



Challenges and Constraints of Implementing Communicative Language Teaching: Teacher-Related vs. Non-Teacher-Related Factors

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APA Citation:

Nam, G. (2023). Challenges and constraints of implementing communicative language teaching: Teacher-related vs. non-teacher-related factors. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, 16(1), 75-96.

Received
03/05/2022

Received in revised
form 12/09/2022

Accepted
20/09/2022

ABSTRACT

Concerns have long been raised regarding the constraints of CLT. The study aims to discern the exact as opposed to the supposed problems that are taken for granted as obstacles. A total of 95 in-service Korean, North American, Chinese, Uzbek English teachers participated in the study. The results reveal that none of the non-teacher-related external factors such as educational policy, class size, classroom layout, learners' English proficiency, and learners' motivation, was found to be significant for CLT. Amongst teacher-related internal factors such as teachers' language proficiency, teacher's motivation to teach, years in service, teacher competence, and training in instructional methodology, teacher competence was found to be significant. In addition to the influence of the constraints on the teaching methods, the study further investigated teachers' perception of their teaching. The results that teaching methods were selected for 'convenience' and external teaching environments as the No.1 precondition for their change to CLT suggest a need for a shift in teacher perception.

Keywords: CLT, TBLT, GTM, teacher competence, teacher perception

Introduction

Since the Grammar Translation Method (hereafter GTM) was first introduced in the 1840s, a raft of teaching methods such as Direct Method, Audiolingual Method, Situational Method, Natural Approach, Total Physical Response, and Task-Based Language Teaching (hereafter TBLT) have been introduced (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Some methods such as Suggestopedia and Silent Way have faded away while Communicative language Teaching (hereafter CLT) has won in popularity in language teaching.

The influence of CLT was felt in the EFL classrooms in Asia in early 1990s. Many countries underwent transition from traditional to communication-promoting teaching – introduced in Japan in 1989; stated in the sixth revised national curriculum in Korea in 1995; adopted at the university level in the late 1990s in Taiwan; and stipulated by the State Commission of Education in China in 1992 (Choe, 2016; W. Hu, 2010; Wei et al., 2018).

Despite the acknowledgement of the significance of CLT in English teaching, noticeable changes have not been accommodated in the implementation of this method in actual classrooms. Moreover, in spite of the confessed teachers' belief in implementing CLT (Doeur, 2022), their teaching practices do not reflect such beliefs (Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak, 2021). In addition, the constraints and the difficulties of adopting CLT to EFL classrooms have long been pointed out; however, more often than not, teacher feedback and input have not been reflected in policy changes in relation to this matter (Byun, 2014; Choe, 2016; W. Hu, 2010; Wei et al., 2018). Considering the L2 learners' limited communications in EFL contexts, this issue still has its role in ELT and therefore, giving language learners opportunities to learn how to *use* the language for real life situation and practical applications in combination with other ELT methods (e.g., flipped learning in Phoeun & Sengsri, 2021; online learning in pandemic Covid-19 in Harahap et al., 2021).

In previous research relating to the implementation of CLT (J. Jeon, 2009; Yook & Kim, 2017), concerns regarding the limitations and constraints of CLT implementation have been raised primarily in regard to the non-teacher-related external factors such as education policy and large class size. However, the researcher as a teacher educator observed from class discussion in a teacher training program that there is also a need for close examination of teacher-related internal factors deriving from the teachers' practices and perceptions. Without direct and substantive teacher input for a successful incorporation of CLT, even improvements of those institutional or

governmental factors may prove to be ineffectual. As such, a comprehensive analysis embracing both teacher-related and non-teacher-related factors that have been stated to impede CLT will discern differences between the purported problems taken for granted as obstacles and the factual problems identified from the empirical study. To this end, the research questions of the present study are as follows.

1. Are there any relations between CLT and non-teacher-related external factors regarding class size, classroom environment, learner proficiency, learner motivation, and educational policy?

