

**Azz Eddine Diouani**

is an EFL teacher. He has presented a good deal of papers at national as well as international conferences on issues related to English language teaching and learning. Currently, he is a PhD candidate at Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University. His research interests include language attitudes, teaching methodology, second language acquisition, and learner's reticence.

**Communicative Language Teaching in the Moroccan Classroom: Perceptions, Practices, and Difficulties**

**Azz Eddine Diouani**

**Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco**

**[di.azzeddine@gmail.com](mailto:di.azzeddine@gmail.com)**

**DOI: 10.18196/ftl.5251**

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**Abstract**

Research on the teaching practices of EFL teachers has revealed that teachers' beliefs are often at odds with their actual classroom practices. Accordingly, the present investigation compared teachers' perceptions and classroom practices of the Communicative Language Teaching principles (CLT) in the provincial directorate of Jerada. This exploration is an attempt to examine teachers' practices, thereby draw a line between what they think they do and what they do in the classroom. To this end, ten teachers were interviewed. Out of this number, only two teachers were observed. The data gathered via semi-structured interviews have shown that the teacher respondents were well-informed about the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). However, the data collected by the classroom observations revealed that the teachers were not teaching English communicatively. Factors such as learner's language proficiency, lack of knowledge as to how to implement the approach, unsuitable textbooks, and lack of motivation on the part of the learner, contributed enormously to the non-use of the CLT. To overcome these obstacles, the findings of the current study suggest that EFL teachers "should" motivate students, use simple fluency-oriented tasks, simplify, model, and scaffold the learning activities. They also recommend adapting the textbooks to students' needs, research their practice, and invest more in their professional development. The Ministry of National Education is required to provide high-quality training to help teachers cope with the demands of the Communicative Approach.

*Keywords:* communicative language teaching; curriculum; factors; perceptions; practices; reform

### Introduction

In 1999, following the death of the former King Hassan II, the Moroccan government initiated a series of reforms "aiming at," as Hattani (2018) argued, "improving the quality of education" (p. 88). Due to the relative political openness that characterized the political scene at that time, practicing teachers, political parties, trade unions, teacher trainers, and stakeholders were called on to express their opinions regarding the needs of the Moroccan education system. This "national" dialogue resulted in the drafting of a good deal of official documents. The National Charter for Education and Training (The Ministry of National Education, 1999), combined with The White Book (The Ministry of National Education, 2002), are cases in point. Therefore, it is in this light that one can understand the growing presence of English in the school curriculum. In this framework, English language teaching received considerable attention in those claims were made to integrate this language, starting from the fifth grade of primary school, which has not happened hitherto. However, Moroccan students are introduced to English, starting from the third grade of primary or secondary school.

In line with the philosophy of the National Charter, the Ministry of National Education put forward a set of pedagogical guidelines (2007) to EFL teachers in public and private schools alike. Leafing through these official guidelines, one learns that EFL learners are expected to gradually develop their communicative competence, which includes the grammatical skill, the social and cultural ability, the discourse competence, and the strategic competence. To further help Moroccan EFL learners achieve this goal, the pedagogical guidelines called on teachers to have the five standard areas (communications, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities) in mind, along with promoting learning autonomy. In this vein, Hattani (2018) claimed that the Ministry of National Education invited teachers and teacher trainers, in particular, to work towards adopting the learner-centered approach, the communicative approach, the competency-based approach, and standards-based approach in teaching the school subjects, including English. Putting learners at the heart of the teaching and learning processes entails that teachers act as facilitators, monitors, and guiders.

In contrast, The Charter (1999) thought that learners should take the lead to be more self-directed and responsible for their learning. Commenting on the multiple

attempts at reform implemented, Hattani (2018) argued that "despite all the efforts made to develop the EFL implementation in the Moroccan educational context, it is still lagging behind" (p.88). Both El Karfa (2019) and Bedmar (2014) highlight that the Moroccan education system has undergone an essential change in the way EFL teachers teach English, noting, however, that "traditional" practices persist in the classroom due to a wide range of factors.

