

The Potential of Using Content-Learning Tasks in Promoting Literacy Skills

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Abstract

This study responds to the international widespread application of content-based instruction in foreign/second language teaching as well as the recent calls in Bahrain to promote literacy skills within the learning of English as a foreign/second language. The study achieves this through exploring the effectiveness of using designed content-based tasks in developing 97 Bahraini students' literacy skills while learning EFL/ESL within a design-based research project as an initiative to support their school's attempt to improve the general performance in learning English and respond to the quality assurance standards required in this regard. The main findings indicate the efficiency of the designed content tasks in developing the students' literacy skills while learning the foreign/second language from on different levels; cognitive, language proficiency and raising their confidence of themselves as foreign/second language users. The study discusses these outcomes with their implications for the language learning as well as for possible future language policy in English as a foreign/second language instruction in Bahrain.

Keywords

EFL/ESL, Content-Learning Tasks, Literacy Skills, Designed-Based Research

Introduction

Globally, the implementation of content-based instruction (CBI) and later the content learning tasks (CLTs) in the English as a foreign/second language (EFL/ESL) domain has been explored and examined in terms of its effectiveness in improving the EFL/ESL learners in definite aspects. The first aspect is utilizing the CLTs to improve the listening and speaking skills of the EFL/ESL learners. For instance, Pratama and Fitriani (2020) explored the teachers' and students' perceptions of the effectiveness of implementing the CBI in enhancing the students' speaking skills and their oral function of the target language. The researchers report that the implementation of CBI has enabled learners to learn speaking skill through a variety of activities that were based on the subject matter. In addition, Lai and Aksornjarung (2017) conducted their study through investigating the impact of implementing a 14-week CBI English course on Thai learners' listening and speaking skills. The obtained findings revealed the positive impact on the implemented CBI course in raising the learners' achievement in the speaking and listening tests.

Another aspect investigated with the CBI application in EFL/ESL teaching and learning is related to raising the EFL/ESL learners' motivation while learning the target language by enabling the learners to fulfill specific academic needs or purposes (ESP) related to the subject content which is offered in English. Some researchers like Bozdogan and Karlidag (2013) as well as Pinner (2013) and Huang (2011) report in their studies that applying CLI method with EFL/ESL learners positively impacts these learners' level of motivation and makes them more involved in the lesson activities particularly those related to their academic specializations. In addition, the utilization of CLTs is also explored in terms of its influence on both the teacher and the learners roles in the EFL/ESL lesson. Several researchers (e.g. Brinton & Jensen, 2002; Snow & Brinton, 2008; Stoller, 2002) explain in this regard that using CBI and CLTs in particular can serve more than just a primary platform for language knowledge or skill function

in the way it can enable both the EFL/ESL teachers and their learners establish a thematic learning, where they can integrate the different language skills, and develop some learning habits, such as collaboration, interpretation, and critical thinking.

However, it is noticeable from the review of these studies that the focus is on either the main four language skills or definite learning habits that EFL/ESL learners can develop while exercising CLTs in their learning. This may emphasize a gap in the CBI-CLTs' research, where some other skills related to language learning, such as the literacy skills can be examined to determine more opportunities to improve the learning and teaching of English in foreign/second language contexts.

Consequently, the present study attempts to fill in this gap in research by linking it to the present study's context, where demands have been made to the Bahraini English language teachers to provide more efforts to develop the learning abilities as well as literacy skills of their EFL/ESL learners during their English lessons (BQA report, 2017). This challenge arises from the fact that although the official status of English teaching and learning in Bahrain is recognised as a foreign language, it can be claimed that it is shifting towards being a second language (Abdulmajeed, 2005). This is reflected in the Ministry of Education's (MOE) policies towards teaching English in Bahrain, such as a) assigning English as a core subject to be taught from grade 1 in the elementary school side by side the mother tongue Arabic, b) offering intensive pre- and in-service teacher education programmes for ELTs, and c) allocating intensive teaching and learning of English in the secondary school through offering a number of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses ($n=6$) that are related to the students' specialisations in the secondary school (English Language Curriculum Document for Secondary Education, 2005). All these act as factors that require the English language teachers (ELTs) across the educational stages to equip their EFL/ESL students with various language abilities like proficiency, communication, and thinking abilities to enable them to respond to the demands and needs of their learning in their current educational stage (English Language Curriculum for Basic Education, 2004; English Language Curriculum Document for Secondary Education, 2005). Several researchers have identified the importance of reinforcing key literacy skills in the EFL/ESL education. For instance, Kim (2016) explains that teaching literacy gives EFL/ESL learners space to examine books and articulate their voices on subjects related to cultural/rational diversity and equality. The study suggests that teaching literacy should be more reinforced in the early education stages of EFL/ESL learners to develop their language and learning skills. On the other hand, Gibbons (2008) reports that teaching literacy for EFL/ESL students not only advances the students' linguistic and learning skills but the ELT's teaching abilities as well. The researcher measured the influence of implementing a project titled 'challenging pedagogies' in teaching writing and reading materials to her elementary students and found that this project positively impacted the teacher's performance as well as the students which eventually created a supportive learning environment for the students to utilise the language in different situations away from the normal tasks assigned in the planned curriculum.