2. Are there any relations between CLT and teacher-related internal factors regarding teacher's English proficiency, years in service, training in teaching methodology, and teacher competence? In addition, are there any differences between native English speaking teachers (NEST) and non-native English speaking teachers (NNEST)?

3. What are the reasons for English teachers' adherence to their established teaching methods and what are the conditions for their transition to CLT?

Literature Review

Communicative Language Teaching

Definition of Communicative Language Teaching

Since the communicative competence was pioneered by Hymes (1972) and shaped by Canale and Swain (1980), a new perspective of language learning emerged in language teaching. By turning the attention away from discrete linguistic segments to communicative forms and functions, second/foreign language learning began to facilitate real-life communication.

CLT broadened the concept of language learning from just acquiring linguistic competence to incorporate other competences so that learners can use the target language that is not only grammatically correct but also appropriate for the given context. That is, rather than giving a primary attention to grammar, CLT seriously concerns 'what to say', 'how to say it', and 'in what situations' can be said. As Harmer (2007, p. 69) articulates, "communicative language teachers taught people to invite and apologize, to agree and disagree, alongside making sure they could use the past perfect or the second conditional".

Implementation of CLT in EFL Classes

The practicability of the implementation of CLT in English classes has been questioned in many EFL classes. In Korea, English learners' communicative competence was included in the National Education Curricula, 7th Revision (NEC) in 1997 and intensified through pedagogic reforms promoting CLT and TBLT from 2007 (Choe, 2016; M. Lee, 2011; Y. Lee, 2012). However, there have been concerns about the gap between CLT and English teaching in the Korean educational context (Cho, 2014; S. Kim, 2009) as well as doubts of its feasibility to warrant change in the current educational climate in Korea (Yook & Kim, 2017). Worse still, CLT seems to be applied only in 'demonstration classes' for school inspectors or parents (S. Kim, 2009).

In regard to China and in response to its open-door policy, the State Commission of Education incorporated communicative competence in the Chinese National English Curriculum in early 1990s (W. Hu, 2010; Liao, 2004; Wang & Lam, 2009). In 2001 the government of China stipulated that CLT should be implemented in English teaching in primary and secondary schools; nevertheless, desirable transition from traditional teaching methods to CLT has not been reported (Zhang, 2014). Wang and Lam (2009) suggest that principles of GTM may be well-suited for the Confucian culture of China. They further speculate that this cultural precept may explain the prevalence of GTM in other Asian countries that share the Confucian culture.

Turning to Uzbekistan, English as a foreign language was introduced in the country in the mid-1950s, with GTM being the predominant teaching method. After the country's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, CLT made an appearance in the late 1990s and since then, attempts have been made to transform the system to communication-promoting teaching. However, the successful implementation of CLT is yet to be promising. The problems have been precipitated by several factors such as the lack of teacher competence, failure to understand CLT principles, insufficient government support, and the lack of teaching resource (Hasanova, 2007; Hasanova & Shadieva, 2008; Navruzov, 2017).

The discrepancy between the ideal communicative goals set in the official curriculum and their implementation in actual classrooms has also been reported in other EFL contexts such as in Japan (Humphries, 2015; Tahira, 2012), Thailand (Tayjasanant & Barnard, 2010), and in Vietnam (Canh, 2002). As such, despite the perceived need for a transition from GTM to CLT (Jin, 2007; S. Kim, 2009; Wang & Lam, 2009; Yang, 2014), concerns about the feasibility of CLT have continuously been raised in many EFL contexts (Ethiopia in Adem & Berkessa, 2022; Indonesia in Belinda & Raja, 2021; Turkey in Çiftci & Özcan, 2021).

Factors Impeding Successful Implement of CLT

Challenges for the implementation of CLT that many EFL teachers face have been discussed until recently (Butler, 2011; Littlewood, 2013; Wei et al., 2018). For example, Butler (2011, p.36) identified these challenges based on three categories: 'conceptual constraints' concerning the values of and beliefs about CLT, 'classroom-level constraints' regarding the students and teachers in classrooms, and 'societal-institutional level constraints' about the curricula and tests. The present study aims to investigate the external difficulties beyond the teachers' power and the internal challenges that we as teachers can possibly surmount.