The main issue here is that despite the many reforms introduced, one can see little change on the ground. While it is beyond the scope of this article to assess all of these successful reforms introduced, the focus of the present investigation is restricted to the English teaching per se. The study seeks to find tentative answers to the following research questions. (i) What are the teachers' perceptions of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach? (ii) To what extent do the EFL teachers' actual classroom practices reflect the philosophy of CLT? And finally, (iii) what are the factors that might hinder the implementation of the CLT approach in the Moroccan EFL classroom? Specifically, the present study aims at exploring the EFL teachers' understandings and practices of the Communicative Language Teaching in the classroom by analyzing a corpus of data

gathered via means of semi-structured interviews and classroom observations.

### Review of the Related Literature

Within the community of applied linguistics, English language teaching and learning has always been a dynamic field of research. Two pertinent questions have still shaped the industry of English language teaching and learning. These are, of course: what is language? And how do people go about learning them? The "traditional approaches" stressed that languages are sets of building blocks and structures that ought to be discovered by the use of drills, repetitions, and memorization of lists of words, grammar rules, and the like. CLT came as a response to the inadequacies of structuralism, structural methods, grammar-translation methods, and the Audio-lingual method. The Grammar-Translation method and the Audio-lingual Method are manifestations of such a "traditional understanding" of the nature of language and how we go about learning them. However, since the seventies, especially after the very significant developments in other fields like linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology, sociolinguistics, and education, researchers in second language learning started talking about

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). It came later as a movement, with the effect of exercising a lot of influence on teachers, educationalists, researchers, and policymakers all over the world (Littlewood, 1981).

In this vein, Littlewood (1981), and Tootkaboni (2018) stressed that the boom in CLT has made teachers rethink their teaching practices in the classroom and revisited their perceptions towards the nature of language itself. Littlewood (1981) highlights that CLT does not imply any sort of epistemological break with the structural view of language. However, "it combines the newer *functional* view of language with the traditional structural view to achieving a complete communicative perspective" (p. 2). Confirming this understanding of the nature of language and how it is learned, Richards and Rodgers (cited in Reo, 2002) postulate that CLT starts with a theory of language as communication, and its goal is to develop, in the learners, what Hymes (1972) has termed "communicative competence."

The ultimate aim of CLT is to develop the learners' ability to take part in the process of communication through language, rather than with the perfect mastery of individual structures in isolation to the context. In line with this view,

Sauvignon (cited in Hattani, 2018) asserted that teachers' roles, within the framework of the CLT approach, shift from being the only source of knowledge in the classroom to being monitors, guides, and facilitators of the learning process. Hattani (2018) emphasized that organizing the learning activities around the tenets of CLT demands one introduces role-plays, presentations, discussions, interviews, dialogues, and the like as derived from learners' interests. Nevertheless, surveying previous literature, one learns that research is scarce into the extent to which the CLT approach is being turned into reality in the Moroccan EFL classroom. In this regard, Tootkaboni (2019), in an insightful comment on the theory and practice of CLA at the school, wrote:

Although the communicative approach has been adopted by many textbooks and curriculum all over the world, research findings indicate that communicative language teaching (CLT) tenets in the classroom are scarce, with most teachers declaring dedication to the communicative approach but applying the more traditional structural approach in their real practice. (p. 265)

In the same vein, Richards (cited in Tootkaboni, 2018) stated that language teachers who believe they follow CLT do not even have a consistent definition of the

concept in question. Brown (cited in Tootkaboni, 2018) argued that this inconsistency stems from the lack of an exact description of CLT. As he puts it: "there is not an exact definition of CLT, it raises considerable confusion about what it means to teach communicatively?" (p. 266). Hattani (2018) reveals that the Moroccan EFL teachers in public schools have positive attitudes towards this approach in the sense that the use of the CLT approach enhances oral competency among students. However, the question asked here is, is it enough to investigate the teachers' perceptions *per se* to arrive at such a big statement as to say that CLT is an added value to the teaching of English in the Moroccan context? What makes one even more skeptical about the findings of such a study is that the data were gathered via only semi-structured interviews. The paradox is that everybody claimed to use the CLT approach, but little is known about what Moroccan EFL teachers do in their classrooms, regardless of their stated beliefs.

