

The Using of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach: A Case Study of Jordanian Female EFL Learners at University of Jordan

Kosay Alshwater 

Department of Curriculum and instructions, Faculty of Education, Muta'a University, Jordan

✉ **Corresponding Author:** Kosay Alshwater, **E-mail:** Kosaymoneer@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore the experiences of Jordanian English as a foreign language (EFL) student concerning communicative language teaching. Classroom surveys were used to gather data from three separate sources. The quantitative method was applied to collect and evaluate data through classroom surveys, which were statistically assessed using suitable methods. Female students (N = 115) who participated in the research. In terms of the significant conclusions, data interpretation revealed gaps in the subjects' experiences of EFL Learning. Furthermore, the results showed that EFL teachers in Jordan face various difficulties when introducing communicative language learning in their classrooms. Three points of concern were regularly identified: student challenges, institutional issues, and problems with the administrative structure. Overall, the findings showed that despite the problems, Jordanian EFL learners regard the CLT method favourably.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

Communicative language teaching (CLT) was initially presented in the 1970s and is now recognized as a significant language teaching practice factor. Language teaching has become a dynamic process in which reforms are regularly proposed and applied. This is to actively engage language learners in English as a foreign language (EFL) perspective (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Research has shown the significance of applying the communicative language teaching method in an EFL setting for improving proficiency in all language skills, both receptive and productive. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), language teaching approach change has aimed to improve learners' speaking abilities and incorporate modern teaching tactics. Teacher-student engagement in cooperative groups, how teachers use additional resources, how learners perceive them, and how lessons transition between teacher-centric and collaborative activities. (Batstone, 2012)

1.2 Significance of study

This study contributes to the debate about Jordanian English language education background. It proposes to contribute to the discussion in the following ways:

- (i) Identifying the significant obstacles that EFL learners may encounter while interpreting CLT.
- (ii) Distinguishing the difference between what happens in class and the language requirements of students.
- (iii) Contributes to and proposing suitable alternatives for the Jordanian educational context to develop learners' communication skills.

1.3 Research Objective

To identify the students' perceptions of their EFL teachers' CLT practices in their classroom.

1.4 Research Question

What are the students' perceptions of their EFL teachers' CLT practices in their classroom?

1.5 Problem Statement

Like those in other countries, EFL teachers in Jordan are expected to implement communicative language teaching techniques. However, traditional teaching approaches are frequently used to teach English, which appears to adopt a strongly instructor-centered methodology with the teacher controlling the English language learning environment (Khan2016; Rajab, 2013). This results in low morale in English language learners, contributing to weak communicative success as they use English in social and educational environments.

2. Literature Review

This research's primary goal is to examine students' viewpoints to assess whether EFL teachers' instructional methods are consistent with CLT methodology's values. As a result, this chapter aims to conduct a literature review to comprehend the theoretical foundations of the principle of methods in English language teaching.

2.1 The Rationale for Choosing CLT

Three primary language teaching approaches are discussed, and the conceptual history to the strategies utilized in language education. These are:

- (a) The Grammar Translation Method is among the most widely utilized teaching approaches in most educational institutions, and it is also employed to some extent in more traditional teaching contexts.
- (b) The Audiolingual Method was developed in reaction to the lack of focus on hearing and speaking in grammatical translation (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004)
- (c) The content-based approach is often presented as offering a more traditional language teaching background.

The communicative competence concept drives the teaching and learning methodology that underpins CLT (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This chapter reflects on four significant foreign language (FL) teaching approaches and their connections to curriculum design and assessment. Furthermore, it is argued that the CLT method does not seem to be adequately mirrored in existing ELI in-class teaching and learning practices. This chapter explains how these approaches may be related to shortcomings in the current program's approach, resource usage, and evaluation procedures. However, before delving into the above techniques, defining those concepts – process, methodology, style, and procedures –prevents misunderstandings.

2.2 Definition and principles of CLT

CLT is characterized in many ways (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). First, it attempts to "apply the communicative method's conceptual viewpoint. This is done by considering communicative competence as the object of language instruction and recognizing the interrelationship of language and communication," according to Larsen-Freeman (2000). (p. 121)Furthermore, Savignon (2002) emphasizes that CLT is concerned with the methods and goals of learning in the classroom, which is the basic theoretical concept underlying CLT. Finally, CLT was included in the debate of language usage and foreign learning instruction in the late twentieth century.

