

## Problems in Communicative English Language Teaching/Speaking and Listening Skills by Iraqi Teachers

Assist Lect. Ahmed Jiad Zidan    Assist Lect. Yassir Shaeer Hameed

General Directorate of Anbar Education

Ministry of Education

**Keywords:** communicative approach, educational system, implementation

### Summary:

The current study focused on the problems encountered by Iraqi teachers when teaching listening and speaking using the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. The implementation of CLT has been widely debated by researchers in the field of methodology due to the difficulties encountered in applying it not only in Iraq, but also in other parts of the world where English is taught as a foreign language. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the problems faced by Iraqi teachers when implementing this approach. The study used a mixed-method design based on quantifying qualitative to gather and analyze the data through a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. Part (A) is concerned with personal information, part (B) assesses the extent to which Iraqi teachers are appropriate in using CLT, and part (C) investigates the source of problems that Iraqi teachers face when adopting CLT, namely difficulties resulting from (a) teachers, (b) students, (c) educational system, and (d) CLT itself. The research questions of this study are: (1) what are the major problems behind the weakness of teaching listening and speaking skills by Iraqi teachers? (2) To what extent are Iraqi teachers appropriate in implementing CLT? The results of this study showed that the participants agree with 'Yes' respondents to all problems despite their interesting in CLT as an approach in their teaching in the classroom Furthermore, the study

concluded that there is a significant gap between the level of theoretical aspects of CLT and its practical implementation by Iraqi teachers.

## 1- Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The need to communicate in English has led to a demand for teaching skills. English teachers are crucial in teaching the language to students of all levels. To teach a language effectively, teachers must use a particular method. There are five approaches for teaching English, including the Grammar Translation Method, Audio Lingual Method, Direct Method, Situational Language Teaching, and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). CLT is among the newest approach which for English has been applied in Iraq after 2003s with the use of new syllabus language that promote communicative environment and enjoyable atmosphere for both students and teachers. Moreover, its aim is to improve the abilities of the students' skills in order to be more productive and efficient by the end of the school year. (Mitchell, 1988) states that the aim of CLT is to learn a language through communication in order to achieve communicative competence. (littledwood, 2013:1) states that communicative approach is "an umbrella term for approaches that aim to develop communicative competence through personally meaningful learning experiences".

Howatt (1984) also states that the communicative competence is the main goal of CLT since it is regarded the main goal of teaching language in order to develop the four skills (reading , writing , listening and speaking) via interdependence of language communication . (Larsen-Freeman, 2008) confirms that the primary goal of this approach is to reinforce the four language skills (writing, reading, listening and speaking) and to shift classroom from teacher-centered to student-centered. This means that the teacher's role has been transformed from being a conveyor of

information to a facilitator in order to guide the communication and the interaction inside classroom. Therefore, it can be noted that the educators of second and foreign languages adopt this approach as new style to develop their ways of teaching.

## 1.2 Problem of the Study

Although the current approach of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is considered a new style of teaching and is fundamentally correct, it faces some serious problems that require attention. These problems have been identified by researchers. The primary objective of CLT is to develop strong oral and verbal communication skills, but it should not neglect the essential reading and writing skills required for effective communication. Therefore, listening and speaking skills are vital in this approach. Richard and Renandya (2002, 205) state that "listening plays an extremely important role in the development of speaking abilities," meaning that listening supports speaking and precedes it. Furthermore, listening and speaking skills are crucial life skills that are necessary for developing reading and writing skills. Although teaching materials for listening and speaking are provided to learners, the teaching of these skills is often a neglected area in secondary schools due to the nature of testing. Examinations do not encourage learners and teachers to focus on such skills, and instead lead them to prioritize other skills to pass and obtain good grades.

Additionally, interaction inside the classroom is a critical feature of CLT. Brown (2007:165) states that interaction in communicative language teaching is the heart of communication. Through interaction, students can use the language they have learned and negotiate meaning among themselves. However, Iraqi teachers face challenges in achieving this goal due to the limited use of English language inside the classroom, fewer opportunities for pair-work or group-work, and large class sizes. These challenges may result from teachers' lack of training in CLT or students' insufficient proficiency in spoken English, or may be a result of shortcomings in the

communicative approach itself. Therefore, this study takes into account all the issues faced by Iraqi teachers in implementing such an approach. The primary purpose of the study is to explore the challenges that hinder the effective implementation of CLT by Iraqi teachers.

### 1.3 Research Questions

This study investigates the following research questions:

1. What are the major problems behind the weakness of teaching listening and speaking skills by Iraqi teachers?
2. To what extent the Iraqi teachers are appropriate with implementing of CLT?

### 1.4 Objectives of the study

The study hypothesized the following:

1. There are major problems behind the lack of implementing of CLT by Iraqi Teachers.
2. There are levels of appropriateness of Iraqi teachers in implementing CLT.

### 1.5. Value of the Study

The current study is important because it sheds light on the challenges faced by Iraqi teachers while teaching listening and speaking skills to their students. By identifying the major problems, the study helps to bridge the gap between the communicative approach and implementing it in language teaching, which allows the development of targeted interventions to improve the quality of English language education in Iraq. Furthermore, the study will be as a guideline for teachers who are interested in CLT in general and in listening and speaking skills in particular.

### 1.6 Procedures of the Study

The procedures of the current study are as follows:

1. Randomly selecting a group of teachers who teach in intermediate, preparatory, or secondary schools to be a representative sample.

