

# Communicative Language Teaching in EFL University Context: Challenges for Teachers

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**Abstract**—The tenet of this study was to investigate the challenges hindering a proper implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in EFL university context. There have been opposing views on feasibility of implementing CLT in EFL context. Some researchers (Incecay & Incecay 2009; Bax 2003) have preferred the significance of learners' needs and adoption of traditional methods of language teaching. However, there is much research on adopting CLT in EFL context (Coskun 2011; Richards 2006; Sauvignon 2002; Murphy 2000; Littlewood 1981; Hymes 1971). In Saudi Arabia, one of the objectives of teaching English is to enable the students to achieve communicative competence but teachers face a lot of difficulties in exploiting the content using CLT approach. A questionnaire (Ozsevik, 2010) was adapted to gather the data from 100 teachers (male and female) at Taif University English Language Centre regarding the challenges they are facing in creating a CLT environment. The results revealed that the teachers were confronted with various challenges relating to teachers, students, education system, and CLT. The important findings included lack of CLT training, problems in accessing CLT resources, low-proficiency of students, lack of motivation among students, examination system and instruments to assess communicative competence of the students.

**Index Terms**—communicative language teaching, EFL University context, English teaching in Saudi Arabia

## I. INTRODUCTION

There are three broad aims in language learning which are social, artistic (literary), and philosophical. Social aim considers language as a form of social behaviour and communication, artistic aim treats language as a form of creativity, and appreciation of creative activity and creativity itself, and philosophical aim demands training in analytic techniques (Kelly, 1969 p.396 quoted by Robert, 2004 p.2).

To ensure achieving these aims, numerous approaches and methods in teaching of English as foreign or second language were conceived, but the most prominent were grammatical and communicative approaches. The grammatical approach is based on linguistics or grammatical forms which are “combined to form grammatical sentences” (Canale 1980, p. 1). Whereas, the communicative approach is based on functions helping students “to know and emphasizes the ways in which particular grammatical forms may be used to express these functions appropriately” (ibid). Communicative approach was introduced in 1970s for teaching English as a second language (ESL) to cope with the “needs of the immigrants in English speaking countries but with the passage of time the communicative approach was experimented in non-native countries to provide better and life-like opportunities to the English language learners” (Canale 1980, p. 1).

Communicative approach or Communicative language teaching (CLT) is based on theory of language as communication emphasising greatly on using the target language by the learners in a variety of contexts and on learning language functions. In other words, successful learning of a foreign language means how well learners have developed their communicative skills or competence which means an ability to apply knowledge of a language with adequate proficiency to communicate. Since its inception, CLT is best considered as an approach rather than a method (Richards & Rogers, 1986) and has served as a major source of influence on language teaching practice around the world. Rogers (2001) suggests that an approach represent language teaching philosophies can be interpreted and applied in a variety of different ways in the classroom. CLT “highlights the fundamentally communicative properties of language, [where] classrooms [are] increasingly characterized by authenticity, real-world simulation, and meaningful tasks and it attempts to go beyond purely grammatical and discourse elements in communication and probe the nature of social, cultural, [and] pragmatic features of language” (ibid).

The pivotal concept in CLT is communicative competence which includes knowledge of “what to say and how to say it appropriately based on the situation, the participants, and their roles and intentions” (Ozsevik 2010, p. 27). In such situations, a teacher’s role in the classroom is of utmost importance. They should be a “model for correct speech and writing” and help “produce plenty of error free sentences” (Richards 2006 p. 5). Also, they should create an environment where students feel comfortable working in a group or pair, rather than “relying on the teacher for a model” (ibid). A teacher’s role is of a facilitator, guide and co-learner. Learners are provided with an autonomous environment to help them to influence and take control of their learning.

In Saudi Arabia, English is a compulsory component of curricular scheme of study at school and university levels. Though the universities have adopted activity based syllabus to enable the students to communicate within and outside

the classroom fluently and effectively, much research concludes that the students are not performing well as they should be (Zahid, 2014; Farooq, 2012; Al-Seghayer 2011; Khan, 2011). Despite having a communicative syllabus, experienced teachers and facilities, poor performance of the students needs to be investigated. This research aims at finding out the problems in exploiting the study materials and creating a learning environment, and to suggest measures to improve the situation.