In this sense, one assumes that these were severe methodological shortcomings in Hattani's study, notably that previous research, in other contexts, reported a mismatch between what teachers *said* and *did* in their classrooms. For these legitimate reasons, one cannot epistemologically rely on the perceptions of teachers and students

*per se* to assess the extent to which CLT has been implemented in the Moroccan EFL classroom. After seeing these shortcomings of her study, Hattani (2018) stated that "classroom observations are advocated to investigate how the CLA approach is practiced in the EFL instructional settings" (p. 97).

Based on data gathered via questionnaires from Iran, Tootkaboni (2018) suggested that "the majority of teachers had high levels of perception about CLT tenets" (p. 265). Later on, however, he wrote, "there is a clear mismatch between their beliefs and practical application of CLT" (p. 265). These discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices make it almost useless to introduce educational reforms regarding EFL teaching methodologies if teachers' "traditional" methods prevail in their practice. An early investigation by Nunan (cited in Tootkaboni, 2019) was based on classroom observation. He found that "despite performing communicative based activities, the presence of many traditional exercises were predominant. Teachers were not interested in the real tenets of communicative approach" (p. 269). One important theme that emerges from the findings of such studies is that they are mostly relevant to what Kachru (1992)

termed as "the expanding circle." It refers to the countries where learners' exposure to English is limited to the classroom. Confronting these findings, one asks: Is it a myth to talk about the adoption of Communicative Language Teaching in the expanding circle? It might be a strong claim, but it makes sense when one goes through the massive body of research that confirms the non-use of the CLA approach in contexts where English is a foreign language.

Using questionnaires, classroom observation, formal and informal interviews, Jabeen (2014) showed that "there are obvious discrepancies between how the teachers responded to questions and their classroom practice" (p.71). Similar findings were confirmed by Rahman et al. (2018) from Malaysia. Although only two teachers were observed and interviewed, the outcomes were significant in that the classroom practices contradicted the two teachers' stated beliefs. A good deal of empirical studies (Singh & Rahman, 2018; Jabeen, 2014; Abbaspour & Vaezi, 2014; Farrell & Lim, 2005; Kaymakamoglu, 2018; Adnan & Hazlina, 2012; Mutlu & Kashoglu, 2015; Tootkaboni, 2018; Rao, 2002) has confirmed that there is a mismatch between teachers' stated beliefs and their actual classroom behaviors.

## Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was adopted to gather more in-depth data. The researcher also used semi-structured interviews and classroom observations to catch both the teachers' perceptions and classroom practices of CLT. Then, the findings are more likely to suggest how much of "communicativeness" there is and see whether there is a mismatch between teachers' stated beliefs and their actual classroom practices. To achieve this purpose, ten EFL teachers were recruited for the interview. Five students were females, and five identified themselves as males. As far as their teaching experience is concerned, five participants revealed that they were "novice" EFL teachers, with two months of teaching experience. Four teachers stated that they had four years of teaching English, whereas one teacher said he had two years of teaching experience. The data obtained from the interviews and the classroom observations were both audio-recorded and transcribed. Although the audio recordings were edited for interruptions, false starts, and repetitions, the researcher kept faithful to what was said. Moreover, the notes taken during the classroom observations

conducted were used to back up the data elicited through teacher interviews.

The questions asked in the interviews were mainly the product of the researcher's synthesis of the previous literature regarding the features of the CLT approach. Then, to determine the communicativeness of classroom discourse, there were classroom observations. They were conducted based on the Communicative Orientation Scheme framework developed by Fröhlich et al. (1985). To systematically examine the frequency of the communicative activities, seven aspects were observed, including the integration of the four skills, the role of the teacher, the role of the learner, the way grammar was taught, the use of the L1, meaningful contexts, and corrective feedback. In this context, examining teachers' and students' classroom behaviors is likely to help the researcher to systematically look at the classroom activities in such a way as to carefully determine whether or not such teachers' and learners' behaviors go hand in hand with the philosophy of CLT Movement. The current study took place in the province of Jerada. Why the researcher opted for this topic is that no researchers have explored it in the area. Non-random sampling was used simply

because not all the teachers agreed to be observed.

