

Title: Tacit rejection of policy and teacher ambivalence – insights into English language teaching in Bahrain through actors’ perceptions.

Abstract: The article develops Phillips and Ochs’s framework for policy borrowing, particularly the theorisations about indigenisation of international programmes. It uses the example of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Bahrain, exploring teacher perspectives regarding the effects of CLT on the pre-existing arrangements in the national education system and the impact of contextual factors on the potential for CLT implementation. Qualitative focus groups with English language teachers in 10 schools were conducted. The analysis elucidates how teachers were tailoring their own ways through the new reforms to strike a satisfactory balance between the government’s aims and the attitudes of the public. It answers the question ‘What happens to English language teaching policy when it is transplanted to a different culture?’, concluding that it becomes actively rejected. The conclusion offers a conceptual development of Phillips and Ochs’s framework, adding an additional option of ‘rejection’ to the indigenisation stage. The paper also ends with some practical implications.

Keywords: policy borrowing, teacher ambivalence, Communicative Language Teaching, socio-cultural factors, policy rejection

INTRODUCTION

Debates about borrowing policy from one nation and its applications to another are integral to international policy making nowadays. One of the questions that is continually being asked is why international transfers of policies do not lead to the outcomes that nations engaging in them expect to gain (Winstanley, 2012). This paper explores this question using the framework for policy borrowing developed by Phillips and Ochs (2003) who propose that transfer of international programmes in education is a process consisting of four main stages. These stages include 1) cross-national attraction - which focuses on the preconditions of borrowing such as poor external evaluation or internal dissatisfaction, 2) decision – consisting of choices regarding how the new policy will be implemented, 3) implementation – how the new model is adapted in the borrowing country and 4) Internalisation/ Indigenisation – which is the stage at which the new policy, in its adapted form, becomes part of the system of education in that country (Phillips and Ochs, 2003). While there has been quite a lot of interest in the ‘cross-national attraction’, ‘decision’ and ‘implementation’ stages, the ‘internalisation/ indigenisation’ stage has not been given the same amount of attention (Aydarova, 2013). This research therefore focuses on what happens to international policy in the final stages of implementation, when it reaches the school level. It follows Aydarova (2013) who argues that the indigenisation stage of the evaluation framework should be

developed through greater focus on 'significant actors' (e.g. local education authorities or head teachers) and 'contextual factors' (i.e. socio-culturally informed provision of and attitudes towards education). It therefore incorporates the analysis of local actors' interpretations of educational transfers and focuses on the dynamic interactions between home and target culture characteristics that surround them. The paper draws on the research exploring the perceptions of teachers (viewed here as significant actors) regarding the potential success of the new English language teaching policy and the effects it has had on the pre-existing arrangements in the national education system. The research asked the following questions:

- a) What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the effects of CLT on the pre-existing arrangements in education in Bahrain?
- b) What is the perceived impact of the context of schools in Bahrain on the potential for CLT implementation? To what extent is this impact captured by Phillips and Ochs' s (2003; 2004) framework for policy borrowing?

Theorisations about how people on the ground make sense of policy transfers position the article more widely in academic work related to teacher beliefs. Analytical perspectives that acknowledge the impact of socio-cultural factors surrounding teachers' school lives and professional training are particularly useful here in conceptualising the data below. These perspectives emphasise the impact of the socio-cultural context on teacher sense-making, proposing that it informs teacher beliefs about a particular approach to education, which in turn, affects its implementation in the classroom (e.g. Mansour, 2013). The teacher perspective is therefore applied in this article to understand which aspects of the new English language teaching policy are possible to borrow in Bahrain. The teacher perspectives can also provide insights into the political, socio cultural and economic discourses surrounding education (e.g. Das et al, 2014, Li, 2013). Understanding of these discourses is therefore essential to evaluate the impact of the context of schools in Bahrain on the potential of CLT implementation. The data below point to a strong presence of traditional views on education in national schools in Bahrain which, together with what is additionally revealed about the assumptions underlying certain structures and school processes, creates a dynamic narrative for understanding the lack of CLT developments in Bahrain.

