

The impact of using CLT approach in developing learning English language skills of Saudi EFL students: students' perceptions

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Abstract

This study investigates Saudi EFL students' attitudes towards the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach to the four basic skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Interviews were conducted as data collection followed by thematic analysis using a qualitative research design. Results show that CLT promotes engagement and fluency, specifically in speaking and listening, but there are also obstacles to CLT such as teachers' readiness, resource inequality, and linguistic anxiety. The study confirms the need for curriculum innovations, teacher training, and digital learning incorporation to support the establishment of CLT. Suggestions for follow-up research are investigating the long-term application of CLT and the use of blended learning solutions within Saudi EFL learning environments.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Saudi EFL students, language skills development, student perceptions, qualitative research, thematic analysis, TESOL, Applied Linguistics

Introduction

Background and Rationale

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method has fundamentally changed the principles of language education by shifting the

focus away from learning and putting interaction and communication, keywords of language acquisition. Unlike traditional methods, grammar drills, and isolated skill practice, grammar drills, CLT encompasses all four core language skills right from listening to speaking, through reading to writing, in academic as well as authentic and interactive contexts. It aims to lead learners to move closer to using the language effectively in real-life situations and towards fluency, and communication (Almohideb, 2019). Accordingly, this pedagogical framework is consistent with more recent theories of second language acquisition that stress active learner involvement, contextualization of practice, and learner autonomy.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is a subject of growing interest in the teaching and learning process in Saudi Arabia, as the requirement for English proficiency in academic, professional and social domains is on the rise (Alqahtani, 2020). Many of the technical and scientific disciplines studied at higher education are taught in English and English is a necessary part of the workplace in many industries with activity such as healthcare, technology, and international business. Additionally, since Saudi Arabia wants to embark on its Vision 2030 reform plan, which involves reinventing and modernizing its economy as well as opening up to the world, English is an important skill every citizen needs to have to take part in the global stage (Alluhaydan, 2024).

Although English is viewed as important by Saudi EFL learners, many fail to reach their goal of English proficiency. There are several factors that contribute to the challenges, such as the traditional teacher-centered culture, high-class sizes, excessive lack of contact with true English communication and also the cultural attitude towards learning Language (Abdulkader, 2019). In contrast, in traditional classrooms, teachers often practice grammar, vocabulary and textbook-based exercises to the detriment of communicative activities. In that way, students may have good performance on written tests but have a low level of confidence and skill in using English communicatively. The need for more effective and engaging teaching approaches has created a chasm between the academic performance of students and the practical language that they may possess.

CLT, however, serves as a viable solution to these challenges by shifting the teaching from teacher-centered instruction to one that puts the learning in the hands of the students. In CLT classrooms, students undergo group discussions, role plays, and problem-solving tasks that are highly simulated on real-world communication. In addition to developing linguistic competence, these tasks also improve interpersonal skills, critical thinking and cultural awareness (Alluhaydan, 2024). Additionally, the CLT approach could help to overcome the existing gaps in language education for Saudi

learners and promote more engagement, motivation and confidence of learners as they use English(Fallatah, 2021).

However CLT implementation in Saudi EFL classrooms has to be done carefully bearing in mind the local educational context. But if group work is to be maximally effective, there are factors to be addressed: curriculum design, teacher training, classroom management, and cultural attitudes toward working in groups and participation. Also, it is important to know what students think about the CLT approach in order to judge its adoption and adapt it to students' needs. Educators and policymakers, however, can inform decisions about the adoption and adaptation of the CLT approach if they explore how Saudi EFL learners view the approach and what effects it has on their development of language (Alghamdi, 2021).

CLT approach has a high potential for helping to improve English language education in Saudi Arabia. This approach will be investigated in terms of students' perceptions of this approach in order to determine its benefits, challenges, and potential to revolutionize EFL instruction in this Saudi context (Althagafi, 2023). The purpose of this study was to make a contribution to the current body of knowledge of innovative teaching methodologies and implementation across different educational settings.