Non-teacher-related External Constraints

Non-teacher-related external factors impeding a successful implementation of CLT are vulnerable to decisions of institutions and governments. The voices of teachers have not effectively been involved in those decisions nor in the policy-making process, and thus noticeable changes are few and far between (J. Jeon, 2009; Yook & Kim, 2017).

In this regard, several issues are in play. First, educational atmosphere and culture have not been reflected in policies (Han, 2016; Liu et al., 2004; Wei et al., 2018). Moreover, heavy administrative workload imposed on teachers can result in their lack of readiness for CLT (Han, 2016; Kim et al., 2014; Kim & Park, 2014).

Second, the implementation of CLT has been encumbered by the large class size and the traditional layout of those classrooms (e.g., individual tables and chairs in rows). The situation looks worse in China where some English classes in universities accommodate more than one hundred students (W. Hu, 2010). This has been one of the acute problems in many EFL countries (Byun, 2014; Choi, 2000; Jin, 2007; Li, 2001; Liu et al., 2004).

Third, the English learners' low motivation to communicate and their communicative competence have also been seen as the impediments to CLT (Cho, 2014; Rabbidge & Chappell, 2012; Wei et al., 2018). Learners' motivation seems to be heavily shaped by English exams. Since the communicative competence is not centrally and purposefully incorporated in the school assessment and college entrance exams, any transition from GTM which is suitable for test-preparation to CLT has proved to be hard to exercise in many countries (G. Hu, 2005; H. Lee, 2018; Han, 2016; Jin, 2007; Yu, 2001; Suh, 2007; W. Hu, 2010; Wei et al., 2018). As Moodie and Nam argue (2016), this may be the reason why the education reforms towards CLT in Korea has yielded insubstantial changes. As a result, learners' extrinsic motivation aimed

at attaining high scores may be attributed to unsatisfying communicative competence.

Teacher-related Internal Factors

Compared with the non-teacher-related external factors requiring top-down changes, teacher-related internal factors concerning teachers' own issues can be the bottom-up movement in which we as teachers can take the initiative.

First, the lack of teachers' English proficiency, in particular their oral proficiency has long been pointed out as an obstacle to CLT (Choi, 2000; Han, 2016; Jin, 2007; Liu et al., 2004; Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014). Compared with native English speaking teachers (hereafter NEST), non-native English speaking teachers (hereafter NNEST) can have low confidence in the target language and culture (H. Lee, 2018). W. Hu (2010, p.79) quoted Chinese teachers' complaints as in "I can teach English to some extent. It is quite beyond me if I am asked to give more explanations on language and cultural differences" as an example of teachers' self-perception in regard to their own English proficiency.

Second, there is a need for teacher training programs that can provide communicative teaching methods and practical hands-on techniques. Some teachers have misconceptions that CLT is merely teaching English in English or providing games for entertainment (Han, 2016; Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006; Sakui, 2004). As Zhang (2014) speculates, teachers have no past of role models of CLT since they themselves were not taught in CLT as learners.

Third, a higher level of teacher competence may be required to implement CLT. In addition to the lack of teachers' knowledge about CLT (Cho, 2014), it has also been pointed out that the current teacher training may be regarded as insufficient or ineffective to build teacher competence in CLT (Canh, 2002; Choi, 2000; Han, 2016; H. Lee, 2018; Jin, 2007; Wei et al., 2018; Yu, 2001; Zhang, 2014).