2. Preparing an elicitation tool, including open-ended questions (rating scales,) and closed-ended questions.
3. Calculating the numerical value associated with each issue to identify the main problems.
4. Discussing the findings of the analysis.
5. Drawing conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of this research.

## 2- Theoretical Background

### 2.1. History of Communicative Language Teaching Approach

The origins of Communicative approach began in Britain in 1960s as a reaction to structural method called Situational Language Teaching. The development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) resulted from the dissatisfaction of educators and linguists with the previous methods like audio-lingual and grammar translation methods by which students will not learn an effective language that could help them to communicate with one another (Canale and Swain, 1980). According to Richard (2002: 6) language teaching over the past half century can be categorized into three distinct periods.

Period 1: Traditional approaches (up to the late 1960s)

Period 2: Characterized as "classic communicative language teaching" (1970s to 1990s)

Period 3: Identified as "current communicative language teaching" (late 1990s to the present)

Initially, let's consider the shift from traditional approaches to what is called the first stage of communicative approach. In this period, CLT began in Britain in 1960s with the emergence of situational language teaching, which focused on the teaching of grammar in context. CLT began as a reaction to structural method called Situational Language Teaching. In the mid-1960, this approach was emerged as a response of Chomsky's criticism of structural theories and partly influenced by the

ideas of British functional linguists like J.R. Firth and Michael Halliday, American sociolinguists like Dell Hymes, John Gumperz and William Labov , as well as the work of the philosophy like Austin and Searle on speech acts(Richards & Rodgers,2014). In this stage, language was taught through a set of functional situational expressions, which were taught in a prescribed order. The form of the language was concerned with instead of its communicative use (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In the 1970s, the second period of CLT began with the communicative competence development. This step was affected by the work of Hymes who suggested that language is not only a system of rules but also a means of social interaction. Communicative competence concentrated on the development of learners' ability to use the language in a variety of social contexts. This period emphasized the importance of learner's ability in communicating effectively rather than on the grammatical accuracy (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

In the 1980s, Communicative Language Teaching approach started with the emerging of task-based language teaching; influenced by Long's suggestion that learners have the ability to acquire the language through communication-based tasks. Thus, CLT approach emphasizes on using authentic materials and real-life situations in order to enhance learners' communicative competence (Willis & Willis, 2007). In the 1990s, the focus-on-form approach indicated the third era of CLT which was influenced by Doughty and Williams' proposal. Their proposal emphasized on learners' need to focus on the form of language to improve grammatical accuracy. Furthermore, CLT prioritized teaching grammar in context, with a great focus on meaning than form. Feedback-correction was also emphasized for developing grammatical accuracy (Long & Doughty, 2009). In the period between 2000 and 2010, CLT was developed to meet the demands of digital technology and globalization. That event led to a great focus on intercultural communication, technology and multilingualism to enhance language learning.

Moreover, CLT achieved more aligned with other educational approaches, such as experiential-learning and learner-centered (Byram & Hu, 2013). Nowadays, CLT became one of the dominant approaches in language teaching around the world, with a wide range of adaptations and variations in different contexts. In several ways, Communicative Language Teaching approach represents a paradigm shift in language teaching from concentration on form into concentration on function, from memorization of grammatical rules into communication naturally, and from teacher-centered instruction to learner-centered interaction.

Though the exact content and form of CLT approach vary depending on the specific educational and cultural context, the basic principles of communicative competence, tasks, authentic materials and learner-centered instruction remain the target of the approach. It was indicated that Communicative Language Teaching has gone through several stages and periods since its emergence in the 1960s. These stages have been influenced by different theories and approaches, all aimed at developing learners' communicative competence. From situational language teaching to the focus-on-form approach, CLT has evolved over the years, emphasizing the importance of developing learners' communicative ability over grammatical accuracy.

## 2.2 Definitions and Principles of Communicative Language Teaching Approach

There is no appropriate way to define CLT since its definition has considerable debates. According to Richard and Rodger (2011: 66), "there is no single text or authority on it, nor any single model that is universally accepted as authoritative." However, both British and American proponents assert that CLT is an approach, not a method, since its aim is to develop communicative competence, which is the main goal of language teaching, and to develop procedures for the four language skills. CLT is regarded as an umbrella term that encompasses a range of language teaching approaches that prioritize communication as the primary goal. Richard and Rodgers

(2011) mention that the main goal of CLT is to enable learners to use the language in a communicative way that reflects real-life situations. In this approach, learners are encouraged to communicate by engaging in CLT techniques such as role-play, problem-solving tasks, and debates. This means that this approach emphasizes communication over isolated language structures and shifts the focus from language as a set of rules to language as a tool of communication. (BANGSAWAN, 2020: 15) presents four interconnected properties in order to define Communicative Language Teaching as the following:

1. Communicative competence is given more weight in the classroom rather than linguistic competence.
2. Activities are designed for functional, authentic and pragmatic use of language to convey the meaningful purpose.
3. Fluency is more important than accuracy in order to make the learners engaged with a meaningful communication since fluency is communication not perfection.
4. In a communicative classroom setting, students are required to use the language receptively and productively within familiar context.

Kumaravadivelu (2006) indicates that "it should be kept in mind that Communicative Language Teaching monolithic entity" this means that there are different interpretations about the definitions, principles and procedures of the CLT. (Nunan, 2003) confirms CLT has evolved over time and is not a monolithic entity, as there are various versions of the approach. One version of CLT emphasizes the use of authentic materials and tasks to promote communication (Celce-Murcia, 2001), while another version places greater emphasis on the use of pair and group work (Willis & Willis, 2007). Despite these differences, (Savignon, 1997:6) presents five goals which represent the objectives of CUT, which are known as 5 Cs:

1. The communicative goal: This area "addresses learners' ability to use the second language to communicate thoughts, feelings, and opinions in a variety of settings".



