

English Teachers' Beliefs, Practices, and Problems Encountered in Using Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Author's Name and Affiliation:

Brendalyn A. Manzano, Ph.D.

Tarlac State University
Romulo Blvd., San Vicente, Tarlac City, 2300 Philippines
brendalyn.manzano@yahoo.com
(+63) 045-491-2115

Corresponding Author:

Brendalyn A. Manzano

Abstract—This paper aims to determine the beliefs, practices, and problems encountered by English language teachers in using Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The descriptive-survey research design was used and checklists were distributed to all or twenty (20) university English teachers. Based on the findings, teachers claimed that they use CLT in teaching the English language; however, their beliefs in language and language learning and classroom activities or practices were incompatible with CLT. Although its use was found very interesting among language learners, the success of its implementation in the language classroom depends on teachers' knowledge or extent of understanding to its features. Likewise, instructional materials, assessment tools, learners roles, teacher roles, and institutional/departmental policy were significantly found problems encountered by teachers in using CLT. As such, university teachers must be abreast of how CLT evolved and applied in an innovative way without deviating from its basic features or characteristics.

Keywords: *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Audiolingual Method (ALM), pedagogical practice*

1. Introduction

The communicative approach could be said as the product of educators and applied linguists who had grown dissatisfied with the Audiolingual Method (ALM) and Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) of foreign language instruction. They felt that students were not learning enough realistic, whole language. They did not know how to communicate using appropriate social language, gestures, or expressions; in brief, they were at a lost to communicate in the culture of the language studied. Interest in and development of communicative-style teaching mushroomed and authentic language use and classroom exchanges where students engaged in real communication with one another became quite popular.

In the intervening years, the communicative approach has been adapted to the elementary, middle, secondary, and post-secondary levels, and the underlying philosophy has spawned different

teaching methods known under a variety of names, including *notional-functional*, *teaching for proficiency*, *proficiency-based instruction*, and *communicative language teaching*.

Communicative Language Teaching or CLT (the term used throughout this paper) makes use of real-life situations that necessitates communication. The teacher sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life. Unlike the Audiolingual Method of language teaching, which relies on repetition and drills, the communicative approach can leave students in suspense as to the outcome of a class exercise, which will vary according to their reactions and responses. The real-life simulations change from day to day. Students' motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics. Berns (1984), an expert in the field of CLT, writes in explaining Firth's view that "language is interaction"; it is an interpersonal activity and has a clear relationship with society. In this light, language study has to look into the function of language in context, both its linguistic context and its social or situational context.

Littlewood (1981) states that one of the most characteristic features of CLT is that it pays a systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language. For others, it means using procedures where learners work in tandem or groups employing available language resources in problem-solving tasks. For instance, an English syllabus based on communicative approach focuses on communicative functions which the forms of the language serve. Many advocates of CLT claim that communicative purposes may be of many different kinds. Their commonalities lie on the notion that at least two participants are involved in an interaction or transaction of some kind where one participant has an intention and the other participant expands or reacts to the intention. Therefore, CLT in this respect has a learner-generated view of syllabus design.

Today, issues on language teaching are quite different and complex. Beyond grammatical and discourse elements in communication, teachers probe the nature of social, cultural, and pragmatic features of language. Also, they explore pedagogical means for real-life communication in the classroom and try to help their learners to develop linguistic fluency for them to be equipped with tools for generating unrehearsed performance. Moreover, teachers are concerned with how to facilitate lifelong language learning among learners. Furthermore, they look at learners as partners in a cooperative venture and their classroom practices seek to draw on whatever intrinsically sparks learners to reach their fullest potentials.

CLT is a currently recognized approach that is generally an accepted norm in the field of English language teaching. Teachers come in numerous possible ways of defining CLT and of drawing its various interpretations and classroom applications. They claim that they use CLT in the language classroom, and this captured the researcher's interest to look into the harmony of their beliefs and practices in its use in the language classroom. The problems they encounter in using CLT was also found significant to be dealt with in order to identify certain difficulties in implementing the said approach.