Methods

Participants

A total of 95 in-service English teachers participated in the study. They were 27 Koreans, 20 North Americans, 42 Chinese, and 6 Uzbeks who have been teaching at primary schools, secondary schools, and colleges/universities in EFL contexts for between 1 year and 30 years. Detailed information of teachers is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Participants

Gender	English		Years in service	English proficiency		Countries of their teaching	Educational stages of their teaching
M=33	As an	As an	M=10.55,	Oral:	Written:	Korea=47	Primary=11
F=62	L1=20	L2=75	SD=6.93	M=3.27,	M=3.17,	China=42	Secondary=31
			(.05-30 years)	SD=1.13	SD=1.18	Uzbekistan=6	Tertiary=53

Note. English proficiency 1=intermediate low, 2=intermediate mid, 3=intermediate high, 4=advanced, 5=distinguished (revised from ACTFL proficiency guideline)

Materials and Procedure

For those English teachers who were teaching or were in a teacher education program (M.A. and Ph.D.) in Korea, a 3-page-long paper-and-pencil questionnaire was given in person. For their colleagues who were not in Korea, an on-line version (Google Survey) with identical questions was provided. There were no time constraints for completion and the data was processed in anonymity.

In order to verify whether the alleged obstacles to CLT have empirical evidence, the survey questions were designed to investigate the relations between the alleged problems and their influence on CLT. In section one, in order to identify the teachers’ own teaching methods either promoting communication or not, 10 questions regarding principles and techniques of a traditional GTM and CLT (see Table 2) were adopted from Richards and Rodgers (2014) and Larsen-Freeman (2011).

As shown in Table 2, survey questions about GTM included examples such as “If students can translate from their first language into English (and vice versa), they are considered as successful learners.” On the other hand, a question about CLT was “The teacher facilitates communication in the classroom and acts as an advisor during the activities and students are communicators and are actively engaged in negotiating meaning”. The questions employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’.

In section two, the alleged problems that may impede CLT were identified. The non-teacher-related external factors were policy (either promoting CLT or not), class size, classroom layout (either promoting communication in a class or not), learners’ English proficiency, and learners’ motivation. The teacher-related internal factors involved teachers’

Table 2

Survey Questions (Section 1: Teaching Methods)

Teaching methods	Principles
GTM	Purpose of learning a language is to be able to read literature written in English. The teacher is the authority in the classroom. If students can translate from their first language into English (and vice versa), they are considered successful learners. Students learn the grammar rules and examples and then apply the rules to other examples. The language that is used in class is mostly the students' native language.
CLT	Purpose of learning is to communicate in English. Thus, students should be able to know the appropriate form to fulfil the language function in given social context. The teacher facilitates communication in the classroom and acts as an advisor during the activities and students are communicators and actively engaged in negotiating meaning. Everything done in class such as games and role-plays is done above simple drills with a communicative intent. Authentic language and materials are used in my class. Students' errors are seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills.

proficiency level (oral and written), years in service, training in instructional methodology, and teacher competence. The questions employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

For a close examination of the teacher competence, 40 questions were adopted and revised from Borg and Edmett (2018). It involved questions regarding learners (e.g., I help my learners identify individual learning goals), teaching (e.g., I promote collaboration and communication), language (e.g., I clarify forms of language), feedback & assessment (e.g., I identify errors and sensitively correct students' oral language), and material & technology use (e.g., I use technology to design and create teaching and learning material). The responses for teacher competence were taken according to a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. For other factors, both open-ended (e.g., How many years have you taught English?) and closed-ended questions (e.g., choose your classroom layout: suitable for communicative activities/ suitable for one-way lecturing) were employed. The study has acceptable internal consistency of the scales (Cronbach $\alpha = .93$).

Data Collection and Analysis

First, the initial number of the participants was 117; however, incomplete responses from 22 participants were excluded. Therefore 95 participant responses were manually scored and organized in Microsoft Excel. Second, in addition to descriptive statistics to obtain general

information, multiple regression was conducted to investigate any relationships between CLT and constraints which have long been considered as critical obstacles of CLT (both teacher-related internal factors and non-teacher-related external factors). Third, descriptive statistics was conducted for frequencies of reasons for the teachers’ teaching methods and precondition for CLT respectively.

