten them, but I have discovered that the college students often find these activities and games to be a waste of time”*. The subject does not think that

teaching grammar rules is important and qualifies this with the following observation, *“Teaching a language has proven to be effective when taught in a certain context. A student may have easily grasped the rules of grammar but when it comes to applying it (the rules) may often prove to be a failure”*. She believes that integrated skills teaching is essential as components of language are not used in isolation therefore, *“there is no point in dismembering them”*. Finally, the subject finds the PPP approach is effective in teaching grammar structures if the instructor places a lot of emphasis on the practice mode of this method.

The first thesis statement of the research may be confirmed in this case. According to the information supplied by the subject she seems to have a “limited” knowledge of this approach. She has had no formal applied linguistics or teacher training experiences and she stated that she learned about CLT through the internet. In her answer to question 5 which involves teaching methodology and the CLT approach, the subject identifies a number of characteristics of CLT such as *“interaction”* and *“activities”* but does not expand on the underlying tenets of the approach.

With regard to the second thesis statement, the subject describes her teaching approach as a combination of *“content-based”* instruction and the *“audio-lingual”* approach. Therefore, the second thesis statement can also be confirmed as the subject clearly states that she uses a mixture of approaches other than the CLT approach in the classroom.

4.2.8 Questionnaire: Discussion of Findings Subject M

Subject M is a South African female in her mid 50's with a bachelor's honours degree and a postgraduate certificate in education. This subject has 12 years' experience teaching. She describes her approach to teaching as “traditional” but sometimes uses a variety of approaches in the classroom, *“to keep the students interested and motivated”*. For this subject the CLT approach entails *“getting the students to communicate with others through the medium of English.”* She learned about CLT through *“informal”* sources and keeps up to date with developments in linguistics through journals, the internet, workshops, and conferences. The subject maintains that teaching grammar rules is important especially in the Arabic first language speaker

context as, “Accuracy in English is important in the productive skills – writing and speaking”. With regard to teaching language skills in an integrated manner the subject notes that, “Both the integrated and discrete methods can be effective. However, the integrated approach is more effective as, for example, good writing depends on accurate grammar”. According to the subject covering the materials in the course textbooks is necessary in order to prepare the students for examinations and “monolingual classes” are an obstacle to implementation of the subject’s preferred teaching style.

In the case of this subject the first thesis statement of the research can be confirmed as the information supplied by the subject indicates that she has a limited knowledge of the CLT approach. She learned about CLT through “informal” means and believes it is about “getting the students to communicate with others through the medium of English”. The subject describes her approach as “traditional” although she does not expand on what this entails. Suffice to say that in the applied linguistics industry, this approach could be equated with the grammar translation method. In addition, the subject’s response to question 5, “getting the students to communicate with others through the medium of English”, is too imprecise to indicate reasonable knowledge of the CLT approach. The goal of communication in the target language is common to many teaching approaches.

The second thesis statement can also be confirmed in this case as the subject states she uses a “traditional” teaching approach in the classroom.

4.2.9 Questionnaire: Discussion of Findings Subject N

Subject N is an Egyptian male in his mid 30’s with a bachelor’s degree in English and 3 years teaching experience in the Gulf region. He describes his teaching approach as “eclectic” and his preferred method as “The Direct Method”, which he describes as characterized by, “a stress on speaking and a native-like pronunciation”. He likes to vary his approach depending on the focus of the language and the abilities of the students. He learned about CLT through research on the internet and by reading journal articles and attempts to keep in touch with developments in second language teaching through seminars, workshops and distance learning. The subject provides an interesting answer to question 5; “CLT aims at enhancing learner communicative

competence in all facets. The stronger version of CLT is simply not applicable in NNS (non-native speaking) contexts. I am rather in favour of a weaker version injected with viable techniques from other teaching approaches.” In addition, the subject thinks that teaching grammar rules are important because of the need for, “*a command over grammatical rules in writing speaking and comprehension of texts of various genres*”. He believes that an integrated approach to teaching language skills is more efficient in that “*compartmentalization of skills would only be necessary when [the] need arises*”.

Obstacles to implementation of the preferred teaching approach according to this subject are class size and task requirements. The first thesis statement can be confirmed in the case of this subject; he has limited knowledge of the CLT approach. He has learned about it through internet research and by reading journal articles but has no formal training in second language acquisition or applied linguistics. The subject indicates that he has knowledge of the “*strong*” and “*weak*” schools of thought in the field of CLT and indicates that he is in favour of a weak form of CLT in his current teaching context, but does not expand on this. The second thesis statement can also be confirmed in this case as the subject prefers to use the “*Direct Method*” and describes his approach as “*eclectic*”. It may be possible that the subject makes use of elements of CLT in the classroom, but the information provided on the questionnaire does not state this.

4.2.10 Questionnaire: Discussion of Findings Subject O

This subject is an Indian female in her late 30’s with a bachelor of Education degree and a master’s degree in an unspecified field. She has 5 years’ teaching experience and provided sparse answers on the survey questionnaire. She does not have a preferred teaching approach nor does she use a variety of approaches in the classroom. According to her answer to question number 5 “*No*”, she has no knowledge of the CLT approach. She states that it is important to teach learners grammar rules because, “*...grammar is the backbone of any language, it’s very important to teach it. Without grammar language will be shapeless*”. In addition, it is important to teach language skills separately as, “*it is an exam oriented course. Integrated fashion will be effective if the course is meant for general learning only*”.

Obstacles to implementing her teaching style are cited in bullet point fashion as following:

- *Less exposure to the language*
- *No equivalent word or phrases to translate*
- *Lack of interest or motivation*
- *Fear of a foreign language*

With regard to the above it is unclear whether the candidate has understood the question clearly as the points mentioned seem to resemble reasons why the students would experience difficulty in acquiring the target language rather than reasons why the teacher would experience difficulty in implementing a teaching style.

The lecturers in the English Language Department of the institution have limited knowledge of the CLT approach. The first thesis statement can be confirmed in this case as the subject claims to have no knowledge of the CLT approach. The second thesis statement states that: *The lecturers in the English Language Department of the institution do not use the CLT approach in the classroom.* The subject has no knowledge of the CLT approach therefore the thesis statement can be confirmed as it is highly unlikely that the subject would embrace this approach without any prior knowledge of its characteristics.

4.3 Discussion of Findings Core Group

The aim of this section is to discuss the findings of the core group in the research study in order to relate them to the first thesis statement and the second thesis statement. The core group is especially relevant to the study in that the data gathered from this group were collected by means of 3 data-gathering instruments in contrast to the single instrument (survey questionnaire) used to gather data for the auxiliary group. Therefore it was possible to conduct rigorous research by triangulating the data in order to gain a clear picture of factors surrounding the research problem. Of significant impact were the classroom observation sessions which allowed the researcher to gain an insight into classroom methodology employed by the subjects.

As the research progressed it became clear that many of the participants, especially those without any formal teacher training or background in applied linguistics, misconstrued the use of the word “approach”, as used in the questionnaire and the semi structured interviews. In a number of cases it was clear the term “teaching approach”, had been interpreted in layman’s terms rather than that of the academic school of thought normally used to denote the philosophy underlying a practical teaching methodology or what actually takes place in the classroom. For example, “the teacher had a friendly approach”, was the broad basis of the understanding of the term as opposed to the CLT approach or the audio lingual approach as embraced by applied linguists.

4.3.1 Discussion of Findings Subject A

This subject has relatively little teaching experience and no formal teacher training or applied linguistics training. She has no preferred approach to teaching English and claims to be aware of the CLT approach but has “*no idea*” of how she learned about it. She believes that teaching grammar rules promotes fluency but does not expand on how this is achieved. She has no idea if the course books and teaching materials affect her teaching methodology and finds that constraints such as curriculum requirements and timetables pose problems in implementing the PPP teaching approach, but does not expand on how this occurs.