#### *Research Question*

1. What difficulties and challenges do the teachers face in adopting CLT?
2. What are the challenges caused by students in implementing CLT in the classroom?
3. Is the education system in Saudi Arabia helpful in implementing CLT?
4. How can CLT be applied in the classroom to enhance language skills of the students?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Communicative language teaching, introduced in 1970s, is regarded as an approach to language teaching and it is based on a theory that primary function of language use is communication (Richards & Rodgers 2001). CLT is considered as a major invention and the most prevailing approach in English language teaching since its inception (Savignon, 1972; Habermas, 1970; Hymes, 1971; Jakobovits, 1970). The basic concept of CLT is to develop students' communicative competence (Hymes, 1971) by providing real-life situations that initiate communication. CLT needs authentic input of language use and requires providing opportunities for the students to use the language in a real life context. It also entails the use of wide materials and the employment of highly qualified teachers to manage the creative classroom potentials (Sun & Cheng, 2000)

CLT is a reaction to the traditional approach in language teaching which emphasizes rote learning and "structurally (grammatically) sequenced curricula" (Brown, 2007, p. 47). In CLT environment learning takes place "through the process of struggling to communicate" (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, in Brown, 2007, p. 49).

The basic concept in CLT is communicative competence. It is the ability to understand and apply appropriate behavior in a social context, and at the same time it involves learner's active participation in producing the target language. (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrell, 1997; Canale, 1980; Hymes, 1972). Communicative competence includes linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence. Linguistic competence means knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, sociolinguistic is the ability to initiate, contribute and end a conversation in a consistent and coherent manner, and discourse competence is the ability to communicate effectively without any problems and breakdowns (Savignon, 2002, pp. 8-9).

Brown (2007, pp. 46-47) enlists seven characteristics of CLT which are: Focus on communicative competence intertwining the organizational and pragmatic aspects of the language, learner's engagement meaningful use of the language through an effective relationship between form and function, focus on fluency rather than accuracy, appropriate feedback from teacher on students' errors, equipping the students with skills necessary to communicate in real life contexts, making the students autonomous to develop their language skills beyond the classroom, encouraging the students to construct meaning through interaction with others, and engaging students in the learning process through learner-centred, cooperative and collaborative activities.

In a classroom, CLT environment can be established if a teacher considers culture of the target language as an important aspect of teaching and learning. Students are expected to acquire accurate forms of the target language and its usage in various social situations in the target language setting to convey appropriate, coherent, and strategically-effective meanings for the native speakers. To achieve such objectives, authentic materials are used to represent the reality of native speaker language use. That is why CLT is not considered as a method but rather as an approach in which a variety of methods and techniques may be applied instead of restricting to one model or authority (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

### *A. Teachers' Role in CLT Classroom*

CLT, being a learner-centred approach, modifies the roles of teacher and students in a language classroom as compared to traditional approaches. In CLT, a teacher is not merely a teacher and a learner just a learner. In a traditional classroom, a teacher is the dominating authority whereas in CLT, s/he is a facilitator and a learner is a participant, and through communicative activities they create knowledge in a collaborative environment in classroom. The teacher facilitates the communication process between the students in the class and between students and the text and activities. The teacher also acts as a co-learner and researcher to contribute in terms of the nature of learning and organizational capacities (Breen & Candlin, 1980, p. 99). Thus, a teacher adopts CLT to produce and use authentic teaching materials according to the needs of the learners. S/he is a motivator as well and provides the learners with a comfortable classroom environment for language learning. Further, CLT discourages teacher controlled drills, quiz based on memorized materials, as well as focus and explanation of forms of English.