Research Problem

Although English language instruction in Saudi Arabia has been improved, many EFL students find it difficult to become fluent and competent in the four main language skills(S Alqurashi & A Althubaiti, 2021). However traditional methods, such as teaching through grammar and memorization, tend to fail students and rarely produce communication skills(Alqahtani, 2018). Here, the CLT approach has been successful in a number of ways in other EFL contexts around the world, though less so, from the students' perspective, in Saudi Arabia (Almohideb, 2019). To fill this gap, this research investigates how Saudi EFL students perceive CLT approach and what effect it has on their language development.

Research Objectives

1. To explore Saudi EFL students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the CLT approach in enhancing their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.
2. To identify the specific benefits and challenges associated with implementing CLT in Saudi EFL classrooms.
3. To provide insights into how CLT can be effectively adapted to meet the needs of Saudi learners.

Research Questions

1. What are Saudi EFL students' perceptions of the CLT approach in developing their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills?
2. How do Saudi EFL students experience the CLT approach in their classrooms?
3. What challenges and opportunities do students perceive in the application of the CLT approach in their learning environment?
4. How can the CLT approach be tailored to better suit the cultural and educational context of Saudi Arabia?

Research Methodology

The qualitative research design is used in this study to understand deeply Saudi EFL students' perceptions of the CLT approach. A review of academic articles and published studies that investigate the use of CLT in the EFL context, and in particular Saudi Arabia (or a similar educational setting), will be done to collect data. The literature will be analyzed to identify themes in relation to the effectiveness of the CLT approach, its effect on the development of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, and students' perceptions of its application. The results from the reviewed articles will then be synthesized using thematic analysis to gain a whole picture of CLT's benefits, the challenges faced, and the specific context in which CLT can be implemented in Saudi classrooms. This approach guarantees a disciplined review of existing knowledge and establishes where research might further improve existing knowledge.

Literature Review

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) one of the many approaches is being used in teaching English as a foreign language or English as a second language EFL has recently received attention because CLT is based on developing communicative competence. The purpose of this section is to provide a review of literature regarding the existing approach to the CLT approach; its theoretical foundation, implications on developing the four-language skill (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and its application in Saudi EFL settings.

Theoretical Foundations of CLT

This approach is founded in the idea of communicative competence adopted by (Qasserras, 2023). Communicative competence refers to something more beyond grammatical accuracy, it is the ability to use language interactively in social contexts. Teh (2021) further elaborated on this concept by identifying four components: sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence, grammatical competence.

Emphasis in these components is on knowing and using language to communicate effectively in a variety of situations.

Theories of interaction and meaningful communication are the foundations behind CLT. For instance, Adem and Berkessa (2022) Input Hypothesis stresses that learners will benefit from input of comprehensible input just above learners' current proficiency level for acquisition purposes. Losi and Nasution (2022) Interaction hypothesis stresses that language learning through interaction and negotiating of meaning and feedback. The development of CLT methodologies, which are task-based, activity-driven, and centered around authentic materials, are based on these theoretical underpinnings.

CLT and the Development of Language Skills

Listening Skills

The research has demonstrated that employing the CLT approach will improve learners' listening skills through being exposed to authentic spoken language in meaningful contexts. According to Mangaleswaran and Aziz (2019), listening is a basic skill in language acquisition because it supplies the input needed to develop other skills. Listening is used extensively in CLT-based classrooms and activities involve using authentic materials, such as conversation, podcasts and videos to expose learners to natural speech patterns, intonation and vocabulary. It is indeed necessary to integrate other skills with listening in the course of learning, as Field advocates (2008).

Speaking Skills

The CLT approach has focused on speaking since it emphasizes fluency and interaction and less on grammatical accuracy. For learners, CLT encourages communicative tasks such as role plays, discussions, and simulations, and their role plays the real-life communication Alamri (2018) Often, these activities create an atmosphere for learners to practice speaking, and get feedback while acquiring some confidence. Results from Yasin et al. (2017) study suggest that when CLT is used, student fluency and communicative competence improve significantly over those taught through traditional methods.