Results and Discussion

In order to probe into the factors that impede CLT, the findings will be presented in non-teacher-related external factors and teacher-related internal factors.

Non-teacher-related External Factors

The external factors investigated were policies either promoting communication or otherwise, class size, classroom layout, learners’ English proficiency, and learners’ motivation.

Table 3

Non-Teacher-Related External Factors

	Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>std</i>	<i>b</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>VIF</i>
	Policy	1.69	.46	-.05	-.03	-.32	.75	.97	1.02
	Class size	3.60	1.27	-.01	-.17	-1.57	.12	.93	1.08
CLT	Classroom layout	1.22	.42	-.14	-.94	-.84	.41	.84	1.19
	Learner’s L2	1.69	.49	.02	.01	.13	.90	.92	1.09
	Learner’s motivation	1.34	.71	.09	.10	.95	.34	.94	1.06
R(.24), R2 (.06), F(1.05), p(.40), Durbin-Watson(1.92)									

Note. T: tolerance

As shown in Table 3, a multiple regression was conducted to investigate whether the external factors (policy, class size, classroom layout, learners’ English proficiency, and learners’ motivation) could significantly predict CLT. The multiple regression model with all five predictors produced 6% of the variance; however, none of the variables significantly predicted CLT ($R^2=.06$, $F(5,89)=1.05$, $p>.05$). The results suggest that none of the non-teacher-related external factors were found not to be significant impediment

of CLT ($p>.05$). This seems surprising in that the external factors were often claimed by English teachers as the key prerequisite for successful CLT.

First, the results of the present study in relation to ‘policies’ stand in contrast to the consistently blamed factor in the impedimentation of CLT. It has been pointed out that input of in-service English teachers has not been reflected in policies (Byun, 2014; Choe, 2016; W. Hu, 2010; Wei et al., 2018). However, the policies either promoting communication in class or not were not found to make any significant difference in the teachers’ CLT.

Second, regarding the classroom environment, there were no statistically significant differences of the teachers’ CLT in the classroom layouts and class size either promoting communicative activities or promoting one-way lecturing. Although these findings appear to be surprising, it can be assumed that certain communicative activities such as pair work can be implemented in a large class with a traditional layout.

Third, regarding the learners, the study found that teachers’ CLT was not found to be significantly influenced by their learners’ English proficiency and motivation. Different from common complaints of learners as obstacles to CLT, the results reveal neither significant correlation with learners’ English proficiency nor with learners’ motivation. This also comes as a surprise since not a few educators including the present researcher would hold the lack of students’ competence or motivation as pretext for the lack of CLT practice in the classroom. In this regard, it may be necessary to engage in some self-reflection as educators and ask whether various ways to overcome learner differences over their proficiency and motivation have been actively sought or whether the core issue may lie in the loss of enthusiasm after a couple of trial attempts of CLT. In this regard, positive changes of students’ views on communication-promoting teaching methods can be promising. Provided that TBLT is also a communication-promoting teaching method (Richards & Rodgers, 2014), J. Kim’s observation (2009) is noteworthy in this regard. That is, the implementation of TBLT improved not only the students’ confidence in English communication but also their views on the teaching method. Therefore, it is important to call to attention the fact that the burden of proof should be on teachers and not solely on the learners.

Teacher-related Internal Factors

Considering the difference of CLT between NEST ($M=4.42$, $SD=.41$) and NNEST ($M=3.93$, $SD=.63$; $t(93)=3.28$, $p=.00$) and particularly NNEST implementing lower CLT as shown in Table 4, teacher-related factors of NNEST will be additionally presented in this section.