CLT is classified as a method since language teaching aims to improve aptitude in the four language skills to aid interaction. According to Brown (2001), communicative language teaching is a conceptual stance on language education's essence and method. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), CLT requires a wide variety of approaches and strategies, but there is no particular paradigm or authority for the methodology. It utilizes widely recognized techniques as definitive and suitable for education and versatile methods in using resources. CLT's holistic design distinguishes it in scale and significance from any other strategy (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Moreover, this study needs to know why CLT is favored over other conventional teaching approaches. For the sake of enabling language skills through the inclusion of students in contextual, substantive, and communication-focused activities, Doughty and Long (2003) advocate a proactive or performance-based approach. For some, CLT is nothing but the integration of grammatical and practical instruction. For others, like Littlewood (1981), it pays tribute to functional and structural components of communications, one of the most distinguishing features of CLT.

Furthermore, CLT is described as a method for EFL that stresses that the goal of learning is proficiency (Richards et al.,1992). Consequently, CLT represents a particular model, analysis paradigm, or even theory (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Over everything, CLT encourages learners to use what they had done to partake in meaningful interaction in various settings. (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Littlewood, 1981).

2.3 Syllabus and materials in a CLT approach

With the continued growth of CLT, the design of a curriculum has become a critical aspect in the transition toward application. Thus, ensuring that the objectives concerning the communicative value of such material are fulfilled. Wilkins's (1976) notional and functional paradigm was used with early curriculums. However, while some versions were once deemed suitable for use, they have since been replaced. The Council of Europe, in particular, sought to create and extend a CLT curriculum to develop courses for European adults to use for a range of functions (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Van Ek and Alexander (1980) formed the Council of Europe curriculum, which significantly impacted CLT programs in Europe.

Furthermore, the acceptance of CLT is viewed as the start of a substantial shift in the method of language education, with CLT concepts being generally recognized as an appropriate solution (McDonough, Shaw & Masuhara 2013). As a result, CLT principles have been identified as tools, techniques, and classroom procedures emphasizing the value of understanding and implementing those principles in various teaching and learning environments. CLT curriculum design, according to Richards and Rodgers (2014), has progressed through many stages. The first goal was to build a syllabus that was consistent with the principle of CLT. Consequently, rather than relying purely on grammatical structure, a notional and functional textbook was suggested (Wilkins, 1976). A notional and functional curriculum approaches language learning and instruction through the lens of the language norms used for natural interaction in various contexts. For example, a CLT-designed curriculum allows students to gain more practical proficiency in the target language (e.g., request, give direction, apologizing).

2.4 The Role of The Learner in CLT

CLT is a learner-centric and experience-based methodology to language instruction that emphasizes interaction and communication instead of mastery of language types. Students are at the heart of the strategy and are supposed to communicate efficiently in teams or groups using the classroom content (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This influences the standing of the students in the classroom, encourages and promotes excellent enthusiasm. By improving language for communicating in different contexts, there is a tendency to place a stronger emphasis on proficiency rather than accuracy (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The nature of their role may vary; instead of reacting to duties put on teachers, students might manage their learning process. As a result, the independence of learners within CLT is expanded (Hedge, 2000). Moreover, students regularly participate in meaning negotiation and assume a dynamic role in the learning phase, facilitating and communicating rather than becoming idle in the classroom (Larsen Freeman, 2000; Maley, 1986). The learner assumes that he can give and receive, and thus learning occurs in an interdependent manner (p. 100). Furthermore, CLT allows learners to relate to and assume responsibility in organizing activities that facilitate learning and apply their skills in a social sense. As previously said, CLT teaching and learning practices are learner-centric, dependent on learners' expectations and preferences. They vary from conventional teacher-fronted approaches in that they promote teamwork through community activity, sports, and pair work. Problem-solving tasks such as three-step interviews, roundtable discussions, think-pair-share, solve-pair-share, and numbered heads are examples of these exercises (Olsen & Kagan 1992). The learner takes on a group member's role in these tasks, collaborating with other participants to complete the tasks. In other terms, learners must consciously and actively engage in studying the language. As mentioned in the preceding subsection, the teacher's job is to provide organized help for the students and promote a cooperative classroom environment by undertaking different classroom activities (Richards, 2001, p. 52). With its tightly controlled structural components concentrating on accuracy rather than proficiency, the traditional method has an opposite CLT ethos (Brumfit, 1984; Hedge, 2000). A learner-centered CLT methodology helps learners to identify independent methods and specific motives. Both are effective influences in language acquisition and activity design.