One possible approach to achieve this in the context of this study is through implementing the CBI method. Davis (2003) views CBI as a teaching method that focuses on integrating the use of the foreign/second language learning with the subject matter content learning to achieve specific language learning needs or purposes relevant to the learners. Munoz (2016) mentions that any teaching technique that reflects the CBI mode of instruction must adhere to the following principles: EFL/ESL learners receive content and language together, central exposure to texts and discourse while teaching and learning the language, interactional moves

and focus is on the language academic use. In this regard, the CLTs is seen as a subdivision technique of CBI in teaching English to the EFL/ESL learners, where specific tasks are planned and developed from the core subject units in the subject to enable the students to reach the intended language level in shorter time and to achieve the required subject matter at the same time (Snow, 2001).

This was achieved through two steps. First, a design of an application cycle was carried out with some interventions of the target technique by the study participant teachers on their students then it was followed by a measurement of the improvement those learners managed to achieve after each intervention during their experiences of learning EFL/ESL using CLTs. Second, the ELTs' perceptions of the potential of applying CLTs as a teaching technique in developing the Bahraini secondary students' literacy skills when learning English was also explored to identify issues related to possible challenges and obstacles that should be considered when applying the proposed technique in future. This is suggested by Weng et al. (2019) that providing opportunities to the EFL/ESL teachers in the bilingual contexts by equipping them with feasible techniques and materials to try directly in their actual context will emphasize and support their agency as foreign/second language teachers and participate in their professional growth since it will allow them to develop their personal theorization about the best ways to improve the learning and teaching of English in a non-native English speaking context.

Method

The study sought to answer the following questions:

RQ1. To what extent was using the content learning tasks effective in improving the Bahraini secondary EFL/ESL learners' literacy skills?

RQ2. What were the teachers' views on the literacy skills which their learners had improved during their learning of EFL/ESL using the content learning tasks?

These questions were approached by following a design-based research methodology through blending empirical research design with theory design of learning environments (The Design-Based Research Collective, 2002). Accordingly, the study followed the one independent group in data collection and analysis. The method for collecting data was twofold; both quantitative data as well as qualitative data were collected and analysed through using multiple tools. For the quantitative part as required in RQ1, data were gathered and analysed from tests and lesson observations while the interviews were conducted to answer RQ2. The rationale behind using these three instruments was to measure the "Instructional Dynamic" that should be investigated in a design-based research, such as this study where active processes occur on interpreting the teaching and learning experiences in which knowing about and understanding content, learners, teachers and environments or all of them constitute the core of the educational process due to the interventions of the proposed content learning tasks in the English language lessons in this regard (Ball and Forzani, 2007). This also corresponds to the instructional triangle suggested by Cohen et al. (2011) that should be addressed when carrying out a designed-based study. The following figure illustrates this triangle:

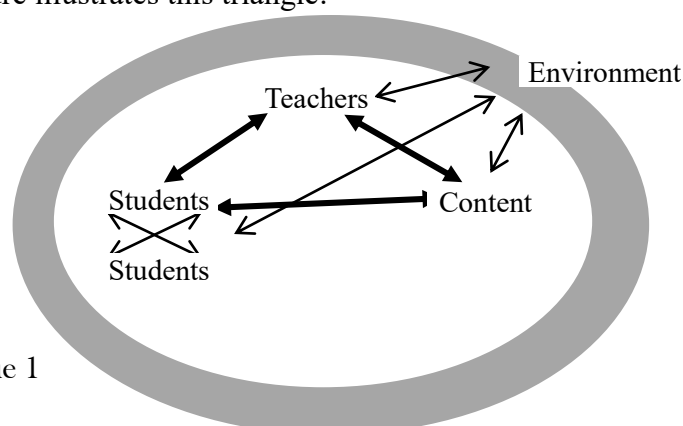


Figure 1. The Instructional Triangle (Cohen, Raudenbush & Ball, 2003, p.124)