Class observation revealed a pedagogic modality that can best be described as explicit teacher-led instruction with a strong focus on form and error correction. The students engaged in gap-fill exercises and the teacher worked with the class as a whole. The topics and the materials came from the course book and worksheets. The semi structured interview revealed that the subject had scant knowledge of the CLT approach beside the fact that the object of this approach was, “*to get the students talking and communicating in English*”. In conclusion, both the first thesis statement and the second thesis statement can be confirmed in the case of this subject as she has no knowledge of the CLT approach nor does she use any teaching methodology that is characterized by the tenets of this approach.

4.3.2 Discussion of Findings Subject B

This subject has formal training in the additional language learning and linguistics and describes her approach as “*student centered/communicative*”. She is able to discuss in depth the philosophy behind the CLT approach including events surrounding the historical development of this and other approaches to additional language learning. Interestingly, she tries to adapt her approach to the local context in which learners feel comfortable learning rules as well as writing thing down. “*I try to be flexible in the classroom*”. Some constraints to implementing her teaching approach are students and local management styles. With regard to pedagogic modality the classroom observation of this subject revealed one salient feature characteristic of the CLT approach which was the use of group work and a game or competition that seemed to motivate the learners. However, the subject engaged mainly in explicit instruction addressing the class as a whole, and the worksheet topic had been selected by the teacher as opposed to negotiated between learners and teacher. The nature of the task was inductive as students had to deduce the answers by means of collaboration and inductive reasoning.

With regard to the first and second thesis statements, it is not possible to confirm either in this case as the subject has substantial knowledge of the CLT approach and embraces a teaching style in the classroom that displays a number of characteristics of this approach. However, on the basis of one hour classroom observation it is not possible to ascertain beyond presumption that the subject engages the use of the CLT approach in the majority of her lessons.

4.3.3 Discussion of Findings Subject C

Subject C has 5 years’ teaching experience and a Master’s degree in English teaching methodology. Despite this the answers to question 5 and 6 on the survey questionnaire raise some doubts as to the quality of information provided on the questionnaire. “*It is the Communicative Language Teaching; I believe it is to teach the language to the learners unintentionally “... [G]ot [sic] across the method when I was working on my master’s degree but I don’t really remember what it is about*”. In addition the subject believes that the skills should be taught separately because, “*...then they (the students) are more focused on them*”. On the basis of this information it is possible to

confirm the first research thesis statement as it is clear that the subject by her own admission has no knowledge of the CLT approach.

Further elicitation of data from the classroom observation session revealed that the teacher worked with the class as a whole using explicit instruction and chose materials from the textbook. The teacher focused on the content of the textbook in order to meet the requirement that students cover the allotted number of units the content of which would be examined at the end of the course. Although this approach is focused on textbook content rather than learning outcomes and target language mastery, a number of teachers learned from experience (see subject B), that often students who did not achieve good marks would habitually lay the blame on the teachers for not having covered the relevant units in the textbook.

In conclusion, the second thesis statement can also be confirmed in the case of this subject as all three data-gathering instruments did not yield any evidence to the effect that the subject practised the CLT approach in the classroom.

4.3.4 Discussion of Findings Subject D

This subject has studied applied linguistics and also has a master's degree in TESOL. She has been teaching for 8 years and claims to use many different approaches in the classroom including, *"...a bit of behaviorist drill, a bit of CLT, games...I also sometimes use Test, Teach, Test especially with grammar"*. The subject varies her teaching approach as she maintains that students become bored with one approach. She is aware of the CLT approach, having learned about it through formal teacher training. Both the classroom observation session and the semi structured interview yielded a considerable amount of data that indicated the subject has in depth knowledge of the CLT approach and she uses this approach periodically in the classroom. Therefore, it is not possible to confirm either the first or the second thesis statements of the study.

4.3.5 Discussion of Findings Subject E

The subject's answers to question 1 and 2 on the questionnaire come across as somewhat incoherent, disconnected and unclear. For example, he describes his approach to teaching, (question 1) as, "*Communicative, based on integrating all receptive and productive skills*". Then, question 2, in which the subject outlines his preferred method, "*Using background information to tackle any theme based on their prior knowledge and enabling them to elicit or deduce the topic and the rest of the lesson*". However, the subject does not attempt to answer questions 5 and 6 which deal with an explanation of the CLT approach. In addition, the subject states that he likes to make use of drills and deductive learning procedures in the classroom especially when teaching grammar. The subject is able to provide a partial definition of CLT.

The classroom observation session was characterized by a directly teacher-centered approach, explicit instruction in a traditionally organized classroom that lacked any type of collaborative work between students. Therefore, both the first and the second thesis statements of the research can be confirmed in this case.

4.4 Summary

In the case of the Core Group which formed the empirical basis of the study, it was possible, in three cases out of a total of five to confirm both the first and the second thesis statements of the research. In the case of the Auxiliary Group it was possible to confirm the first thesis statement in five out of ten subjects. In addition, it was possible to confirm the second thesis statement in five out of ten subjects. However, in the case of five of the subjects, the data indicated a high probability that the second thesis statement did not hold true, but given the lack of the benefit of classroom observation, it would not be possible to either reject or confirm this thesis statement.

During the course of this research a number of common trends came to the fore with regard to the findings. Firstly, on reaching the end of the interviews and the classroom observation, it became clear that a significant number of the subjects did not have a clear idea of the meaning of the term "approach" as it relates to the additional language teaching. The obvious reason for this is that these subjects had not encountered the term in its use in the context of applied linguistics or formal TESOL

training. In contrast, subjects B and K who both have formal training in TESOL are familiar with the concept of approach. Secondly, there was a large discrepancy in some cases between how subjects said they taught and how they actually taught. For example, a subject might have stated a preference for employing the CLT approach when in fact the classroom observation session revealed otherwise as in the case of subject E. Third, I realized that many subjects had oversimplified views and misconceptions of the CLT approach and its practical implications in the classroom. The interviews and the questionnaires revealed a fair amount of appropriate jargon surrounding the topic of CLT. However, hardly any of the participants were able to provide in depth descriptions and to make the distinction between approach and method.

Another factor unrelated to the above themes that emerged was the issue of discrepancies in equivalence of degrees from different regions/countries around the globe. For example, the Indian subcontinent grants MA and M Phil degrees. The MA is a taught degree normally completed by coursework and examined by a series of two or three hour papers. In contrast, the M Phil degree may be completed by means of coursework or a dissertation or a combination of both. Hence, the MA is rather like a year postgraduate degree as found in most countries of the “inner circle” category. This distinction creates false perceptions in the recruitment process and in the workplace in general. For example, the potential scope, content and quality of skill and knowledge acquisition that lies in an eight-module one-year taught course would logically be far less than that of the combination of a year taught course and at least two years’ research work examinable in the form of a dissertation. However, both of these endeavours may result in a degree that is denoted by a similar appellation; an MA degree. Hence, it is not surprising that subject C who has a “master’s degree in English teaching methodology” cannot remember well what the approach entails but believes it involves teaching the language “unintentionally”. The same subject displays a surprising disregard for formal English grammar and syntactical conventions in her written responses on the questionnaire for someone that is educated to the master’s degree level. Likewise, subject O with a bachelor’s degree in education and a master’s degree in an unspecified field claims to have no knowledge of the CLT approach. Related to the qualifications question is the issue of teachers who possess high level degrees that are not relevant to the profession in which they

are practising. For example, subject A has a masters degree in history, claims to have knowledge of CLT although she does not know how she acquired this knowledge. In addition, her teaching style is characterized by a traditional teacher-centred classroom with a strong focus on pronunciation and immediate error correction. Additionally, subject M, a South African female, has a bachelors honours degree (field unspecified) and a postgraduate certificate in education and displays a surprising lack of knowledge with regard to CLT. A further example is subject E who has a bachelors degree in English language and literature and a, “one year masters course in Mass Media and Cross Cultural Poetics”. The subject claims to employ the CLT approach. However, the lesson observation yielded no information to support this claim. Both this subject and subject C cite administrative duties and paperwork as constraints to the implementation of their preferred teaching style. It is difficult to conceptualize how this could be possible given that a certain number of hours are allocated for teaching each week and a certain amount of time is allocated for administrative duties. During the allocated teaching time one is free to implement one’s preferred teaching style as one wishes. The only imaginable influence of burdensome administration tasks during teaching time would be in the form of stress affecting the individual’s performance in the classroom.