Additionally, existing explorations of policy borrowing internationally also suggest that teachers are sometimes less and sometimes more willing to negotiate these established structures and processes in light of the changing conditions of their work (Comber, 2011). For instance, Comber (2011) argues that teacher responses to the new teaching agendas and what they emphasise or downplay in the classroom is contingent upon many biographical and work-related factors. Teachers decide to adopt specific pedagogical behaviours depending on their perceived relevance to the students' needs

and the values the children and their parents place on education (Comber and Nixon, 2009). Research often suggests that the ‘wow’ effect when new policies are introduced lasts only for those who want to introduce them (e.g. Hayes, 2016). Similar levels of excitement among teachers who are already practising other forms of education or students who are used to these forms, or do not see any point in the new reforms, are hard to find. This is exemplified, for instance, in the work of Street (2009) who criticises international literacy transfer campaigns for failing to consider that the nations to whom they are trying to bring the new forms of literacy already practise their own forms of reading and writing. Further examples may include Janks (2014) who explains that positive or negative national attitudes towards a new policy (such as English as a medium of instruction) can be developed based on the perceived social effects of this policy, for example, in terms of increased job market opportunities. These conclusions therefore point to the impact of ‘perspective’ and the socio-cultural and economic conditions that shape it on the potential for new policy developments. They show that through their choices and individual positioning, teachers may determine the degree of policy adaptation, causing delays and modifications to the intended outcomes. The section below outlines why some delays and policy rejection might have happened in Bahrain.

Context of Bahrain

The first stage in Phillips and Ochs’s (2003; 2004) framework describes impulses that spark off interest in education policy observed in another country. These, among others, include internal dissatisfaction, negative external evaluation, economic competition and globalisation (p. 777). It could be said that all of these impulses informed Bahrain’s decision to engage in CLT as the government has expressed dissatisfaction with the country’s graduates, stating that the education system had to be reformed for Bahraini students to be considered by global employers (Bahrain Economic Development Board, 2008). This *inter alia* included better English language education.

Al-Sulaiti (2002) argues that the system of education in Bahrain has been largely influenced by the cultural views of the people in the country that have led to certain perceptions of education and the purposes it should serve. Historically, schools in Bahrain have placed a lot of emphasis on the mastery of certain subjects to respond as quickly as possible to the growing demand for literate people who could teach and work in offices. This resulted in the education system that favoured authoritarian role of the teacher, rote learning and inculcation (Al-Sulaiti, 2002). The influences of the teacher substituting for the father outside the family circle, as well as the school being the institution that teaches discipline and obedience, had also led to the creation of the system that encouraged dependence and compliance with family and society’s morale (ibid). The dissatisfaction with the education system favouring inculcation approaches to teaching (Shirawi, 1989) was further exacerbated by a negative evaluation from Al –

Ahmed (1994). Al-Ahmed (1994) argued that low standards of English education in Bahrain could be attributed to under-preparation of language teachers who had not been trained to use effective communicative methods of teaching. She concluded that unless teachers in Bahrain developed and implemented an array of critical thinking skills, successful English teaching reforms were not possible.

The system of education characterised by rote learning and under-preparation of teachers was therefore seen as stunting Bahrain's ambitions to become a knowledge-economy (Bahrain Economic Development Board, 2008). Following the success of CLT in Singapore, the country then made a decision to move to the second stage of policy borrowing (Phillips and Ochs, 2003; 2004) and borrowed the same teaching programme to implement it in its own national schools. The reforms in English language teaching were placed under a bigger umbrella of education changes – the National Education Reform Initiatives (NERI), which also included developments, for instance, in the science curriculum or the Arabic language. NERI is a national project supported by stakeholders from Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and the UK. It captures a series of reforms related to the Economic Vision 2030, supporting Bahrain's transition to the knowledge-based economy. Education is positioned as one of the pillars in this transition. It is therefore focussed on 'fitness for purpose' and skills development required to compete in the global labour market. In English language education, this means an increased emphasis on practical skills and language development applicable to the labour market (Soman, 2015). English language is therefore compulsory in all stages of education. In secondary schools, the programme is particularly focused on holistic language development, supporting students towards beginning university education abroad and international career prospects (Al-Baharna, 2005).