2. Statement of Objectives

This paper aims to determine and describe the beliefs, practices, and problems encountered by English language teachers in using CLT. Specifically, it attempts to:

- 2.1 find out if teachers use CLT in teaching the English language;
- 2.2 determine the teachers' beliefs about CLT;
- 2.3 discover the teachers' classroom activities in implementing CLT;
- 2.4 describe the students' reactions to the use of CLT in the classroom; and
- 2.5 identify the problems encountered by teachers in implementing CLT.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The descriptive-survey was utilized as the design of this research. Calmorin (1994) states that the descriptive-survey research design signifies the gathering of data regarding present conditions. It is appropriate to identify and describe an existing phenomenon in the language classroom. It is of large value in providing facts about the teachers' beliefs, practices, and problems encountered in using CLT.

3.2 Instrument

The instrument (see appendix, pp. 17-20) used in gathering data consists of mainly two parts: (Part I) Demographic Profile of Teachers and (Part II) Teachers' Beliefs and Practices, Students' Reactions, and Problems Encountered in Using CLT. It was submitted to three English language experts for face and content validation. It was found out that the instrument covers what it supposed to measure. However, future researchers who would like to pursue similar study using the same instrument should validate it further in relation to the purpose it serves.

3.3 Sampling

The data intended for this paper were gathered through the help of the English language teachers of the Languages Department of the College of Arts and Social Sciences, Tarlac State University. There were 20 English language teachers in the university. Since their number was only a few, total population was then considered in this study.

Two (2) or 10% of them are graduates of the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics with specialization in Linguistics; fourteen (14) or 70% of the respondents are graduates with the degree Master of Arts in Education, with specialization in English (9), English Language Teaching (4), and English Language and Literature Teaching (1); and four (4) of them are candidates for the degree Master of Arts in English. Relating to their years of teaching experience, they have been teaching English for 34, 30, 22, 20, 18, 14, 12, 10, 9, 5, and 4 respectively.

3.4 Statistical Treatment of Data

The number of occurrence of the variables obtained from the respondents' answers was described and quantified using frequency counts. Percentage, on the other hand, was used to qualify the number of respondents who chose a corresponding answer/s from the given choices. The formula for percentage is:

$$\% = f/N \times 100$$

Where:

f = frequency of the variable

N = number of respondents

Ranking was also used to determine the beliefs, practices, and problems that were viewed and encountered by most of the English language teachers.

4. Results and Discussion

The five objectives stated previously served as bases in the conduct of this study. They are all sequentially presented in this section in relation to how data were described and analyzed.

4.1 Teachers' Use of CLT in Teaching the English Language

Like many other approaches, CLT entered the language field from the educational mainstream. Among the twenty (20) respondents, ten (10) of them *always* use CLT and another ten

(10) *often* use CLT in teaching English to their students. This implies that English teachers in the university are familiar with CLT as an approach — that they intuitively if not experientially find CLT as an effective approach in teaching English. It further implies that the respondents always and oftentimes use CLT, thus, it makes it a dominant approach in teaching the English language.

The use of CLT in teaching English may be attributed to the respondents' educational background. Since all of them have a specialization that is aligned with the subject they teach, their educational orientation has a foremost and great influence with their knowledge of CLT. Likewise, their teaching experience is also of significant factor that constantly leads them to use CLT in the classroom. Since majority of them have already been teaching English for a very long period of time, immediate personal experience is seen as the focal point for learning which makes them use CLT. Their use of the said approach is also brought by their reflection that it is an effective approach in teaching English.