Interestingly, three of the research subjects showed awareness with regard to students’ needs and cultural factors. Moreover, all three (B, J and K) have either formal training in education or TESOL methodology. The most salient statement emerged from subject B who thought that, “western teachers and their communicative approach to language teaching are not suited for the Omani system as it is today. Arab and Indian teachers are much better, linguistically and culturally closer to the students”.

5 Conclusion

This section looks at the contributions of the study with special reference to the local context and relevant variables as prerequisites for official accreditation of General Foundation Programmes in Oman. These prescribe a teaching approach that is characterized by CLT teaching methodology which embraces a move away from more traditionally-oriented, teacher-led versus a learner-centred approach. Finally, the notions of particularity, practicality and possibility as outlined by Kumaravadivelu (2006:69) are linked to salient features of the study.

Demographic statistics presented in this study show that there will be an expanding demand for quality higher education in Oman during the forthcoming decades. Currently, the education industry faces a number of challenges, notably; a lack of locally trained educators, quality issues with local teacher training and lack of interest in the profession due to low pay and limited career path incentives. The result is a heavy reliance on expatriate labour with a continuing trend toward underdevelopment in the local sector. Here it could be wise to bear in mind Holiday's (2004:3) case for a "*broader*" version of CLT, or a CLT that is adapted to meet local conditions by drawing on local knowledge, experience and which is in harmony with local cultural sensitivities. With regard to the above, Husna Al-Jadidi, in her unpublished doctoral thesis, (2009:49) claims that, "...bilingual teachers [Arabic and English speaking] are able to teach English drawing on local cultural content, and also use pedagogical approaches that are more appropriate than the communicative language teaching (CLT) that are currently taught and recommended by Western universities". Al-Jadidi's findings seem to agree with Holiday's proposal of a version of CLT that is adaptable and informed by local realities. It is interesting to note that Al-Jadidi (2009) proposes "pedagogical approaches that are more appropriate" than CLT. This idea seems to bear resemblance to the, "context-sensitive, location specific pedagogy, that is based on a true understanding of local linguistic, social, cultural and political particularities" described by Kumaravadivelu (2006:69).

The issue of over reliance on expatriate labour poses a number of problems. Firstly, a recruitment policy which adheres strongly to the "native speaker" fallacy (see Phillipson, 1992:194) ensures that many unsuitable and unqualified candidates enter the teaching profession. Kachru makes the following observation concerning the native speaker fallacy.

The traditional dichotomy between native and non-native is functionally un insightful and linguistically questionable, particularly when discussing the functions of English in multilingual societies. The earlier distinction of English as a native language (ENL), second (ESL) and foreign (EFL) has come under attack for reasons other than sociolinguistic. (Kachru 1992:3)

Another pertinent issue surrounding recruitment policies is the myth that a native English speaker with a master's degree would be equipped with the requisite skills and knowledge to teach English. This assumption involves the combination of the native speaker fallacy and a belief that a master's degree, in any discipline, enables one to teach English as an additional language. In breaking down the second part of the assumption, the false logic that any highly educated native English speaker should be able to teach English becomes evident. In my experiences it is the opposite that is true. Native English speakers with master's degrees in unrelated disciplines tend to teach English as a first language with an overemphasis on immediate error correction and pronunciation. For example, subject B felt the educated native English speakers should automatically be able to teach English reasonably well. Many with minimal teaching experience tend to teach as they were taught and, as they have no professional training, they end up "modelling" their classroom behavior on their past experiences. If their performances in the classroom are not well received they tend to become defensive instead of introspective and when complaints filter up to middle management about teaching methodology or exam results, the subtext however covert, is nearly always there: *"I am a native speaker and I have a master's degree – I know what I am doing"*. In addition, when correcting class work or marking examination scripts they tend to deduct marks unreasonably for spelling and punctuation errors when neither spelling nor punctuation is being assessed. The result is that students become demotivated on seeing their work returned full of red ink. In my capacity as a teacher at the institution, I witnessed on numerous occasions how students lost marks when the grammar item that was being tested was correct but punctuation or spelling was incorrect. Many teachers became extremely defensive when their grades were called into question as it was mostly interpreted as the student "fishing" for extra points.

More than two decades ago Tyacke and Walton (1987) noted the varying quality of teachers and the broad differences in teacher training, methodology and experience.

Al-Issa, (2002) has also commented on the negative effects of this syndrome. Secondly, many local teachers in state and private education with in depth knowledge of local conditions and innate sensitivity toward cultural and environmental factors, remain an untapped source of wealth due to misconceptions about who and what makes a good teacher. The assumption that a native speaker with a master's degree in any discipline generally makes for the best teacher of English as an additional language is entirely erroneous (Davies: 1991) and often results in more harm than good being done in the classroom.

There are positive signs that institutions of higher learning in the Gulf States including Oman are gradually becoming more selective and rigorous in their recruitment procedures as advertisements for teaching positions in the media increasingly reflect demands for master's degree qualified staff in applied linguistics , education and TESOL subject areas.⁴ In addition, there are also indications that authorities in a number of Gulf States are taking concrete steps to upgrade the quality of local teachers by means of engagement with foreign universities such as the large scale Leeds University programme mentioned previously in this study.

Finally, as Mangubhai et al (2005:32) point out, "Studies designed to explore teachers' understanding of a CLT approach, however, appear to be few". In the same study the authors found teachers' beliefs about CLT were inconsistent with researchers and theorists' views. The existing rift between conceptualization, theory and application is indicative of a wider malaise in second-language teaching that risks becoming the target of "magic bullet" type solutions dispensed from policy makers and administrators from above in an attempt to impose order and conformity on a system characterized by its abstract nature. Teachers need to have a clear understanding of the complexities of CLT before they are able to implement it in the classroom. Kumaravadivelu defines his notion of "*practicality*" as seeking to, "rupture the reified role relationship between theorizers and practitioners by enabling and encouraging teachers to theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize" (2006:69). In other words teachers' relationships between theory and practice becomes dynamic, versus a top-down process that has teachers applying in

⁴ See GFP Document, Appendix B, 3.3.1.

practice a theory which they have learned about without accommodating feedback from the environment. The usual “one size fits all” definition of CLT encompassing: role play, group and pair work, minimal error correction, less focus on grammar, more focus on communication in naturalistic contexts, etcetera, does not take into account relevant local variables neither is it a true reflection of the tenets of the approach. For example, in a classroom where learners place a high value on grammar rules it may be wise to blend an aspect of grammar focus into the lesson. Also, foreign course books such as the *New Headway* series that may contain reading texts dealing with culturally inappropriate topics such as ‘dating’ and ‘alcohol’, may have to be substituted with more culturally sensitive topics with which learners are easily able to identify.

5.1 Contributions of Study

During the course of this study it became evident that not much research that deals with the topic of additional language learning and relevant issues in the Gulf region has been published. There is a small, but interesting corpus of academic work that emanates from locally based academics mostly in the form of masters or doctoral dissertations undertaken under the auspices of Western universities. Reasons for this could be twofold, firstly as Al-Issa (2002) mentions; local academics have high teaching loads and not much time for research. Secondly, because institutionalized education in the form of western style schools, colleges and universities is a relatively new concept in the Middle East, not much time has been available for interested scholars to investigate and publish work.