Therefore, a package of CLTs was developed and applied in light of Kroeker and Henrichs (1993) model, which focuses on practising four main types of tasks for improving literacy skills to foreign/second language learners, these are: *jigsaw*, *gallery tour*, *cloning the author* and *story board*. The developed tasks included texts for different proficiency levels, outlined purpose(s) and procedures to follow by the learners with their teacher. The nature of the Bahraini Non-native English-speaking context was also considered when designing those CLTs. As well, a training session to the concerned teachers was also conducted to ensure familiarisation and awareness of the aspects of language learning that should be focused on while exercising the designed CLTs.

Then, the tests were developed by the participant teachers and supervised by the researcher to ensure the consistency and alignment of the tests with the literacy skills and language competencies that were aimed to improve on the part of the learners in this study. Similarly, a lesson observation card was also developed discussed with the senior teacher who acted as the supervisor of the participant teachers. The aim was to ensure that the developed observation card was aligned with the official observation card used by the senior teacher in terms of the performance aspects that should be focused on during the observation visit to English language lesson in secondary schools so that it is found familiar to the teachers as well as their senior teacher that it will not require them to consider special preparations or additional requirements when performing their lessons. These two instruments served mainly to answer the quantitative part in this study as indicated in RQ1.

However, qualitative data were gathered and analyzed through conducting semi-structured interviews with the study participants to answer RQ2 of this study. The interview questions were shared and discussed with 2 faculty colleagues who were teaching literacy courses to teacher candidates at Bahrain Teachers College (BTC). The aim of this procedure was to ensure consistency and relevance of the developed questions to the problem under investigation. After arbitration and modification of the interview questions, the interview questions were piloted with 2 English language teachers who were taking their in-service training course at BTC. The piloted interviews were conducted in English, however, the use of mother tongue [Arabic in the context of this study] was also used during the actual conduction of the interviews with the study participants to a) ensure that the participants were able enough to express themselves clearly and confidently, and to b) make them feel free and comfortable during the interview as this would be useful to “avoid paying too much attention to answering the right answer in the right order of questions which might have resulted in a peculiar social dynamic which could be unsatisfactory for this type of data” (Mason, 1996, p.67). The gathered responses from the interviews were transcribed and analysed then shared with the concerned participants for validation to ensure a representative presentation of the participants’ views regarding their experience in applying content-learning tasks in teaching EFL/ESL as well as their professional development after conducting the designed-based study. Then, final scripts were content analysed and categorised into thematic categories that were described, discussed and analysed with reference to the relevant literature.

Participants

The study was conducted on target sample English language teachers (n=4) who were teaching English in a secondary girls' school in Bahrain and their students (n=97). The teachers were graduates of the BTC were classified as experienced teachers by the MOE in Bahrain as they have been teaching EFL/ESL in secondary education for more than 10 years.

Findings

The analysed data from the classroom observations of students work and their test results showed significant improvement throughout the stages of the study. The following discusses these findings in relation to RQ1 to measure the effect of the proposed practice in developing the learners' literacy skills as well as identifying what particular literacy skill(s) that students managed to develop as a consequence of using the CLTs when learning EFL/ESL.

Findings from classroom observations: Ample opportunities with different learning responses

Multiple class visits (n=16) were conducted along the two months of the application [1 visit every two weeks for the 4 classes] to observe the learners' performance during their practice of the proposed CLTs, namely *jigsaw*, *gallery tour*, *cloning the author* and *story board* tasks as shown in the following table:

Table (1): Observations done during the conduction of CLTs

Teacher	Class	1 st Month	2 nd Month	Total
Teacher A	Class 1	2	2	4
Teacher B	Class 2	2	2	4
Teacher C	Class 3	2	2	4
Teacher D	Class 4	2	2	4
Overall total		8	8	16