Table 4

Comparisons Between NEST and NNEST

	NEST			NNEST			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD			
GTM	20	2.73	.42	75	3.15	.63	-2.81*	.00	.08
CLT	20	4.42	.41	75	3.93	.63	3.28*	.00	.10

Note. 1 lowest to 5 highest implementation of GTM and CLT

The internal factors concerning issues relating to teachers involve teachers’ language proficiency (oral and written), teacher’s motivation to teach, years in service, training in instructional methodology, and teacher competence as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Teacher-Related Internal Factors

Teacher-related Internal Factors	All		NNEST	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Teacher’s proficiency (oral)	3.27	1.13	2.81	.78
Teacher’s proficiency (written)	3.17	1.18	2.68	.79
Teacher’s motivation	1.29	.46	1.35	.48
Years in service	3.65	1.18	3.52	1.23
Training in instructional methodology	1.40	.74	1.43	.74
Teacher competence	3.98	.45	3.87	.40

As shown in Table 6, A multiple regression was conducted to investigate whether the teacher-related internal factors (teachers’ oral and written proficiency, teacher’s motivation to teach, years in service, training in instructional methodology, and teacher competence) could predict CLT. The results of the regression explained 26.8% of the variance ($R^2=.27$, $F(6, 88)=5.42$, $p<.05$) and within those results, only teacher competence was a significant predictor of CLT ($\beta =.49$, $p<.05$). This suggests that teacher competence has a relationship with CLT. The similar correlation was also observed from NNEST ($\beta =.45$, $p<.05$).

Table 6

A Multiple Regression: Teacher-Related Factors

Variable		<i>M</i>	<i>std</i>	<i>b</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>VIF</i>
Teacher's proficiency (oral)	All	3.27	1.13	-.06	-.11	-.47	.64	.15	6.49
	NNEST	2.81	.78	-.07	-.82	-.47	.64	.39	2.54
Teacher's proficiency (written)	All	3.17	1.18	.11	.21	.91	.36	.16	6.17
	NNEST	2.68	.79	.09	.12	.66	.66	.38	2.66
Teacher's motivation	All	1.29	.46	.06	.05	.45	.65	.84	1.19
	NNEST	1.35	.48	.08	.58	.49	.63	.84	1.19
Years in service	All	3.65	1.18	-.01	-.09	-.88	.38	.83	1.21
	NNEST	3.52	1.23	-.01	-.87	-.70	.48	.79	1.27
Training in instructional methodology	All	1.40	.74	.05	.06	.60	.55	.85	1.18
	NNEST	1.43	.74	.04	.48	.37	.71	.73	1.38
Teacher competence	All	3.98	.45	.69	.49	4.55	.00	.70	1.42
	NNEST	3.87	.40	.71	.45	3.7	.00	.83	1.20

All: $R(.52)$, $R^2(.27)$, $F(5.42)$, $p(.00)$, Durbin-Watson(2.08)
 NNEST: $R(.43)$, $R^2(.19)$, $F(2.67)$, $p(.02)$, Durbin-Watson(2.06)

Note, T: tolerance

As shown in Table 7, the relationship between teacher competence and CLT was further investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. There was a positive correlation between teacher competence and CLT ($r=.50$, $n=95$, $p<.05$). The results show that teachers with higher teacher competence have stronger adherence to CLT. The similar positive correlation was observed in NNEST ($r=.42$, $n=75$, $p<.05$).

Table 7

Correlations Between CLT and Teacher Competence

		N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Teacher competence	All	95	.50**	.00
	NNEST	75	.42**	.00

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It is important to reiterate that teacher competence in the present study reflects teachers' views and beliefs about learners, teaching, language, feedback & assessment, and material & technology use. Therefore, the finding is in line with Doeur (2022) that teacher belief is the important determining factor in teaching practices. In other words, teachers tend to 'display or verify' their beliefs through language practices; for example, teachers use the GTM method with the belief of the value of grammatical

competence (Ahn, 2008; Han, 2016). It is also important to find that teacher competence was higher for NEST than NNEST in the present study. Thus, NESTs' higher adherence to CLT than that of NNESTs should not be attributed solely to their knowledge of the target language and culture, but rather to their teacher competence.