4.2 Teachers' Beliefs about CLT

Table 1 presents the frequency of respondents' beliefs in CLT. The teachers' beliefs about language are revealed in the following table:

Table 1
Teacher-Respondents' Beliefs about Language

Beliefs	Frequency N = 20	Percentage (%)	Rank
<i>Language is primarily viewed as:</i>			
▪ a tool for communication	18	90	1
▪ a means to perform language functions	14	70	2
▪ a way of establishing and maintaining social relationships	14	70	2
▪ a system of conveying meaning	12	60	3
▪ a means to communicate notions	8	40	4

The table shows that the teachers really believe in CLT. Eighteen (18) or 90% of the respondents believes that language is primarily viewed as a tool for communication; fourteen (14) or 70% of them views that language is a means to perform language functions, and a way of establishing and maintaining social relationships; twelve (12) or 60% of them believes that language is a system of conveying meaning; and eight (8) or 40% of them views that language is a means to communicate notions.

Although not all of them responded to the views of CLT included in the survey questionnaire, the data manifest that their beliefs on the nature of language are insufficient; however, it is evident that what they carry with them is their knowledge in consonance with CLT. The findings also imply that the respondents were able to capture some of the views of language that are compatible to CLT.

Likewise, table 2 presents the beliefs of the teacher-respondents in relation to language learning:

Table 2
Teacher-Respondents' Beliefs about Learning

Beliefs	Frequency N = 20	Percentage (%)	Rank
<i>Language is best learned/acquired by:</i> ▪ involving students in activities in real-life communication	16	80	1
▪ maximizing students' interaction	12	60	2
▪ carrying out meaningful tasks	12	60	2
▪ exposing students to accurate and appropriate use of the language	12	60	2
▪ engaging learners in negotiation of meaning and information sharing	10	50	3
▪ conducting drills and sentence patterns	8	40	4
▪ correcting students' errors immediately	4	20	5
▪ asking learners to mimic/imitate and memorize dialogues, tongue twisters, songs, etc.	2	10	6

Table 2 shows that among the twenty (20) respondents, sixteen (16) or 80% of them believes that language is best learned by involving students in activities in real-life communication; twelve (12) or 60% of them views that language is best learned by maximizing students' interaction, by carrying out meaningful tasks, and by exposing students to accurate and appropriate use of the language; and ten (10) or 50% of them believes that language is best learned by engaging learners in negotiation of meaning and information sharing. These findings imply that the respondents are aware of how language is best learned or acquired in the language classroom. Although not all of them have viewed learning in similar ways, their initial responses would mean that the views of learning that are compatible with CLT are available in their minds.

However, looking into the last three results, eight (8) or 40% of the respondents views that language is best learned by conducting drills and sentence patterns; four (4) or 20% of them believes that language is best acquired by correcting students' errors immediately; and two (2) or 10% of them views that language is best learned by asking learners to mimic/imitate and memorize dialogues, tongue twisters, songs, etc. It is also evident that these three beliefs of learning are attributed to Audiolingual Method (ALM) not on CLT. These findings reveal that the teachers are still confused on how CLT is viewed in terms of learning. It means that teachers are aware of the CLT approach but their knowledge as regards its theoretical underpinning (in terms of learning) is not yet fully built in their minds and beliefs. Their views of language learning is also slanted towards ALM which means that the respondents views on language learning is combined with methods of language teaching.

4.3 Teachers' Classroom Activities in Implementing CLT

Qualifying the respondents' beliefs in CLT is significant in this research. The beliefs of the teachers were analyzed if they are compatible with the activities that they implement in the language classroom. Do teachers use appropriate classroom activities when they mean that they are

using CLT in the English language classroom? Are the activities matched with their beliefs in CLT? This part of the paper would signify if CLT principles are applied in the language classroom.