The notes registered from the observation visits were quantified considering; (a) the frequency of the observed actions and (b) the type of efforts done by the EFL/ESL learners during the observed lessons, and calculation of frequency to register the sum points for each criterion according to the allotted percentage. Table 1 below displays the overall mean scores calculated from the frequencies of the applied four tasks during the visits after quantifying the observation notes in this regard:

Table (2): Overview of Students Performance Across the Applied CLTs

Teaching technique	Criteria						M
	<i>Integrating the 4 skills (20%)</i>	<i>Collaborating actively (20%)</i>	<i>Accessing prior knowledge (10%)</i>	<i>Thinking on different levels (10%)</i>	<i>Making multiple passes through the text (20%)</i>	<i>Demonstrating understanding using different modes (20%)</i>	
Jigsaw	17	18	10	10	17	18	90
Gallery walk	20	17	7	10	15	16	86
Cloning the author	18	20	10	10	17	18	93
Story board	16	20	7	10	18	17	88
<i>Overall M</i>							91.4

The above results indicate a high level of performance done by the students during their practice of the different CLTs when learning ESL/EFL. This can be generally inferred from the averages [16 – 20 for the criteria with total of 20%] and [7 – 10 for the criteria with total of 10%] registered for each type of the 4 tasks. This performance was categorised and described more in detail below:

a. *Promoting language communication/function*

It was clear through the observations that CLTs represented a useful opportunity for the ESL/EFL learners to practice and improve their 4 language skills. The learners showed ample efforts to engage more content in their projects and express their thoughts fluently during the lesson. This fluency development was scaffolded with extensive use of vocabulary from the studied texts and other contents (e.g. poems & autobiographies) which revealed the learners' achievement in developing their ability to use different lexical complexities despite their inaccurate structure several times during the implementation of the study. The classroom observations showed that despite their inaccurate formations, the EFL/ESL learners didn't show any sort of frustration or demotivation towards practising the target language. On the contrary, it was noticeable how those learners were referring to the content to develop their thoughts or express their opinions toward a certain issue or problem especially during practising writing or listening, the two skills that require accuracy in the language features, such as spelling, expression of thoughts or correct grammatical structures. Zhang (2017) and Ewert (2014) explain this finding that literacy development in ESL/EFL learning normally encourages the learners to focus on fluency before accuracy due to the fact that the learners tend to engage with more content, which provides them with the basis and rationale for how they can better express their thoughts and ideas. However, the observation findings in this study showed that CLTs can enhance EFL/ESL learners' accuracy through associating it with their fluency by speaking about definite content ideas and topics.

b. *Learning ESL/EFL collaboratively*

Collaborative learning or group work is not a new practice in ESL/EFL pedagogy. Yet, the observations of the CLTs' conduction with the ESL/EFL learners revealed how those learners managed to go beyond the traditional reading strategies (e.g. identifying the main idea and supporting details) they had shown in the first two weeks of their CLTs' lessons to develop new learning strategies, such as discussing embedded meanings and exchanging opinions regarding such concepts in the studied content and utilising their schemata or prior knowledge about the defined content to produce a collective understanding of their group discussion to share with the other groups in the class. This was evident in the power-point presentations the learners made about some authors and the portraits they displayed in their story boards in which they exchanged their thoughts and information with the other groups in the class without referring to the teacher for confirmation or contribution. This finding corroborates with Al-Mubireek (2021) that collaborative learning supports the EFL/ESL learners to express themselves with no fear as it they get the chance to review their ideas from peers before they provide their final production and this is required to ensure "active engagement" during the EFL/ESL class (p.53) . Kosnik et al. (2017: 3) assert this and specifies that learners' active collaboration in the ESL/EFL lesson is a key feature in the CLTs strategy as it provides the learners a "break" from regular teacher-centred activities in the way each learner practices a necessary role for task completion due to the different and complex prior knowledge each learner would have. In addition, Haung (2011) reports that collaboration among the learners resulted from implementing CLTs reinforces and develops their speech and writing abilities in the way they tend to use more complex and longer sentences and shift their focus from what they would regularly focus on, namely from form-focused, to meaning-focused. Yet, what the present study

adds in this regard is the effect of the applied CLTs on motivating the participant students to develop their thinking and utilise the learnt language skills to express their ideas in this regard. This was noticed in the mid of the project conduction [after one month of the CLTs conduction] when the participants were attempting to give unpredicted information and express their opinions in addition to the predicted information when the teacher was asking them to provide unpredicted information.