### Findings and Discussion

This section offers and discusses the findings gathered by the semi-structured interviews and the classroom observations conducted. In this framework, the data elicited seem to suggest that the teachers interviewed are well-informed about the principles of CLT. However, the data gathered by classroom observations strongly indicated that teachers were not teaching as CLA recommends. The data elicited seem to suggest that the respondents interviewed have a good understanding of the elements of the CLT approach regarding the first research question. As a whole, all the interviewees assumed that grammar is taught "inductively" in communicative English. Teachers, within the framework of this approach, act as "guiders," "facilitators," and "helpers." As far as the respondents' views are concerned, basing one's teaching on the CLT principles entails that one does not correct learners' errors/mistakes on the condition that these do not impede the process of communication. Moreover, the findings confirmed that using fluency-based activities such as "dialogues," "classroom

discussions," "interviews," and "role-plays" were in harmony with the CLT approach.

Generally, the interviewees indicated that CLT had the potential to enhance students' oral fluency because, as Khalid said, "It is a good idea to give a chance to students to give oral presentation and English, after all, is more about speaking." Fatima, another interviewee, stated that the "Communicative language approach focuses more on communication as exemplified by real-life situations." Ayoub, likewise, emphasized that the communicative approach should be integrated while delivering the lesson. As he indicated, "Speaking, reading, writing, and listening should be taught in a communicative way as students are engaged in doing more speaking." In the same way, Abdelhak emphasized that this approach "gives more importance to speaking than to other skills."

As far as the role of the teacher is concerned, there is substantial evidence indicating that teachers are required, within the framework of CLT, to act as facilitators and guides. According to Fatima, "I usually do less speaking. I urge my students to speak. It is their responsibility". She further explained that urging learners to speak had the potential "to help them develop their fluency."

Nevertheless, several interviewees emphasized that "We should help learners develop both fluency and accuracy in a meaningful context." Following these lines of thought, Khadija, though she noted that grammar ought to be taught in a meaningful context. She stated that: "it is kind of difficult to teach some grammar lessons in this way, especially when it comes to the basics like teaching the verb to be."

For learners to be active in the EFL classroom, teachers are supposed to get students to work with one another, not individually. The data gathered suggest that the teachers were aware of the importance of learner organization in the classroom. In this vein, Asmae argued, "I resort to group work. It is time-saving. Instead of calling on each student to volunteer their answers, they do that in groups".

Regarding students' mistakes, Ibtissam pointed out that, "When I teach speaking, I don't correct grammar mistakes." Whereas, all the teachers interviewed stated that they use plenty of communicative activities. For example, Lyasaa implied, "I use group discussions and interviews." Houda, too, claimed that: "I sometimes use role-plays and debates. My students love role-plays".

Similarly, Ayoub explained that these communicative activities motivated students. He said that "Students feel so

excited about playing roles." Putting aside the respondents' attitudes towards CLT, Abdelhak summarized his understating as follows:

CLT teaching approach focuses on the communicative competence of the learners. That means we should not focus on grammar. For example, we don't focus on the idea that learners have to make a grammatically correct sentence. Teachers within this approach need to work to develop learners' ability to communicate in the job market and various situations outside the classroom.

Abdelhak's statement above proves that he has an excellent understating of what CLT is all about. His main idea is that the ultimate goal of CLT is to help learners communicate effectively in any given context, thereby become fluent users of English. However, he seemed to ignore that being able to form grammatically correct sentences is, doubtless, a principle of CLT (grammatical competence). The kind of corrective feedback that one must provide on learners' mistakes/errors is debatable. Most of the interviewees shared the same point of view. Previous research (El Karfa,

2019; Hattani, 2018) indicated that Moroccan EFL teachers were well-informed about the philosophy of CLT. Still, it is true that perceptions, cognitively speaking, do not always influence teachers' behaviors, under all conditions. In this regard, the findings revealed by El Karfa (2018) confirmed that teachers' perceptions might be inconsistent with their teaching behaviors in the EFL classroom.

