



EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENT CLT AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL IN THE SOUTHERN REGION OF BANGLADESH

Md Tauhiduzzaman

PhD Scholar

Limkokwing University of Creative and Technology,
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract: This paper tries to identify the challenges that create obstacles of implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) at the level of secondary schools in the southern region of Bangladesh. Data is collected from fifteen English teachers of secondary level in southern region of Bangladesh. This article demands the research technique-questionnaire and interviews. This article initiates with the short introduction of CLT, tracked by its problem statement, objectives and research questions. Then literature review is delineated with the help of writings of different scholars. It also discusses some principles of CLT and the roles of instructors and students as well as explores the challenges for the application of CLT associating with the short indication of exam and educational system of Bangladesh. Quantitative data analysis has also been shown in this study to realize the exact condition of Communicative Language Teaching in the study area. The findings point out some encounters- bizarrely large class size, culture, insufficient of trained teachers and modern teaching aids, low salary of instructors, formal relationship between teachers and students, educator's inability to speak English for a long time in the classroom, imbalance between curriculum and assessment and grammar-based exam. It also focuses on the recommendations and implications for further research to eradicate the challenges. This investigation may offer suggestions for the experts and the language policy makers to upgrade CLT practices.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Grammar Translation Method (GTM), challenges of CLT implementation, Secondary level, schools located in southern region of Bangladesh

Introduction

The course English language is started as a mandatory subject from the class one to twelve in the education system of Bangladesh. Most of the students cannot grow their ability at the advanced level to command English language in their day to day communication perfectly even though they have completed their twelve years of schooling. In the teaching of English language, when Grammar Translation Method was failed to fill up the needs as well as the expectations of policy makers, learners and teachers all over the world, the method Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged out to improve the condition of English language teaching. CLT was presented in Bangladesh through launching a project named: English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP). This project was Bangladesh-UK jointly funded. National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) "a department of Education Ministry (MoE) of Bangladesh", has produced the CLT oriented text books to implement CLT at the level of schools, colleges, and madrasahs (religious institution) by taking the target to upgrade the students' communicative competence. As the communication is the primary goal of teaching and learning a language through

CLT. This study focuses the motives that hamper the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) at the level of secondary schools in southern region of Bangladesh.

Background of the study

The researchers have experimented a number of theories to look for a suitable technique to teach English over the centuries. From the shortcomings of those theories, the learners have developed their ability in the real-life communication in the period of time. An approach named Communicative Language Teaching has been emerged to provide the solution of this problem. CLT method chiefly emphasizes on the students' skill through recovering the drawbacks to express their proficiencies of feelings in the second language in real life communication. As a whole, the method CLT focusses to enhance the learners' linguistic as well as pragmatic knowledge in the second language. It does not matter how much the students are expert, but the matter is interaction or communication with others in the second language will help them to be capable. According to William Littlewood (1981), the best method to take the learners towards the second language is Communicative Language Teaching approach. This CLT approach has been considered as a harbinger of the present age in teaching English language. The primary ideologies of the CLT method is that the instructors should perform as a facilitator to make a student-centered classroom and keep the students busy in meaningful communications to reach the goal. However, the instructors should design the lesson plan before giving the class of students and it should have clear objectives how learning materials are benefitted for the learners' acquisition of the second language as well as practical knowledge. English as a foreign language (EFL) context has lately been argued expansively. The learning outcome is not effective sufficient as well although some instructors have steadily implemented approaches based on language use meaningfully.

Problem Statement

English is taught as a foreign language in our schools. Linguists opine that the students will become skilled at English if they start early. According to their opinion, English should be taught from class one. Now English is obligatory up to degree level. Currently, in our institutions, Communicative Language Teaching Method (CLT) is taken as medium to teach English. Still, our students are suffering from a kind of English mania. After the completion of secondary education, they cannot communicate in English though the target of Communicative Language Teaching Method is to increase communicative competence among the students. That is why the target of this study is to explore the problems of implementing CLT at the secondary level in the southern region of Bangladesh.

Objectives of the study

- To explore the challenges met by the learners and the instructors in the application of CLT at secondary level in the southern region of Bangladesh
- To Measure the strengths and weaknesses of this method in the context of Bangladesh
- To provide some possible solutions for such problems.