c. *Practicing multiple level thinking language tasks*

The implemented CLTs enabled the EFL/ESL learners to study a range of texts at different levels and approach multiple resources as per their availability and accessibility to them during their learning of the foreign language. This has resulted in developing their literacy skills through combining both ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’ literacy practices to fulfil their assigned tasks across all the four applied CLTs. For instance, it was observed how the learners in the *jigsaw* tasks were working to summarise the text and represent it together through distributing roles and making the learners motivated by selecting the parts or tasks they find them suit their abilities or interest. Another observation also registered the multiple contributions which the learners were giving to their groups through either the intensive research or extensive research using the internet and presentation designs during the *gallery tour* and *cloning the author* tasks. In these two pedagogies, the majority of the learners were witnessed to be fully engaged and motivated to communicate and contribute using the target language regardless of the level or type of the text that was assigned to be studied. In the *story board* tasks, the learners were seen they were developing critical reviews and commentaries on the information and concepts represented in the given texts despite the low language proficiency made by some of them. This fact of enabling students to practice different levels of thinking while doing CLTs in the foreign/second language learning and teaching is corroborated by the literature. For instance, Cranitch (2010) reports that giving CLTs to the EFL/ESL learners usually acts as a scaffolding activity for these learners in the way it enables them to combine their analysis of the text features with the factual information it includes to better identify the purpose, audience, and recognise and use text conventions such as chapter headings and indexes to reproduce the text and its information in their own style and level using the target language. The classroom observations repeatedly reflected this action on the students part and registered how this enabled the learners to get engaged with multi-model texts regardless its subject content or self-interest. Al Amrani (2019) asserts this as well and explains further that the nature of the CLTs’ design engage the EFL/ESL learners to not only practice their different levels of language proficiency but also to enhance their ability in building a knowledge base in the one content area by moving beyond lower level thinking skills and begin to apply this knowledge base to problem solving, evaluating arguments or creating new meanings, which was indeed what was observed in the *cloning the author* and *story board* tasks where most of the learners were found giving their justifications and representations of the information/concepts included in the texts in a form of a story or critical review of the author. Ewert (2014) considers this as a “development cline” in thinking skills that is not contingent on language proficiency only but on how well they have understood the text and managed to break it down to its main features, which is considered an action of higher order thinking skills (p.272).

Findings from the tests: Progressive improvement in language proficiency

Analysis was done for the learners’ performance in the three tests; the pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2, that were given to them during the application cycles of the CLTs to compare results and identify areas of progress while learning EFL/ESL. The test consisted from 4 parts that represent the implemented CLTs with questions that reflect a major competency for each task

and match at the same time with the nature of the test as a tool for measuring achievement. Generally, the overall analysis of the tests results shows a progressive improvement in the learners' achievement as EFL/ESL test takers. Table 3 summarises this:

Table (3): Learners' Achievement Progress throughout the Tests

Instrument	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>N</i>
Pre-test	10.7875	4.828779	97
Post-test 1	25.26563	4.387154	97
Post-test 2	30.14063	4.391201	97

The above table indicates a dramatic increase in students' performance using the target language from the pre-test to the post-test 1, which reflects the effectiveness of the applied CLTs in developing the EFL/ESL learners' level in the language proficiency. Furthermore, the level of increase in students' improvement registered in the post-test 2 reveals the impact the CLTs contributed to sustain a progressive development in learning the target language on the part of the EFL/ESL learners. A comparison between those learners' performance in the pre-test and post-test1 indicates the development those learners have achieved in the quality of words they used to describe, explain or summarize the given texts and the degree of difference in the lexical complexity (content words/ total words) particularly in the *jigsaw* and *storyboard* tasks. As well, the obtained results from the learners' performance in the *cloning the author* tasks in both the pre-test and post-test1 reveal an improve in the students' ability to construct a corpus-based frequency of the academic words and expressions when explaining or reporting the read texts. A summary of this comparison is illustrated in the tables 4 and 5 below:

Table (4): Detailed Results of Learners' Achievement in the Pre-Test

Pre-Test parts	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>N</i>
Cloning the author	1.56875	1.16079	97
Jigsaw	2.84375	1.401714	
Storyboard	4.25	1.421637	
Gallery walk	2.125	2.0068562	