Thus, the third stage of implementation of CLT in Bahrain involved redrafting of textbooks and introducing new series in English with the help of 'external agencies such as Pearson. The new materials were based on an integrated skills language teaching model, emphasising eclectic elements of CLT, learning through communication, little error correction and elimination of deductive teaching of grammar rules (Al-Baharna, 2005). Significant changes in the redrafting of the curriculum also took place in 2002 when a new genre based syllabus was proposed for Bahraini schools. The genre-based curriculum was built around different types of texts, selected from different writing genres, which was believed to provide a more systematic approach to teaching (Bax, 2006). Teachers following this programme could focus on one area of writing at a time (e.g. writing a story or a letter of complaint), which was thought to enable them to better support the students in advancing their skills as they could focus on one text at a time (Bax, 2006). It was also thought that through a genre-based curriculum, the students could be better prepared for the final examination that sought to assess real-life skills in

English, such as making a complaint or writing an invitation. The findings below provide interesting insights into the exams issue.

To support teachers with the challenges that came with the new reforms, experts from the National Institute of Education (NIE) of the Nanyan Technological University of Singapore were contracted by the government to develop a national teacher training programme. This initiative was started to help pre-service teachers understand and acquire the principles of communicative methods (BTC website). The Bahrain Teachers College (BTC) was established to facilitate this new training programme and the government issued national guidelines for teaching and learning that were to be implemented across all schools (e.g. for English, see Al-Baharna, 2005).

It is surprising though that with nearly thirty years of such significant developments in English language education in Bahrain, there has been no exploration to date of the final stage of policy indigenisation. The review of research on policy borrowing above indicated that teacher perspectives and decision-making can also significantly impact on this stage, but evaluations of policy in Bahrain through their perspectives have not been published to date. Similar research, however, related specifically to language teaching and CLT provides very important insights. Yu's (2001) work, for instance, shows that resistance to CLT happens primarily in schools and is constructed by teachers who try to strike a balance between the government objectives and the more traditional methods that are still preferred by the locals. Their positioning therefore affects how successful policy implementation is. Similarly, Li and Baldauf (2011) observed in their research into CLT in China that a lot of teachers chose to teach through traditional methods because these methods guaranteed high student scores in the examination-oriented educational system in China. This decision resulted in positive evaluations by the school but at the same time was problematic for CLT implementation which was affected by teacher strategic positioning in the middle of the conflict between the traditions of the education system and the novelty of CLT (Li and Baldauf, 2011). The findings reported in the sections below reveal similar positioning in the context of Bahrain.

METHODS:

Sampling

English language teachers from 10 secondary schools across five governorates that Bahrain is divided into took part in this study (1 boys and 1 girls school in each governorate). This represents approximately 30% of all national secondary schools in the country. The schools in each governorate were randomly selected and 60 out of the total number of 85 teachers employed across the selected schools took part in the

study. To recruit participants, the researcher held information meetings in each school explaining the aims and objectives of the project. Participant information sheets and consent forms were also given to the teachers, which were collected on return to each for the interviews. The aim was to recruit between 6-12 interviewees for each session (Stewart et al, 2007). A smaller number of participants was only interviewed in two schools, with 3 interviewees taking part in one school and 4 in another. In case of the second school, 4 was the total number of teachers working in that school. Table 1 below presents the numbers of teachers interviewed and employed in each school.