A large number of expatriates from a wide variety of backgrounds are involved in the teaching profession in Oman and the Gulf region. Many of these expatriate teachers are there for a short term while others stay for a decade or two. Nevertheless, most western expatriates in the teaching profession arrive with preconceived ideas, however well disguised, about the superiority of their knowledge, skills, attitudes and cultural values. Kumaravadivelu (2006) describes how during the 1990’s the TESOL profession “went critical”. In his words, “going critical” implies:

[r]ecognising language as an ideology, not just a system. It is about extending the educational space to the social cultural and political

dynamics of language use, not just limiting it to the phonological, syntactic and pragmatic domains of language usage. It is about realizing that language learning and teaching is more than learning and teaching language. It is about creating the cultural forms and interested knowledge that give meaning to the lived experiences of teachers and learners (2006:70).

It is hoped that this research may raise awareness of the benefits of consideration with regard to local factors versus the blanket imposition of an approach or methodology that may be well suited to western or other contexts. It is quite significant that CLT has established itself at the forefront of a string of additional language teaching approaches to be embraced by many in the TESOL industry as a standard. How did this happen? If one examines the description of historical events contained in most undergraduate and postgraduate TESOL and applied linguistic courses, including certificate and diploma courses such as the CELTA and DELTA, it becomes clear. Most of these courses contain a timeline usually beginning with the grammar translation method, encompassing the quirky so called “designer methods” of the 1970’s and ending with the perhaps not too well understood CLT approach. This study has shown that there is a wide variation in teachers’ conceptions and implementation of this approach from engaging in group and pair work to attempting to get learners communicating in the target language. Respondents in the core group described their approaches as *student centered*, *communicative*, *eclectic*, *broadly the PPP approach* or *a range of approaches*. Most of these approaches have been either learned through formal training or informal means such as the World Wide Web, conferences or peers. Kumaravadivelu’s point however is that, “Any actual post method pedagogy has to be constructed by teachers themselves by taking into consideration linguistic, social, cultural, and political particularities” (2006:69).

In addition, it is hoped that this research will highlight the value of local educators as a resource to be treasured and developed versus the misconception that a native English speaker with a DELTA or a master’s degree should be worth more both in monetary terms and otherwise.

Husna Al-Jadidi provides in the abstract to her doctoral the following observation by making a case for the adaptation of expatriate (monolingual) educators to the local culture including the linguistic domain.

There is a need for a systematic program of professional development for both groups of teachers in theories of language acquisition, communicative competence and more recent theories of constructivist pedagogy in language education. In addition, an opportunity exists for professional development programs that aim to involve local and expatriate teachers in cross-cultural awareness and in teaching and learning from each other. Monolingual teachers should try to enrich their learning and develop their understanding of the language-learning issues of their students by learning Arabic and learning about Islamic culture. Bilingual teachers should work to incorporate more communicative approaches and more varied activities into their teaching and develop stronger frameworks for a cross-cultural understanding (Al-Jadidi 2009:3).

The above quote is interesting because it proposes methods by which expatriate teaching staff may enhance teaching capabilities by engaging with aspects of local culture. Likewise, local teachers are advised to “incorporate more communicative approaches and more varied activities”. It is clear to see that this advice closely resembles the “broad” version of CLT as proposed by Holiday (1994) which is informed by local realities.

It is hoped that this study will contribute towards a small but growing body of research literature emanating from the GCC region dealing with issues related to the learning and teaching of English as an additional language. Working in other GCC countries has shown the researcher that each country faces its own set of challenges with regard to the implementation of improved ESL pedagogy. According to Watson (2004:61), “Any planned policy, to improve an education system such as the UAE vision 2020, must look at what needs to be taught and how, but also through what medium”. Of particular relevance to this research in Watson’s quote are the words “what” and “how”. The current GFP accreditation exercise underway in the Sultanate of Oman is a complex and demanding process that should serve to enhance the execution of Foundation Programmes in the country which will enable students to make a smooth transition between secondary and tertiary education. In addition, it is hoped that this research will be of some value to educators, decision makers and administrators involved in the creation, the maintenance and the evaluation of general foundation programmes in Oman with regard to the ongoing accreditation exercise overseen by the Ministry of Higher Education. Finally, I hope that this study may encourage educators to develop their own micro strategies within the broader macro

strategic framework of particularity, practicality and possibility in order to “transcend the limitations of the concept of method” (Kumaravadivelu 2006:69).

5.2 Recommendations

The MoHE in Oman has taken a number of positive steps to ameliorate higher education in the Sultanate, a salient case in point being the accreditation of GFP's. However, there are three areas which merit attention namely; selection of teaching staff and professional development opportunities, curriculum development/design and enhanced career opportunities for local teachers.

With regard to the selection of teaching staff, it is important that all staff including locals and expatriates should have a minimum of two years teaching experience at postsecondary level as well as qualifications relevant to additional language learning. These qualifications should be from recognized universities and a basic understanding of the equivalence of degrees from different countries should be prerequisite knowledge for human resources departments tasked with the processing of CV's. Moreover, senior management and key decision makers should be selected on the basis of a strong track record as well as relevant qualifications in the field of education. An excellent track record in private sector business management does not necessarily provide a candidate with the requisite knowledge and skills to successfully manage an educational institution. Al-Issa outlines a common problem with the recruitment of teaching staff from diverse backgrounds:

Lastly there is the problem of conflicting and multiple cultural backgrounds of teachers ... Arabs (Egyptians, Jordanians, Syrians, Sudanese, Moroccans and Tunisians) and non-Arabs (Indians, Pakistanis, and Sri-Lankans). These teachers sometimes teach the way they were taught English through Arabic and teaching through the Grammar Translation Method and Audio-Lingual Method. They are not necessarily intrinsically inferior approaches to the teaching of language but the main problem points to how these strategies combine (sometimes unsuccessfully) with Omani students' own cultural expectations of teaching and learning (Al-Issa2005: 36).

Students in foundation programmes are usually exposed to a number of dissimilar teachers each day. These teachers often have diverse accents, use the English language differently and have singular approaches to teaching ranging from

traditional authoritarian teacher centred lessons to facilitation type, negotiation of meaning and content lessons in which the students have a large scope of autonomy. More often than not, as Al-Issa points out, this variation in styles leads students to conclude that teacher X is “unprofessional” or teacher Y “never explains things”. Teacher induction, in-house professional development programmes, and workshops are means by which teachers could have opportunities to improve teaching skills and knowledge. Most importantly, departmental heads of subject areas in GFP’s should exercise some form of policy guided control and monitoring over teaching staff with regard to methodology. All too often new teachers are issued a timetable and a desk then sent off to class to teach with the only form of feedback being the final exam results. By that time it is much too late to address issues of learning problems, classroom methodology and syllabus delivery.

Secondly, stakeholders in higher education would do well to move away from the common, easily available ESL textbooks and design their own material that is embedded in the cultural and social realities of the region. This is beginning to happen on a small scale but too many administrators are more comfortable with well known branded textbooks published by globally renowned publishing houses. More often than not the curriculum is designed around a series of these books on the basis of week one, unit one, week two unit two and so forth. Teachers should be encouraged to draw from different sources and to use textbooks as a means of achieving learning outcomes that form the basis of a curriculum instead of ploughing through chapters of a textbook, the content of which has no relevance to the students’ knowledge of the world apart from, for example, the title of a box office film they may have seen or a reference to a well known sporting personality.

Finally, the teaching profession which is vital to the rapidly modernizing GCC members, needs to exist as an attractive and financially rewarding career path for locally trained teachers by virtue of enhanced possibilities and excellent working conditions, as opposed to a low status women’s job for expatriates and locals who are unable to secure tenure in highly sought after public sector ministry positions. This can be achieved by regulating and monitoring the industry as well as by recognizing the native speaker fallacy for what it is. Here, Kumaravadivelu’ (2006) notions of particularity, practicality and possibility are most relevant. Local knowledge and

sociocultural contexts, the ability to link theory and practice in order to teach in a reflective manner, and learner identity formation, become salient issues.