2. The cultures goal: This area “addresses learner understanding of how the products and practices of a culture shape its perspectives, which in turn are reflected in the language”.
3. The connections goal: This area “addresses learner using of the language to learn new content and information beyond the classroom”.
4. The comparisons goal: This area are designed “to foster learner insight and understanding of the nature of language and culture through a comparison of the culture of the target language with the languages and cultures already familiar with them”.
5. The communities’ goal: This area “describes learners’ lifelong use of the language, in communities and context both and within the school setting itself”.

Accordingly, the five Cs collectively emphasize the practical application of language skills by learners and represent a holistic or a comprehensive communicative approach to language learning.

Nunan(1991,120-3) presents five main principles of CLT:

1. CLT emphasizes the communication through interaction.
2. CLT emphasizes the using authentic material in learning situation.
3. CLT gives opportunities for learner to focus not only on language but also on the management of process.
4. CLT emphasizes on an enhancement of the personal experiences of learner.
5. CLT attempts to link the language learning inside classroom with language and activities outside classroom.

Generally speaking, the central principle of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is that language learning should focus on developing communicative competence, which means that learners should acquire the ability to use language effectively in real-life situations. The common principles of CLT include creating authentic and meaningful communication opportunities, focusing on the

development of all language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), providing opportunities for learners to use the language creatively and interactively, and promoting learner autonomy and responsibility.

### 2.3. Techniques of CLT Approach

Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT) makes use of a variety of techniques to promote the development of learners' communicative competence (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Some of the key techniques include:

1. Pair work and group work: Communicative approach encourages learners to work together in pairs or small groups to complete communicative tasks and activities (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).
2. Role-plays and simulations: This approach often incorporates role-plays and simulations that allow learners to practice language in realistic situations (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).
4. Information-gap activities: These are tasks that require learners to communicate in order to complete a task or solve a problem, such as filling in a chart or completing a puzzle (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).
5. Games and puzzles: This approach makes use of games and puzzles to provide learners with opportunities to use language creatively and interactively (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).
6. Authentic materials: Communicative approach makes use of authentic materials, such as newspapers, magazines, and videos that reflect real-life language use and provide learners with exposure to natural language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).
7. Task-based learning: Communicative approach focuses on the completion of communicative tasks as the primary goal of language learning, with language development occurring as a natural byproduct of task completion (Willis & Willis, 2007).

## 2.4 The Teacher's Role in Communicative Language Teaching Approach

The role of the teacher is very important in applying CLT. Teachers who teach language have to develop their interest in applying communicative approach and using various techniques that fit with different strategies and learning styles of students. According to Larsen-Freeman (1986), Richard and Rodgers (1986), and others who analyzed CLT in relation to the role of the teacher in implementing the communicative approach, the current approach (CLT) is given priority for the language teacher to shift the emphasis from the traditional method to the modern method. Various scholars, such as Lopez (1984) and Nunan (1989), suggest that learners have different needs, interests, and cognitive styles.

Therefore, teachers have to use many techniques and roles in applying CLT. Thus, teachers of CLT may adopt a variety of roles when applying it. They have the roles as facilitators, managers, motivators, planners, and group organizerd. Each role has its own objectives and characteristics that contribute to the communicative approach success.

1. Teacher's role as a manager, the teacher has the responsibility for organizing and maintaining a productive classroom environment. This involves setting clear expectations and guidelines for managing resources, behaviors, materials, and monitoring student progress. Via initiating a supportive and structured environments, the teacher can facilitate effective learning and communication among students (Johnson, 2018).
2. Teacher's role as a facilitator, the teacher supports and guides students' interaction and communication. This includes creating excellent opportunities for students to practise and improve their language skills via meaningful activities, tasks and discussions. In addition to, teachers also provide feedback and correction to help students improve and develop their language abilities. By encouraging students

to practise real communication, the teacher helps them become more confident and proficient in using language (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

3. Teacher's role as a planner, the teacher designs and implements the lesson plan and activities that are involved in the communicative approach. This composed of selecting materials and resources that are relevant and engaging. It also includes designing tasks and activities that lead to achieve meaningful communication and interaction. Via careful planning and structuring lessons, the teacher is able to create a challenging and stimulating learning environment that enable students to use the language in authentic situations (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

4. Teacher's role as an adviser, the teacher may provide a guidance and support to students. This includes identifying students' strengths and weaknesses, providing personalized-feedback and assistance to help them develop their language skills. The teacher also supplies students with advice and support to help them set goals and develop strategies to master the language. Acting as an adviser, the teacher can help students develop their language abilities and achieve their full potential (Harmer, 2015).

5. Teacher's role as a group designer, the teacher has the responsibility for creating effective groups of learning and promoting cooperative learning. This includes choosing and grouping students in accordance to their language abilities and needs, as well as designing tasks and activities that promote collaborative learning and communication. Via designing appropriate learning groups, the teacher can initiate a supportive and engaging learning environments that lead to effective communication and language development (Brown, 2007).

To sum up, teachers who adopt the communicative approach are required to have native or close-to-native language competence and a good knowledge of the society and culture in which spoken English is used. Additionally, these teachers must be able to adopt multiple roles that contribute to the success of the approach.