Research Question

The research questions of the study are as follows:

- ✓ What are the challenges of CLT at the secondary level in the southern region of Bangladesh?
- ✓ What are the possible means to recover the difficulties of CLT in the southern region of Bangladesh?

Literature Review

Communicative approach has been given much importance to teach English language for more than three decades. At the outset of 1970, communicative language teaching was emerged as a reaction against the rigid Grammar-Translation approach and Audio-lingual technique with an aim to evolving learners' communicative competence in case of using second language easily.

The term "Communicative competence" was defined by Dell Hymes (1972), to mention the ability of language users utilizing the social and functional features of a language for a meaningful message. Here the author indicates that the main focus is not only on the formation of correct sentences grammatically but also on the actual knowledge of using the sentences- where, when and to whom in a talkative event (Richards & Rogers 2003)

Canale & Swain (1980) enveloped the idea of communicative competence. They make four basic components from the communicative competence;

- grammatical competence,
- sociolinguistic competence,
- discourse competence
- strategic competence.

The above components will make the learners able to some extent that they can command the second language like native speakers. In communicative Language Teaching method, the real-life situations are extremely practiced in perspectives of language teaching. In this way learners can have the opportunity to use the target language properly. Here instructors perform in the CLT classrooms as a monitor or facilitators of the learners' improvement in learning the second or target language (Larsen Freeman, 1986). Learners should take part in all kinds of classroom events actively.

According to Richards and Rodgers, there are four characteristics of the communicative view of language as follows:

- a) Language is a system of expression of meaning.
- b) The primary function of language is to allow interaction and communicative.
- c) The structure of language reflects its fundamental and communicative uses.
- d) The primary units of language are functional notional categories, rather than structural ones. There are several sectors of communicative competence, of which the grammatical is one.

Richards and Rogers give emphasis on the fact that from the very beginning, CLT has undergone through some different steps as its supporters have pursued to apply its principles to various dimensions of the teaching and learning process. Firstly, the idea of Communicative Competence is compatible with the learners or not. This implies to make course outlines in terms of notions and functions rather than structures that are grammatically correct. Secondly, CLT discusses the procedures to detect the learners' necessities. Thirdly, CLT focused on the classroom activities based on communicative methodology, such as pair work, group discussion, and information gap activities. The above-mentioned steps are not properly followed. It happens lack of suitable training of educators and the shortage of resources.

In the context of Bangladesh, Barman, Sultana and Basu (2006) suggest eight factors known as constraint walls to implement CLT in Bangladesh mentioned as follows:

- 1) inefficiency of ELT practitioners,
- 2) economic constraints,
- 3) administrative set-up,
- 4) infrastructural Limitations,
- 5) cultural Conflicts,
- 6) seating arrangement in classroom,
- 7) class size and language teaching and learning,
- 8) testing.

They specified that most of the instructors who didn't have the previous formal training of teaching were able to start the career as teacher in Bangladesh. Though the government had produced the materials based on CLT, the educators did not fully understand the ideas of communicative competence. As the salary structure of secondary school teachers were poor, they need to look for part time job to make extra income. That is why they couldn't concentrate fully in their classroom. Barman, Sultana and Basu also manifested the reason of fund limitation from the government for the public sectors as a weakness for CLT to be applied appropriately.

As the above review expresses that though CLT is the most common way to teach the target or second language, it has been proved tough to implement CLT in the classroom. So, to apply CLT at the level of secondary schools in the context of Bangladesh, the instructors must require to adjust the atmosphere of the classroom activities.

Principle of CLT

Savignon mentions Berns in "Communicative Language Teaching: Linguistic Theory and Classroom Practice:" in which Berns offers a valuable summary of eight principles of CLT as follows:

- ✓ Language teaching is based on a view of language as communication, i.e. language is seen as a social tool which speakers and writers use to make meaning; we communicate about something to someone for a purpose, either orally or in writing.
- ✓ Diversity is recognized and accepted as part of language development and use in second language learners and users as it is with first language users.
- ✓ A learner's competence is considered in relative, not absolute terms of correctness.
- ✓ Language variety is recognized as a viable model for learning and teaching.
- ✓ Culture is recognized as instrumental in shaping speakers' communicative competence, in both first and subsequent languages.
- ✓ No single methodology or fixed set of techniques is prescribed.
- ✓ Language use is recognized as serving the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual functions, and is related to the development of learners' competence in each.
- ✓ It is essential that learners be engaged in doing things with language- that is, that they use language for a variety of purposes, in all phases of learning (Berns, 1990, p. 104)

