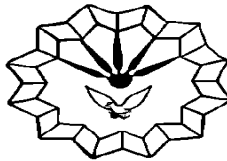


In the name of God



Razi University

Faculty of Literature & Humanities
Department of English Language & Literature

M.A. Thesis

Title of the Thesis

**Investigating Iranian EFL Teachers` Attitudes toward
Communicative Language Teaching in Kermanshah Language
Institutes**

Supervisor:

Dr. Ferdos Jamali

Advisor:

Dr. Nouroddin Yousofi

By:

Mahroo Lashgari

October 2012



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I bow and say thank you to each one of you

DEDICATION

To the Most Merciful, God:

As he has compassionately and generously bestowed upon me whatever wish so far I've
craved

To my parents:

As they have never deprived me of their praying to God

My father, for his encouragement and support

My mother, for her endless and unconditional love

Abstract

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) aims at developing learners' abilities to communicate in a second language. It represents a change of focus in language teaching from linguistic structure to communication skills. CLT has expanded beyond English as a Second Language (ESL) to English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In recent decades, CLT has been accepted and used by many EFL teachers. The review of related literature showed that although teachers' attitudes play an important role in their practicing of CLT, few studies have been conducted about teachers' attitudes toward CLT in a particular context, Iran.

The study aimed at investigating EFL teachers' attitudes toward CLT. The three main purposes of this study are: firstly, investigating EFL teachers' attitudes toward CLT. Secondly, exploring teachers' underlying reasons for their attitudes. Thirdly, investigating if there is any discrepancy between teachers' beliefs toward CLT and their practice in classroom.

A mixed method approach was used in this study. It was a three-phase research design, starting with quantitative data collection through a questionnaire, followed by two qualitative data collection through interviews and observation. The qualitative phase was used to explain the results of the quantitative phase.

The results of this study indicated that generally the EFL teachers held favorable attitudes toward principles of CLT and displayed characteristics of CLT in their beliefs and practices. Not much gap was observed between the teachers' beliefs toward CLT and their realized practices in the classroom.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, EFL teachers' attitudes, CLT principles, Communicative competence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	PAGE
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	A
LIST OF FIGURES.....	E
LIST OF TABLES.....	F
LIST OF ABBRIVIATIONS.....	G

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview.....	2
1.2 Preliminaries.....	2
1.3 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.4 Purpose of the Study and Its Significance.....	4
1.5 Research Questions.....	5
1.6 Definition of Key Terms.....	6
1.6.1 Teacher`s Beliefs.....	6
1.6.2 Communicative Language Teaching.....	6
1.6.3 Communicative Competence.....	7
1.6.4 Learner-Centered Approach.....	8

1.7 Limitations of the Study.....	8
1.8 Organization of the Study.....	9

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Overview.....	12
2.2 The History of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).....	12
2.3 The Theory of CLT.....	13
2.4 The Goals and Various Features of CLT.....	14
2.5 Strengths and Weaknesses of CLT.....	16
2.6 Teachers` Attitudes towards CLT.....	19
2.6.1 Definitions.....	20
2.6.2 Assumptions and Social Context.....	20
2.6.3 The Power of Beliefs to Influence Teaching.....	21
2.6.4 The Source of Teachers` Beliefs.....	22
2.6.5 The Importance of teachers` Beliefs.....	23
2.7 Teachers` Awareness of CLT Principles.....	24
2.8 Teachers` Perceptions, Understandings and Beliefs on CLT.....	25
2.9 Teachers` Beliefs and Practices.....	28
2.10 CLT and Language Learners.....	28
2.11 CLT and Grammar.....	29
2.12 CLT and Culture.....	30
2.13 Factors that Hinder the Implementation of CLT.....	32
2.14 Conclusion.....	33

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview.....	35
3.2 Setting and Participants.....	35
3.3 Research Design.....	36
3.4 Instruments and Data Collection Procedures.....	37
3.5 Data Analysis.....	39