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APPENDIX A

IELTS Levels Band Descriptors:

Band 9- Expert User

Has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.

Band 8- Very Good User

Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.

Band 7- Good User

Has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.

Band 6- Competent User

Has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations

Band 5- Modest User

Has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.

Band 4- Limited User

Basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.

Band 3- Extremely Limited User

Conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.

Band 2- Intermittent User

No real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulae in familiar situations and to meet immediate needs. Has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.

Band 1- Non User

Essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.

Band 0- Did not attempt the test

No assessable information provided

Appendix B⁵

OMAN ACADEMIC STANDARDS

FOR

GENERAL FOUNDATION PROGRAMS

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The majority of students entering into higher and post-secondary education in Oman first undertake some form of foundation programme designed to help prepare them for their further studies. These standards seek to help ensure that those programmes are of an appropriate quality. In essence, they require that all General Foundation Programmes (GFPs) are effective in helping students attain the prescribed student learning outcomes in at least four areas: English, mathematics, computing and general study skills. GFPs which meet these standards will be recognised through formal accreditation by the Oman Accreditation Council (OAC). The standards also recognise that the higher education providers (HEPs) have the primary responsibility for providing high quality teaching and assessment of students. As such, these standards provide flexibility for the HEPs to meet them in the manner they deem best.

1.3 Purpose of Standards

Oman's Academic Standards set the minimum requirements that programmes of study are expected to attain. Their primary focus is on student learning outcomes, placing the students and their potential contribution to society at the heart of higher education. These outcomes are not achieved by chance, but are the result of carefully planned and executed formal programmes of study. Therefore, the standards also address the minimum structural and resourcing requirements.

Standards are not curricula. It is the responsibility of each HEP to develop the curriculum, teach and assess students, and review and improve its GFP curriculum in line with the requirements of these standards.

These standards may be used for the following purposes:

- To guide HEPs in the development of their GFPs.
- To provide information to the public about the learning outcomes of GFPs.
- To provide the benchmark against which OAC Accreditation Panels will assess GFPs for the purpose of programme accreditation.

1.3 GFP Exit Standards vs. Higher Education Entrance Standards

a) The GFP is a compulsory entrance qualification for Omani degree programmes, although some of these programmes may also require that additional standards are met (see 2.5 g).

b) For other Oman postsecondary qualifications and for degrees in Oman awarded by a foreign HEP, the GFP is not a compulsory entrance qualification for postsecondary and higher education. Rather, it is designed and used to provide additional academic support to those students who require it.

c) Thus, the GFP exit standards and higher education entrance standards are not synonymous and will not necessarily be the same. Oman's system of higher education includes locally and internationally sourced diploma and degree programmes. In the case of the international programmes, the entrance standards are determined by the foreign provider. As such, HEPs may require students to achieve higher standards than those specified for the GFP. For example, whereas these GFP standards require students to achieve English language competency at a level equivalent to IELTS 5.0, a foreign provider may require an IELTS score of 6.0 for entry into their degree program. It will be the responsibility of each HEP to make this information clearly available to prospective

students.

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1.4 Standards Development, Approval and Review Processes

- a) These standards were developed by pan-sectoral working groups comprising leading national and international academicians. The members are listed in Appendix A.
- b) The process involved national and international benchmarking, a review of past and current national experience, and extensive public consultations including a major symposium held at Sultan Qaboos University (January 2007).
- c) In order to ensure their androgogic effectiveness, the standards were crafted taking into account a learning taxonomy derived from work started by Bloom et al.¹
- d) All Oman Academic Standards are formally approved by a Decision from H.E. The Minister of Higher Education on the recommendation of the Oman Accreditation Council.
- e) These standards will undergo a minor review by the OAC after each accreditation exercise, taking into account lessons learned through the accreditation process.
- f) These standards will undergo a major review, similar to the process used to develop the initial draft, by no later than the year 2012.

1.5 Accreditation of General Foundation Programmes

- a) The Oman Accreditation Council accredits GFPs. Each accreditation exercise will involve a single Review Panel considering several GFPs at the same time.
- b) Accreditation will involve assessment of the GFP against these standards. In cases where a HEP has chosen to include areas of learning in its GFP additional to the four student learning outcome areas in these standards (see section 2.2), they will also be considered by the accreditation panel, taken into account appropriate benchmark standards provided by the applicant HEP.
- c) The first accreditation exercise will take place in late 2009. All HEPs will be invited to submit their GFPs for accreditation. Participation will be optional.
- d) The second exercise will take place in late 2011. All HEPs whose GFPs are not already accredited will be invited to submit their GFPs for accreditation. Thereafter, it is expected that accreditation exercises will take place every two years (but note (g) below).
- e) In time, the OAC will issue a Decision as to when participation will be mandatory. It is anticipated that this may be by 2010.
- f) GFPs which meet the required standards AND which are being subject to successful continuous quality improvement efforts by its HEP will be accredited.
- g) Accreditation of a GFP lasts for six years. At the end of that time, the accreditation will lapse. It is expected that HEPs will reapply for GFP accreditation at least 10 months before their existing accreditation (where applicable) lapses.
- h) HEPs will be entitled to promote the accredited status of their GFP.
- i) Further rules and information about accreditation will be available from the OAC (www.oac.gov.om).

¹ Bloom, B. (Ed.) (1956) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*, Susan Fauer Company, Inc.

2 PROGRAMME DETAILS

2.1 General Foundation Programmes

There are many types of programmes of study that use the term ‘foundation’. For the purpose of these national standards, a GFP has the following characteristics:

- a) It is a formal, structured programme of study licensed² in the Sultanate of Oman and provided by a licensed HEP.
- b) It is designed to prepare students for their postsecondary and higher education studies.
- c) It precedes the first formal year of higher education study (except where, on a case by case basis, the HEP has determined that it can be undertaken, in part, concurrently with first year study).
- d) It is only required for students who do not otherwise meet all the entrance criteria for the first year of their postsecondary and higher education (which, for Omani degree programs, include these student learning outcomes – see section 1.3).
- e) It does not result in the awarding of formal academic credit to the student. And more specifically, a HEP may not award credit for any higher education course which only meets these standards or less.
- f) It is general in disciplinary scope, thereby preparing students for a wide variety of subsequent postsecondary and higher education programme options (although see clause 2.2(3) below).
- g) It is not precisely ‘higher education’, but nonetheless falls within the ambit of the OAC.

2.2 Four Areas of Learning

a) In order to obtain accreditation, a GFP must be effective in helping students meet the specified learning outcomes in the following four areas of learning:

- ☐ English Language
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Computing
- ☐ General Study Skills

b) These four areas have been selected based on the advice of academic staff in Oman, international literature and international benchmarks. They provide a comprehensive intellectual base that is relevant to all further study, and to the development of broad thinking and life skills in general. This strategy is consistent with the development of generic graduate attributes for Oman.

c) A HEP may, at its discretion, choose to supplement these areas of learning with any others that it believes are appropriate, having regard for the higher education programmes it provides.

d) HEPs that teach only in Arabic will not need to comply with the English language standards. It is intended that the issue of developing standards for Arabic language, as an alternative to the standards for English language, will be considered during the first review of these GFP standards.

² GFPs not already licensed but which, by March 2007, have been operating for more than one semester may apply directly for accreditation without first obtaining a license. The awarding of accreditation will be concomitant with granting the license.

