



INVESTIGATING THE TEACHER PERSPECTIVES INCOMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN EFL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract: This study examines Indonesian primary school teachers' perspectives on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) for developing communicative competence. It employs a qualitative descriptive approach using interviews and document analysis with three teachers. The findings reveal that although teachers value CLT, they combine it with grammar-focused instruction due to curriculum demands, low student motivation, and resource constraints. They adapt CLT through task-based activities, group projects, scaffolding, and culturally relevant materials despite large class sizes and limited training. Effective CLT implementation requires professional development, contextual adaptation, and supportive policies in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, EFL Classroom, Teacher Perspective

INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of this study is to explore English teachers' opinions in Indonesia regarding the adoption of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in EFL classrooms. It aims to identify their perspectives, challenges, and successes in implementing CLT, with findings

intended to benefit educators, policymakers, and language education scholars. In recent decades, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in Indonesia has undergone significant transformation. One increasingly popular approach is CLT, which emphasizes developing communication skills through authentic interactions. As English serves as a global lingua franca, both parents and students highly value conversational proficiency to support education, careers, and broader social engagement. As Mada (2024) notes, the ultimate aim of language learning is to enable learners to communicate responsibly and effectively in diverse social contexts. CLT supports a learner-centered approach by fostering active participation through varied communicative activities.

According to (Kurniawan, 2022), Communicative competence in English language teaching (ELT) is a complex concept that instructors must fully understand before implementing the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. One of the statements reported by Qasserras (2023), the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has gained popularity in language education due to its emphasis on meaningful interaction and effective language use.

CLT is widely regarded as an effective strategy, though its implementation in Indonesian schools remains challenging. Teachers are encouraged to shift the focus from linguistic forms to meaningful communication, enabling students to use English in everyday and academic contexts (Jabri, 2021). However, many struggle to balance communicative activities with exam-oriented instruction. Drawing on Hymes' work, CLT recognizes that language serves multiple functions, including communication, social interaction, emotional expression, imaginative world-building, and control, thus emphasizing meaning-making over mechanical grammar mastery.

Furthermore, experts assert that CLT fundamentally differs from traditional methods by emphasizing language use in context. Panahi (2024) highlights the centrality of communication in language teaching, with all classroom activities designed to achieve communicative goals. Communicative competence, which encompasses grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic components, forms the cornerstone of effective language use. Overemphasizing grammatical accuracy does not ensure successful communication, as true competence requires integrating multiple knowledge types to meet learners' real-world needs.

Despite its benefits, research shows that instructors often struggle to implement CLT due to limited resources, large class sizes, and insufficient training. Cultural norms, student expectations, and entrenched teacher-centered practices further shape its perception and adoption.

Doeur (2022) notes that traditional lecturing still dominates many classrooms, leaving little room for interaction and collaborative learning. These challenges can prevent teachers from fully embracing CLT, leading them to revert to conventional methods.

Suhartami and Amin (2023) conducted an online survey with English instructors from public and private high schools to investigate challenges in adopting Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The findings revealed that teachers faced significant obstacles, including limited exposure to target-language culture, insufficient knowledge of CLT implementation, lack of time to prepare communicative materials, and heavy workloads that constrained lesson planning. Teachers also reported that many students lacked confidence in using English, showed low motivation, and were reluctant to participate in activities or follow instructions due to weak proficiency. These issues were further compounded by student-related factors.

In Indonesia, English has been taught at various educational levels for years, yet many students still struggle to converse effectively. Classroom methods are often only partially communicative, leaving students struggling to express their thoughts orally. Teachers working in diverse cultural and linguistic contexts must adapt CLT to local realities, creating lessons that balance curricular requirements with communicative goals. As Noveriana Chang (2020) points out, instructors understand CLT concepts but face challenges such as inadequate exposure to target-language culture, insufficient preparation time, and limited professional development.