Moreover, they should focus on designing their methods. Learners have the opportunity to prepare, introduce, and coordinate their tasks (Hedge, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Individual contributions, perceptions, behaviors, and attempts to compromise among learners are enhanced due to the corresponding dedication acknowledged as legitimate and beneficial in language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Furthermore, in lessons, teacher and student engagement or participation is critical; This is consistent in relation to CLT concept conceptual framework of language teaching and learning phase. Language is acquired, instructed, and used formally to communicate thoughts (Davis, 2002 & Nunan, 1999). Learners are encouraged to participate in the 'negotiation of meaning' as they participate in such active discussions with their instructors or groups. This will hopefully assist them in voicing their opinions and beliefs and explain them (Farr, 2015; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Soo & Goh, 2013). Learners may improve their communication skills by doing so. Therefore, students' contributions to class discussions have a significant part to play in assessing their language skills and learning outcomes (Warayet, 2011). Despite CLT strategies ways of supporting learners, they are nonetheless reluctant and silent in the classroom. Teachers are using various tactics and processes to expose learners to the target language to no avail. Silence is also widespread in university settings in the United Kingdom and China (Wei, 2018). As a result, educators need to implement effective instructional practices that encourage students to participate in-class activities. According to Shamim and Kuchah (2016), confronting diverse levels in the classroom, apprehensive students, assessment, and

insufficient resources might hinder CLT use. According to Shamim and Kuchah (2016), essential responses to these problems include using various tasks, proper timing of material, improving collective learning, customizing content, and forming classroom routines. To recap, CLT is a relatively modern EFL teaching approach that encourages learners to develop from minimal engagement in classrooms to maximum learner involvement through interaction and the negotiation process to develop in academic and professional settings.

Al-Rabadi (2012) examined if Jordanian university instructors' activities matched their behaviors toward pair/group work, the teacher's job, corrective feedback, and the use of L1 and the difficulties they encountered while implementing CLT concepts in their context. In terms of applying CLT, the research adopted the activities of two English department professors. Classroom observations and surveys were included in the qualitative analysis. Despite general acceptance of such CLT characteristics, the results showed a relative gap in the instructors' perceptions and classroom habits. The most significant difficulties were a scarcity of CLT instruction, large class sizes, minimal accessibility to English, a rigorous program, and insufficient time. McLean (2011) has evaluated the understanding and use of CLT approaches for an established program at an Omani Higher Education Institution. A group of instructors and three data collection tools were part of the qualitative analytical technique of this study: survey questionnaires, class assessment, and semi-structured interviews. The research suggested that teachers possessed an insufficient understanding of CLT, and many had not used it at all. In addition, surveys and visits to the classroom revealed that a large number of respondents did not understand the term "approach" since it relates to the characteristics of EFL methods. A plausible explanation for this is that these teachers have never used the term in a teaching context.

McLean suggested that a modified CLT form that considers local conceptual and socio-cultural contexts could be pedagogically possible. Meaning, the manner of studying and teaching English is improved if it draws on local expertise and understanding that is compatible with local cultural sensitivities and guided by local context. Batawi (2006) examined instructors' impressions of CLT usage as an invention in the Jordanian Arabian background. In total, one hundred female instructors were interviewed, and twelve took part in the study's second stage, which consisted of three focus groups.

The focus groups primarily addressed the teachers' grasp of CLT and the challenges they may encounter while implementing CLT. According to the results, teachers used many approaches that embodied a mix of strategies while teaching. In other terms, Jordanian teachers expected to incorporate features of both formal and communicative techniques into their curriculum, choosing conventional methods to CLT. Teachers' challenges caused difficulties due to a lack of experience, large class sizes, and instructional policies relating to a structured school structure. The investigator outlined three things that policymakers should give great attention to make use of CLT effectively: (a) the readjustment of broader society; (b) development rather than acceptance of the CLT (c) the significance of training instructors. In the long run, the researchers indicated that Jordanian instructors could investigate to improve suitable language teaching methods for the Jordanian background. Alhawsawi (2013) published another critical analysis discussing a similar topic, analyzing the experience of Jordanian student educational experiences in an EFL program at the University for Health and Science (QU-HS) from three different perspectives: (1) the impact on student learning environments focused on instructional theory characteristics; (2) family educational context, utilizing the principle of cultural capital; and (3) Students' engagement with the techniques of instruction utilized in the curriculum. Semi-structured surveys, classroom reports, and relevant records were used to gather evidence. The findings of an analysis of the university's applied policies found that three factors negatively affect the EFL curriculum, affecting the student environment.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection procedures:

After obtaining authorization to gather data, the next step was to communicate with EFL students. The pilot study involved three students. None of these students had a face-to-face interview, but they were all highly collaborative and eager to be involved in research. The next step was to visit the curriculum supervisor of ELI, who introduced the researcher to the coordinator of the teachers and supplied copies of the curriculum to select the suitable observation class. The analysis started in September 2019 with the study of three English classes. The instructor monitored these lessons, and each instructor was watched twice. This pilot study gave a more comprehensive view of how the university's curriculum functioned and how instructors applied it in practice. The pilot research also showed how either a GTM approach or a CLT approach were embraced and the way that both students worked in class. Since the pilot gave significant contextual observations since these factors are critical to the classroom observational analysis. Once the pilot research is finished, the field notes were examined in line with the research questions and utilized to construct an observation system that was planned and updated. In the next paragraph, the observation protocol is detailed.