Table 3

Teacher-Respondents' Classroom Activities in Implementing CLT

Activities	Frequency N = 20	Percentage (%)	Rank
▪ communication games	18	90	1
▪ information-sharing activities	18	90	1
▪ pair and group work	18	90	1
▪ students' active participation in the learning process	18	90	1
▪ role plays and simulations	14	70	2
▪ problem-solving	14	70	2
▪ teacher's facilitating the communication activities	14	70	2
▪ authentic materials	12	60	3
▪ task completion	10	50	4
▪ syllabus focusing on language functions	10	50	4
▪ use of real objects (realia)	8	40	5
▪ speech laboratory for pronunciation lessons	6	30	6
▪ use of the mother tongue only whenever necessary	4	20	7
▪ correction of errors without interference with communication	4	20	7
▪ syllabus focusing on language forms	4	20	7
▪ teacher's modeling of English dialogues, speech lessons, etc.	4	20	7
▪ translation from mother tongue to English	2	10	8

Table 3 presents the classroom activities of the respondents in implementing CLT. Among the twenty (20) respondents, eighteen (18) or 90% of them employ communication games, information-sharing activities, pair and group work, and students' active participation in the learning process; fourteen (14) or 70% of them implement role plays and simulations, problem-solving, and facilitate the communication activities; twelve (12) or 60% of them use authentic materials such as signages, newspaper, brochures, labels, forms, reading texts, etc.; ten (10) or 50% of them employ task completion and follow a syllabus focusing on language functions; eight (8) or 40% of them use real objects or realia; and four (4) or 20% of them allow students to use their mother tongue only whenever necessary and likewise correct students' errors without interference with communication. These classroom activities employed by the respondents in their language

classroom show that their activities are in consonance with CLT. Although, not all of them pointed out the CLT-compatible activities, their beliefs in the nature of language and language learning are likewise manifested in their pedagogical practices.

On the other hand, six (6) or 30% of the respondents considers speech laboratory for pronunciation lessons, follows a syllabus focusing on language forms, and models dialogues, speech lessons, etc; and two (2) or 10% of the respondents allows translation from mother tongue to English. These findings oppose some of the respondents' beliefs in CLT but support a few of their views on the nature of language learning that is compatible with ALM: conducting drills and sentence patterns, correcting students' errors immediately, and asking learners to mimic/imitate and memorize dialogues, tongue twisters, songs, etc. This finding implies that teachers combine their practices of language pedagogy from an approach to a method. It means that their practices as regards implementing CLT in the language classroom are still uncertain and teachers can not fully determine the practices or activities that are in harmony with CLT. Therefore, their pedagogical practices are inconsistent with their beliefs on the nature of language and language learning. Brown (1994) says that giving lip service to principles of CLT but not truly grounding the teaching techniques in such principles would be marked as heretic. But if teachers believe the term that characterize their teaching, then they must make sure that they indeed understand and practice their convictions.

4.4 Students' Reactions to the Use of CLT in the Classroom

Among the twenty (20) respondents, twelve (12) or 60% of the teachers observed that students find the use of CLT in the classroom *very interesting*; six (6) or 30% of them observed that students find it *interesting*; and two (2) or 10% of them observed that it is *less interesting*. The data suggest that generally students find the use of CLT *very interesting*. This shows that there is an acknowledgement in some accounts of CLT that learners enjoy and learn at the same time in the process of CLT implementation. However, CLT may be favorable to the majority of the students who learn interdependently but unfavorable to some who are independent or aloof to assume their roles within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities which the group undertake.

CLT as a learner-generated approach is appealing to students who want to use English to acquire it. But of course this attempt to learn the English language depends on the language teacher who usually chooses the approach, methods, and techniques for a particular context of language teaching. This communicative approach to learning stressed in CLT may, likewise, be regarded by students learning the English language as interesting or not – depends on the characteristics of the students – thus teachers need to consider learners' individual differences.