This research is therefore motivated by both the opportunities and challenges of implementing CLT in Indonesia. Understanding teachers' perspectives is essential for enhancing classroom practices, strengthening teacher training, and informing policy decisions. To address this gap, the study examines how Indonesian English teachers perceive, adapt, and implement CLT in real classroom settings. It explores how their professional knowledge, contextual constraints, and agency interact to navigate the challenges of communicative pedagogy. By directly investigating instructors' viewpoints and providing empirical data, this study bridges the gap between theoretical ideals and localized practices, contributing to contextually grounded CLT research in EFL education and offering recommendations to improve English language learning outcomes in Indonesia.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative descriptive method to explore English teachers' perspectives on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Indonesian EFL classrooms. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth investigation of teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and practices, as well as the contextual factors that shape their pedagogical decisions (Creswell, 2023). Rather than testing hypotheses, the study sought to describe and interpret teachers' lived experiences in adapting CLT to local classroom realities.

Sources of Data

The study drew on both **primary** and **secondary data**. Primary data were obtained from three English teachers working in two different senior high schools in Cirebon. SMA Yadika and SMA Al-Azhar. These schools were selected purposively to represent varied institutional contexts. Secondary data included lesson plans, student worksheets, and other relevant teaching documents, along with scholarly literature and curriculum guidelines that provided a broader framework for analysis.

Data Collection

Two main techniques were used:

1. **Semi structured interview**

Interviews were the primary tool for capturing teachers' views on CLT. Open-ended questions covered definitions of CLT, classroom applications, challenges, and adaptation strategies. The semi-structured format ensured consistency while allowing flexibility to probe emerging themes. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, recorded with consent, and later transcribed for analysis.

2. **Documentation analysis**

Lesson plans, teaching materials, and related documents were analyzed to cross-check whether teachers' stated beliefs aligned with their classroom practices. This method enhanced the credibility of findings by providing evidence beyond self-reported data.

Research Instruments

The main instrument was the interview guide, which included 20 open-ended questions grouped into themes such as beliefs about CLT, instructional strategies, barriers, and professional development needs. A checklist was also developed to analyze lesson plans and materials, focusing

on communicative activities, the balance between fluency and accuracy, and alignment with CLT principles.

Participants and Site

The study involved three teachers with more than two years of teaching experience, chosen purposively for their familiarity with CLT. The research was carried out in SMA Yadika and SMA Al-Azhar Cirebon. Ethical considerations were observed by obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and restricting the use of data to academic purposes only.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of:

1. **Data reduction** transcribing interviews, coding responses, and categorizing information into themes such as teachers' beliefs, practices, and challenges.
2. **Data display** organizing information in tables and thematic summaries to reveal patterns and contrasts.
3. **Conclusion drawing and verification** synthesizing findings, triangulating interviews and documents, and validating interpretations through member checking.

In sum, this study applied a qualitative descriptive method using semi-structured interviews and document analysis to investigate teachers' perspectives on CLT. Purposive sampling of teachers from two schools enabled contextual variation, while data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's model to ensure systematic interpretation. The combination of methods and verification techniques enhanced the credibility of findings, providing a robust understanding of how Indonesian teachers perceive and implement CLT in EFL classrooms.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined the perspectives of Indonesian English teachers on the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in EFL classrooms. Data obtained from interviews and document analysis revealed a complex interplay between teachers' conceptual understanding, classroom practices, structural challenges, and adaptation strategies. The findings are presented thematically, followed by a discussion that situates them in the broader theoretical and empirical context. As by Pan (2023) highlighted, sounds An EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom is a learning setting in which English is taught to students who do not speak English as their first language.

Teachers' Perceptions of CLT

The data show that teachers generally hold a strong conceptual understanding of CLT. They emphasize that the goal of English learning should be communication rather than mere mastery of linguistic forms. As highlighted by one teacher, success in CLT is reflected in students' willingness and confidence to speak, not just grammatical accuracy. This aligns with Hymes' concept of communicative competence and Canale and Swain's model, which stresses linguistic, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. Teachers recognized that grammar remains important, yet they prioritized its integration into meaningful communication rather than as an isolated subject. A study in Indonesia discovered that EFL teachers internalize CLT concepts through personal narratives, which influences how they reflectively develop materials and implement teaching approaches (Listyani, 2023)

Despite this awareness, differences emerged among teachers. Some were able to integrate CLT principles more consistently, using activities such as role-plays, games, and discussions. Others, however, admitted that their practices were constrained by curriculum demands, student readiness, and institutional limitations. These varied perceptions demonstrate that while CLT is valued, its application is shaped by contextual realities rather than applied uniformly.