A teacher hence, in a CLT environment has multiple roles to act, and according to Harmer (2001), a teacher is an organizer of classroom activities, assessor of learner errors, participant in organized activities, prompter to encourage the learners, a source of language and knowledge, and an instructor to train learners on language skills. These roles, sometimes, confuses the teachers in their expectations, practices, and reaction to CLT. At the same time, however, these

roles encourage other teachers to select or develop their own materials by providing learners with a range of communicative tasks (Savignon, 1983)

Deckert (2004) thinks that CLT requires teachers with low profile role, pair and group work, problem solving activities, use of authentic material, interaction on real-life topics, and teaching of four language skills. Thompson (1996, p. 14) also recommends the reconsideration of old concepts regarding language teaching held by teachers based on their experiences and compare them with the new developments and possibilities for better pedagogical gains. In recent approaches to ESL/EFL, new developments have been made focusing on cognitive aspects of L2 motivation. Such trends resulted in new motivational constructs like “self-efficacy, self-determination, and those of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations, and expectancy of success, etc.” (ibid). Teachers utilize motivational techniques like group work in their teaching to enhance positive L2 learning goals and beliefs.

#### *B. ELT in the Current Context of Study*

Much research conducted in the context of teaching and learning English in the Arab world suggests that it has not produced the desired results (Zahid, Farooq & Gulzar, 2012; Al-Jarf, 2008; Rababah, 2003). In this regard, Al-Hazmi (2006) similarly reported that “language teaching in the Arab world is dominated by a traditional, top-down, textbook-oriented, teacher-led methodology.” (p. 38).

English in Saudi Arabia is influenced by “political, religious, social, and economic overtones and is a topic of heated debate”, though, there is an opposition to English language questioning its “validity and contributes to a shift in the language to suit local beliefs and practices”, (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014, p.128). Being an international language, English has acquired a privileged status in Saudi Arabia by government and community (Hajailan, 2003, p. 01) and it is used as a means of communication, commerce and trade, diplomacy, tourism, and as a medium of teaching learning in higher education” (Liton, 2013 p.19).

In the Saudi context, the government has taken various steps including introducing English as medium of instruction in technical and higher education, establishing language labs, teacher training, curriculum development according to modern line to ensure learning English for communication purposes. On the other hand, the level of achievement in learning English is not encouraging as it should be. Alshumaimeri (cited in Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013, p. 114) argue that “teachers have pointed out that students leave the secondary stage without the ability to carry out a short conversation.” After learning English for many years, the students have achieved little in terms of language proficiency, and making a large number of students and teachers waste their time and energy. According to the researcher's involvement with the context, the situation remains the same to a large extent currently.

#### *C. Relevant Studies*

Anderson (1993) conducted a research on difficulties relating to CLT in China and found the following challenges: Insufficient number of teachers practicing CLT, mismatch between CLT's goals and the students' expectations, and difficulties in evaluating students' performance. Valdes and Jhones (1991) pointed out teachers' low proficiency in English and difficulties in designing courses to meet the students' real needs as major challenges in implementing CLT in Cuba. In the Greek context, Karavas-Doukas (1996) conducted a research on teachers' attitudes towards CLT and concluded that the teachers were inclined towards traditional methods besides having a CLT based curriculum. He opined that either the teachers didn't understand the basic principles of the CLT or they didn't want to implement CLT in their classrooms. Li (1998) conducted a research on South Korean teachers' to find out their perception of CLT in EFL environments. Li found similar student-related difficulties such as: (a) low English proficiency, (b) little motivation for communicative competence, and (c) resistance to class participation. Similarly, Choi (1999) mentioned discrepancies in the Korean context between teachers' perception about CLT and their teachers' practices. Yang and Cheung (2003) conducted a study on secondary school English language teachers in Hong Kong and found that the teachers face challenges in using CLT due to the constraints like large classroom size, lack of training in communicative techniques, and mistaking any group work for communicative teaching.