Table (5): Detailed Results of Learners' Achievement in the Post-Test 1

Post-Test 1 parts	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>N</i>
Cloning the author	5.75	1.704483	97
Jigsaw	6.578125	1.117629	
Storyboard	6	1.123903	
Gallery walk	6.9375	1.1093642	

Yang and Chen (2015) justify this finding that the type of CLT motivates EFL/ESL learners to go beyond just labelling or searching for specific information to challenge the studied content in the foreign/second language as they will use English as their main vehicle for acquiring the

information and concepts they need to approach the studied text. According to the researchers, in this way the EFL/ESL learners' role goes beyond being simply language learners to be reflective thinkers and the target language will act as a tool for thinking not just means for communication. In this study, it was observed how the CLTs enhanced the EFL/ESL learners to reflect on their culture and interest as well as selecting their intelligent preferences when doing the specified tasks. This variety of learning activities were found to engage students for reproducing the learnt knowledge and probing it further using the target language. This finding implies the learners' success in developing good level of confidence while using the foreign/second language. Lazar (2007) asserts this result and mentions that the increased motivation and engagement of learners in the EFL/ESL class are resulted from the level of confidence and literacy potential that the language learners normally develop after their learning experience of the subject content in the foreign or second language.

Consequently, the learners appeared to continue more actively in the CLTs when learning EFL/ESL. This was registered in their scores in the post-test 2, particularly in the tasks related to the *jigsaw*, *storyboard*, and *galley walk*, where a constant progress in communicating complex ideas and functioning sophisticated linguistic input, which reflects an advanced level of the foreign/second language use. Table 6 illustrates this below:

Table (6): Detailed Results of Learners' Achievement in the Post-Test 2

Post-Test parts	2	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Cloning author	the	7.90625	0.799054	97
Jigsaw		8.515625	0.828611	
Storyboard		8.28125	0.721156	
Gallery walk		8.15625	0.9929902	

However, the table above also displays that the learners continued to show lower level of achievement in the *cloning the author* tasks compared to the other three task types and similar to their results in the pre-test and post-test 1. According to Arshavskaya (2018), EFL/ESL learners often develop thinking skills when they are developing their literacy skills through their study of the subject-content texts in the target language. However, the researcher explains that development of the foreign/second language competencies are usually slower or lower than the thinking skills due to the fact that the learnt content knowledge can be repeatedly referred to and interpreted in different ways, such as diagrams and concept maps while it is limited in the language use in terms of the type of vocabulary, format of structure and the word amount required for each task. This corroborates with the obtained finding in this regard especially that the study design of the present study follows the one-independent group that acts both the control as well as the experimental roles in this case.

Findings from the interviews: Contextualising EFL/ESL learning experience

This part mainly responds to the RQ2 regarding the teachers' views of their EFL/ESL learners' learning during their study of the foreign/second language while using the CLTs. The interviews with the teachers confirmed that learners showed significant progress in their learning of EFL/ESL resulted from using the CLTs in their teaching. The aspects of improvement from those teachers' perspective are classified as in the following categories:

- a. *Integrated practice of the main language skills*

The amount and quality of vocabulary used by the students in the four methods was found an obvious improvement in the learners' practice of the target language by their teachers. Yet, the way which the learners managed to utilize this amount of vocabulary in their speaking was the change point in those learners' practice as perceived by their teachers. The teachers reported how it was noticeable for them their students' capability that they had shown when expressing their own interpretations of the studied texts as well as defending or justifying their opinions towards them:

“Students were capable of explaining their ideas and opinions using both specialized terms related to the content and link them with other words to express their views and feelings” (Teacher A)

In addition, the development of lexical meaning seemed to enable the learners to scaffold their approach to comprehend the text content at both macro and micro levels during their reading. One of the teachers explained this finding in detail:

“It's interesting to find the students utilizing the suitable concepts and terms and reproduce the supporting details to express their opinions using variety of technical and general vocabulary” (Teacher B)

The teachers also found that their learners achieved sufficient progress in the listening tasks and managed to utilize it to produce correct structured sentences. For instance, the learners showed recognition of the close sounds for the technical concepts and their different use:

“The reading text about global economy assisted my students to differentiate between the word ‘practical’ and ‘economical’ and when each can be used for” (Teacher C)