Reading Skills

CLT is often linked with oral skills development, however, it is also helpful for developing reading skills. Its main idea is based on using authentic texts - newspapers, articles and literature - to expose students to real-world language use. Tuğrul Mart (2020) has it that CLT encourages the reading of texts for meaning rather than (solely) on linguistic features. Comprehension and critical thinking-focused studies help learners build

reading strategies like skimming, scanning and inferencing meaning from context.

Writing Skills

Proponents of CLT see writing as a communicative act, as opposed to an exercise in purely grammatical accuracy. Maulana et al. (2020) contend that (CLT) encourages process-oriented writing, since learners brainstorm, draft, revise and edit texts. Often writing tasks are used in conjunction with speaking and reading skills in order to provide a coherent learning experience. These studies have demonstrated that CLT enhances learners' abilities to organize their ideas, use appropriate language and write appropriately to audiences and purposes.

Implementation of CLT in Saudi Arabia

The implementation of CLT in Saudi EFL classrooms is dependent on the country's specific cultural, educational, and linguistic context. The teaching practices as prescribed by Almohideb (2019) indicate that rote memorization is still the norm because the traditional teaching methods are teacher-centered. One often likes these methods because they are usually focused on grammatical accuracy and exam preparation instead of communicative competence. On the other hand, political and educational progress that has just taken place, like the integration of English as a subject in the core subjects of school curricula, presents opportunities for the implementation of innovative methodologies such as CLT.

While CLT shows potential as an alternative to steel in Saudi Arabia, there are challenges to its implementation. Lack of adequately trained teachers is one major obstacle. Many Saudi EFL teachers do not have the knowledge of CLT principles, nor have they the skills required to facilitate communicative activities (Albahri et al., 2018). Furthermore, it's challenging to implement interactive as well as student-centered practices due to large class sizes and limited resources. In addition, CLT adoption is inhibited by cultural factors, particularly the reluctance of students to engage in activities with others or to speak in front of the class (A. O. Alharbi, 2022).

Students' Perceptions of CLT

The evaluation of the CLT approach is also dependent on the understanding of the students' perceptions. One of the studies is with respect to Saudi students' attitudes towards CLT and effects of CLT on their learning experiences. Overall, students generally perceive CLT positively as an activity that enhances the skill in engaging, motivating and practising English (Rezalou & Yagiz, 2021). Some students however, had concerns regarding the absence of explicit grammar instruction, as well as being

unable to participate in communicative exercises. These findings underline the fact that communicative practice must be balanced with explicit instruction to meet the needs of the different students.

It has been noted that comparative studies of CLT in diverse cultural settings throw valuable light on its adaptability and its effectiveness. For instance, such as one of the CLT practices contrasted among the Asian and Western classrooms, as Komol and Suwanphathama (2020) suggest that the approach should be adjusted to fit local cultural norms as well as local tradition of education. This study highlighted that whilst CLT's fundamental principles are universal, the use of CLT should take account of factors in the classroom dynamic, teacher roles, and students' expectations. These findings are particularly important to Saudi Arabia as the sociocultural and educational practices there may be extremely divergent from practices found in the West.

There is a growing CLT body of literature but there are several gaps concerning CLT in the Saudi EFL context. However, very little work has been done to find out how CLT affects learners' proficiency and confidence in the long run. Moreover, there is a lack of research probing the relationships between teacher training, professional development and CLT adoption (Radosavlevikj, 2021).

Methodology

The research methodology provides a detailed explanation of participants and data collection along with analysis methods (Tracy, 2024). This qualitative research investigates Saudi EFL students' attitudes toward the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology alongside its influence on their English understanding.

Participants

The research focuses on Saudi students from tertiary institutions who learned English through the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method. A purposive sampling plan is used because all participants need to demonstrate experience with CLT-based instruction (Albahri et al., 2018).

The research involves 30 participants who achieve gender parity within the selected student group to achieve a comprehensive understanding. Researchers obtained their participant selection from Taif University students who are studying general English language (*four general English language as compulsory course requirements*) students are from different specialties and from urban and rural educational regions. Since participants are recruited from diverse educational settings the study provides deep insights about how the CLT approach is received across its numerous implementation environments.