## 2.5 The Learner's Role in Communicative Language Teaching Approach

Communicative Language Teaching places a strong emphasis on communication processes and learners' participation in language learning. According to Nunan (2003), learners are not passive recipients of language input but active agents who engage in communication and negotiate meaning with others.

In the communicative approach, learners play several key roles. Breen and Candlin (cited in Richard and Rodgers, 2001: 77) describe the learner's role in communicative language teaching as "a negotiator between themselves, the learning process, and the object of learning that emerges from interaction with their role as joint negotiator within the group and the classroom procedures and activities that the group undertakes." This means that communicative language teaching emphasizes the active role of learners in negotiating meaning between themselves, the learning process, and the object of learning by working collaboratively in groups and engaging in communicative activities such as pair or group work, role-play, and simulations. These activities help learners develop their negotiation skills and achieve their language learning goals. Larsen Freeman and Anderson (2011:162) confirm that learners act as communicators who negotiate meaning to make themselves clearly understood, even if they have limited knowledge of the language they are trying to communicate in. This means that the teacher-centered role plays a less dominant role in communicative language teaching.

To sum up, learners play an active and central role in communicative language teaching by using language in real-life contexts, taking responsibility for their own learning, and collaborating with others to develop their communication competence.

## 2.6. The Two Versions of Communicative Language Teaching Approach

The Communicative Language Teaching approach has brought a significant change in the process of language learning, but there are variations of the approach

known as the "weak" and "strong" versions. Howatt (1984) distinguished between those two versions of CLT approach. The weak version concentrates on integrating language activities into language teaching program to give learners opportunities to use the language for communicative purposes. It has also become more common in recent years. On contrary, the strong version focuses on the idea that language is acquired via communication, and aims to stimulate the language system development rather than activating the existing knowledge of the language. Furthermore, the former "weak" version is described as "more or less standard practice," whereas the latter "strong" version makes stronger claims about the importance of communication in language acquisition process.

Accordingly, the distinction above highlights the ongoing debate over the suitable balance between communication and accuracy in language teaching. Weak CLT has an emphasis on communication that it allows learners to use the language meaningfully in social contexts. This approach goes hand in hand with the communicative approach's goal of developing communicative competence. (Canale & Swain, 1980)

However, some critics argue that weak CLT approach leads to learners' overreliance on communicative strategies at the expense of linguistic accuracy (Hinkel, 2006). In contrast, strong CLT aims to balance both communicative and linguistic competence, giving learners opportunities to use the language in authentic communication, receiving feedback and instruction on vocabulary, grammar, and other language structure aspects (Bachman & Palmer, 2010).

To end with, Howatt's recognition between weak and strong versions of CLT approach emphasizes the complexity of teaching and learning a language. Though communication and accuracy are both important, striking the right balance between them based on learners' goals, needs, and contexts. Thus, effective language teaching demands a nuanced understanding of the way that develop both

communicative and linguistic competence It also provides learners with opportunities to use language in meaningful and authentic contexts.

### 3- Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study uses a mixed-method design based on quantifying qualitative data. Creswell (2012: 535) defines this type of method as "a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study or a series of studies to understand a research problem." Accordingly, the research questions and data collection of this study lead to the emergence of two strands, quantitative and qualitative methods, in a single study. The study is qualitative according to the first research question, which aims to identify the major problems faced by Iraqi teachers in applying CLT. Furthermore, the study will gather data using a close-ended questionnaire, which yields numerical data to evaluate and assess the frequency of issues.

However, the study is qualitative according to the second research question, which aims to identify the degree of appropriateness of the communicative approach by Iraqi teachers, and according to the two open-ended questions which show the extent of satisfaction with this approach and the number of problems that Iraqi teachers have in applying this approach. Thus, the mixed method is more acceptable than a pure quantitative or qualitative method in order to answer the research questions and understand the problems better.

#### 3.2 Participants of the Study

The formal questionnaire survey was conducted with 50 Iraqi teachers who were teaching in schools at the intermediate, preparatory, and secondary. There were 34 male and 16 female participants who took part in the study, and their ages ranged from 25 to 53 years old. They had different levels of experience in teaching English, with some having taught for one year, while others had been teaching for up

to 28 years. On average, their teaching experience was over two years. At the time of the study, 20 participants were teaching in intermediate schools, 18 were teaching in preparatory schools, and 12 had taught at secondary schools. Additionally, 33 of the participants were teaching in urban schools, while 17 were teaching in rural settings.

### 3.3 Data Collection Procedures

The data for this study was collected through a questionnaire consisting of three parts. Part (A) concerns personal subjective details such as sex, age and their experience in teaching English. Part (B) consists of two questions with rating scale responses, which are related to the participants' views on communicative language teaching. Part (C) consists of 15 items designed to represent the problems of the study, which are divided into four groups based on their causes: problems caused by teachers, students, educational system, and communicative language teaching itself. All statements in Part (C) of the questionnaire were designed to be simple and clear to avoid any misunderstanding by the participants. The participants were instructed to express their viewpoints on each item by selecting either "Yes" or "No."

A questionnaire which is used to collect data from participants about their attitudes towards this topic is included in Appendix (A) along with other materials related to the research design.

### 3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis procedures are not a simple description but they are follow a process by which the researcher can bring explanation to the data Powney & Watts (2018).The study was a mixed-method design that involved quantifying qualitative data. According to Jones (2018), quantifying qualitative data is a process of transforming non-numerical qualitative data into numerical quantitative data by using different techniques, such as coding, categorizing, and rating, to make the analysis more objective.