However, it seems that despite this developmental integration in the speaking, reading and listening skills witnessed by the teachers, the CLTs couldn't support the learners to achieve recognizable achievement in the writing skill. As it was reported by one of the teachers, the level of inaccuracy in the formed structures limited the students' performance in their written tasks. Teacher (A) justifies for this result:

“Academic essays are similar to the academic texts in the way they normally require complex structures due to the interrelated and complex concepts that need to be illustrated and expressed in the foreign/second language even if the students have sufficient amount of the required vocabulary” (Teacher A)

In fact, the above finding is asserted by some researchers. For instance, Lai and Aksornjarung (2017) and Huang (2011) report that using content-based instruction has remarkable effects in developing students' speaking and reading skills as well as listening to some extent. On the other hand, the researchers report that content instruction in EFL/ESL might limit the students' writing due to the accuracy of complex structures could be required when explaining or expressing definite technical concepts or themes.

b. Developing digital literacy skills through the use of digital technology

The three teachers informed how the utilized CLTs enabled their students to incorporate different ranges of texts and representational resources in their study of the assigned content tasks. The teachers clarified that they found their students more motivated to learn the EFL/ESL and develop their literacy skills in a multifaceted process in learning the foreign/second language. This motivation was seen in those learners' attempts to demonstrate an integrated development of the literacy skills through equal use of ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’ learning skills:

“Some of my students started using kindles which may reflect the high desire and confidence they’d developed while studying the subject-content texts”(Teacher A)

“I really got excited When my students searched for good quality texts from trusted sources like *The Guardian*” (Teacher C)

Developing extensive reading skills and motivation, diversifying resources for gathering information and gaining soft skills are not the only aspects of learning that can be implied from the teachers’ testimonials above. Further, the above may reflect how the CLTs enabled those teachers as well as their students to change their lesson structure and culture while teaching and learning the foreign language. It seems that the teachers managed to make their lessons more flexible for their students to share with them their critical thoughts or interpretations about the studied texts. It may also show how the CLTs enabled both the teachers and their students develop motivation towards approaching different resources such as kindles and reading newspapers on the web. This increased passion for seeking ‘extra’ knowledge or information to do the required content task has had its positive impact on those teachers’ practices while teaching their students. The following summarizes this conclusion:

“In fact, practicing the subject content tasks with my students helped me develop a collaborative-holistic learning approach where my students and I search and evaluate for the information needed through the different resources we can approach to do the assigned task(s)” (Teacher B)

As a consequent, the teachers expressed their surprise with the ways their students had followed to present their work in some tasks, which eventually reflects their development of their skills in utilizing digital technology in their learning:

“Most of my students have created their digital essays in different text forms and structures” (Teacher A)

“The students presented their words in a form of digital ‘blogs gallery’ which was interesting!” (Teacher B)

“what I liked the most was their [the students] way of referring to the wikis and films reviews to develop their critique” (Teacher C)

Kosnik et al. (2017) consider the use of diverse sources and utilization of digital technology facilities as the main elements of a ‘pedagogy of literacy’ that EFL/ESL teachers should develop. In their study, the researchers interviewed 28 literacy/English teacher educators in four countries three times regarding the concept of literacy as expanding in the EFL/ESL context and the approach those teachers should adopt to achieve successful language function on the part of their EFL/ESL learners. Their findings identify three elements as perceived by the interviewed teachers. They are: diversity of the text genres provided for reading, speaking, listening, or writing; creating authentic reflection activities; and show value to the learners’ readings through acceptance of the different productions made by the learners.

c. *Enabling learning of EFL/ESL through multiple opportunities*

Lakovos et al. (2011) report that studying the subject content in the foreign or second language requires the EFL/ESL learners to do more than one attempt to fulfill the given task(s) since learners in this regard need not only to memorize and answer but to develop new ways to express their thoughts and illustrate their comprehension of the studied content. The interviewed teachers asserted the influence of the applied approach in facilitating the learning of their EFL/ESL learners in this regard. One of them explained how the utilized CLTs assisted her learners to go beyond just memorizing the text content and start establishing a view point of they interpret the content and argue about some of its ideas:

“It was a great opportunity for the students to try using English in different ways .. they could read and write or listen to take notes of the information then write them in essay or speak what they have learnt about in English” (Teacher B)

In addition, these ‘different ways’ in learning the foreign language were found to accelerate the flow of the learning process during the lesson instead of slowing it down:

“In the normal lesson students usually read the text then answer some questions which require them to memorize or refer to the text again for one time only to check up their answers which slows the lesson while it was the opposite in the CLTs lessons.” (Teacher A)

The teachers also found that their application of the CLTs facilitated more their response to their students’ learning styles in the way the nature of the task content was enabling the learners to display their use of the language in the way they prefer:

“What I like most about it [CLTs] is that I could see how my visual students were tending to show me their language ability through presentations and those verbal ones in the discussion panels while the other abstract ones were reflecting it in their writings and research papers” (Teacher C)

To conclude, those diverse opportunities imply a reinforcement in the relationship between those teachers and their learners that have resulted in an increased level of confidence on the part of those learners as they are learners of EFL/ESL:

“Through these multiple attempts in the tasks I become more aware of and involved with my students” (Teacher A)

Al Amrani (2019) concurs the above finding in his study and explains that the different activity involvement of the students in the content-based tasks during the EFL/ESL lesson demands an interfering role between the teacher and learners through the group work activities and project tasks which require a shift in roles most of time between the teachers and their learners. In this study, the teachers and students cooperated with each other in the way the teachers acted as supervisors to their students during some tasks while they also acted as an audience or recipients of their students’ presentations and galleries in other tasks.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the above findings in this designed-based study suggest that using the CLTs in the EFL/ESL classroom can positively influence the EFL/ESL learners’ literacy skills from two perspectives. First, from a language acquisition perspective, the learners in this study showed improvement in the amount of the vocabulary used in the tasks, complexity of them, nature and style of structures, and the originality of the ideas developed by those learners and registered during the class observations and as well as their achievements in the given tests. The outcomes expected from any EFL/ESL learning suggests that EFL/ESL lessons should facilitate flexible use and usage of the target language on the part of the learners in order to contextualize their language use and usage to their actual reality (Shabani and Ghasemi, 2014). The findings above reflect this idea in the way how the learners in this study utilized the studied content texts to develop particular literacy skills such as text analysis, concepts definitions from a target cultural perspective and divergent range of ideas expression as per each learner’s proficiency in the target language.

On the other hand, though these findings indicate a faster pace of language learning during the application of the CLTs as shown in the text analysis and reproduction, the number of participant learners in this study might limit the generalization of this finding since there are other factors that might play role if a wider application of the CLTs was done. However, results suggest that there is no necessary relationship between the length of time an EFL/ESL learner has been taking to practice the target language and the development of the literacy skills in it.

Time in secondary school does not really represent a crucial or helpful factor as students at this stage are expected to have good foundation in the target language but not necessarily good development of the literacy skills associated with their learning of the language in this regard (Kasper, 1997).

In addition, the second perspective is the development of the EFL/ESL learners' learning skills as an indirect consequent from the applied teaching methods; namely jigsaw, gallery walk, cloning the author and story board. The obtained findings reveal in this regard the change in the learners' attitudes and orientation towards learning EFL/ESL using CLTs, as it can be concluded that group work, collaborative and cooperative learning, and raising the confidence level to provide comprehensible ideas or conclusions, are the main aspects of learning habits that were witnessed during the study. This implies that for future application of the CLTs in the EFL/ESL teaching, more contextualization of the tasks and careful planning to consider wider scope of learners will assist in facilitating the EFL/ESL lesson to stimulate higher order thinking skills, such as problem solving and critical thinking which both will directly boost the learners' achievement in the linguistic competence and content areas. As mentioned by Crantich (2010), the development of the literacy skills in the foreign or second language contributes in enhancing the learning habits of its learners since this development creates a balance between the language needs and learning needs the EFL/ESL learners feel they have to achieve. And this is what is indicated in the data above that the learners made an integration between their emotional needs (represented in achieving the content task) and their language proficiency (shown in their language level to express ideas) while studying the CLTs.

Finally, the nature of its design as a design-based research, this study may act as an opportunity for EFL/ESL practitioner teachers in Bahraini context or any other non-native English speaking context to pursue a contextualised professional development practice since this design assists them to design learning environments and establish "prototheories" about learning EFL/ESL in an intertwining way (Weng, 2019), where the EFL/ESL teachers can embrace their practice through cultivating their professional practice with published theories. Therefore, this study design and findings can contribute in assisting as well as supporting school leadership in their reform attempts to improve their organizational processes by documenting and connecting the reality of teaching and learning, particularly of teaching and learning EFL/ESL.

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