Regarding research question two, the findings revealed that the two teachers were not teaching English communicatively to no small extent. The components of the table below are mainly the product of my synthesis of the previous research findings regarding the communicative features of the CLT approach. However, the table is primarily based on the Observation Scheme developed by Fröhlich et al. (1985) and was inspired, partly, by Rahman et al. (2018). Four lessons were observed: writing, reading, grammar, and listening. Asmae taught writing and reading, whereas Mohamed taught grammar and listening. Each lesson lasted between 47 and 50 minutes.

Table 2. Teachers' Practices of CLT in the EFL Classroom

The Integration of Skills		Asmae	Asmae	Mohamed	Mohamed
The integration of skills		-	-	-	-
The skills /(sub) skills are taught in a meaningful context	Skills are linked to a theme	+	-	+	+
The role of the teacher	The teacher is dominant	+	+	+	+
	The teacher is a facilitator/helper/monit or	-	-	-	-
Grammar teaching	Inductive	Not covered	Not covered	+	Not covered
	Deductive			-	covered
Learner organization	Individual	+	+	+	+
	Pairs	-	-	-	-
	Groups	-	-	-	-
The use of the L1	In giving instructions	+	+	-	-
	In explaining some vocabulary items	+	+	-	-
	In explaining mechanics	-	-	-	-
Corrective feedback	Teacher correction	-	+	-	-
	Pair- correction	+	+	-	-
Fluency-oriented activities	Discussions	-	-	-	-
	Role-plays	-	-	-	-
	Interviews	-	-	-	-
	Dialogues	-	-	-	-

Yes (+), No (-), not covered (The teacher covered other skills)

Based on the classroom observations conducted, one can say, with a sort of assertiveness, that there was little of "communicativeness" in the lessons observed. The teachers observed were so dominant on classroom discourse that both of them spent almost half an hour talking. The researcher noted that their output was simplified. One of the defining features of a communicative EFL classroom is that teachers work towards the integration of the four skills. This element appears to be missing from Asmae's class. While one does not have to dictate which specific skills have to be integrated, teachers need to incorporate at least two skills for their lessons to be communicative. The lessons observed revealed that although the teacher adhered to the principles of communicative language teaching in theory, they demonstrated quite the opposite in practice. It was exemplified by the teacher talking time (TTT), the total absence of fluency-oriented learning activities, the disintegration of skills, the nature of the activities introduced, and the kind of "mechanical" responses of students' to teacher's "stimulus."

The notes taken during classroom observations revealed that writing was taught in isolation to a great extent. For example, on October 21<sup>st</sup>, the researcher had the chance to observe Asmae's teaching. That

day's lesson targeted descriptive writing. In this regard, the teacher spent almost twenty-two minutes, in total, on the teaching of some vocabulary items (adjectives) before she could introduce the learners to writing, albeit it, writing, was a major objective of the lesson. When the researcher investigated the reasons why the teacher adopted such an approach to writing, she stated that "One must equip students with the adjectives they will need when in the process of writing a descriptive paragraph." The adjectives were taught using Moroccan Arabic, leaving aside the question of the time spent on vocabulary teaching. As far as the use of the mother tongue is concerned, the teacher would mostly instruct in Moroccan Arabic. The reason she resorted to Arabic in teaching vocabulary is, as she told the researcher later on in unplanned discussion following the classroom observation, that "It is time-saving."

The sort of activities used had little to share with the philosophy of CLT in that their claimed "communicativeness" ranged from highly controlled to semi-controlled. At the level of interaction, the teacher was standing at the front of the board, talking, leaving little room for students to talk. In terms of questioning, a bulk of the questions required students to respond in one or two-word answers. The issue is that the questions

asked revealed how learners already possessed the information requested, leaving little room for "the negotiation of meaning," which is, as Swain (2000) claimed, necessary for language learning to happen. Since the teacher whose teaching I observed knew about the issue I was investigating, she, as the lesson drew to a close, asked me about the extent to which she had been successful in constructing a fluency-based lesson. The researcher's answer was "Judging by the data at hand. I think there is some communicativeness in the classroom". She replied by asking, "What about when the students were responding to my questions? Was not that communication?" The researcher responded by saying that the Communicative Approach emphasized that learners' responses should not be restricted to the use of "yes," "no," or other "pseudo questions and answers." Rather, authentic communication involves more "risks" and is more sustained. The teacher's response to this lack of fluency-based activities was that: "It is quite difficult to teach writing communicatively, given students' proficiency." She resumed, "I do sometimes use discussion-based activities with my students, but I do believe that one, at first, should focus on grammar and vocabulary before one introduces such fluency-based activities." Moreover, all of the learning

activities assigned to the students in the classroom were dictated by the textbook.