Influence on Instructional Strategies

Teachers' perceptions directly influenced their teaching strategies. Those with positive views of CLT tended to design more communicative activities, including group work, conversation simulations, and interactive games. Document analysis confirmed this orientation: lesson plans included tasks such as "Asking and Giving Opinions," which integrated videos, Padlet-based collaborative tasks, and role-plays. These activities created opportunities for authentic interaction, negotiation of meaning, and the use of digital tools to contextualize language input. The ultimate goal is to create an interactive classroom environment where students are actively involved in their learning journey and take responsibility for their achievements, both academically and in the context of everyday communication (Izet Begovic Yahya & Prasetyono, 2024).

However, teachers also highlighted the need to adapt CLT to the Indonesian context. Time constraints, large class sizes, and heterogeneous student abilities required them to blend communicative activities with traditional methods, such as grammar exercises and vocabulary drills. This hybrid model reflects pragmatic professionalism: teachers strive to balance

communicative goals with systemic expectations, particularly the exam-oriented curriculum that prioritizes grammar and reading comprehension.

Structural and Cultural Challenges

Teachers identified multiple challenges that hindered full implementation of CLT. First, curriculum and assessment systems remain heavily focused on structural knowledge rather than communicative performance. National exams test grammar, reading, and vocabulary, pressuring teachers to devote substantial time to form-focused instruction. Second, large class sizes and limited resources make it difficult to manage communicative activities, which often require smaller groups and more materials. Third, student-related issues such as low motivation, anxiety, and uneven proficiency levels were cited as barriers. Teachers noted that some students lacked confidence to participate in communicative tasks, preferring passive listening. Finally, institutional limitations such as insufficient training, limited exposure to authentic materials, and lack of supportive classroom facilities further constrained practice. . Furthermore, classroom management issues such as pupils' limited vocabulary, a lack of consistent language exposure, and psychological barriers (e.g., nervousness, poor motivation) are frequently a challenge (Hidayat et al., 2024).

Cultural norms also played a role. Traditional teacher-centered instruction remains dominant in many Indonesian classrooms, and students are accustomed to viewing the teacher as the primary knowledge source. This expectation often clashes with the student-centered orientation of CLT, where learners are expected to collaborate, negotiate meaning, and construct knowledge actively. Understanding and integrating cultural contexts is crucial in EFL classrooms. Teachers must be aware of their students' cultural backgrounds and use culturally relevant materials to make learning more relatable and engaging. Finally, responsive culture is increasingly being used to integrate cultural awareness into EFL instruction, which helps students acquire cross-cultural literacy competencies and stimulates critical debate about diversity (Kaslati Siregar, 2023).

Adaptation Strategies

In response to these challenges, teachers employed various adaptive strategies. They combined CLT with traditional grammar-based approaches, ensuring that students were prepared for exams while still gaining communicative exposure. For instance, role-play and group discussion were often followed by grammar reviews, blending communicative input with structural reinforcement. Teachers also designed contextualized activities, selecting topics relevant

to students' daily lives, such as school, hobbies, and local issues, to maintain engagement. The use of digital platforms (e.g., Padlet, Google Drive, YouTube) allowed teachers to provide authentic materials and facilitate collaborative learning beyond the classroom. Additionally, teachers emphasized creating a supportive and error-tolerant classroom atmosphere to reduce students' anxiety and encourage experimentation with language. These strategies reflect a localized form of CLT, adapted to suit cultural expectations, curriculum demands, and institutional constraints.

Impact on Students

Teachers reported that even partial implementation of CLT positively influenced students' confidence and participation. Students engaged more actively in role-plays, games, and discussions, showing improvement in fluency and willingness to speak. Group-based activities fostered collaboration and negotiation of meaning, essential aspects of communicative competence. However, the lack of consistent exposure to communicative tasks limited long-term development. Teachers acknowledged that unless institutional barriers are addressed, student gains may remain superficial and uneven across classes.