Richards & Rodgers also give some comments about the principles of CLT. There can be some similarities with the summary of what Berns states. The principles are as follows:

- Learners learn through using it to communicate.
- Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of class room activities.
- Fluency is important dimension of communication.
- Communication involves the integration of different language skills.
- Learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error. (Richards & Rodgers, p: 172)

However, the key Principle of CLT is based on communication and it focuses on the learners so that they can progress four basic skills of language learning. If the instructors would like to apply communicative approach in the classroom, they require to give much attention and understanding in case of using CLT.

The instructor's role in CLT

The educator's role is very significant in CLT. According to Richards and Rodgers (1986), there are some roles for the instructors to implement CLT. They are "needs analyst, counselor, and group process manager" (p. 77). The instructors who will teach CLT should have the idea apparently about the learners' language needs. A CLT instructor should help the learners to interact effectively through motivation, advice and feedback as a counselor. However, CLT instructors must have the proper knowledge about classroom management so that the activities of interaction can be done easily. Breen and Candlin (as cited in Richards and Rodgers, 1986) depicted two main roles of a teacher. The first one is to perform as the facilitator between the learners and the texts in the classroom. The other one is to act as an independent member within the learning-teaching group. (p. 77) The role of the teachers should be "less dominant" in CLT method (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 129). As Richards (2006) said, "The role of the teacher in CLT is that of a facilitator, who creates a classroom climate conducive to language learning and provides opportunities for students to use and practice the language and to reflect on language use and language learning" (p. 23). According to Ahmed (2014), a teacher in CLT plays the role of the guide, and not an "all-knowing knowledge provider" (p. 3). So, the instructors have to play the roles like a bridge between the learners and the texts to implement CLT successfully.

The Role of Learners in CLT

The learners can also play many important roles in CLT. As stated by Richards and Rodgers (1986), CLT gives importance on the communicative process that directs to "different roles for learners from those found in more traditional second language classrooms" (p. 77). Richards (2006) has also asserted, "Learners in CLT develop their own routes to language learning, progress at different rates, and have different needs and motivation for language learning" (p. 23). According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), learners are the communicators in CLT. She has also stated that learners are the "more responsible managers" of their own learning (p. 129). Learners should look for the chance to exchange their views and ideas. Learning is possible when learners' engagement will get preference in a language classroom. Learners should perform as the active participant. According to Richards (2006), the concept of "information gap" is an important issue of communication (p. 18). Learners interact with each other to get

information from other participants of the group and they can also generate their ideas through pair and group work. Learners can increase the level of motivation by making pair and group work.

Challenges to apply CLT in the perspective of Bangladesh

There are many constraints and difficulties in Bangladesh's ESL context to apply CLT in the classroom. The grammar-based examination system is the great challenge to implement CLT at the classroom. Though some English medium universities have implemented CLT, it cannot influence the whole levels of education system. There are some various factors- large class size, culture, insufficient of trained teachers and modern teaching aids, low salary of instructors, formal relationship between teachers and students, educator's inability to speak English for a long time in the classroom that hampers the implementation of CLT to be successful. Several scholars (Rahman and Karim, 2015; Ahmed, 2014; Iftakhar, 2014; Shurovi, 2014; Sultana, 2014; Biswas, Uddin, and Sarker, 2013; Ansarey, 2012; Tarannum, 2010; Hasan and Akhand, 2009; Hamid, and Baldauf, 2008 and so on), have recently tried to explore the challenges of implementing CLT in the context of Bangladesh. Based on the previous research, it is stated that CLT can be applied successfully if it is possible to solve the problems of large class size, imbalance between curriculum and assessment, poor socio-economic condition and low salary of the instructors, lack of proper training, cultural unsuitability, the teachers' inability to speak English fluently in the classroom, lack of modern teaching aids in many educational institutions, and misconception about CLT.