Therefore, unlike traditional approaches, Hu (2002, p.95-96) suggests that CLT project student centeredness and create more interactive environment in the classroom. In this regard, Liu (2005) conducted a research on the issue of CLT in Taiwan and concluded that the teachers face problems in practicing CLT in their classroom due to grammar based examination. Inceyay and Inceyay (2009) conducted a research on the effectiveness of CLT in Turkey and found that aligning the CLT activities with the traditional approach had a positive effect on the learning of EFL learners. As such, much research conducted on the implementation of CLT EFL settings mostly focused on teacher-related challenges while conducting CLT activities in the classroom. At the same time, it demonstrates a disparity in teachers' beliefs regarding CLT concepts and their practices in the classroom. Such misconceptions are based on lack of communicative competence, large classes, and traditional grammatical knowledge and its teaching. (Richards 2006; Sakui, 2004; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999; Thompson, 1996; Burnaby & Sun, 1989).

### III. RESEARCH DESIGN

A quantitative method employing questionnaires was adapted (Ozsevik 2010) to gather data from English language teachers. The questionnaire consisted of four parts: Teacher-related difficulties and challenges, student-related

difficulties and challenges, difficulties and challenges related to educational system, and CLT-related difficulties and challenges. The questionnaire was modified for the current study. The sample consisted of 100 EFL teachers (50 males and 50 females) at the Taif University English Language Centre.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected through a questionnaire was tabulated in percentile. The discussion has been divided into four parts; difficulties and challenges relating to teachers, students, education system, and CLT itself.

A. Teacher-related Challenges

The first part of the questionnaire reflects the EFL teachers' opinions regarding the challenges they face in their classroom in implementing CLT. Responses from both genders revealed three main aspects: Awareness, CLT training and resources, and native context. See Table 1 below.

TABLE 1:  
TEACHER-RELATED DIFFICULTIES AND CHALLENGES

Statements	Major challenge		Challenge		Mild challenge		Not a challenge	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1. Teachers have misconceptions about CLT.	20	14	48	42	20	10	12	34
2. Teachers lack appropriate use of English in context.	20	29	48	12	24	21	8	38
3. Teachers lack the knowledge about the English culture.	12	0	32	24	35	18	21	58
4. Teachers have little time to develop materials for communicative activities.	7	7	45	48	40	36	8	9
5. Teachers have fewer resources for communicative material development.	22	35	45	26	28	28	5	11
6. Teachers lack training about CLT approach.	28	12	51	21	19	48	2	19
7. There are few opportunities for teachers to get CLT training.	28	0	40	42	26	40	6	18
8. Teachers lack access to authentic materials such as newspapers, magazines, movies etc.	33	14	46	4	14	29	7	53

Firstly, ‘teachers have misconceptions about CLT’ has been considered a challenge by most of the teachers (45%), but at the same time, a reasonable number of female teachers (34%) didn’t think it was a challenge. As the idea of CLT was conceived in ESL context in 1970s and initial materials were designed keeping in view the needs of the immigrants living in English speaking counties, it may have created certain misconceptions regarding the implementation of CLT in EFL contexts. These misconceptions, according to Thompson (1996), were teaching of no grammar, teaching only speaking, pair work means role play, and expecting too much from the teacher. Thompson provided the reasons for the misconception about CLT which were the teachers’ unwillingness to re-evaluate their beliefs and practices when they described that CLT norms demanded an unrealistically superhuman teacher. After clarifying these misconceptions, Thompson suggests that in CLT environment teachers are induced with new incentives instead of repeating the same every year and the enjoy their work. (p. 14).

According to the present study results, the second set of challenges that teachers are facing in adopting CLT have vital aspects as reflected through their responses regarding CLT training and resources. EFL teachers may lack training about CLT (51% male as a challenge and 48% female as a mild challenge), and there are less opportunities of training about CLT (41% both male and female teachers as a challenge, but 40% female EFL teachers consider it as a mild challenge). Professional development is an effective part of any educational system as it assimilates educational policies, culture, and modern trends. In this survey, the majority of EFL teachers mentioned that they lacked training and there were less opportunities of training to implement CLT in EFL context despite the in-house continuous professional development programs. However, Khan (2011, p.73) argues that “They think that this is an academic embarrassment to take part in any training program”; It’s obligatory for a teacher to update his knowledge, potential and skills through continuous professional development to keep abreast with the advancement in the field of education, language teaching, use of technology in an educational environment. In the ear of technology, the world has become a global village, and one can pursue relevant courses from anywhere and anyway (Khan, 2011 p.73).