As far as the teacher's corrective feedback is concerned, the teachers never corrected students' mispronunciations of the words given explicitly. On several occasions, during classroom observation, it was the students who provided explicit corrective feedback for learners' mistakes (peer correction). In contrast, the teacher corrected students' implicitly by pronouncing the mispronounced word (s) accurately but without indicating that the learner has made a mistake in pronunciation. The use of the mother tongue was not limited to the teacher, but rather students relied on it heavily to account for their "lexical gaps." For example, when the teacher was asking students about the meaning of words such as "popular," "reliable," "pessimistic," "easy-going," "optimistic," or "round-faced," learners replied by voicing out the meaning of these words in Moroccan Arabic. It was beyond students' proficiency to explain the terms given in English, mainly because they did not have enough linguistic tools.

Mohamed's classes, in sharp contrast to Asmae's classes, revealed more "communicativeness." In this regard, no mother tongue was used, though students were using it with one another. Grammar

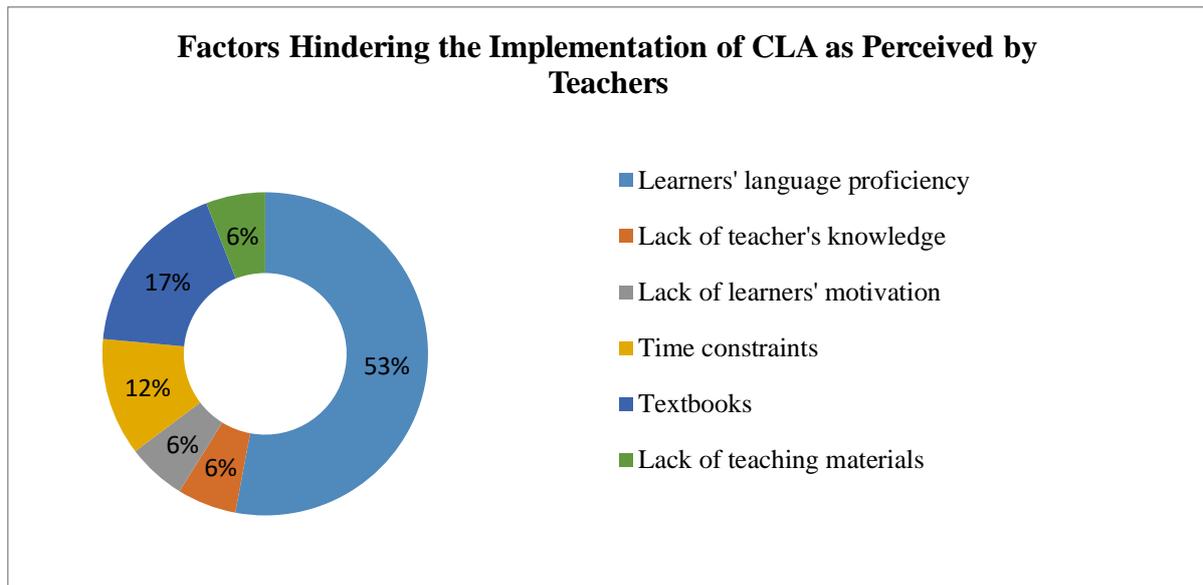
was based on a topic, contextualized, and taught in a discovery-based approach. However, no fluency-based activities, based on the notes taken, were used. The flow of the lesson was like getting "the rules" and "the uses of the tense being taught from a context dictated by the textbook, and "checking" students' understanding with a "traditional exercise" and last the teacher would ask students "to give" him "examples" using the target language. Despite students' numerous utterances, their output was extremely restricted to only giving examples. From the observation notes, students, in this class, showed adequate English proficiency in that the classroom was vivid with their active classroom participation.