Table 1: Number of English Teachers Interviewed in Focus Groups out of the Total Number of Teachers Employed

| | School A | School B | School C | School D | School E | School F | School G | School H | School I | School J |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Participants Interviewed | 4 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 5 |
| Participants Employed | 4 | 9 | 15 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 15 | 8 |

The teachers who were interviewed in the study were all working full-time. They were all native speakers of Arabic. Their teaching experience varied from 1 to more than 12 years and the age range was between 21 and 60 years old. All teachers were educated to a degree level, most of them locally in the Gulf or other Middle Eastern countries.

Data Collection

Data were collected through focus group interviews as perceptions regarding shared experiences with policy borrowing were the focus of the study (Bryman, 2008). Focus groups are also believed to be suitable for researching social issues in the Arab context due to the collective nature of these cultures (Thomas, 2008). Thomas (2008) argues that focus groups allow for cultural values and beliefs of the researched to emerge, which was very important for this study as it aimed to elucidate the role of socio-cultural factors in the implementation of CLT.

One focus group interview was conducted in each school. 10 discussion questions were prepared (please see the appendix). The interview questions inquired about the influences on what and how the teachers taught (e.g. *What determines the way you teach English?*), about the context of English teaching practice in Bahraini schools (e.g. *Can you tell me about the practices of teaching English?*), as well as how teachers implemented the present curriculum and the challenges they faced (e.g. *Do you face any problems? How would you solve these problems?*). The teachers were also asked to talk about their teacher training and whether they faced any challenges implementing

the new methods of teaching English (e.g. *How do you implement the curricular requirements and the new methods of teaching? Do you think you need more education and training?*).

All interviews were audio-recorded. The recordings were transcribed in full. The interviews were conducted in English. Interview questions were however written in English and Arabic in case some teachers found it easier to read in their native language. English language proficiency of teachers was not considered to be a problem as all teachers had to pass an English proficiency test as part of their teacher training. The teachers were however allowed to speak Arabic whenever they felt they could not express themselves clearly in English. Such situations did not occur in any of the focus groups. On average, the sessions lasted between 40 - 60 minutes. All data were sent back to interviewees for participant validation. No comments with corrections were returned.

Data Analysis

The Constant Comparative Method was used in data analysis and perceptions of all teachers were compared within each and across all focus groups. To facilitate the comparisons, Ritchie et al's (2003, cited in Bryman, 2008) framework approach was used for ordering and synthesising data. The framework enabled to construct an index of raw data consisting of codes, categories and main themes which were then represented in a matrix for each focus group, later used for a more holistic analysis. Each matrix (in a form of a table) displayed the core categories, with each column of the table representing a code where relevant verbatim comments were pasted into each cell. The following results were generated.

RELEVANT THEMES AND CONCEPTUALISATIONS:

Many themes and categories emerged during data analysis. They elucidated how the teachers were making sense of the new English teaching reform in light of their own beliefs about education and values shaped by training. The themes that emerged showed that schools had to adopt 'the borrowed ideas' about teaching. They also showed that teachers were tailoring their own ways through the new reforms, so they could strike a satisfactory balance between what the government and the public wanted. This emerging conflict in the analysis explicated how CLT was likely to be indigenised in the context of Bahrain. Given the aim of this paper, this was considered to be core and thus only the categories that capture this conflict are reported below, as broader coverage of all themes would be beyond the scope of this paper. These included: (1) Inadequacy of Communicative Language Teaching, (2) The Power of the Final Exam,

(3) Inadequacy of Teacher Training, (4) Internal Orientations on Teaching and (5) Value of English for Professional Careers.

The excerpts presented under the themes below are consistent with many responses. The majority of teachers agreed that indigenisation of CLT was not easy, due to a number of cultural influences, and they described behaviours that suggested tacit rejection of the new policy. There were teachers, however, who indicated that they were quite successful in implementing the new strategies and that they liked the new curriculum. For example:

Teacher 3I: What I try to do in my class is that I choose one person and I tell them to explain a lesson. They do it as part of their homework and then the next day they have to come and explain it to their friends.

Teacher 1J: I like the current curriculum, I think it's beneficial, if you take a look at this, it has reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, style, it almost covers everything. It works quite well with the students, I am not saying that it is perfect but it is the best available.