Exam System of Bangladesh

The system of examination does not match with the communicative language teaching at any levels of education in Bangladesh. At the secondary and higher secondary levels, exam system is based on grammar translation method (GTM). So, the students did not get any chance to use English in real life situations. They remain busy to practice grammar items pointing the systems of their academic exam. Even the instructors cannot give so much time to practice the basic four skills of English Language. As the examination system is based on grammar and language related comprehension, it is tough for the instructors to practice communicative method in this condition. Based on this condition, Taguchi (2005) mentions that school instructors are concerned about language related comprehension, vocabulary and grammar-based examination system. So, they are inclined to teach the students about the traditional methods.

Educational System of Bangladesh

The present literature for English language teaching cannot give the result to implement communicative approach up to the mark at the secondary level. Some reasons such as syllabus, curriculum, teaching materials and management systems can influence the application of communicative language teaching or the mindset of the learners.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To collect and analyze data, the qualitative and quantitative approach have been used for this study. The aim of this study responds to the enquiry questions of qualitative and quantitative, so mixed-method technique is selected as the methodology of this study. This mixed-method approach can help the instructor to comprehend the difficulties in the perspective of implementation of CLT in the southern region of Bangladesh through the survey questionnaire, and with the aid of interviews. the difficulties and the challenges are clearly revealed by this mix-method style.

Research design

This research paper applies both primary and secondary sources of data to reach the destination. To get primary information, face to face interviews have been performed with various high school instructors. This chapter triggers out an overall plan of the research methodology. The procedures-setting, selection, description of the participants, research design, instruments practiced for data collection and data analysis applied in this study.

Participants of the study

The participants who teach English at the secondary level are elected for this study and their number is 15 working presently as instructors in the educational institution of that particular area. They are from public and private institutions of southern region. The participants are selected at random. Among all of the participants, female

participants are seven and male partakers are eight. All instructors are very smart and expert as they are involved with the English language teaching industry for several years. Some teachers complete the section of survey questionnaire and some are requested to perform for the interview successfully.

Research Instruments

With the aid of questionnaire and interviews, the research conductor is able to realize the challenges of CLT in the southern region of Bangladesh. The questionnaire is organized taking into consideration the pertinent issues confronted by the educators. The research conductor sets the questionnaire and interview in this way so that the instructors can identify the problems related to implement CLT in the classroom as well as difficulties of teaching system that create the challenges to the implementation of CLT at the secondary schools in the southern region of Bangladesh.

Written Questionnaires

The printed survey questionnaire has been used in this study and it was planned for English language teachers who teach in public as well as private secondary schools in the southern region of Bangladesh. The research conductor gives some instructors questionnaires to look for the crucial problems which stand as walls in the southern region of Bangladesh to apply CLT as well as to inspect the possible issues how these problem can be overcome by terms.

Interviews

Interviews play the most important source to explore data related to the challenges of CLT. The research conductor takes interviews to collect data for this study. The duration of interviews takes from fifteen to twenty minutes. In these interviews, there are open ended questions addressing the different difficulties connected to CLT as well as triggering the solution of it in the context of second language teaching particularly in the southern region of Bangladesh.

Data collection procedure

For the data collection the conductor contacted with the particular instructors from the selected secondary schools as well as took the permission from the head of Schools. The total participants are fifteen for this study who teach English language at the secondary levels. Some of the participants are requested to perform the questionnaire, and some other teachers are also requested to participate in the interview actively. In case of the questionnaire the respondents took time as they required. Though the respondents were very busy with their work, they were aware of doing the section of questionnaire and interviews. In a word they were so much co-operative. All of the respondents are 30 to 50 years old. Their teaching practice varies from 10 to 20 years at the secondary level of different schools. Regarding the academic educational background, some of the respondents have a masters of arts (BA) in English from national university. And some other respondents have masters of arts (MA) in English language from public university of Bangladesh. Very few respondents hold the degree master of education (M.Ed) teachers training college of Bangladesh. All these apparatuses help the respondent instructors to detect in their own way what make them constraint to implement CLT from the particular point of view. The constraint can be political, economic, cultural and administrative.