Internal factors found insignificant for CLT were teachers' language proficiency, teacher's motivation to teach, years in service, training in instructional methodology. First, although there was difference of adherence to CLT between NEST and NNEST, English proficiency was found not to be a significant factor affecting CLT. English proficiency among the NNESTs was also not found to be crucial. Apart from linguistic competence the lack of sufficient knowledge of the target language culture may be another important reason for the NNESTs' reluctance to CLT (Medgyes, 2001). The aversion of NNESTs' CLT may lie in their perceived or real sub-par communicative competence and that can hold them back from adopting CLT since the method requires authentic and culturally appropriate communication in the target language (Braine, 2005; Humphries & Burns, 2015; Liu et al., 2004; Rabbidge & Chappell, 2012). However, the lack of communicative competence may not be the only explanation for their weaker adherence to CLT. It is plausible to speculate that NNEST may possibly teach in the same way they learned English. Thus, in addition to their lack of communicative competence the dearth of learning experience in CLT as learners may account for the lackluster reception of CLT into their classrooms.

Second, teacher's motivation to teach was not found to be significant for CLT. However, it seems promising that their motivation was closer to intrinsic (e.g., passion for teaching) than extrinsic (e.g., money).

Third, teachers' years in service did not influence CLT. It may be concerned with the teachers' persistence of a particular teaching method to which they are accustomed. This issue will be further discussed in the following section in relation to reasons for the teachers' preference to a teaching method and preconditions for teachers' change to CLT.

Fourth, the training in instructional methodology was found not to be effective since there was no statistically significant difference of CLT between the teachers who have taken a methodology class and those who have not. In addition, a striking finding is that those teachers who did but found it not helpful revealed lower adherence to CLT ($M=3.76$, $SD=.73$) than those who have never taken the methodology class ($M=4.04$, $SD=.67$). This finding may call for an improvement in the quality of teacher education.

Reasons for Teaching Methods and Preconditions for the Change to CLT

Regarding the research question three, open-ended questions regarding reasons for the teachers’ teaching methods and precondition for CLT were asked. As shown in Table 8, the two most cited reasons for English teachers’ preference to a teaching method were both non-teacher-related external constraints (policy, class size, and teaching environment: 35.8%) and teacher-related internal factors (their own views on language teaching: 35.8%). However, none of the external factors was found to be significant in the present study and this does not seem to justify external teaching environments as the teachers’ No. 1 precondition for the practice of CLT (53.7%) in Table 9.

Table 8

Reasons for Teachers’ Preference to a Teaching Method

Reasons	Responses	%
External constraints (policy, class size, and teaching environment)	34	35.8
Teachers’ views and beliefs	34	35.8
Students’ needs	15	15.8
Convenience	10	10.5
Never thought of the reason	2	2.1
Total	95	100.0

As for the other most cited reason, teachers’ own views on language teaching as discussed earlier, it may be speculated that some teachers have formulated views on language teaching from their own language education. Consequently, it is possible to suggest that they may instill in their students their own beliefs on grammatical competence as of the highest value. Another risk is that even those teachers who believe their teaching to be in line with CLT may be far from the common implementation of the method as pointed out in Y. Jeon (2010), Han (2016), and Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006).

It is surprising to find that some teachers did not give careful consideration when they selected their teaching methods. 10.5% of teachers responded with choosing a teaching method because it was simply deemed as ‘convenient’ and more critically, 2.1% of teachers have not even given conscious thought as to why they use a particular teaching method.

Table 9*Preconditions for Teachers' Change to CLT*

Precondition	Responses	%
External teaching environments	51	53.7
Teachers	4	4.2
Learners	12	12.6
Not willing to change	18	18.9
Never thought of it	10	10.5
Total	95	100.0

As shown in Table 9, the most cited precondition for teachers' change to CLT was the external teaching environments (53.7%), followed by matters concerning the learners (12.6%). Regrettably, only 4.2% of teachers saw the fact that they may be the foremost agent in any meaningful change. The findings suggest that teachers' complacent attitude may lead to their lack of initiative in bringing about any serious transformation.