Examples from Teachers 3I and 1J represented the views of the minority of teachers though. Predominantly, the participants felt that CLT was inadequate, due to various teacher and parent pressures, as well as teachers' own beliefs about teaching. Relevant insights are presented below.

Inadequacy of Communicative Language Teaching

The teachers' comments evoked conclusions that pedagogies implemented at school level did not reflect the borrowed model of CLT. The teachers explained that the traditional school structures based on obedience and teacher-centred approaches did not encourage the students to think that learning could come through interaction in English. The comment from Teacher 1H below reflects the view of many interviewees who explained that when teachers try to use communicative approaches:

Teacher 1H: The students think that English is easy, because teachers have fun, teachers play. They follow the teachers who are strict, whereas with English they don't see that so they, for example, don't stick to the guidelines, they don't treat us seriously.

Teacher 5D further explained:

Teacher 5D: In my opinion, not all methods are suitable here. I think a GTM [Grammar Translation Method] would be suitable for those students [in Bahrain]. I know it's an old method but it is a suitable one for them. With the communicative approach, they make a big noise and they don't learn. Or some of

the students work, the others copy from them and then that's it. They need something that would allow the teacher to control the class more.

The GTM requires translating texts and memorising numerous grammatical rules and vocabulary lists (Griffiths and Parr, 2001). This, in the teachers' opinion, suits the cultural framework of Bahraini students. It was suggested that the traditional view on learning in Bahrain does not allow for the benefits of CLT to emerge. Still, however:

Teacher 2D: The Ministry are copying from other countries, the methods, but they are not suitable for those students. It's suitable for Singaporean students. It's different [all agree].

The Power of the Final Exam

Further comments additionally suggested that how students and parents feel about the final exam mediates CLT implementation in a negative way. The teachers explained that the great value of the results from the final exam concentrates all teaching only on the material that is included in the final assessment.

Teacher 1A: The students study for the final exam. They only want to study because they will have the same question in the final. They don't want extra information. The exam is the only thing. So, whenever we give them a lesson they ask: 'Teacher is this going to be included in the final exam?'

These attitudes result in teaching from the course book because, according to Teacher 8C, '*the texts and examinations concentrate on the book*' (Teacher 8C) and students are mainly interested in the model answers that they can later memorise for the exam. These statements are typical of claims in the literature concerned with the washback effects of testing, representing the view that final exams 'contain what students must learn and therefore what must be taught' (Chapelle and Douglas, 1993, p. 16). Bailey (1999) claims that washback can therefore be impeding innovation because teachers tend to teach to the test. Here, the washback effect was additionally amplified by teacher positioning characterised by ambivalence that, on the one hand, represented commitment to the new reform, but on the other, supported the traditional methods of teaching. This is explained below.

Teacher 3B: Honestly, there is a bad habit that students have here. They have ready-made writing, they memorize it and when you ask them to write an independent sentence, outside that writing model, they cannot. They just memorize it. They take the model writing from the teachers. They just need the model for the exam. Yes, we provide them with the model writing. Students just concentrate on the final exam only [all teachers agree], they hate you when you try to help them and explain what should be done first and then next, they don't

like that, just direct monotonous way of teaching. That's it. They don't accept it that it's [language learning] a process, they need something ready, the model for the final exam.

As explained in the comment from Teacher 3B above, the strong emphasis on doing well in the final exam creates teaching situations in which students are simply provided with model answers because '*otherwise, they [students] will be angry with us*' (Teacher 4C) and '*the parents sometimes put their nose in our job*' (Teacher 2C). Teaching through model answers equates with good grades and seems to embody a form of survival for teachers who otherwise are likely to be subject to negative evaluations.

Teacher 4D: (...) you are not a good teacher. Parents also interfere and they don't see why their child failed, so they blame the teacher. It's only the teacher. But if the student passes the exam, he is a good student, but if he fails, there is nothing wrong with the student, it's the teacher's fault.