Data analysis procedure

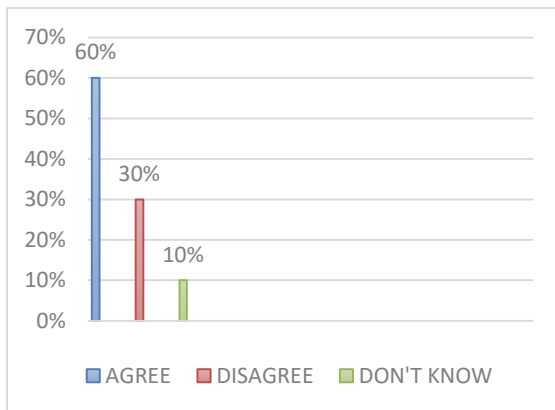
Data analysis in case of the questionnaire encompasses the analysis of open-ended as well as close-ended questions. The questions are evaluated through statistical analysis. This calculation gives the overall idea of the CLT in the southern region of Bangladesh. The research conductor finds difficulties and challenges what they confront during their efforts to implement CLT in English as second language (ESL) classrooms. The qualitative data comes from interview particularly, content analysis technique can be delineated into different categories through analyzing the collected data to reach a final documentation.

Data Presentation and Discussion

The printed questionnaire for quantitative data has been discussed in this study by the surveyor and the respondents selected from the secondary schools. Ideas or views are generated from interviews conversed in this paper.

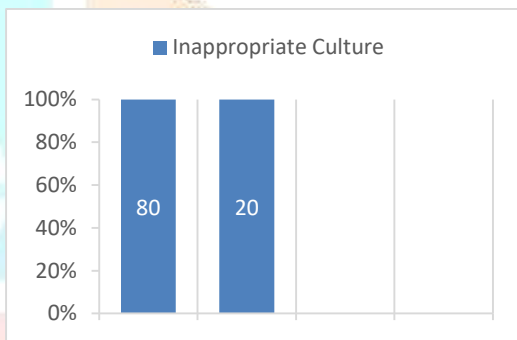
Quantitative Data Analysis

60% of the teachers are agreed to develop the learners’ basic by CLT. 30% of them don’t agree and 10% of them don’t know at all.



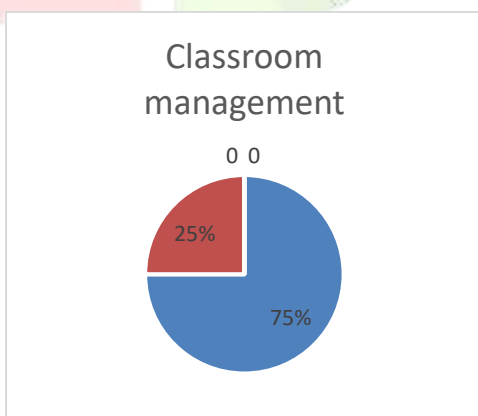
Incorrectness of social culture

80% of the instructors think that CLT is not adjustable with the social context of southern region in Bangladesh. 20% of them think that this issue can be overcome.



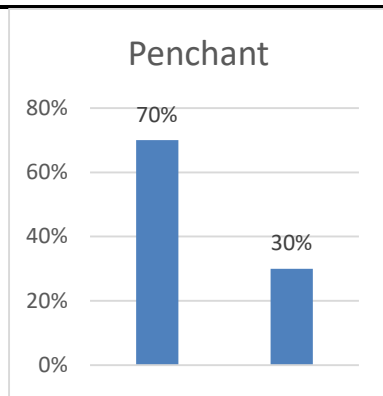
Lack of classroom management

75% of the instructors complain not to have enough teaching aids in classroom. 25% of them are not concern at all.



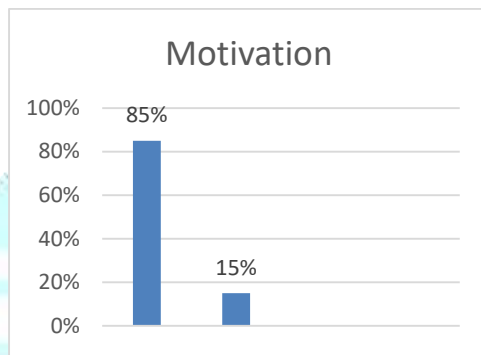
Penchant of CLT to the instructors

70% of the instructors like grammar translation method (GTM) more than CLT. 30% of them are okay with it.