However, Miss Asmae showed some discomfort with the researcher's presence in the classroom, though she welcomed me with open arms at the beginning. Yet, when she asked about the amount of "communicativeness" in her teaching, the researcher answered by saying: "I believe

there is some." The teacher in question reddened in the face. Perhaps she was expecting to hear, "All your teaching is well-grounded in the Communicative Approach." When she learned about what was going on, she became "suspicious" of this research. Two days after observing her teaching, the researcher received an email stating, "After thinking about it for some time, I am not comfortable being the sole research subject in your article. I don't mind being observed in class, generally speaking, but I just do not feel good about this one, especially the way your grid approaches the teacher's work. It is my conviction, and I hope that you understand". The researcher was surprised when receiving this message, though it was very telling.

The graph below summarizes the results obtained for question three. The data gathered by semi-structured interviews revealed that the teachers had some excellent reasons why they did not implement CLT, especially its strong version.

Figure 1: Perceived Difficulties in Adopting the CLT Approach



By and large, 7 teachers out of 10 (hence 53%) stated that the main obstacle standing in their way to the implementation of the CLA is learners' language proficiency. As shown, 3 teachers believe that the textbook is, in fact, one of the main hindrances in deciding whether or not to use the method in question, with 2 teachers saying that CLA is "time-consuming." To expand more on this point, Khalid, an EFL teacher with two months of teaching experience, explicitly stated that "Students don't know enough words. They keep asking me in Arabic, teacher, how do we say this in English? What is the equivalent of this word in English? Because their proficiency is not that good, I keep helping them over and over". Within the same framework, Ayoub confirmed the link between the non-use of CLA and students' proficiency by saying

that: "If students form a grammatically correct sentence, it is already a great achievement."

Houda, a novice teacher, enthusiastically said that "The problem is that I have so many ideas and activities that I would like to use with them, but I can't do that simply because learners don't have the required abilities to do fluency oriented tasks." "This is why," she resumed, and, "They ask me how to say this and that in English." Likewise, Khadija stated that: "when I introduce learners to discussions, they find it difficult to make full, meaningful sentences." Confirming the strong link between learners' language proficiency and the impracticality of the CLA in the classroom, Ibtissam, regretfully stated that "The overwhelming majority of the learners are not good enough." In the same vein, Huang (2016)

reported that students' low English proficiency was one of the principal obstacles for the adoption of CLT following an early investigation he carried out in a rural Taiwanese EFL classroom. In the same context, similar findings were also confirmed by Ibrahim and Takal (2019) from Afghanistan. Similarly, El Karfa (2019) revealed that adopting CLT in the Moroccan context was impeded by a plethora of variables such as the foreign status of English in Morocco, the formal context of the classroom, students' personality traits, and large size classes, to mention, but a few.

The textbooks used were important variables contributing, more or less, to the non-use of CLA. The interviewees who shared this view claimed that the books assigned to them by the provincial directorates had severe pitfalls. For example, Lyassa, an EFL teacher with four years of teaching experience, stated that "Some textbooks have many grammar lessons, but the paradox is that some of these grammar points are not contextualized in the textbooks. The only solution left for you then is to bring your materials with contexts; otherwise, you teach grammar deductively." Asmae, Khalid, and Abdelhak shared the same point of view. As Abdelhak illustrated,

What is at issue is that in the textbook, there is a focus on

grammar. To give you evidence, in the "Ticket Textbook," for example, Unit One has "Simple Past Tense." The textbook in question focuses on both accuracy and fluency. Back in the training Center in 2015, our teacher trainers stressed that we ought to teach English according to the principles endorsed in "the official guidelines." The problem is I don't really understand how I can implement the CLT approach in my teaching.