Teachers therefore become 'significant actors' (Phillips and Ochs, 2004) whose survival techniques and interpretations of the best way forward are not only in conflict with the main objectives of CLT but also have negative consequences for student learning. Some teachers reported that this had already been noted at the school level. Students taking the final exam were reported by the teachers to be unable to meaningfully apply the model answer they had learnt to the context of the exam question. For example:

Teacher 3E: I remember once, I taught them to write how to complain about an item you bought. There was a fault and you return it back to the shop, they had to write a complaint letter. So, what we did in the class was about the hairdryer, that you plug it in and that it made a sound and smoke came out of it, etc. And then in the exam, they were to write about a book, complain about a book, so they said, we plugged it in and smoke came out and it made a horrible sound. So you know, they don't even have the sense, the thinking.

It would seem reasonable to suggest here that some kind of 'exit points' from the transferred methods of teaching are necessary (Aydarova, 2013); points that would suggest effective substitutions for the elements of the education system that create barriers to the implementation of CLT. Here, this element would be the final exam, which in the present form seems to have a rather detrimental effect on language skills development. This has implications for the narrative surrounding the reasons for CLT borrowing in Bahrain, which should allow for the possibility of substitution of the exam with other forms of evaluations. Presently, it seems that it is assumed that the existing structures with simply 'absorb' it.

Inadequacy of Teacher Training

The teachers indicated that the additional training in communicative methods they had received as part of the implementation process of CLT *'does not match; some students cannot work with those methods'* (Teacher 2D).

Teacher 1E: But even if you give us training, it won't work unless other factors that we talked about change. Because you know, everybody is giving training to the teacher; everybody is blaming the teacher, as if it is the only factor that influences the learning process.

Teacher 4D in another school agreed and used an interesting analogy to explain how hard it is to change the embedded views on education in Bahrain.

Teacher 4D: They [policy makers] think that students are clay and that teachers misuse this clay to make undesirable shapes. In fact, the students are not clay, they are a hard stone you cannot break. [all agree]

There is evidence here that additional investment in teacher improvement programmes may have been a waste of resources as the incoherence of the new methods with the cultural context challenges the need for this investment.. The quotation below additionally suggests that re-training of teachers is not a 'quick fix' to problems related to policy implementation. Clearly, the problem in Bahrain does not seem to be linked to the inability of teachers to learn the new methods, but rather to the subjective readings of the purposes of education that make these methods incoherent.

Teacher 6G: Some of us are coming from the BTC¹, and we were taught very different methods of teaching but we cannot apply them here. I learned a lot, I used to discover more and more about teaching as I went but when I came to teach to schools here, I discovered that some of the things that were taught there cannot be applied.

Another reason why 'some of the things that were taught' may not be applied in Bahraini classrooms is that teachers may also hold certain views on language teaching. This is explained in the following section.

Internal Orientations on Teaching

The emerging codes in relation to teacher beliefs suggested that their own orientations on teaching and learning a language might be an additional barrier to CLT implementation. This suggests a conclusion that teaching through model answers may, on the one hand, be a survival strategy in response to pressures from parents and students (as indicated under section 'The Power of the Final Exam') , but, on the other, it may also be a realisation of teachers' own beliefs about teaching. For example, a

¹ Bahrain Teachers College

number of teachers indicated that they believe that grammatical competency can be better achieved through explicit teaching of tenses:

Teacher 1D: The directive from the Ministry is not to teach grammar. Grammar must come through texts. But it doesn't work [all agree]. They must know the rules. They don't know the tenses.

Similarly, Teacher 1E stated that explicit correction of speech errors is necessary for speech development in a foreign language.

Teacher 1E: They don't know exactly what they are doing, they got it wrong [policy makers]. This is not a communicative approach that we accept anything that the students say in the class. They say don't correct the students. If I don't disturb the students when they are speaking, they won't know, as soon as they get it wrong, I have to correct them.