Discussion

The findings illustrate the complex negotiation between pedagogical ideals and classroom realities. Teachers demonstrated theoretical alignment with CLT, consistent with international literature. However, implementation gaps persist due to structural, cultural, and institutional constraints. The linguistic environment, which frequently lacks real-world exposure to the target language, promotes the use of authentic resources and simulated communicative scenarios in the classroom (Noviyanti, 2024).

The adaptation strategies observed reflect the notion of contextual pragmatism in language teaching. Teachers act as mediators between CLT principles and the demands of their specific environments, aligning with Borg's framework on teacher cognition. This pragmatic negotiation underscores that effective CLT in EFL contexts does not mean wholesale adoption of Western models, but thoughtful localization that respects cultural and institutional realities.

Another important finding is the central role of teacher agency. Teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and willingness to innovate shaped how CLT principles were enacted. Those who viewed communication as central to learning were more creative in designing tasks and leveraging digital tools, despite systemic limitations. This highlights the importance of teacher professional

development not just in knowledge transfer, but in empowering teachers to exercise agency in their classrooms.

Finally, the results stress the need for systemic alignment. Without supportive policies, adequate training, and revised assessment systems, teachers will continue to face tension between communicative goals and exam-focused realities. As long as evaluations privilege grammar over communication, CLT will remain only partially implemented. Addressing this misalignment is essential for fostering communicative competence among Indonesian learners.

Implications

The study provides several implications for policy and practice. First, teacher training should focus on practical, context-sensitive applications of CLT, equipping teachers to design communicative tasks within existing constraints. Second, curriculum and assessment reforms are needed to better align national exams with communicative goals. Third, institutional support such as access to authentic materials, classroom resources, and digital infrastructure can enhance implementation. Finally, ongoing research is needed to explore how localized adaptations of CLT evolve across diverse Indonesian contexts, providing further evidence for sustainable policy reform.

Main Findings Summary

This study reveals that Indonesian English teachers possess a strong conceptual understanding of CLT as an approach emphasizing meaningful communication over mere linguistic form mastery, aligning with Hymes' and Canale-Swain's communicative competence concepts. However, EFL classroom implementation is often hybrid due to structural barriers like large class sizes, exam-oriented curricula (focusing on grammar and reading), limited resources, and student factors such as low motivation, speaking anxiety, and passive learning habits influenced by teacher-centered cultural norms. Teachers adopt adaptation strategies like blending communicative activities (role-plays, group discussions, digital tools like Padlet) with traditional grammar exercises, locally relevant topics, and error-tolerant classroom environments. Positive impacts include improved student confidence and participation, though limited by inconsistent application. These findings underscore the need for contextual teacher training, curriculum-assessment reforms, and institutional support to bridge CLT theory and local practice.

Main Findings Table

Finding Theme	Key Description	Data Examples	Implications
Teachers' Perceptions of CLT	Strong understanding: Focus on authentic communication, not isolated grammar; success measured by students' speaking confidence.	"CLT success is students' confidence in speaking" (teacher interview).	Support reflective material development via personal narratives (Listyani, 2023).
Influence of Teaching Strategies	Communicative activities (role-plays, games, discussions) blended hybrid with grammar drills; use digital tools.	Lesson plan: "Asking Opinions" with video & Padlet.	Create interactive classrooms for student learning responsibility (Yahya & Prasetyono, 2024).
Structural & Cultural Barriers	Large classes, grammar-focused national exams, low student motivation, teacher-centered norms.	Limited prep time, facilities, student anxiety (Hidayat et al., 2024).	Integrate cultural awareness for cross-cultural literacy (Siregar, 2023).
Adaptation Strategies	Blend CLT with traditional methods; local topics; error tolerance; digital platforms.	Role-play followed by grammar review; YouTube for authentic input.	Contextual pragmatism enhances teacher agency (Borg's framework).
Impact on Students	Improved fluency, collaboration, & confidence; limited by inconsistent exposure.	Students more active in games & group work.	Requires consistent exposure & institutional support for long-term competence.