Respondents also reported that there are fewer resources for communicative materials development (45% male as a challenge and 35% female as a major challenge), and they have little time to develop materials for communicative activities (46% both as a challenge). In this regard, Thompson (1996) suggests that that it is difficult to adopt CLT when the study materials available are uncommunicative, but nowadays one can find books based on CLT with activities providing teaches guideline to carry out them in their classroom. (p. 14).

Thirdly, the current results showed that there was a huge discrepancy in opinions between male and female respondents regarding the lack of appropriate use of English in context (48% male as a challenge but 38% female think it not a challenge), lack of knowledge about English culture (35% male as a mild challenge but 58% female as not a challenge), and access to authentic materials (46% male as a challenge but 53% female as not a challenge). Male EFL teachers reported these aspects as challenges, whereas the female EFL teachers rated them as not a challenge. This reflects that female EFL teachers in Saudi universities may have an edge on their counterparts in their awareness, access,

and commitment in adopting CLT. Breen and Candlin (1980) suggested that the primary role of a CLT teacher is “to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between them and the various activities and texts” (p. 99). Hence, an EFL teacher needs to reach a benchmark level of English proficiency to understand and communicate the depth of subject knowledge besides having skills to impart it in an effective and efficient manner, making his/her students use the target language for communication.

Regarding teacher-related difficulties and challenges, there are various studies that reflect interpret the current study results in terms of mismatch in teachers’ beliefs about CLT and their practices, and issues relating to language competency, planning skills, training in CLT, material development, etc. (e.g. Li 1998; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). Li (1998) further commented that most of the teaches are already over-burdened whereas CLT demands some additional work on the part of teachers which they can’t manage. Therefore, “lack of time for and lack of expertise in developing communicative materials” had been the major constraints for teachers (Li 1998, p.689). In Saudi Arabia however, creating a cohesive group of EFL students might be a challenge due to several reasons. One of the reasons may be the curriculum itself since the teachers may feel that they may not be able to cover the required syllabus on time so they “switch to use the Grammar-Translation Method” (Al-Maini, 2006). As a result, “it decreases the opportunities of interaction in the classroom” (Alrabai 2011, p. 260).

### B. Student-related Challenges

The second section of the questionnaire discusses student-related difficulties and challenges. The majority of EFL teachers agreed to such items as less confident and less prepared (68%), passive style of learning (56%), resistance of participating in communicative activities (62%), lack of motivation (62% male as a challenge and 45% female as a mild challenge), and low-level proficiency (50%) as challenges in their classrooms. See Table 2 below.

TABLE 2:  
STUDENT-RELATED DIFFICULTIES AND CHALLENGES

Statements		Major challenge		Challenge		Mild challenge		Not a challenge	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
9.	Students have low-level English proficiency.	35	37	48	52	12	8	5	3
10.	Students have a passive style of learning.	25	34	58	55	14	9	3	2
11.	Students are less confident and less prepared for CLT.	18	22	68	67	12	7	2	4
12.	Students resist participating in communicative class activities.	29	6	52	72	14	18	5	4
13.	Students lack motivation for developing communicative competence.	11	17	62	28	23	45	4	10

In the present study context, though activity-based syllabus has been designed keeping in view the students' needs, the EFL teachers face several problems in executing it in its true sense. According to Javid (2014), these problems include students’ low proficiency in English language, lack of interest in learning English, EFL anxiety, over-crowded classes, and lack of technological support. It has been observed that “more than 70% of the students are usually placed in lower levels as they mostly lack motivation” (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013 p.477). Arabic being the native language is used by the Saudis at home, workplace and institutions so “there is a bleak chance to learn English through day-to-day interaction” (Khan, 2011 p.1249). Sometimes it becomes difficult for the subject teacher to encourage some enthusiastic students to use the target language due to those students who are not very good in English, or at least hesitant to use English in and outside the classroom (Khan, 2011, p.69). Khan (2011, p. 1248) argues that the students are not producing results as desired despite having “a sound planning, purposive curriculum, suitable textbooks, qualified teachers and effective administration” and traditional way of teaching English at school level. Also, in most of Saudi universities, classroom instruction is teacher-centred instead of student-centred (Al-Shehri, 2004) and EFL classes are usually over-crowded with more than 50 students in each class (Al-Mohanna, 2010). This may have largely contributed to students’ passive style of learning. At the same time, low-level of proficiency may also lead to less confident and less prepared students. Therefore, it becomes difficult for EFL teachers to practice CLT in their classroom, and thus they tend to stick to the traditional way of teaching.