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Overview.....	42
4.2 Data Collection through Questionnaires.....	42
4.3 Analyzing teachers` Questionnaires.....	43
4.3.1 Categorizing the Items of the Questionnaire.....	44
4.3.2 Descriptive Analysis.....	46
4.4 Analyzing Teachers` Interviews.....	51
4.4.1 Place and Importance of Grammar.....	51
4.4.2 Group/Pair Work.....	53
4.4.3 Quality and Quantity of Error Correction.....	54
4.4.4 The Role of Teachers in Classroom.....	55
4.4.5 The Role and Needs of Learners in Learning Process.....	56
4.5 Analyzing Class Observations.....	58
4.5.1 Place and Importance of Grammar.....	58
4.5.2 Group/Pair Work.....	59
4.5.3 Quality and Quantity of Error Correction.....	60
4.5.4 The Role of Teachers in Classroom.....	61
4.5.5 The Role of Learners in Classroom.....	62

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Overview.....	65
5.2 Discussions and Conclusions.....	65
5.2.1 EFL Teachers` Attitudes toward CLT.....	66
5.2.2 Underlying Reasons behind EFL Teachers` Views.....	68
5.2.3 Teachers` Practices and Classroom Observations.....	69
5.3 Implications for EFL Teacher Education.....	69
5.4 Implications for Syllabus Designers.....	70
5.5 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research.....	70

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A.....	72
APPENDIX B.....	76

REFERENCES.....	78
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure.....	Page
Figure (4.1) Means of the Teachers` Views.....	46
Figure (4.2) Percentages of the Teachers` Views.....	50

LIST OF TABLES

Table.....	Page
Table (4.1) Demographic Data of the Participants.....	43
Table (4.2) Descriptive Statistics of the Attitudes Scores.....	44
Table (4.3) Mean of Teachers' Attitudes towards the Five Principles of CLT.....	45
Table (4.4) Frequency and Percentage of Participants` Responses.....	47
Table (4.5) Mean of Percentages of Five Principles of CLT.....	48

ABBREVIATIONS

CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
M	Mean

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter presents preliminaries followed by information about statement of the problem and significance of the study. Research questions are also presented in this chapter followed by definition of key terms. Limitations and delimitations have also been mentioned. This chapter comes to an end by presenting an overview of the study organization.

1.2 Preliminaries

“Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a prominent theoretical model in English Language Teaching (ELT) and CLT is accepted by many applied linguists and teachers as one of the effective approaches” (Karim, 2004, p.7).

As Li (1998) stated since its first appearance in Europe in early 1970s and subsequent development in English as Second Language (ESL) contexts over the past twenty years, CLT has extended in scope and has been used by different educators in different ways.

“The main purpose of CLT is to develop learners’ abilities to communicate in a second language context. It represents a change of focus in language teaching from linguistic structure to learners’ need for developing communication skills” (Chang, 2011, p.17).

Karavas-Doukas (1996) suggests that the mismatch between teachers' beliefs and practices may contribute to the neglect of examining teachers' attitudes before implementing any new approach, e.i., only promoting the approach and trying to convince the teachers of the effectiveness of CLT does not successfully change the teachers' existing beliefs about language learning and teaching.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The goal of most language teaching methods is to teach learners to communicate in the target language. In the 1970s, educators began to question if they were going about meeting the goal in the right way (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Some noticed that learners were able to make and express sentences correctly in context of classroom but were not able to use those sentences while communicating outside classroom. Others noted that being able to communicate required something more than mastering linguistic structures (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Students may know the rules of linguistics usage, but be unable to use the language (Widdoson, 1978, cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2000). It became clear that communication required that students perform certain functions as well, such as promising, inviting, and declining invitations within a social context (Wilkins, 1976 cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Being able to communicate required more than linguistic competence; it required communicative competence (Hymes, 1971 cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Such observations contributed to a shift in the field in the late 1970s and early 1980s from a linguistic structure-centered approach to a Communicative Approach (Widdowson, 1990 cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

In recent decades, teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) have been encouraged to implement communicative language teaching (CLT) to help develop students' abilities to use English appropriately in context (Chang, 2011).

CLT advocates teaching practices that develop communicative competence in authentic context (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Fovi-Littlewood (2007) cited in Chang (2011) suggests that to improve students' abilities to use English in real contexts, CLT has been adopted in the setting of EFL colleges. However, the theories and practices of CLT have faced various challenges in many EFL contexts (Anderson, 1993; Ellis, 1996; Li, 1998; Liao, 2000; Takanashi, 2004; Yu, 2001; cited in Chang 2011).