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

From the findings of the study, many of the external factors which have long been considered as the impediment to CLT were not found to be critical obstacles to CLT. The results suggest that teacher competence is the critical determinant for CLT while none of the external factors that have been blamed as obstacles were found to be significant. Therefore, despite the concerns that have long been raised regarding the difficulties of implementing CLT in EFL contexts, the results of the present study lend credence to a starting point for CLT albeit from a different angle. That is, the study hopes to encourage teachers to take the aforementioned initiatives to improve their teaching with the following pedagogical implications.

The discussion of CLT often draws the collective sigh of resignation as in the statement 'if the external circumstances don't change, there is not much we can do'. As J. Jeon (2009) found from the replication of her previous study in 1997, English teachers' perception of the obstacles of CLT seem not to have changed. However, different from the teachers' negative perception, class size which was ranked as the foremost problem has decreased from 45-50 to 30-37 (J. Jeon, 2009). She also found improvements in teachers' English proficiency over the period. Therefore, the present study proposes a change of teachers' perception from the direction 'why we can't implement the communicative teaching' towards 'what we can try in the circumstances.'

It is high time for change in regard to the language teacher's perception of the communicative teaching. Teaching for communication is not a "matter of paying lip-service" (G. Hu, 2002, p. 94) or fearing to "lose of control" over students (Littlewood, 2013, p. 7) since the mutual respect and understanding between teachers and students can be expected from teachers who behave as 'facilitators' and not 'controllers' of the learning process. Any peer pressure from other teachers who maintain the traditional teaching methods (Shin, 2012) should not prevent active teachers from giving the communicative teaching method a chance. As found in the present study, teacher competence reflecting teachers' beliefs is one of the key factors in the realization of CLT. Therefore, the study suggests initiatives for teachers to change from "passive receivers" to "active constructors" (Wei et al., 2018, p. 7) and in order to improve their teaching, changes should be "suited to his or her own specific context" (Littlewood, 2013, p. 3). To this end, some pedagogical suggestions follow.

First, external constraints such as large class size can be overcome through class activities emphasizing language functions (a case study in Liao, 2003 as cited in Liao, 2004, p. 271). Second, regarding the lack of emphasis on accuracy as an important shortcoming of CLT, TBLT aimed at accuracy-building tasks can be a solution. The concerns of students who consider activities in CLT as merely 'fun games' (Zhang et al., 2013) can be reduced through the form-focused tasks in TBLT which can further maximize the students' satisfaction of the class (Baek, 2017). Third, in order to reduce the resistance to CLT, an eclectic approach embracing some features of traditional teaching may be realistic or even desirable. Considering that CLT is an approach and not a method, it can allow some scope for modification without changing the external constraints such as the school curriculum and policy. A blend of the existing traditional instruction with well-designed activities in CLT can complement each other even in the literature-based EFL classrooms (Byun, 2014; Johnson, 2004; H. Kim, 2004; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2006; Rao, 2006; W. Hu, 2010). In addition, regarding the teachers' concerns about the lack of teaching materials for CLT, there are ample teaching resources on the internet, some of which are freely printable. For example, even in a traditional classroom where students practice grammar through fill-in-the-blank or multiple-choice types of exercises, simple adaptation of grammar-focused communicative activities that are available online would benefit the students' accuracy for oral communication.

This study strongly suggests that language teachers taking initiatives should be at the center of any change toward CLT. It should, however, be noted that the study does not lessen the need to improve the external constraints such as poor teaching environments and non-communicative exams, nor squarely lay the blame on the teachers' shoulders. It is also

important to reiterate that the pedagogical suggestion in this study embracing traditional teaching does not intend to blunt the core principles of CLT. And since this study has limitations regarding the number of countries involved, future research including most if not all of the EFL countries may render a more comprehensive picture.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by Dong-A university research fund.

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