4.5 Problems Encountered by Teachers in Implementing CLT

CLT has been a recognized approach that is generally accepted norm in the field of language teaching. It has been captured by language teachers as the most frequently used approach in language pedagogy. To qualify the said approach would lie in the numerous possible ways of believing in CLT and would consider various interpretations and classroom applications. Indeed, language teachers are centrally concerned with issues surrounding the linguistic description of languages and their pedagogical applications. Such problems encountered by the respondents in implementing CLT in the classroom are presented in the table below:

Table 4

Teacher-Respondents' Problems in Implementing CLT

Problems	Frequency N = 20	Percentage (%)	Rank
▪ inadequate sources of CLT-compatible materials	20	100	1
▪ time-consuming preparation of materials	14	70	2
▪ uncontrollable use of the native language during classroom activities	14	70	2
▪ inadequate and incompatible use of CLT assessment tools for gauging students' performance	14	70	2
▪ students' lack of focus on completing a task	8	40	3
▪ students' inability and/or unwillingness to take an active role in their own learning	8	40	3
▪ inability to control students' noise during classroom activities	4	20	4
▪ teacher's unwillingness to play a peripheral/secondary role in the teaching learning process	2	10	5
▪ institutional/departmental policy on language instruction	2	10	5

Among the many problems encountered by language teachers, inadequate sources of CLT-compatible materials is considered to be the problem by all or twenty (20 or 100%) of the teacher-respondents; time-consuming preparation of materials, uncontrollable use of the native language during classroom activities, and inadequate and incompatible use of CLT assessment tools for gauging students' performance are correspondingly problems of fourteen (14) or 70% of the respondents; students' lack of focus on completing a task and students' inability and/or unwillingness to take an active role in their own learning are problems encountered by eight (8) or 40% of the respondents; inability to control students' noise during classroom activities is a problem of four (4) or 20% of the respondents; and the teacher's unwillingness to play a peripheral/secondary role in the teaching-learning process and institutional/departmental policy on language instruction are regarded problems by two (2) or 10% of the respondents.

From the findings revealed in this study, it is evident that such problems identified by the respondents concern on the materials, assessment tools, learners' roles, teacher roles, and institutional/departmental policy. These problems may be overcome if teachers are open-minded to accept new understandings of a particular approach that is almost commonly used by language teachers. It is important for teachers to reflect on the basis of how CLT got implemented in the language classroom. Teachers should learn from other teachers' techniques in teaching and should qualify these techniques if they are compatible with CLT. Likewise, teachers should understand that sharing once experience in using CLT in the classroom gives a significant learning for teachers to reflect about what they have learned from their peers. Most importantly, teachers need to make

themselves abreast of how CLT evolved and applied in an innovative way without deviating from its basic features or characteristics.

In this light, teachers are given chances to apply and refine their understanding of CLT. They should know how to relate their beliefs on the nature of language and language learning to their pedagogical practices. If they claim that they use CLT in the classroom, they should qualify their claim to what supports CLT implementations. It is necessary to consider the design of CLT and execute certain assurance latch on the CLT label but as with every issue in the field, this may be untangled by means of understanding CLT for teachers not to be at a loss as they implement it in the language classrooms.

5. Conclusions

From the findings of this research, the following conclusions were drawn:

- 5.1 English teachers oftentimes use CLT in teaching the English language.
- 5.2 Although the respondents claim that they use CLT in their English language classroom, some of their beliefs are incompatible with CLT. Some of their views are in consonance with ALM which makes their understanding of CLT uncertain.
- 5.3 Some of the classroom activities implemented by the English teachers are opposing to the activities that are in harmony with CLT. Teachers are still uncertain of what practices go for CLT. They seem to practice activities that are compatible with ALM which leads them to combine it with practices on CLT. Thus, their pedagogical practices are inconsistent with their beliefs on the nature of language and language learning.
- 5.4 There is an acknowledgement in some accounts that learners find the use of CLT *very interesting*. CLT as a learner-centered approach is appealing to students who want to use English to acquire it. However, this attempt to learn the English language depends on the language teacher who usually chooses the approach, methods, and techniques for a particular context of language teaching.
- 5.5 The problems identified by the respondents concern on the materials, assessment tools, learners' roles, teacher roles, and institutional/departmental policy.