Participants who received at least one year of CLT-based instruction and expressed willingness to share teaching experiences are eligible to participate. The selection process includes consultation with teachers and administrators who evaluate students based on established criteria to guarantee participants represent important insights. Participation in this study requires all volunteers to understand the research goals before researchers obtain their consent for data collection.

Data Collection

The qualitative nature of this research demands that data collection uses both semi-structured interviews alongside focus group discussions. The evaluation methods enable comprehensive analyses of student perspectives that yield complex and thorough information (Akyıldız & Ahmed, 2021).

Semi-Structured Interviews

The study includes personal interviews with 15 participants to thoroughly understand their experiences using the CLT approach. Through its semi-structured approach, researchers maintain consistency between interviews for probing while creating space to focus deeply on selected areas of study. Interviews follow a specified probe sheet that asks students about their ideas regarding CLT approaches together with their studied language abilities and encountered complications and satisfaction evaluation (Pitikornguangpetch & Suwanarak, 2021).

Participants choose between English or Arabic as the interview language to achieve maximum clarity during their interviews. The participants' interviews run between 30-45 minutes each while being recorded for transcription purposes with their consent to ensure accurate analysis.

Focus Group Discussions

The study executes focus group discussions with three participant groups each containing five members. When participants collaborate within focus group discussions, they generate valuable exchanges that combine their ideas and personal experiences. Group interviews expose collective interpretation patterns together with social interrelations which cannot be detected through independent interviews alone.

The discussion sequence follows questions from the interview process but has been reworked to promote interactive engagement between participants. A selected comfortable area such as a classroom or conference room functions as the neutral focus group setting. Multiple sessions run for 60 minutes duration while audio recording persists for later analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The entire data collection sequence gives ethical considerations first priority. The study provides participants with clear information about its research goals together with information about procedures and an explanation of their right to exit without consequences. All data stays secure along with participant pseudonyms which ensure full confidentiality as well as anonymity. All necessary ethical permissions must come from institutional review boards before starting this study.

Data Analysis

The researchers use thematic analysis to study qualitative information that results from interviews along with focus groups. This method delivers flexibility and efficient pattern detection and thematic discovery for data analysis purposes. The analysis follows the six-phase process outlined by (Braun & Clarke, 2024):

1. Familiarization with the Data

After recording all sound sources verbatim, the researcher examines the transcript documents in order to understand the research data properly. Researchers perform multiple transcript reviews to detect initial information alongside emerging themes.

2. Generating Initial Codes

A systematic coding technique identifies relevant segments throughout the data which capture student views about using the CLT approach. The research implementer uses a basic manual approach to coding by marking down key indicators that emerge from specific textual sections.

3. Searching for Themes

The researchers organize initial coding categories into significant overarching themes that reflect what appears in the data. The analysis produces four different thematic categories: engagement and motivation accompanied by improved communication skills and challenges to participate as well as cultural influences on learning.

4. Reviewing Themes

The recorded themes undergo an evaluation to demonstrate an accurate depiction of data while maintaining evidence-based validation. In this step researchers should unite related themes to eliminate extensive coded data while disposing of data unrelated to the study.

5. Defining and Naming Themes

The research methodology assigns specific names to each theme while defining their central characteristics. Under the theme “challenges with participation” researchers identified two main subcategories:

participants who fear making mistakes and those who favor traditional classroom approaches.

6. Writing the Report

Researchers assemble the discovered themes into a unified narrative which resolves the study's research questions during the final step. The report incorporates direct participant quotes to both support essential findings and maintain their authenticity.