2.3 Structure

- a) These standards are designed to ensure HEPs have the necessary level of flexibility in managing their GFPs.
- b) The student learning outcome standards in the four areas of learning are not prescriptions for courses/modules. They may be addressed through any variety of courses/modules. For example, there does not need to be a “General Study Skills” module, provided that the HEP can demonstrate that the General Study Skills learning outcomes are satisfactorily attended to in its other GFP modules.
- c) For administrative convenience, GFPs are expected to be structured according to the credit hours or credit points system set out in ROSQA (although completion of each course does not earn the student credit).
- d) These standards do not impose a time limit on a GFP (unlike pending OAC standards for diploma and degree programmes, which will utilize standardised durations of study as well as student learning outcome standards). It is expected that GFPs will be tailored for each student in accordance with their learning needs. A student does not complete the GFP until s/he has met all the learning outcomes. Therefore, a GFP may range in length from none, to one or more semesters (the term ‘foundation year’ is unhelpful as it assumes a fixed duration irrespective of the students’ varied learning needs). It is anticipated that many GFP students may require three or more semesters, until the benefits of changes to the secondary school curriculum become manifest over the next few years.
- e) A student undertaking a GFP must not be enrolled in more than 100% of a full time load. In other words, they may not undertake a GFP on top of a full time first year study load. This is in recognition of the fact that students undertaking GFPs require additional support, and are not yet ready to manage more than a full time higher education load.
- f) Where the learning outcomes of the GFP are manifestly pre-requisites to further study, then the GFP must be completed prior to a student’s enrolment in further study.
- g) Non-mandatory guidelines for structuring GFPs in relation to each of the four areas of learning are provided below under their respective sections.
- h) A HEP may contract with a second HEP to provide courses to the first HEP’s students that will meet these standards.

2.4 Assessment of Student Learning

- a) Assessment for GFPs is unique because the assessment for the entry and exit are essentially the same, i.e. designed to determine whether or not the student meets the learning outcome standards.
- b) A GFP entrance assessment is required to determine whether a student already has met the required GFP learning outcomes.
- c) A student shall not be required to undertake a component of a GFP if s/he has already met the required learning outcomes for that area of learning. If a student satisfies the standards for English, Mathematics and Computing during entry testing then s/he will be awarded the certificate of attainment for the entire GFP (see sections 2.5 and 6.1).
- d) The Study Skills standards are not subject to pre-entry testing. This is for pragmatic reasons, because effective assessment of study skills involves methods other than a test or examination. Therefore, the Study Skills component of a GFP will only be required if a student is undertaking any of the English, Mathematics or Computing areas – see section 6.1).
- e) An exit assessment is required to determine whether a student has met the required GFP learning outcomes. A student shall not pass the GFP until all the learning outcomes are met.

- f) At this time, there will be no standardised national tests. Each HEP will have the responsibility for developing its own methods of assessment against the student learning outcomes in these standards. The HEP must demonstrate that the chosen assessment

method is effective in determining whether the student has attained the required learning outcomes.

- g) The final assessment result should be either a pass, indicating that the student learning outcomes have been achieved by the student, or a fail. There will be no final grading shown on the official testamur or transcript.
- h) All assessment shall be criteria based (i.e. based on the learning outcome standards) and not normative references. Arbitrary scaling of results (for example, ensuring a certain percentage of students pass by moving the pass/fail point down the scale of student results) shall not be permitted.
- i) HEPs must have appropriate internal quality controls for its assessment processes. These must include, at least, internal moderation by faculty of examination papers and of marked work prior to the issuance of results, and a transparent appeals process for students.
- j) It is expected that HEPs shall also utilize an appropriate and broad range of assessment mechanisms during the programme, in order to provide students with feedback on their progress which will assist their learning.
- k) The process for accrediting GFPs will include, at least, independent checking of student's marked work and overall assessment results. If the OAC Review Panel determines that students have been passed without meeting the learning outcome standards, then the GFP will not be accredited.
- l) If a student fails part of the GFP s/he does not fail the entire GFP and would only need to re-sit the part that s/he failed. However, the student must pass all four learning outcome areas in order to pass the GFP.
- m) A student who has not completed their GFP may enroll in some first year degree courses provided that:
 - ☐ The outstanding GFP component is not evidently a pre-requisite for the first year/level courses being taken (e.g., a student could enroll in a 1st year history course before achieving the Applied Mathematics GFP standards);
 - ☐ The student's total enrolment (of first year and GFP courses) does not exceed 100% of a full time student load; and
 - ☐ The student may not undertake any second year/level degree courses until the GFP is completed.
- n) In order to ensure that the GFP is sufficiently flexible to allow students to take the time necessary to reach the learning outcomes, the assessment schedule should provide for students to successfully exit at the end of any semester. This may require making all GFP courses available every semester. For example, if a student passes Course 1 (in semester/term1) in an area of learning but then fails Course 2 (in semester 2), s/he ought to be able to repeat Course 2 in the next semester/term, rather than having to wait two semesters.
- o) For instances where a cohort of GFP students at a particular HEP will be progressing to subsequent studies taught and assessed in the Arabic language, it will be acceptable for the teaching and assessment of these GFP to be undertaken in Arabic.

2.5 Certificates of Attainment

- a) HEPs shall present non-credit 'certificates of attainment' to students who successfully pass the requirements of an accredited GFP, whether they do so during GFP entry or exit testing. The certificate may bear the insignia of the testing HEP and an insignia from the OAC provided to the HEP for this purpose.

- b) The 'certificate of attainment' is not intended to be a formal exit qualification and does not represent any commitment to employers about the preparedness of the student for work.
- c) The certificate will be issued to students achieving the required standards for all four student learning outcome areas, even if some of those areas were passed by the student via assessment/recognition of prior learning (including adequate secondary school exit marks)

(see 2.4).

d) HEPs may present non-credit ‘certificates of attainment’ to students who successfully pass the requirements of a non-accredited GFP. The certificate may bear the insignia of the testing HEP. However, they shall not bear an insignia of the OAC.

e) The HEP shall, within one week of presenting the certificates to students, submit a complete list of all students who have received such a certificate to the MoHE, who shall keep it on file for such purposes as providing independent confirmation to enquirers. This list shall clearly demarcate certificates for accredited verses non-accredited GFPs.

f) This list may be audited by the MoHE at any time, and will be included in the scope of accreditation assessments by the OAC. Any breach of the standards in this section shall result in disciplinary action by the MoHE and shall, in the case of accredited GFPs, result in immediate forfeiture of the GFP’s accreditation.

g) For the purposes of enrolment into the first year of postsecondary or higher education programmes of study, all HEPs in Oman will be obliged to recognise a student’s certificate for successfully completing an accredited GFP, although HEPs will also have the right to set additional enrolment criteria for certain programmes.

h) This period of recognition shall last for two years from the date the certificate is issued. After that, a HEP may choose to re-test a student seeking to enroll for the first year of a postsecondary or higher education programme.

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3 ENGLISH LANGUAGE

3.1 Aim of the Area

To extend the English language skills of the student to enable active participation in their postsecondary or higher education studies.

3.2 Learning Outcome Standards

Having successfully completed GFP English language a student will be able to satisfactorily:

- a) Actively participate in a discussion on a topic relevant to their studies by asking questions, agreeing/disagreeing, asking for clarification, sharing information, expressing and asking for opinions.
- b) Paraphrase information (orally or in writing) from a written or spoken text or from graphically presented data.
- c) Prepare and deliver a talk of at least 5 minutes. Use library resources in preparing the talk, speak clearly and confidently, make eye contact and use body language to support the delivery of ideas. Respond confidently to questions.
- d) Write texts of a minimum of 250 words, showing control of layout, organisation, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary.
- e) Produce a written report of a minimum of 500 words showing evidence of research, notetaking, review and revision of work, paraphrasing, summarising, use of quotations and use of references.
- f) Take notes and respond to questions about the topic, main ideas, details and opinions or arguments from an extended listening text (e.g. lecture, news broadcast).
- g) Follow spoken instructions in order to carry out a task with a number of stages.
- h) Listen to a conversation between two or more speakers and be able to answer questions in relation to context, relationship between speakers, register (e.g. formal or informal).
- i) Read a one to two page text and identify the main idea(s) and extract specific information in a given period of time.
- j) Read an extensive text broadly relevant to the student’s area of study (minimum three pages) and respond to questions that require analytical skills, e.g. prediction, deduction, inference.