As the language is used for expressing meaning, interaction, and communication, students’ needs should be given priority. To meet the students L2 needs, Brown argued (as cited in Richards (2006, p.4) that learning in CLT be seen as resulting from “interaction between learner and language user, collaborative creation of meaning, meaningful and purposeful interaction through language, attending to feedback provided by peers and teacher, attaining to input and trying to incorporate new forms into developing output, and risk taking and experimenting with the language.

### C. Policy-related Challenges

In the third part of the questionnaire, teachers expressed their opinion regarding various difficulties and challenges caused by the prevailing education system as shown in Table 3 below. Female EFL teachers were concerned about the shortage of AV aids in the classroom (63%) and large classes (46%) as major challenges in effective use of CLT in their classrooms. Male EFL teachers also considered the shortage of AV aids (52%) as a challenge. Lack of materials for communicative activities was another difficulty reported by EFL teachers (44%) as a challenge. Further, existing examination system was reported as unsuitable for CLT as expressed by 47% of teachers.

TABLE 3:  
DIFFICULTIES AND CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Statements	Major challenge		Challenge		Mild challenge		Not a challenge	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
14. There is a lack of enough support from administration.	13	5	38	27	42	53	7	15
15. Traditional view on teachers' and students' role is not compatible with CLT.	12	7	44	38	40	46	4	9
16. Classes are too large for the effective use of CLT.	25	46	33	38	30	9	12	7
17. Lack of material for communicative activities	18	21	45	43	29	28	8	8
18. CLT is unsuitable for existing examination system in Saudi Arabia.	13	7	41	55	39	20	7	18
19. The existing syllabus is not suitable for communicative activities.	9	7	34	14	46	30	11	49
20. Classrooms are not equipped with AV aids.	21	63	52	18	22	14	5	5

In the current study findings however, there is a little disparity among males' responses (46% as a mild challenge) and females' responses (49% as not a challenge) regarding the suitability of existing syllabus for communicative activities. The reason may be the huge budget allocated by the Saudi Government in the field of education and especially English language learning. Curricula have been redesigned and updated by the experts at university level to meet the international standards of foreign/second language education.

Findings of several previous studies align with present study findings. Li (1998) found that the large classes and grammar-based examination were the main difficulties faced in the educational system. In the same vein, Liton (2013) collected data through questionnaires from a total of 25 EFL teachers at renowned Saudi universities. The research results revealed that the EFL classroom is not conducive to task-based language teaching practice due to large class size (100-140). Alrabai (2011) also conducted a research at KAU and concluded that "overcrowded classes are also a challenge for teachers to introduce CLT activities in their classes" (p.276). Such constraints emerge as consequences of the current policies enacted by the education system, and which may not be overcome unless a serious initiative is taken by the top officials of the educational system.

D. CLT-related Challenges

Table 4 below shows the results of the last part of the questionnaire. Respondents were asked about CLT-related difficulties and challenges.