3.2 Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire was intended to address learners' views of the problems surrounding English language instructors' methods, primarily whether the instructional techniques and resources utilized matched their expectations. As a result, the learners'

questionnaire was structured in the same manner as the instructors' questionnaire. Furthermore, the same structures and a mix of open and closed questions were used to clarify students' impressions of instructors' teaching activities. The student questionnaire contained eight questions concerning language teaching methods and language skills in classroom instruction.

3.3 Quantitative Data Analysis

Close-ended questions were adopted in this research so that respondents' answers to each topic could be assessed using scales that matched the study's goals, as well as open-ended questions that allowed for exploration. A statistical analysis of the closed questions was completed using SPSS, which is extensively used in academic research. In addition, several coded responses, including yes/no and four-point Likert scales, were employed for the questionnaire findings.

4. Results and Dissection

Learners' opinions of teachers' CLT behaviours were identified by questionnaire discussion and analysis. On a scale of 1 to 4, learners were required to describe their impressions of their teachers' current classroom activities, with 1 representing "to a great extent," 2 suggesting "to some extent," 3 implying "to a limited extent," and 4 signalling "not at all." The table following displays the findings of the learners' questionnaire concerning the following question:

Students' responses to the question "To what extent do the following statements apply to your teacher's activities in class?" (N = 115)

N	Statement	To a great extent	To a limited extent	Not at all
1	Classroom activities focus on memorizing grammar rules.	(76%)	(15.4%)	(8.6%)
2	The teacher corrects errors immediately	(18.8%)	(39.4%)	(41.1%)
3	The teacher frequently uses different aids, such as tasks, maps, games, and videos	(41.1%)	(34.8%)	(24.0%)
4	Pair/group activities are used in the classroom	(52.6%)	(30.2%)	(17.1%)
5	The teacher mostly focuses on communication, with grammar rules when necessary	(42.8%)	(48.3%)	(8.6%)
6	The teacher dominates the classroom interaction through lecturing only	(36%)	(33.1%)	(30.8%)
7	The teacher uses drilling and repeating sentences a lot	(34.8%)	(32%)	(33.1%)
8	The coursebook is the only source that the teacher uses in the classroom	(36.6%)	(33.1%)	(30.3%)

According to the learners' questionnaire findings, most (84.6 percent) of the learners believe that teachers typically concentrate on memorizing grammar rules to a great extent. However, just 15.4 percent chose "to a limited extent." In terms of the usage of L1 in the school, just 13.7 percent of students selected "not at all." 50.8 percent stated that teachers use Arabic in the classroom "to a great and some extent," 35.4 percent claiming "to a limited extent," and 13.7 percent reporting "not at all." In terms of mistake correction, 52.6 percent of students said instructors fix students' mistakes automatically "to a great and some extent," 41.1 percent said "to a small extent," and 5.7 percent said, "not at all." Relating to the argument that teachers often use multiple instructional resources, such as tasks, charts, games, and photographs, 41.1 percent of students said "not at all," 34.8 percent said "to a small extent," and 19.4 percent said, "to a great extent."

In comparison, most students (69.7%) claimed that the coursebook was the only tool used to any and great degree in the school, although 30.3 percent reported that instructors used the coursebook in classrooms "to a small extent." This may mean that the teacher has insufficient access to different types of instructional resources to help students. In terms of contact, most students suggested that teachers dominate classroom interaction "to a large extent" by lecturing instead of employing a communicative-based method. However, just 30.8 percent chose "to a minimal extent." Admittedly, almost 70.3 percent of students indicated that they were not offered the time to interact in class. However, just 29.7 percent said they had the opportunity to speak "to a large extent."

Furthermore, 66.8 percent of students said that instructors drill and repeat sentences in class "to a great and some degree." This is confirmed by learners' reactions to pair and group work tasks, with the majority (52.6 percent) stating that teachers utilized these exercises "to a small degree," 21.7 percent "not at all," and just 25.7 percent saying "to a great and some extent." In comparison, 61.1 percent of students indicated that teachers often promoted individual work practices in the classroom "to a large and certain extent." However, 38.8 percent reported that teachers did so "to a minimal extent."

5. Conclusion

To conclude CLT has become recognized as an essential framework for English learning and is regarded by many applied language instructors and EFL instructors globally as an indispensable strategy. However, it is not typically discussed or studied whether or if there are discrepancies in conviction and experience. This study contributes to the debate about Jordanian English language education background. The proposes to contribute to the discussion in identifying the significant obstacles that EFL learners may encounter while interpreting CLT, distinguishing the difference between what happens in class and the language requirements of students and contributes to and proposing suitable alternatives for the Jordanian educational context to develop learners' communication skills.

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