Accordingly, the researcher of this study will follow the following data analysis procedures: firstly, calculating the number of each issue and grouping the issues into four main groups to summarize the data and make it easier to analyze; secondly, rating the major issues according to numerical value of each group; and finally, discussing the main problems in each category.

#### 4- Results and Analysis

This section presents the results of a survey that includes both open-ended and close-ended questions. In this sense, the open-ended type of questionnaire shows that the Iraqi teachers who participated were interested in the methods they used in their teaching. Thirty-eight out of the 50 participants reported that they were interested in CLT. However, about 12 reported that they were concerned with the grammar-translation method, the direct method, or a combination of both (classical and modern) in their teaching. While the close-ended type of questionnaire shows the most common problems encountered by Iraqi teachers in utilizing CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) are classified into four categories.

##### 4.1 Problems Resulting from Teachers

N.	Difficulties	Yes	No
1	Teachers' deficiency in appropriate knowledge of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	36	14
2	Teachers' deficiency in spoken English	34	16
3	Deficiency in communicative competence such as strategic and sociolinguistic competence	30	20
4	Lack of preparedness resulting from the large number of sessions which is taken by teachers during a day	40	10
5	Inadequate time to develop materials for communication classes and for syllabus coverage	27	23
	<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>83</b>

The table shows the participants who provided "Yes" responses and those who replied with "No", for experiencing problems, the most common issue was {N. 4}, with 40 respondents indicating this as a problem. Though, the number of participants who disagreed upon this constraint is 10 "No". The next most frequently reported problem was {N. 1}, with 36 respondents indicating this as an issue and 14

respondents of disagreement with "No". Following this, 34 respondents of "Yes" and 16 responses of "No" reported problem {N. 2}. The fourth most common issue {N. 3}, with 30 respondents reporting this as a problem whereas, 20 respondents of disagreement declaring it as no problem. Finally, the problem {N. 5} was reported as a constraint by 27 respondents "Yes".

{N. 1} the participants in this study agreed that there is a difficulty, indicating a potential gap in language teaching methodology. If teachers lack appropriate knowledge in CLT, they may struggle to effectively implement this approach in the classroom. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to receive proper training and ongoing professional development in CLT to enhance their teaching skills and improve their students' language learning outcomes.

{N. 2} the participants agreed that they have a deficiency in their spoken English when it comes to applying CLT. As a result, it can be said that while Iraqi teachers may have a high level of proficiency in reading, writing, and English grammar, their abilities in listening and speaking may not be adequate for effectively implementing CLT in their classrooms.

{N. 3} participants who agreed to this difficulty might feel that this constraint would limit their ability to fully utilize the communicative approach in their classes. This is because strategic and sociolinguistic competence are crucial components of communicative language teaching, which emphasizes the practical use of language in real-life situations, rather than just traditional grammar rules.

{N. 4} most of the participants agreed about this challenge, which means that teachers are stressed from having large number of sessions during the day. This has led to a lack of preparedness for listening and speaking lessons. Additionally, it emphasizes the need to prioritize the well-being of teachers, as stress can have a negative impact on their overall performance and job satisfaction.

{N. 5} some of the participants agreed that the lack of time is a big challenge. 40-minute lessons are regarded as too short to make the listening and speaking skills comprehensive for the students. Additionally, this limited time makes the teachers ignore practical lessons such as listening and speaking, and focus more on writing and English grammar.

#### 4.2 Problems Resulting from Students

N.	Difficulties	Yes	No
1	Students' low English proficiency	47	3
2	Absence of motivation among students to participate for communication	24	26
3	Students' resistance to class participation	41	9
	Total	112	38

The table provides a breakdown of the number of individuals who agreed with "Yes" for three different problems caused by students in a given context. The problems are listed depending on frequency, with the most common problem listed first and the least common listed last. The first {N. 1} problem received the highest number of "Yes" responses with 47, in contrast, this problem perceived 3 respondents of disagreement "No". The second one graded 41 "Yes" responses, which is the {N. 3}, and received 9 disagreements "No". The third one, with 24 "Yes" responses and 26 "No" responses, is {N. 2}.

{N. 1} most of the participants considered the first problem i.e. "Students' low English proficiency" a very big challenge that prevents them from applying CLT approach effectively. Thus, it is essential to take into consideration the students' language proficiency level when implementing CLT since it is required that students should actively use and practise the language in meaningful contexts. However, a low level of students' English proficiency can hinder their ability to participate in communicative activities. It requires teachers to adapt their CLT approach to meet their students' needs.

{N. 2} participants of the study agreed upon the idea that students lack motivation to practise communication via English language effectively in their

classes. This problem was identified as a significant challenge in teaching. This result highlights the importance of creating an environment that initiate active engagement and participation among students. To address this issue, educators are innneed to adopt innovative teaching strategies that promote student-centered learning, such as interactive activities, group discussions, and project-based assignments. In addition to, regular feedback and praise should be provided to enhance students' confidence and encourage them to take active roles in class discussions.

{N. 3} participants of the study perceived that the main challenge in implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in their classrooms is when students are unwilling to participate. This idea is based on the students' belief that practical lessons are not important and they may complain that they haven't learned anything if they didn't learn grammar or new words in their classes. As a result, teachers will face significant constraints in adopting this approach. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach to language teaching that emphasizes communication and interaction between the learners, rather than just learning the language rules. It aims to enable the learners to use the language effectively for real-life purposes. However, as with any new teaching method, it may face resistance from students who are accustomed to traditional grammar-focused approaches. Teachers adopting CLT should thus be prepared to address such challenges and help their students understand the benefits of the communicative approach.