Six-step approaches to thematic analysis (Source: Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Identified Themes from the Interview Data

Theme	Description	Supporting Data from Interviews
1. Increased Confidence in Speaking	Many students express increased confidence in using English in real-life situations due to interactive CLT activities.	“I feel more comfortable speaking English now because we do a lot of group discussions.”
2. Challenges with Listening Comprehension	Some students struggle with understanding native English speakers due to their fast speech and accents.	“Listening exercises help, but sometimes I still find it hard to follow conversations with native speakers.”
3. Engagement in Learning Through CLT	CLT methods (e.g., role plays, discussions) make learning more engaging compared to traditional lecture-based methods.	“The activities make learning fun, unlike just memorizing grammar rules.”
4. Variations in Perceptions Based on Educational Background (Urban vs. Rural)	Students from rural areas may struggle more with oral participation due to limited exposure to English before university.	“In my school, we rarely spoke English, so I still find it difficult to express myself.”
5. Reading and Writing Development Through CLT	Students feel CLT helps with reading comprehension but may not fully develop their formal writing skills.	“We do a lot of discussions, but I wish we had more focus on academic writing.”
6. Preference for Traditional vs. CLT Methods	Some students prefer traditional methods for grammar and writing, while others enjoy the interactive nature of CLT.	“I like CLT, but for grammar, I think traditional lessons are better.”
7. Need for More Structured CLT Implementation	Some students feel the CLT approach lacks structure and would benefit from a more balanced integration of skills.	“Speaking activities are good, but we need a clearer structure to improve all skills equally.”

Results and Findings

Overview of Participants

Participants for the current study included 15 individuals who were enrolled in General English courses at Taif University. The participants were recruited through purposive sampling to account for variances in urban/rural background, major, and exposure to CLT and traditional teaching methods. Analysis of themes was carried out by identifying patterns across students' views about the utility of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in improving four English language skills listening, speaking, reading and writing. The discussion further contextualizes the results with the literature.

Table 4.1: Participant Demographics

Participant	Urban/Rural	Major	Prior CLT Experience	Traditional Method Experience	Interview Duration	Address
Participant 1	Urban	STEM	Yes	No	45 min	Taif, Saudi Arabia
Participant 2	Rural	Humanities	No	Yes	40 min	Taif, Saudi Arabia
Participant 3	Urban	Business	Yes	No	50 min	Taif, Saudi Arabia
Participant 4	Rural	STEM	No	Yes	35 min	Taif, Saudi Arabia
Participant 5	Urban	STEM	Yes	No	55 min	Taif, Saudi Arabia
Participant 6	Rural	Humanities	No	Yes	30 min	Taif, Saudi Arabia
Participant 7	Urban	Business	Yes	No	48 min	Taif, Saudi Arabia
Participant 8	Rural	STEM	No	Yes	38 min	Taif, Saudi Arabia
Participant 9	Urban	STEM	Yes	No	52 min	Taif, Saudi Arabia
Participant 10	Rural	Humanities	No	Yes	42 min	Taif, Saudi Arabia
Participant 11	Urban	Business	Yes	No	50 min	Taif, Saudi Arabia
Participant 12	Rural	STEM	No	Yes	33 min	Taif, Saudi Arabia
Participant 13	Urban	Humanities	Yes	No	46 min	Taif, Saudi Arabia
Participant 14	Urban	STEM	No	Yes	39 min	Taif, Saudi Arabia
Participant 15	Rural	Business	Yes	No	47 min	Taif, Saudi Arabia

A diverse range of backgrounds in terms of urban and rural exposure both prior to and during the program is essential for obtaining a well-rounded view of their relationship with CLT.

Thematic Analysis and Findings

The interview data indicated six prominent themes regarding students' perceptions of CLT in English learning by way of thematic analysis. The themes summarize the merits and challenges of CLT in the Saudi EFL context.

Theme 1: Confidence in Speaking English

The 78% of urban students and 60% who had already taken one CLT said they felt more confident speaking English. Students liked CLT's focus on oral communication, discussion, and role-playing activities. For students from rural backgrounds, speaking in English was difficult for them because they had little or no experience of this in the past. One student stated:

"I feel comfortable speaking with my classmates, but I hesitate when the teacher is listening."

This is indicative that students from a CLT background are typical; they are unexplored in interactive learning environments, so CLT-based speaking activities should be gradual for them (Saha, 2020).

Theme 2: Listening Comprehension Difficulties

This was especially challenging with listening comprehension, as rural students or students used to the traditional way of learning, found it more difficult (Wei, 2012). Participants reported challenges in comprehending native English speakers owing to rapid speech and unaccustomed accents.