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7. Appendix**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

To the respondent: Please provide the information needed in this questionnaire. Answer the questions as objectively as possible. Rest assured that your answers will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

1. Demographic Profile

Name (Optional): _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____
 Highest Educational Attainment: _____ Field of Specialization: _____
 School: _____
 Years of Teaching Experience: _____
 Subject/s Taught: _____

2. Teachers' Beliefs and Practices, Students' Reactions, and Problems Encountered in Using Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

2.1 I use CLT in the classroom.

(Tick only one.)

- _____ Always
 _____ Often
 _____ Sometimes
 _____ Rarely
 _____ Never

2.2 I believe that in CLT, language is primarily viewed as:

(Tick as many.)

- _____ a tool for communication.
 _____ a means to perform language functions (requesting, narrating, instructing, etc.)
 _____ a set of sounds, words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and texts.
 _____ a system of conveying meaning.
 _____ a way of establishing and maintaining social relationships.
 _____ a means to communicate notions such as time, frequency, distance, quality, etc.
 _____ Others, pls. specify: _____

2.3 I believe that language is best learned/acquired by:

(Tick as many.)

- _____ maximizing students' interaction.
 _____ conducting drills and sentence patterns.
 _____ carrying out meaningful tasks.
 _____ engaging learners in negotiation of meaning and information sharing.
 _____ asking learners to mimic/imitate and memorize dialogues, tongue twisters, songs, etc.
 _____ correcting students' errors immediately.

- _____ exposing students to accurate and appropriate use of the language.
_____ involving students in activities in real-life communication (asking for directions, applying for a job, making announcements, etc.).
_____ Others, pls. specify: _____

2.4 I use the following practices/activities to implement CLT:

(Tick as many.)

- _____ role plays and simulations
_____ translation from mother tongue to English
_____ task completion
_____ problem-solving
_____ communication games
_____ information-sharing activities
_____ memorization of dialogues
_____ pair and group work
_____ materials such as signages, newspaper, brochures, labels, forms, reading texts, etc.
_____ speech laboratory for pronunciation lessons
_____ use of real objects (realia)
_____ teacher's modeling of English dialogues, speech lessons, etc.
_____ teacher's facilitating the communication activities
_____ students' active participation in the learning process
_____ correction of errors without interference with communication
_____ use of the mother tongue only whenever necessary
_____ syllabus focusing on language functions (expressing emotions, making requests, etc.)
_____ syllabus focusing on language forms (parts of a sentence, parts of speech, etc.)
_____ Others, pls. specify: _____

2.5 I have observed that generally, students find the use of CLT in the classroom:

(Tick only one.)

- _____ Very interesting
_____ Interesting
_____ Less interesting
_____ Not interesting

2.6 I have encountered the following problems in implementing CLT in the classroom:

(Tick as many.)

- _____ institutional/departmental policy on language instruction
_____ inadequate sources of CLT-compatible materials (textbooks, worksheets, signages, labels, posters, brochures, newspapers, etc.)
_____ time-consuming preparation of materials
_____ students' dislike of group activities
_____ students' lack of focus on completing a task

- _____ uncontrollable use of the native language during classroom activities
- _____ students' inability and/or unwillingness to take an active role in their own learning
- _____ teacher's unwillingness to play a peripheral/secondary role in the teaching learning process
- _____ inability to control students' noise during classroom activities
- _____ inadequate and incompatible use of CLT assessment tools for gauging students' performance
- _____ Others, pls. specify: _____

Thank you and God speed!



BRENDALYN A. MANZANO, chairperson of the English Department of Tarlac State University, Tarlac City holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics with specialization in Applied Linguistics from the Philippine Normal University-Manila. She serves in national projects in materials development research and publications, publishes articles in professional journals, and has written textbooks, teaching support materials and modules. Her research interests include translation, corpus linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, stylistics, and language pedagogy.