3.3 Resource Requirements

3.3.1 Staffing Resources

- a) The person with overall academic responsibility for the program must have at a minimum a Master's Degree in English or related fields, a qualification in English Language Teaching (ELT) (e.g. CELTA, DELTA, Trinity TEFL certificate) and at least three years' English language teaching experience at postsecondary level.
- b) The minimum requirement for GFP English language teaching staff is either a Bachelor's degree (in a relevant subject and taught and assessed in English) and a qualification in English Language Teaching (ELT) (e.g. CELTA, Trinity TEFL certificate), or a Master's degree (in a relevant subject and taught and assessed in English). Most faculty should have at least two years' English language teaching experience at postsecondary level.
- c) It is also desirable that institutions provide evidence of regular staff professional development opportunities in order to maintain and upgrade staff teaching skills (e.g. workshops, provision for conference attendance, peer observation).

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3.3.2 Teaching Resources

In order to support students' studies and develop independent learning skills, institutions should provide an environment where students can have regular access to e-learning and computer facilities (e.g. such as an IT or Learning Resource Centre equipped with audio visual aids and computers with software/programmes to help students enhance and develop language skills like vocabulary, reading and grammar and listening) and support materials (e.g. a library section dedicated to English language teaching materials or a learning resource centre). Training should be given to staff to facilitate the incorporation of new technology and resources into the teaching programme. Where possible, use of these facilities and electronic materials should be incorporated into the teaching programmes.

4.2 Advice from the GFP Academic Committee

The contents of this section are not mandatory requirements for licensing or accreditation. They are offered as advice from the GFP Academic Committee and its English Working Group.

3.4.1 Course Structure

- a) English courses ought to be semesterised and all courses ought to be available each semester.
- b) The ideal maximum class size is about 20.
- c) If, upon entry-testing (see below), a student is found to require substantially more English tuition than that for which the GFP provides, then it is recommended that the HEP provide that student with access to appropriate additional support, either directly or by referral.

3.4.2 Assessment

Students entering the GFP should be given some form of needs analysis (e.g. a written test, interview or self-evaluation questionnaire) in order to ascertain their current level of English language proficiency and evaluate which skills areas need to be developed. This will enable the institution to decide on the study programme for individual students.

Programme assessment methods could include both continuous assessment and end of semester exams. However, in order to ensure that the learning outcomes have been achieved and to avoid institutions focusing solely on exam results, a variety of formative and summative assessment methods could be considered:

- ☐ standardized tests/quizzes
- ☐ comprehensive exams (teacher-made or institution-made)
- ☐ observations
- ☐ portfolios
- ☐ research projects (group or individual)

- ☐ oral presentations, and/or
- ☐ evaluated performances
- ☐ evaluation of post-programme success

Instruments of assessment could be put on a matrix to show which English language learning outcome(s) were being assessed, as shown in Table 1.

³ Adapted from 'CEA Standards for English Language Programmes and Institutions' (2005) Commission on English Language Programme Accreditation, USA

Table 1. Indicative Assessment Schedule for English Language learning outcomes

Learning outcome Teacher observation
Project Presentation Class Test

Actively participate in a discussion on a topic relevant to their studies by asking questions, agreeing/disagreeing, asking for clarification, sharing information, expressing and asking for opinions.

—
Paraphrase information (orally or in writing) from a written or spoken text or from graphically presented data.

— —
Prepare and deliver a talk of at least 5 minutes. Use library resources, speak clearly and confidently, make eye contact and use body language to support the delivery of ideas. Respond confidently to questions.

—
Write texts of a minimum of 250 words, showing control of layout, organisation, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary.

—
Examples of good assessment practice include benchmarking and double marking of assignments; a number of institutions invite external assessors to moderate exam papers and written scripts before and after the examination. Institutions would need to consider incorporating transparent and consistent mechanisms for providing feedback to students on their progress. This could be done through counseling or advising sessions or written feedback (as opposed to % marks). Evidence of a recorded support system for underperforming students is desirable.

3.4.3 Alternative Assessment

An IELTS score of at least 5.0 (with none of the four areas of writing, speaking, listening and reading below 4.5) or a TOEFL score of at least 500 will be deemed equivalent to passing these standards.

6 GENERAL STUDY SKILLS

6.1 Aim of the Area

To equip students with fundamental study and academic skills needed for postsecondary or higher education studies.

General Study Skills may be taught either as specific course/s, or may be embedded into each of the English, Mathematics and Computing courses. This will require careful attention to ongoing curriculum and instructional design by HEP faculty.

Students who meet the English, Computing and Mathematics standards upon entry testing are awarded the GFP certificate in full, and thereby exempt from the Study Skills standards in the

GFP (see 2.4(c)). Therefore, it is expected that HEPS will also be able to demonstrate how they have incorporated these Study Skills standards into the first year of their diploma and degree programs.

6.2 Learning Outcome Standards

6.2.1 Managing time and accepting responsibility

- a) Work in pairs or groups and participate accordingly i.e. take turns, initiate a discussion, interrupt appropriately, express an opinion.
- b) Follow university policies on attendance and punctuality.
- c) Bring required materials (pens, pencils, folder, etc) to class.
- d) Work to imposed deadlines.
- e) Show respect for teachers and others and their rights to have a difference of opinion.
- f) Use a variety of study techniques.
- g) Create term planners and study schedules noting key dates/events.
- h) Complete homework on time.
- i) Continually revise one's work.
- j) Independently access and use computer labs and the internet for language learning.
- k) Identify preferred study strategies based on learning styles.
- l) Organise a feasible study schedule that accommodates other responsibilities.
- m) Describe learning experiences, challenges, insights in a daily journal.
- n) Organise and maintain a system of recording vocabulary (keep a vocabulary log).
- o) Organise and maintain a portfolio of one's work.

6.2.2 Research Skills

- a) List the key ideas to guide search for information.
- b) Use the library system for finding, borrowing and returning library material.
- c) Use an English-English dictionary for language learning.
- d) Use a contents page and an index to locate information in a book.
- e) Extract relevant information from a book or article using a battery of reading strategies (e.g. skimming, scanning, etc.).
- f) Locate a book/journal in the library using the catalogue.
- g) Find topic-related information in a book/journal in the library using the catalogue.

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- h) Find specific information using internet search engines and electronic resources.
- i) Cite a source in accordance with academic conventions.
- j) Classify and sort new information.
- k) Select or reject a source based on difficulty level, relevance and currency.
- l) Assess the reliability, objectivity and authenticity of a source.
- m) Summarise and paraphrase information in one's own words.

6.2.3 Taking Notes

- a) Recall and define main concepts.
- b) Utilize abbreviations and symbols.
- c) Use English rather than Arabic for notes in margins and glossing vocabulary.
- d) Extract and record key information (the gist) from a written or spoken source based on own interpretation of information.
- e) Adopt a note-taking strategy (e.g. Cornell system; mind mapping).
- f) Support key points with relevant additional details.
- g) Organise information to enable quick reference at a later date.
- h) Date one's notes.
- i) Use notes to create a summary.
- j) Reproduce key information and supporting details from notes in one's own words.
- k) Sort out information and reject irrelevant pieces.

6.2.4 Giving Presentations

- a) Outline and define main concepts.
- b) Address questions from the audience.

- c) Plan and conduct a presentation based on information from written material, interviews, surveys, etc.
- d) Speak in a clearly audible and well paced voice.
- e) Follow a presentation format.
- f) Use presentation language (discourse markers etc.).
- g) Achieve the key aim of informing the audience.
- h) Make use of audio/visual aids when giving oral presentations.
- i) Tailor content and language to the level of the audience.
- j) Maintain some eye contact with audience.
- k) Speak from notes in front of an audience using index cards.
- l) Observe time restrictions in presentations.
- m) Organise and present information in a logical order at a comprehensible speed.
- n) Invite constructive feedback and self-evaluate the presentation.