Participant 1D argued that if teachers start implementing critical thinking approaches:

Teacher 1D: [This] will make it worst because to entertain the students while they have to study and take things seriously, this will make a lazy generation who wants to get entertained in everything.

There is evidence here the traditional views on education expressed by the participants, which promote rigour, obedience and competency through knowledge mastery, may still be preferred by many teachers. One teacher indicated that *'the time is not enough to waste the lecture for that [more interactive approaches], because the course will not finish this way'* (Teacher 3D). This points to a specific form of internalisation of the CLT, indicating tacit rejection, whereby elements of subjective teacher beliefs, in combination with other factors discussed above, mediate the indigenisation process of CLT to an extent when it almost does not happen. The comments under the final section cover yet another set of factors contributing to this extent.

Value of English for Professional Careers

The final category that emerged in the research implies that students are not motivated to develop communicative language skills. The teachers indicated that the primary reason behind this lack of motivation is that students do not need English for their future jobs. Many teachers agreed that students *'have pre-determined jobs in mind for which they know they won't use English'* (Teacher 1G) and:

Teacher 6B: If you ask them why they come to school, they will say because I don't like staying at home, just to satisfy my parents (...) but nobody says because I want to be so and so in the future and I want to study English.

Thus, the expectations of these students towards language education are the same as towards other subjects – that is to facilitate good grades on the final exam (as exemplified above), which makes it more difficult for teachers to implement CLT.

Teacher 11: Here it's completely different because you are dealing with students who have no motivation whatsoever. I tried to use the same techniques with them here [*refers to CLT*], but they stated very quickly that I shouldn't give myself a headache and I should rest. They said they are looking for two things: to be a police officer or to be in the military. 'We have no aspirations to be anything else so why should we bother.'

The final set of comments under this category illustrates that the trends driving CLT developments in Bahrain and educational aspirations of many students are divergent.. It has been observed elsewhere that the low education aspirations of some students in Bahrain have been shaped by historical employment settlements within the Kingdom that brought many expatriate families to the country to work in Bahrain's public sector. These families tend to populate national schools, which consequently results in a student body not interested in education for economic gain that the CLT is meant to drive (Hayes, 2016). As shown here, this subsequently leads to teachers 'giving up', which is likely to affect negatively any attempts to internalise the new policy. Such findings have conceptual implications for theorisations about policy borrowing (Phillips and Ochs, 2003), suggesting that in some cases, the last stage of indigenisation may be substituted with tacit rejection.

CONCLUSIONS

This article has shown that interactions between teacher beliefs, the reported student and parent views and the new types of educational programmes that are borrowed for them create many internal negotiations of school processes. These negotiations seem to be mainly related to the ways in which teachers position themselves in the new education system. Thus, in an answer to the question of 'What happens to English Language Teaching Policy when it is transplanted to a different culture?', this study concludes that it becomes tacitly rejected. This rejection seems to be consequence of teacher ambivalence related to seeking the best way forward in a climate of uncertainties caused by parent and student pressures, inadequate teacher training and teachers' own beliefs about education. The subjective readings of success in the new education system had led to the shift from, at first, trying to implement the new teaching guidelines and methods to then rejecting them, as no indicative efforts leading to their potential adaptations have been reported by the teachers. Instead, the comments from the interviews suggested subjugation to parental and student pressures, interpreted here as survival strategies, as they reflected attempts to avoid negative evaluations and

lack of motivation to teach students who had no interest in learning English. The initial expectation that teachers would emerge here as 'significant actors' was challenged in the analysis, pointing to greater role of students and parents. Whether they could be considered as 'contextual factors' (Phillips and Ochs, 2003) rather than 'significant actors' needs to be explored in future work, as their active agency, enabling them to act upon the conditions set for them by the CLT makes them more than just elements of the 'target' system. Here, the theme of tacit rejection was particularly significant, proposing potential conceptual developments of Phillips and Ochs's (2003) model.