#### 4.3 Problems Resulting from the Educational System

N.	Difficulties	Yes	No
1	Wide syllabus which forces teachers to ignore practical lessons such as those of listening and speaking	35	15
2	Large number of students inside classes and level differences	38	12
3	Grammar based examination	37	13
4	Insufficient funding and lack of support	44	6
5	Lack of authentic materials such as videos, websites etc.	43	7
	Total	197	53

The table displays the number of respondents who agreed with "Yes" and those who responded against the constraints with "No" for five problems caused by the educational system. The problems are presented in order from the most common problem to the least common one based on the number of individuals who agreed with "Yes." The table shows the most common identified problem which is the {N. 4}, with 44 respondents of agreements "Yes". Whereas, this problem achieved 6 respondents of disagreement from those who disagreed upon this constraint. The second most common problem is the {N. 5}, with 43 individuals agreeing with "Yes" and 7 responses of disagreement with "No". Problem {N. 2} comes in the third position with 38 individuals agreeing with "Yes." and 12 responses of disagreement with "No". In the fourth position, problem {N. 3} received 37 respondents of agreements with "Yes" and 13 respondents of disagreement. Furthermore, the fifth problem i.e. {N. 1} graded 35 respondents of agreements with "Yes" and 15 respondents of disagreement with "No". This indicates that there is a significant number of individuals are convinced that the educational system concentrates too much on grammatical rules more than on practical skills i. e. speaking and listening skills.

{N. 1} participants of the current study agreed upon the first problem i.e. "wide syllabus forces teachers to ignore practical lessons such as listening and speaking". Thus, there is a significant challenge in this point since CLT approach emphasizes the importance of the communicative skills, i.e. speaking and listening skills, in language learning, and neglecting those skills can tolerate students' opportunities to communicate in the target language. This problem obstacles students to use the language effectively in real-life situations. It is a demand for language teachers to make a balance between teaching grammar and vocabulary as well as provide their students with practical opportunities to improve their communicative skills.

{N. 2} in this point, the participants agreed that the large number of students in the class has a significant challenge in adopting Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in their classes. The huge class size created management difficulties, such as; increased-noise levels when everyone started to talk, which made a challenging environment for teachers to ensure that everyone remained on task. This environment is also made it difficult to rearrange seats or desks to divide students into groups to accomplish the requirements of communicative learning. Moreover, the challenges faced by teachers in applying CLT in large classes are well-documented in the study. However, the results of the study showed the difficulties faced by CLT teachers when maintaining thier students' engagement for the lesson and ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate actively in tasks. Hence, the teacher's ability to provide individualized feedback and support is limited in large classes. However, with continuous training, planning, and instructional strategies, teachers can incorporate CLT effectively in their classes even with larger class sizes.

{N. 3} participants of the study agreed that the "grammar-based examination" problem and the nature of the exam, which focus mainly on grammar, vocabulary, and writing activities, are among the reasons that led to ignore listening and speaking skills when using the communicative approach. Accordingly, teachers of CLT approach began to imitate traditional language tests which focus heavily on grammar, writing, vocabulary skills. They neglected the main goal behind teaching the language i. e. the emphasis on the development of all four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking, in an integrated and balanced way. Thus, learners may miss out the opportunity to effectively develop their linguistic abilities i. e. speaking and listening skills and focus, in a favor, on grammar and writing activities.. As a result, it is important to ensure that language-tests and assessments

are designed to evaluate learners' proficiency in all four skills, i.e. reading, writing, speaking, and listening rather than just one or two.

{N. 4} most of the participants agreed that the lack of resources, including audios and visual aids, has an impact on Iraqi teachers' abilities to effectively adopt Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach inside learning classes. Without sufficient support and funding, it is a challenge for them to implement this approach. Moreover, it is important to note that CLT is a student-centered approach that has communication and interaction emphasis in the target language. Therefore, providing teachers with practical resources to support this kind of learning environment is crucial for its successful implementation.

{N. 5} participants of the study agreed upon the constraint i. e. "The lack of authentic materials, such as videos and websites... etc." which poses a significant challenge for Iraqi teachers who need to adopt CLT activities in their classes. However, authentic materials are essential components of CLT approach. Using real-life videos, audios, pictures, posters and websites, are crucial in enhancing students to develop speaking and listening skills. On one hand, those materials can help students practise the target language in real-world contexts. On the other hand, the lack of such materials leads to a difficulty in effectively applying CLT in classes by teachers. Thus, finding ways to incorporate and access authentic materials should be a priority for educators who want to provide a communicative and practical approach to language learning.

#### 4.4 Problems Resulting from the CLT itself

N.	Difficulties.	Yes	No
1	Insufficient account of English as a foreign language in CLT.	38	12
2	Lack of efficient and effective assessment instruments	43	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>19</b>

The above table displays the number of respondents who agreed with "Yes" and those who disagreed "No" for two problems created by the Communicative approach itself. Thus, problem {N. 2} shows the most common constraints identified with 43 of agreement respondents with "Yes" and 7 respondents of disagreement "No". However, the second most common problem is the {N. 1} with 43 individuals agreements with "Yes" and 12 respondents disagreed "No" upon the constraint.