CONCLUSION

This study looked at Indonesian English teachers' opinions on implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in EFL classrooms, with an emphasis on their conceptual knowledge, classroom practices, and problems. The findings offer a comprehensive

description of how CLT is read and modified in Indonesian contexts, emphasizing both its potential and limitations. The study found that most teachers had a clear theoretical understanding of CLT as an approach that stresses meaningful communication above rote memorization or an overemphasis on grammatical precision. Teachers repeatedly said that the major purpose of CLT is to improve students' capacity to use English in authentic communication scenarios. This shift in educational philosophy signifies a departure from traditional teacher-centered instruction in favor of more interactive, learner-centered approaches. However, while teachers usually agree with CLT principles conceptually, their classroom practices frequently reflect a hybrid model in which communicative activities are combined with traditional, grammar-focused methods.

One of the most persistent findings is the discrepancy between teachers' views and actual practice. Structural and systemic constraints severely limit the complete adoption of CLT. These include high class numbers, limited teaching time, insufficient resources, and the demands of a curriculum and grading system that continue to prioritize grammatical knowledge and standardized testing over communicative skills. As a result, while teachers may plan lessons that include communicative aspects like pair work, role play, and group discussion, their implementation is often limited and inconsistent. This demonstrates that teachers are not rejecting CLT, but rather debating its ideas within the context of their classrooms.

Teacher adaptability emerged as a major theme. Educators actively alter CLT by including contextualized tactics like task-based learning, group projects, scaffolding, and digital media. Teachers also personalize communication assignments by using culturally relevant subjects to boost student enthusiasm and lessen fear. This adaptable strategy exhibits instructors' autonomy and professional judgment in reconciling ideal instruction with contextual restrictions. The capacity to incorporate CLT flexibly while retaining its communicative essence emphasizes the value of instructional hybridity in EFL environments such as Indonesia.

Nonetheless, the challenges remain significant. Teachers cited difficulty in encouraging student participation due to limited English proficiency, a lack of confidence, and passive learning habits. Many students were unfamiliar with interactive tasks and favored teacher-centered learning, complicating the adoption of CLT. Furthermore, the broader cultural and institutional environment frequently encouraged conservative views, trapping teachers between their professional knowledge of CLT and the systemic demands of exam-oriented education. These

findings support previous research that has shown a continuous gap between CLT theory and practice in underdeveloped nations where structural and cultural constraints remain substantial.

Despite these challenges, the study discovered evidence of a favorable impact when CLT was used. Teachers saw increasing student confidence, eagerness to contribute, and a gradual transition from passive to communicative participation. These findings support the fundamental assumption of CLT that meaningful contact promotes not just linguistic competence but also learner motivation and confidence. However, maintaining such transformation necessitates regular application, institutional support, and professional reinforcement.

The findings have important implications for teacher development and education policy. First, ongoing professional development is required to improve teachers' practical grasp of CLT and provide them with techniques for overcoming classroom difficulties. Workshops, mentoring, and context-relevant teaching tools are required to help teachers gain confidence and competence in adopting CLT holistically. Second, curriculum and evaluation standards must adapt to balance communicative competency with linguistic precision. Without institutional structural change, instructors will be unable to fully adopt CLT. Third, building a supportive learning culture that supports student participation and risk-taking in communication is crucial for realizing the full potential of CLT.

In conclusion, this study shows that while Indonesian EFL teachers value CLT and understand its communication goals, they work in a complicated setting where structural, cultural, and institutional obstacles prevent complete implementation. Teachers' adaptive methods demonstrate resilience and ingenuity, but systemic impediments such as curriculum rigidity, resource shortages, and exam-based evaluation remain important challenges. The study emphasizes the role of contextual adaptability, ongoing professional growth, and supportive policy frameworks in closing the gap between CLT theory and practice. By emphasizing teachers' voices and classroom realities, this study contributes to a better understanding of communicative pedagogy in EFL contexts and provides useful insights for promoting English language instruction in Indonesia.

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