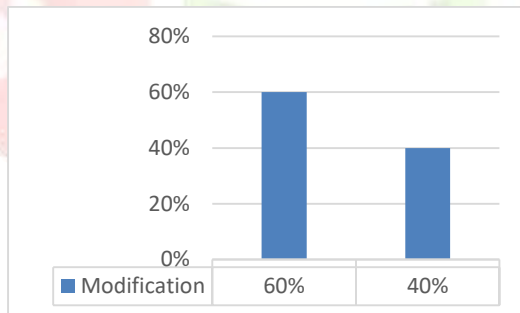
Motivation for Second language

85% of the educators inspire the students to speak English but 15% of them are as usual.



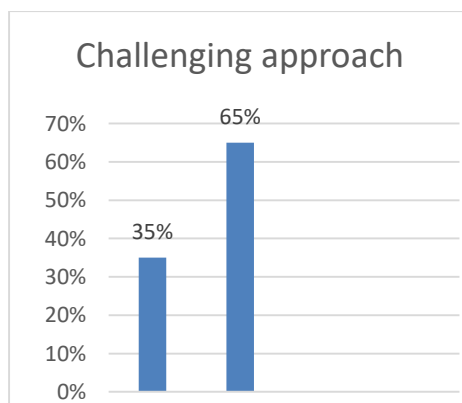
Modification for Exam System

60% of the instructors are agreed to change the exam procedures to implement CLT and 40% of them are not aware of this.



CLT regarded as a challenging approach

35% of the instructors think that GTM is easier than CLT. 65% of them don't think so.



Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the problems that were identified in this paper:

- The text book like English for Today for classes 9-10 must be modified through revision so that the four skills can be focused equally. The teachers who stay in the rural area are urgent to be continuously trained to implement the issues of the definite textbook within their English language classrooms.
- The adequate infrastructure and necessary resources such as audio-visual classrooms, tape recorder, cassette player, language lab, uninterrupted electricity supply, calm and quiet classrooms, and what not should be arranged for village schools for implementing CLT.
- Class size plays a vital issue in CLT. The large class size should be avoided. 30/35 students are better for English language class rooms in the southern region of Bangladesh.
- Most of the English teachers still have the trust at their heart that Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is easier than CLT. Teachers' belief is an important factor that affects the CLT outcome. So, the teachers in the rural areas need to be trained to change their belief and outlook in teaching methodology at the secondary level schools.
- The modification of present testing system is badly needed by adding all the four skills- reading, writing, listening and speaking. English teachers must be trained and made conscious of the communicative language testing principles and procedures.
- Government should take steps to provide training of English language teachers so that they can acquire the adequate knowledge in CLT. English teachers have to make sure that the CLT principles are practiced within English language classrooms.
- To continue the training and supervision of English teachers through consisting a monitoring committee in the southern region of Bangladesh.

Implications for Further Research

From the above discussion, it can easily be understood that there are various obstacles to implement CLT in the southern region of Bangladesh. Studying the former research, this article demonstrates that the key challenges of implementing CLT are lack of proper training, large class, inequalities between assessment and curriculum, inappropriateness of cultural trends, and poor fund. Most of the scholars have recommended to modify the total system of academic exam, to run adequate CLT training for English instructors, to increase instructors' salary, or to provide enough education aids that are suitable for CLT. There is another significant suggestion to perform pair and group work easily. Large class-size should be smaller and the number of students must be reduced in a classroom. As the study area is over populated with weak socio-economic condition, it is not probable to implement CLT instantly in the southern part of Bangladesh. Hence, this issue demands further research to look for the authentic ways to implement CLT in a large classroom based on the view of Bangladesh. It is not easier to develop a new trend of CLT than the change of infrastructural management. This research scope will be able to help millions of learners get the proper knowledge of learning English in Bangladesh.

Conclusion

From the discontent issues of the traditional grammar-based approach, CLT was emerged in Bangladesh to improve the learner's inability to use English language in the real-life situations. As CLT is a western-oriented approach, the implementation of CLT faces so many challenges and restraints discussed in this study. Specially the students of rural areas are lagging behind in comparison of city arenas. In the context of cultural trends as well as class room activities, CLT will take more time to accomplish in the educational institutions of the southern region of Bangladesh. The overall system of education is not satisfactory in Bangladesh. Scholars and the government should come forward taking some necessary steps to remove all the challenges and to make a suitable environment of implementing CLT.

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