{1} in this point, participants agreed that the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach is primarily designed for teachers who are native speakers of English or who have a high level of proficiency. This represents a significant challenge for Asian countries; such as Iraq, in applying this approach effectively. It's important to mention that CLT approach is often associated with native English-speaking teachers though, it is not exclusive to them. Non-native English-speaking teachers can also effectively apply CLT principles and adapt them to their students' needs. Nevertheless, it is a challenge for non-native speakers to fully embody the cultural and linguistic nuances of this approach and transfer them to their students.

{2} Most of the participants agreed upon the problem that the "lack of efficient and effective assessment instruments" as a barrier to adopting CLT. However, Communicative Language Teaching CLT approach puts a strong emphasis on communication and speaking fluency via the language rather than accuracy. Hence, accuracy leads to traditional forms of assessments, such as; grammar tests which is less suitable to the targets of CLT approach. Therefore, there is a need for more innovative and authentic ways to assess language proficiency in communicative contexts.

## 5- Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5. 1 Conclusions

The recent study concluded that Iraqi teachers have an interest in applying Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in thier



classes. However, there is a significant gap between their theoretical knowledge and the practical application of the communicative approach in their classrooms. This represents a conflict between what the communicative approach demands and what the English as a foreign language situation in Iraq allows. The study also concluded that the problems faced by Iraqi teachers will affect students and make them very weak, thereby depriving them of the ability to speak English both in school and outside of it.

Finally, the study indicated that Iraqi teachers do not fully implement the communicative approach in their classes due to various problems. Some of these problems are related to the teachers themselves, some to the students, and others to the educational system. Additionally, some problems are created by the CLT approach itself. Therefore, to address these issues, there are some suggested recommendations for the pedagogical implementation of CLT approach in Iraqi schools.

## 5.2 Recommendations for the Pedagogical Implementation of CLT Approach

The current study provides a helpful details about the practical and theoretical implications for various stakeholders, curricula designers, and teachers to implement the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Iraqi schools. The author highlights that the implications are based on the study's findings. The results of the study suggest that teachers need training and practical courses to be able to implement Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in their classrooms.

According to the participants, teachers who are qualified need to realize the importance of CLT knowledge. Additionally, the study found that teachers need to develop teaching skills to ensure that all students participate in various activities. Some participants suggested that the government should support them in implementing CLT. Thus, it is important for both Iraqi schools and the government to

provide relevant courses and workshops to support teachers in implementing CLT. According to the participants' viewpoint, another important consideration when implementing CLT is the teachers who took part in this study shared the challenges they face when implementing CLT, as many Iraqi students struggle to express their thoughts in English within the classroom.

Therefore, the study suggests that teachers should adopt a student-centered approach in their classrooms instead of a teacher-centered one. Additionally, it is important for teachers to recognize that CLT was originally developed for English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts in Western environments, and thus there may be differences in its implementation in Iraqi classrooms. The study identified several factors that hinder the implementation of CLT, such as large class sizes, mother tongue-based instruction, mixed-level classrooms, and exam-focused curricula. According to what mentioned above; it is recommended that the authorities in charge of education should take the following solutions into their consideration: firstly, reducing class sizes ( a limited number of students ) to enable CLT implementation practicality.

Secondly, educators and administrators must create an effective environment that is student-centered environment. Thirdly, students with lower language proficiency levels should be grouped with those of higher levels to encourage them practise the language in real situations. Fourthly, the exam-oriented curricula should be revised to include a more comprehensive approach that encompasses, speaking, listening, and conversational skills along with grammar, vocabulary and writing skill.

## Appendix(A):

يرجى التفضل بالإجابة على الاستبيان التالي لغرض إجراء بحث بعنوان:

**"Problems in Communicative English Language Teaching/  
Speaking and Listening Skills by Iraqi Teachers."**

A) Please answer the following questions /statements as honestly as possible:

- 1-Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐ 2-Age:
- 3-Are you teaching at intermediate, preparatory or secondary school?  
Intermediate ☐ Preparatory ☐ Secondary ☐
- 4-What grade(s) have you taught? .....
- 5-How many years have you been a teacher of English?
- 6-Is the school where you are teaching located in an urban or rural area?: Urban ☐ Rural ☐

B) Answer/ choose for the following questions:

- 1-Which method are you using now?.....  
- Are you satisfied about it? : Satisfied ☐ Unsatisfied ☐ very satisfied ☐
- 2-Are you interested in communicative approach? .....
- How satisfied are you with the communicative approach?  
Satisfied ☐ Unsatisfied ☐ very satisfied ☐

C) What do you think about the following problems that might face Iraqi teachers in terms of applying communicative approach in their teaching? Do you think they might be difficulties for you in applying CLT in Iraq? Please, tick "Yes" if you agree and "No" if you don't agree.