The first section of the finding highlighted how teachers tacitly rejected the new policy. It could be assumed that because of their own views about the inadequacy of CLT for Bahrain and personal preferences for the GMT, the teachers were unlikely to support changes in the ways that they taught. They did not however express this rejection explicitly, and in this sense, it was tacit and normalised without being stated. This was particularly evidenced by the findings in the section on 'Internal Orientations on Teaching'. Additionally, the data under the section regarding the final exam also offered insights suggesting that CLT in Bahrain is unlikely to reflect elements of the original model. This was exemplified by teachers hedging their bets by, on the one hand, demonstrating commitment to the new education reforms but, on the other, giving in to parental pressures and providing model answers as a result. 'Exit points' – that is, possibilities of substitutions for the current structures - are a potential solution to this situation (Aydarova, 2013), helping, as suggested above, to prevent the negative effects of such ambivalence on student learning.

Changes to the structure and focus of the final exam could be one such 'exit point' whereby local adaptations of CLT would be seen as equally valid (Bax, 2006). Bax (2006) proposes that if some problems with CLT occur due to resistance from the social context, local adaptations of the programme provide a useful alternative. These adaptations usually involve developments in courses that introduce communicative elements but, at the same time, also retain the core principles of the original programme (ibid). This could be undertaken in Bahrain by, for instance, changing the format of the final exam. When a language programme follows the CLT model, it should mainly focus on testing the level of free interaction of learners in spoken and written language (Richards and Rogers, 1986). Therefore, if tasks based on free speech and free writing were integrated into the final exam in Bahrain, they could help solve problems with memorising model answers. No such changes are proposed at the moment and the government seems to want to proceed with the intended reforms within the existing educational and assessment structures. This creates tensions with teacher sense-making, who seem to indirectly reject any change through low-risk strategies that guarantee survival. This implies that CLT may not even be indigenised as no attempts

seemed to have been made by the teachers to turn CLT into a 'local product' (Phillips and Ochs, 2003). Subjective teacher interpretations of the new policies that stem from traditionally developed teacher identities played a significant role here.

These conclusions offer a potential for developments in Philips and Ochs's model (2003), particularly challenging the assumption that aspects of the new borrowed system will eventually become adopted. The model seems to be built on the assumption that if some well-established and 'favoured' procedures (e.g. assessments, pedagogies) are not revised, 'considerable time might elapse before the impact of new measures is felt' (p. 456). It has been shown here, however, that these structures may as well become a vehicle for perpetuating the old ways of teaching, enabling rejections at school level that go unnoticed and may therefore never materialise in any changes in the education system. It would perhaps be reasonable to suggest that an additional option of 'rejection' is added to the indigenisation stage in the framework. .

This conclusion is preliminary though and, just as the authors of the original framework spoke of the need for further tests of their model, it is also proposed here that this new option is further tested in contexts with different cultural and social intricacies than Bahrain. The research presented here is also limited by the small size of the sample and no representation can be claimed here. Finally, the research presents only one perspective – that of teachers, whilst groups of 'significant actors' that may have an impact on the process of policy borrowing may also include relevant local authorities, head teachers or even, as emerged here, students and their parents. Their perspectives therefore need to be included as well, to provide an in-depth account of events, relationships, and experiences of processes of policy borrowing which otherwise would have not been illuminated. This will lead to more rigorous conclusions and ensure that the modifications of the framework that are proposed here are not trapped within a limited model of possibilities (Phillips and Ochs, 2004).

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Appendix 1:

Focus Groups Discussion Questions

Factors influencing your teaching/ context

- What determines the way you teach English?
- Can you tell me about the practices of teaching English?
- Could you tell me about the advantages and disadvantages of how you teach English?

CLT implementation – challenges/ opportunities

- How do you feel about the reforms concerning the English curriculum and the changes in methods of teaching?
- What was considered when making the decision about the new curriculum?
- Do you face any problems?
- If yes, how would you solve these problems?

Teacher training

- You are a qualified English teacher. How does your training apply to your current teaching situation?
- How do you implement the curricular requirements and the new methods of teaching?
- Do you think you need more education and training?