6.3 Resource Requirements

Study skills are considered part of the English standards. To help students develop learner autonomy an environment for promoting self study should be set up (e.g. a self access centre). There should be working areas that are equipped with computers and software that are adequate for contemporary student use, instructional programmes and reading materials. Experienced facilitators should be available to help and guide the students in their independent learning.

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6.4 Advice from the GFP Academic Committee

The contents of this section are not mandatory requirements for licensing or accreditation. They are offered as advice from the GFP Academic Committee and its Study Skills Working Group.

6.4.1 Assessment

The acquisition of study skills should be assessed through a combination of summative and formative methods. Some examples follow:

- a) Teacher Mark: A few marks (3 to 5 marks) are given to students for their in-class participation, attendance, punctuality in turning in homework and coming to class.
- b) Student portfolio: All students must keep a portfolio of their work and update it continuously. They also use the portfolio to create their study plans and their reflections on their learning and learning styles.
- c) Student Project: Students undertake projects to help them acquire and apply the research and presentation skills. The project is part of the requirements for the study skills course. The project involves researching a topic and conducting a presentation. The students are assessed on their research and presentation.
- d) Out of class work log: Students are expected to take charge of their own learning outside the class time. They should show evidence of their work in a log which is checked by the teacher regularly. The log should be part of the student assessment (2 to 4 marks). The out of class work includes using language programmes and reading materials in the self access centre and other resources.
- e) Vocabulary log: Students keep and update a log of new vocabulary they learn in all courses. The log is checked by the teacher continuously. A mark is given based on the content and organization of the log (2 to 4 marks). Students should be given clear guidelines about the vocabulary they should record and how.
- f) Institutions could also choose to have more authentic methods of assessment, such as interviews, role plays, peer reviews, debates, etc.

Instruments of assessment could be put on a matrix to show which Study Skills learning outcome(s) were being assessed, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Indicative Assessment Schedule for English Language learning outcomes*Learning outcome Teacher**mark**Student**portfolio**Out of class**work log**Vocabulary**log**Short tests* Projects*Managing time and
accepting responsibility

- - - -

Research skills _

Taking notes _

Giving presentations _

* A series of short tests that asks the students to create notes from different courses, a text and a listening and then use their notes to answer questions. The tests could be either part of a study skills course or the English Language listening course.

6.4.2 Course Structure

As stated previously, General Study Skills may be taught either as specific course/s, or may be embedded into each of the English, Mathematics and Computing courses. To facilitate the acquisition and application of the study skills learning outcomes, a number of measures could be taken:

a) The skills need to be taught and assessed throughout the GFP but at varying degrees of difficulty at each proficiency level. This could be done through introducing a series of

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mini study skills courses or workshops that could help students learn and apply the skills through explicit instruction and application.

b) The acquisition of the study skills is largely learner dependent. It is therefore important that the students are made aware of the nature and requirements of the college culture through student guides, brochures, etc.

c) The skills could be reinforced in all courses in the GFP and beyond.

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APPENDIX B. ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

The following abbreviations, acronyms and terms are used in these standards. As necessary, they are explained in context. In some cases, URLs are provided to facilitate further enquiries about these acronyms and terms.

CELTA.....	Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults
DELTA.....	Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults
ELT.....	English Language Teaching
GFP.....	General Foundation Programme
HEP	Higher Education Provider
IC ₃ ®.....	Certiport Internet and Computing Core Certification (http://info.certiport.com/yourpersonalpath/ic3Certification/)
ICDL.....	International Computer Driving License (www.icdlgcc.com)
IELTS.....	International English Language Testing System (www.ielts.org)
IT.....	Information Technology
MoHE.....	Ministry of Higher Education (www.mohe.gov.om)
OAC	Oman Accreditation Council (www.oac.gov.om)

ROSQARequirements for Oman System of Quality Assurance (available from <http://www.oac.gov.om/>)
 SQU.....Sultan Qaboos University (www.squ.edu.om)
 TOEFLTest of English as a Foreign Language (www.ets.org/toefl/)
 Trinity TEFLTrinity Teaching English as a Foreign Language

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire:

THE COMMUNICATIVE TEACHING APPROACH IN THE OMANI CONTEXT

Dear Colleague,

This questionnaire forms part of a larger MA study in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) which investigates the use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in tertiary education institutions in Oman. Could you please assist by answering the following questions? Participation is voluntary and participants will remain anonymous. Thank you.

Mr. A. McLean.

QUESTIONS

1 In general, how would you describe your approach to teaching English?

Answer:

2 Do you have a preferred method/approach to teaching English as a foreign or second language? Please name this approach/method.

Answer:

3 Could you briefly describe this approach/method?

Answer:

4 Do you ever use a variety of approaches/methods in the classroom; if so please explain why?

Answer:

5 Do you have any awareness of the CLT approach? If so please briefly explain what this approach means to you with regard to teaching methodology.

Answer:

6 If your answer to the above question was yes then please describe how you learned about CLT; whether it was through formal teacher training or informal means such as research on the internet or journal articles.

Answer:

7 Do you think that it is important to teach learners rules of English grammar? If so please briefly explain why you think this is important.

Answer:

8 In your opinion is it effective to teach the different skills such as grammar, reading and writing separately, or do you think it is more effective to teach these skills in an integrated fashion? Please explain your answer.

Answer:

9 What would you say the main obstacles are with regard to implementing your preferred teaching style in the classroom?

Answer:

10 Do the course textbooks and teaching resource materials affect your teaching methodology in any way? Please explain.

Answer:

11 Do you think that the “PPP” or Presentation, Practice & Production, method of additional language teaching is an effective approach? Please clarify your answer.

Answer:

12 Please state what your qualifications are.

Answer:

13 Do you try to keep up to date with current research findings in second language teaching methodology? If so please explain how you do this.

Answer:

14 In the space below please provide comments or indicate any factors that you may find relevant with regard to your teaching methods.

Answer:

APPENDIX D

List of Questions for Semi Structured Interview:

1. Could you tell me how long you have been teaching?
2. How long have you been working at this institution?
3. Have you taught in other countries; if so would you like to briefly outline your teaching experiences in these countries?
4. Would you like to discuss your academic qualifications and explain how they relate to teaching English as an additional language?
5. Do you have any comment to make about your preferred teaching style/s?
6. What factors do you think should be taken into consideration when adapting teaching styles to local contexts?
7. Would you please describe the type of activities you normally engage the students with in the classroom?
8. To what extent do you use role-play, group work, pair work and similar interactive activities in the classroom?
9. Do you believe it is important to teach grammar rules first when introducing a new aspect of language such as the past perfect tense?
10. Could you briefly discuss your perception of the relationship between function (discourse and sociolinguistic competency) and form (structural/grammatical accuracy) with regard to second language acquisition?
11. Would you explain what you believe to be the ideal classroom environment for English second language acquisition in this institution is?

By classroom environment I mean factors such as class size, gender mix, length of lessons and similar related factors.

12. What kind of organisational constraints have you experienced in this institution and how do these constraints affect your teaching activities?
13. Are there any changes you would like to see made to the syllabus, assessment methods, teaching and learning resources currently in use?
14. Do you have any special techniques that you use in the classroom to motivate and encourage your students?
15. What is your opinion of the learning and teaching materials used in this institution?
16. Do you have any knowledge of the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach?
17. (If the answer is yes), could you briefly describe what this approach entails in your opinion?
18. (If the answer is yes), do you think it is feasible to employ this approach in the Omani context?
19. (If the answer is yes), do you ever use the CLT approach in the classroom?
20. Do you think there are other approaches which may be better suited to the CLT approach within the context of this institution?