1. Teachers' deficiency in appropriate knowledge of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).  
Yes ☐ No ☐
2. Teachers' deficiency in spoken English.  
Yes ☐ No ☐
3. Deficiency in communicative competence such as strategic and sociolinguistic competence.  
Yes ☐ No ☐
4. Lack of preparedness resulting from the large number of sessions which is taken by teachers during a day.  
Yes ☐ No ☐
5. Inadequate time to develop materials for communication classes and for syllabus coverage.  
Yes ☐ No ☐
6. Students' low English proficiency.  
Yes ☐ No ☐
7. Absence of motivation among students to participate for communication.  
Yes ☐ No ☐
8. Students' resistance to class participation.  
Yes ☐ No ☐
9. Wide syllabus which forces teachers to ignore practical lessons such as those of listening and speaking.  
Yes ☐ No ☐
10. Large number of students inside classes and level differences.  
Yes ☐ No ☐
11. Grammar based examination.  
Yes ☐ No ☐
12. Insufficient funding and lack of support.  
Yes ☐ No ☐
13. Lack of authentic materials such as videos, websites etc.  
Yes ☐ No ☐
14. Insufficient account of English as a foreign language in CLT.  
Yes ☐ No ☐
15. Lack of efficient and effective assessment instruments.  
Yes ☐ No ☐

## References

- Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (2010). Language assessment in practice. Oxford University Press.
- BANGSAWAN, I. P. R. (2020). From Communicative Language Teaching to Improve Vocabulary Achievement: A Collection of Writings. Yayasan Institut Studi Ekonomi dan Kewirausahaan.
- Brown, H. D. (2007). Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy. White Plains, NY: Pearson Longman.
- Byram, M., & Hu, A. (2013). Routledge encyclopedia of language teaching and learning. Routledge.
- Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. Applied linguistics, 1(1), 1-47.
- Celce-Murcia, M. (2001). Communicative language teaching: An overview. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), Teaching English as a second or foreign language (3rd ed., pp. 1-20). Heinle & Heinle.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research. Pearson Education, Inc.
- Freeman, L. D. (2008). Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching. Oxford: OUP.
- Harmer, J. (2015). The practice of English language teaching. Harlow, UK: Pearson.
- Hinkel, E. (2006). Current perspectives on teaching the four skills. TESOL Quarterly, 40(1), 109-131.
- Howatt, A. P. R. (1984). A history of English language teaching. Oxford University Press.
- Johnson, K. E. (2018). The second language classroom: Directions for the 21st century. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kumaravadevelu, B. (2006). Understanding language teaching: From method to postmethod. Routledge.
- Larsen-Freeman, D., & Anderson, M. (2011). Techniques and principles in language teaching (3rd ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Littlewood, W. (2013). Developing a context-sensitive pedagogy for communication-oriented language teaching. 68(3), 3-25.
- Long, M. H., & Doughty, C. J. (2009). The handbook of language teaching. Wiley-Blackwell.

- Mitchell, R. (1988). *Communicative Language Teaching in Practice*. Warwick :Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Researching.
- Nunan, D. (2003). The impact of English as a global language on educational policies and practices in the Asia-Pacific region. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(4), 589-613.
- Powney, J., & Watts, M. (2018). *Interviewing in educational research*. Routledge.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge university press.
- Richards, J. C., Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (Eds.). (2002). *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice*. Cambridge university press.
- Savignon, S. J. (1997). *Communicative competence: Theory and classroom practice* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Willis, J., & Willis, D. (2007). *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zare-ee, A. (2005). *A textbook on language Teaching Methods: for BA students and MA candidates in TEFL*.

## مشكلات تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية التواصلية / مهارات التحدث والاستماع لدى المعلمين

### العراقيين

م.م. ياسر شعير حميد  
المديرة العامة لتربية الانبار  
وزارة التربية



[yassiralheety@gmail.com](mailto:yassiralheety@gmail.com)

م.م. أحمد جواد نريدان  
المديرة العامة لتربية الانبار  
وزارة التربية



[jiadahmed2@gmail.com](mailto:jiadahmed2@gmail.com)

الكلمات المفتاحية: الطريقة التواصلية، النظام التعليمي، التطبيق  
الملخص:

ركزت الدراسة الحالية على المشاكل التي يواجهها المعلمون العراقيون عند تدريس الاستماع والتحدث باستخدام منهج تدريس اللغة التواصلية CLT. لقد نوقش تطبيق CLT على نطاق واسع من قبل الباحثين في مجال المنهجية بسبب الصعوبات التي تمت مواجهتها في تطبيقه ليس فقط في العراق، ولكن أيضاً في أجزاء أخرى من العالم حيث يتم تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. ولذلك تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على المشاكل التي يواجهها المعلمون العراقيون عند تطبيق هذا المنهج. استخدمت الدراسة تصميمًا مختلطاً يعتمد على القياس الكمي لجمع البيانات وتحليلها من خلال الاستبيان. تكون الاستبيان من ثلاثة أجزاء. الجزء (أ) يهتم بالمعلومات الشخصية، والجزء (ب) يقيم مدى ملاءمة المعلمين العراقيين لاستخدام CLT، والجزء (ج) يبحث في مصدر المشاكل التي يواجهها المعلمون العراقيون عند استخدام CLT، وهي الصعوبات الناتجة عن (أ) المعلمين، (ب) الطلاب، (ج) النظام التعليمي، و (د) CLT نفسها. أما أسئلة البحث في هذه الدراسة فهي: (1) ما هي المشاكل الرئيسية وراء ضعف تدريس مهارات الاستماع والتحدث لدى المعلمين العراقيين؟ (2) إلى أي مدى يعتبر المعلمون العراقيون مناسبين لتطبيق CLT؟ أظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة أن المشاركين يتفقون مع المستجيبين بنعم في جميع المشكلات على الرغم من اهتمامهم بـ CLT كمنهج في تدريسهم على مستوى الفصل الدراسي. علاوة على ذلك، خلصت الدراسة إلى أن هنالك فجوة كبيرة بين الجوانب النظرية لـ CLT كمنهج في تدريسهم على مستوى الفصل الدراسي CLT وتطبيقها العملي من قبل المعلمين العراقيين.