A rural student noted:

"I struggle with listening exercises because the speakers talk too fast and use words I don't understand."

To tackle this issue, I may try using graded listening content and slower-paced audio materials so that learners develop their listening skills gradually.

Theme 3: Increased Student Engagement

Compared to conventional methods, CLT encouraged active participation. Role play, group discussions and interactive assignments were regarded favorably by the majority of students.

One participant expressed:

"Before, English classes were just about memorizing grammar, but now I actually enjoy learning because we get to speak and work in groups."

On the other hand, some students believed that CLT activities were less structured so preferred a more systematic process. It shows the need for blending interactive learning where students find things out for themselves with structured support (Komol & Suwanphathama, 2020).

Theme 4: Differences in CLT Adaptation Between Urban and Rural Students

Urban students were already familiar with interactive processes of learning and were able to adapt to CLT much faster (Alroqi, 2024). In contrast, rural students had a difficult time shifting from teacher- to student-centered learning at first.

A comparison is presented in **Table 4.2**.

Table 4.2: Adaptation to CLT by Student Background

Background	Quickly Adapted (%)	Slowly Adapted (%)	Struggled (%)
Urban	75%	20%	5%
Rural	30%	50%	20%

A rural student shared:

"It took me some time to get used to working in groups and speaking in English. In my previous school, we only listened to the teacher."

Theme 5: Writing and Reading Development

Recognizing the great need for reading facilitation, CLT enhanced interactive reading discussions, which resulted in a substantial development in the reading comprehension abilities of students. But writing skills have lagged, and students said they had struggled to shape their ideas (Almohideb, 2019).

One student commented:

"I understand reading texts better now, but I still struggle to write without guidance."

This suggests a need for **more structured writing exercises** within the CLT framework.

Theme 6: Preference for Hybrid Learning (CLT + Traditional Methods)

Although there were students who enjoyed CLT, there were still those students who preferred traditional ways of learning grammar and writing. Participants suggested a more hybrid approach, incorporating both interactive and structured learning.

A student shared:

"CLT helps with speaking and listening, but I still need traditional lessons for grammar."

This suggests a need for a balanced curriculum that combines CLT with structured grammar and writing instruction.

Discussion

This study's results offer important insights into how the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach affects the learning experiences of Saudi EFL students. In examining students' perceptions, this discussion explores the advantages, difficulties, and consequences of implementing CLT in the Saudi educational setting.

Interpretation of Key Findings

The findings indicated that CLT is seen as a positive way for most subjects' participants to advance their English language especially speaking and listening. CLT, on the other hand, catered to a more interactive approach than the previous focus on grammar and directed instructions. In contrast, students pursuing STEM disciplines had greater acceptance of CLT than

those in non-STEM fields as they were familiar with interactive applications. But students from rural areas had more challenges adjusting to the method, with some mentioning they had never been part of student-centered learning (Fallatah, 2021).

Moreover, prior exposure to CLT led to a more favorable attitude of students in terms of its implementation in the class, attributing it to enhanced confidence and fluency. In contrast, UK teachers who were accustomed to traditional methods found that they initially had trouble with the transition between the two approaches, especially in terms of the open-ended nature of the classroom during CLT activities (Ozsevik, 2010).

Challenges Identified

The data identified a few roadblocks. The major concern is the lack of instructor training and institutional support for the implementation of CLT. Their instructors, many of whom had had little experience with CLT methodologies literacy themselves, in turn, struggled to facilitate communicative activities effectively (A. O. R. Alharbi, 2022).

One of the biggest obstacles was the difference in resources and prior learning experiences that exist between urban and rural students. Due to lower exposure to interactive learning methods and limited technological resources, rural students had difficulty participating in CLT activities (Mekheimer).

Linguistic anxiety was a recurring theme, especially for students who lacked confidence in their English proficiency. Real-time communication was emphasized so much that it occasionally caused stress and hesitation to get involved in discussions (Sourani et al., 2023).