TABLE 4:  
CLT-RELATED DIFFICULTIES AND CHALLENGES

Statements	Major challenge		Challenge		Mild challenge		Not a challenge	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
21. There is a lack of effective and efficient instruments to assess communicative competence.	22	24	48	43	22	22	8	11
22. CLT doesn't take into account the differences between EFL and ESL teaching contexts.	13	6	24	38	53	44	10	12
23. Western educational assumptions are not suitable within local context.	12	8	45	21	32	45	11	26
24. CLT needs specific materials for teaching.	15	7	37	51	36	33	12	9
25. CLT lack assessment instruments in local context.	16	5	44	49	31	40	9	6

The present study results report that 51% female and 37% male respondents think that implementing CLT is a challenge due to the need for specific materials for teaching. Therefore, it might be difficult to adopt CLT when the study materials available are uncommunicative. Nowadays, a lot of CLT based textbooks are available in the market with activities and teacher book which can be adopted by teachers for use in their classroom.

Regarding the non-suitability of western educational assumptions in the local context, male EFL teachers (45%) consider it as a challenge, whereas females (45%) opine it as a mild challenge. It can be argued that the very idea of CLT was conceived and developed in Europe and its application may be a challenge for language teachers in EFL contexts. However, there is a persistent need to understand the discrepancy between theory and practice, demanding more positivity on the side of EFL teachers' views about the feasibility of CLT.

They also expressed lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments (male 48%; female 43%) to assess communicative competence of the students in local context (male 44%; female 49%) as challenges.

Similar CLT-related challenges have been identified by Li (1998) in South Korean context as well. Searching for proper resolutions, Alptekin (2002) suggests that the learners may be engaged in discourse more effectively if the language is localized to create real communicative behavior realizing English as an international language.

Based on the current study context circumstances, findings of the present study stress several recommendations for CLT to be implemented effectively in the Saudi EFL university classrooms. First, EFL teachers need to undertake ongoing CLT training that emphasizes hands-on workshops that develops EFL teachers' skills on the various aspects of CLT. Also, there has to be a wide access to resources, teaching aids in the classroom. Though its policy related, another important factor for CLT to work out is to lower the number of students in classes and to facilitate the process of setting goals with students.

In order for these implementations to be put into practice, a top-bottom initiative needs to be taken starting from policy-making level. This initiative may essentially include the following procedures: First, EFL curriculum needs to be restructured in terms of time allowance for extra task-based activities that enable students to get involved in the learning process more effectively. Second, EFL instructors should undertake ongoing professional development to refresh their experiences and keep them abreast with current trends in the field. The overcrowded classes were assumed to be one of the largest obstacles that hindered the implementation of CLT in EFL university context. Third therefore, a critical structural rearrangement of students' numbers in classes has to be seriously considered. In the same vein, the forth emphasis should be placed on the classroom setting, making it a more appealing and accommodating environment for the implementation of learner-based activities. This includes equipping classrooms with sufficient technology-enhanced tools such as data shows, access to network and computers, and dynamic tables for flexible group activities.

## V. CONCLUSION

The present research focused on investigating the difficulties and challenges that the EFL teachers encounter while implementing CLT in their classrooms. Challenges to implementing CLT were stranded as relating to such aspects as teachers, students, education system and CLT in Saudi Arabia. Interestingly, most of the EFL teachers were in favour of using CLT in their classrooms, despite all the proclaimed challenges. Several misconceptions were found to be common amongst EFL teachers which were assumed to be developed under the influence of traditional teaching methodology. These misconceptions like 'no grammar teaching' and 'only speaking' were found to be based on lack of knowledge and exposure to CLT approach. As EFL teachers, respondents reported not having access to CLT materials and claimed not being able to prepare CLT activities for their students due to constraints like lengthy syllabi, limited time, and lack of CLT training. Regarding the student-related difficulties, passive style of learning, less confident and less prepared, lack of motivation, low-level proficiency, and resistance to participate in communicative activities' were reported as major student-related challenges to implementing CLT. Such challenges may have also emerged from the learners' needs for using English outside the classroom which, unfortunately was not always feasible. Educational system of a country plays the pivotal role in directing the students' needs and performance in a specific field. In the context of present research, the Saudi government has taken crucial measures to introduce English an international language by providing huge budget, experienced teachers, and supportive materials. However, issues such as large classes, lack of materials for communicative activities, lack of technology-enhanced aids in the classroom, and the prevailing examination system established major constraints in implementing CLT in its true spirit.

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