It is clear that teachers' beliefs toward CLT influence their practice of CLT, so teachers' attitudes are important in their decisions to implement CLT, because they are responsible for applying and translating CLT principles in context of classroom.

As Karavas-Doukas (1995) stated, the reason for mismatch between CLT theory and practice may be teachers' attitudes, therefore the investigation of their attitudes serves as a starting point to identify the possible contradictions between teachers' beliefs and CLT principles (Chang, 2011).

1.4 Purpose of the Study and Its Significance

The present study has three main purposes. First, investigating Iranian teachers' attitudes toward Communicative Language Teaching. Second, exploring the basic and underlying reasons behind their attitudes. Third, investigating if there is any discrepancy between their beliefs toward CLT and their practical implementation in the classroom.

The importance of this study is that subjects such as communication skills and learners' need to improve communication abilities were always in the focus of attention of recent teaching approaches (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Littlewood, 2007; Hymes, 1972; Richards and Rodgers, 1986). Although a number of research studies have been conducted on the implementation of CLT in EFL countries (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Ellis, 1996; Li, 1998; Xiaoju, 1984 cited in Karim 2004), the majority of studies focus on the difficulties that teachers face while applying CLT (Karim, 2004). Few studies have focused on teachers' attitude toward CLT in a particular EFL setting (Razmjoo and Riazi, 2006; Karim, 2004; Hawkey, 2006; Liao, 2003; Chang, 2000; Chang, 2011). As far as I know, no such research has been conducted in a particular setting such as Iran. As the main individuals who are responsible for implementing a given syllabus in the classroom, it is very crucial to find out what teachers think about a certain approach, here CLT, since their thinking shapes their practices no matter what the syllabus requires.

1.5 Research Questions

What follows are the questions of this study:

1. What are Iranian EFL teachers' overall attitudes towards communicative language teaching?
2. What are the reasons underlying the Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes toward CLT?
3. Is there a gap between teachers' attitudes of CLT and their actual classroom practice?

1.6 Definition of key terms

1.6.1 Teacher`s Beliefs

Ideas and theories that teachers hold about themselves, teaching, language, learning and their students are called beliefs. Borg (2006) stated that beliefs are:

“... an often tacit, personally-held, practical system of mental constructs held b teachers and which are dynamic- i.e., defined and refined on the basis of educational and professional experiences throughout teachers` lives. This constructs have been characterized using a range of psychological labels... which may often be distinguished at the level of theoretical or philosophical debate but which seem to defy compartmentalization when teachers` practices and cognitions are examined empirically” (p.35).

Teachers` beliefs are thought to be stable constructs derived from their experiences, observations, trainings and other sources which serve as a source of reference when teachers encounter new ideas. Sometimes their beliefs impede the acceptance of new ideas and practices. Beliefs also serve as the source of teachers` classroom practices and form a system or network that may be difficult to change. In teacher education a focus on belief system is considered important since teacher development involves both development of skill and knowledge as well as development or modification of belief system.

1.6.2 Communicative Language Teaching

An approach to foreign or second language teaching which emphasizes that the goal of language learning is communicative competence and which seeks to make

meaningful communication and language use a focus of all classroom activities. The communicative approach was developed particularly by British applied linguists in the 1980s as a reaction away from grammar-based approaches. The major principles of CLT are:

1. Learners learn a language through using it to communicate.
2. Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activity.
3. Fluency and accuracy are both important in language learning.
4. Communication involves the integration of different language skills.
5. Learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error.

1.6.3 Communicative Competence

Knowledge of not only if something is formally possible in a language, but also the knowledge of whether it is feasible, appropriate, or done in a particular speech community is known as Communicative Competence.

Communicative competence includes:

- a. Grammatical competence that is knowledge of the grammar, vocabulary, phonology, and semantics of a language.
- b. Sociolinguistic competence that is knowledge of the relationship between language and its non-linguistics context. Knowing how to use and respond appropriately to different types of speech acts, such as requests, apologies, thanks, and invitations, knowing which address forms should be used with different persons one speaks to and in different situations, and so forth.
- c. Discourse competence that is how to begin and end conversations.