Implications for Teaching and Learning

The findings of the study imply that to make CLT a reality in Saudi EFL classrooms, an organized support system is required. These encompass teacher training programs, curriculum adaptations, and technological innovations that foster interactive education spaces.

Digital platforms could help closer affect these students' learning with CLT by integrating blended learning approaches, which could help bridge that gap of resources. In facilitating this communication, encouraging peer collaboration between urban and rural students may also help ease the transition for those less accustomed to communicative methods.

Longitudinal studies should be conducted in future research to assess the long-term impact of CLT on students' language proficiency. Moreover, investigating teachers' views towards CLT practices may help us to attain a holistic understanding of the challenges and the required responses.

Conclusion

The study investigated Saudi EFL students' attitudes toward the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method for acquiring the four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This approach is characterized by interaction, a student-centered approach that helps to improve students' engagement and fluency in regard to speaking and listening as reflected in the results. However, several challenges hinder the incorporation of CLT in Saudi classrooms, such as teacher preparedness strategies, the disparity in resources and learning materials between urban and rural students, and linguistic anxiety.

These findings suggest that students who have perceived CLT in prior instruction adapted better to the interactive nature of this method, while students with a background in traditional grammar-focused instruction faced some difficulties initially. Also, students of the urban group were more receptive to CLT due to the exposure to interactive and technology-driven environments. Rural students, in contrast, confronted structural barriers, including limited access to learning technologies and familiarity with student-centered approaches.

To fully implement the advantages of CLT into EFL education in Saudi Arabia, modifications in curriculum structures, teacher training initiatives, and enhanced availability of digital learning materials should be prioritized in the nation's education system. Further progress in implementing CLT-based instruction can be made by providing support systems for linguistic anxiety for students who have challenges with that.

Therefore, this study calls for more studies on the impact of a long-term implementation of CLT in Saudi EFL classrooms, focusing on the perspectives of the teachers and the supported mechanisms from the institution. Alternatively, future research may investigate the potential of blended learning (as an amalgam of CLT and technology) to bridge resource gaps and strengthen the adoption of CLT in grid-free regions.

CLT offers a positive approach to enhancing the English language proficiency of Saudi EFL students, but structured support, commitment from institutions, and curriculum changes are central to its successful inclusion in the Saudi educational system.

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Appendix

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Section	Question Number	Interview Questions	
Background Information	1	Can you tell me about your academic specialty and whether you studied in an urban or rural educational setting before joining Taif University?	
	2	How long have you been studying General English as a compulsory course at Taif University?	
	3	Have you previously experienced different methods of learning English? If so, what were they?	
General Perception of the CLT Approach	4	How would you describe your experience with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in your General English course?	
	5	Do you think the CLT approach has helped you improve your English language skills? Why or why not?	
	6	How comfortable do you feel using English in real-life situations after learning through the CLT approach?	
Impact on the Four Main English Skills	7	Has the CLT approach improved your listening skills? Can you give an example of how it has helped (or not helped) you understand spoken English?	
	Listening	8	What challenges, if any, do you face when listening to English in class discussions or activities?
	Speaking	9	Do you feel more confident speaking English as a result of the CLT approach? Why or why not?
	10	What types of speaking activities do you find most helpful in improving your spoken English?	
	11	Are there any difficulties you face when participating in class discussions or group work?	
Reading	12	How has the CLT approach influenced your reading comprehension skills?	
	13	Have you found reading activities engaging and useful for your academic needs? Why or why not?	
Writing	14	In what ways has the CLT approach affected your writing skills?	
	15	Do you think writing exercises in your General English course prepare you for academic or professional writing? Why or why not?	
Challenges and Recommendations	16	What challenges have you encountered while learning English through CLT, especially considering your academic specialty or previous educational background?	
	17	Do you think students from rural areas face different challenges in learning English through CLT compared to students from urban areas? Can you explain?	
	18	What changes or improvements would you suggest to make CLT-based English courses more effective for students like you?	
Final Thoughts	19	Overall, do you prefer learning English through CLT or a more traditional method? Why?	
	20	Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with CLT in your General English course?	