For this interviewee, while some textbooks were blamed for not stressing the teaching of grammar points inductively, he mentioned that his "lack of knowledge" as to how to implement the approach in question in his teaching was a thorny issue as well. In sharp contrast, Houda assumed that "The textbooks are good. I do use them. When I find the textbook not appropriate, pedagogically speaking, I bring my materials. I insist on using simple activities". Lyasaa, too, told me, at an early stage of this investigation, that the textbook he was using "has long but difficult texts for learners to understand." In line with these findings, Hattani (2018) argued that the majority of her respondents revealed that the school curriculum was outdated and did not aim at

providing prerequisite contents that targeted skills development (p.94). A major obstacle hindering the implementation of the Communicative Approach is the mismatch between the requirements of the syllabus and the demands of the CLT approach. Still, it is quite evident that some interviewees endorsed "the strong version" of the method in question, which doesn't give any importance to the teaching of grammar. For these perceived difficulties discussed earlier, Abdelhak explicitly stated:

We must start with grammar and then move on to communication, not vice versa; otherwise, how can a learner engage in communicative tasks if they don't know what "to be" is. Learners need "to be" to say "I am," "you are," and so on. They need to know where linguistic forms such as "am," "is," "was," came from before having them engage in authentic communication.

As far as the textbook is concerned, Fatima claimed

The problem is that the teaching and learning activities that the textbook has are accuracy-oriented. A teacher has to come up with his activities to teach English communicatively.

Upon such an impression, teachers need to bring their teaching materials if

they wish for their lessons to be communicative. If the nature of the textbook is based more on forms than on functions and notions, how can teachers teach communicatively given the lack of teaching materials? A majority of the interviewees mentioned that the main obstacle standing in their way to use the Communicative Approach is "learners' language proficiency" and the lack of "teaching materials." As far as textbook use is concerned, Mohamed complained that the context dictated by the textbook had many difficulties. For example, in a lengthy statement, he stated:

The textbook provides the teacher with a context. Once you see the text from the learner's perspective, you get to the conclusion that the text is challenging the learners. Instead of having students encounter one difficulty, you find that students encounter three or more difficulties in the same text. To give you an example, today, I have taught my students the present progressive tense. To my surprise, the text used in the lesson had the "affirmative," "negative," and "interrogative" all at once. These are three difficulties at which students feel so frustrated that they feel at sea when they find them

in one text, within one lesson. Teachers find themselves obliged to come up with their materials. So, it is essential that we expose our students to one difficulty and then move on to the next.

From the data analyzed previously, there was evidence that teachers wished their teaching to be communicative. Nevertheless, factors such as learner's language proficiency, textbook issues, lack of motivation on the part of the learners', lack of teaching materials, and lack of knowledge as to how to translate the theory into learning and teaching activities were significant obstacles in practice.

### **Pedagogical Implications for EFL Teaching**

The researcher feels confident that there are some misconceptions that EFL teachers have about CLT. The misconception is that as long as the classroom is not highly equipped with technology, English cannot be taught communicatively. The researcher would go as far as to say that the so-called "traditional" classes are compatible with the philosophy of the CLT movement.

1. Teachers should not worship the textbook. These textbooks are, after all, one of the methods of organizing knowledge. Therefore, instead of

following what they dictate, teachers can adapt them to students' needs.

2. Due to students' language proficiency, teachers should use motivating fluency-based activities. It is not sufficient to praise students to motivate them. Motivation, after all, is the result of using fun games and activities.
3. To further help learners acquire some fluency, it is recommended that teachers simplify, model, and scaffold the learning activities.
4. Instead of blaming it all on the proficiency of language learners, EFL teachers are invited to research their practice; that is, they should do action research to see what works best for both sides.
5. Teachers are invited to invest more and more in their learning autonomy, thereby create new but useful ideas for effective teaching. One way to do this is through professional development.
6. The Ministry of Education, too, is required to invest more in providing EFL teachers with better training to help them translate the theory into practice. Moreover, due to the lack of equipment, it is recommended that schools be equipped with some

prerequisite technological devices (printing machines and data show projectors, to say the least).

### Conclusion

The present paper has explored the teachers' perceptions and practices of CLT in the Moroccan EFL classroom. Generally, the data gathered have revealed that the respondents have a good understanding of what the CLT approach is all about. Yet, the classroom practices of two of these teachers showed that the teachers' stated beliefs are far from reality. The factors contributing to this mismatch between theory and practice are multifaceted. Generally speaking, these factors can be grouped into three major factors, such as the learner factor, the teacher factor, and the textbook factor.

For the learner factor, it is evident that the language proficiency of the learners is a determining factor in the adoption of the CLT approach. The more proficient the learners are, the more likely the teachers are to use communicative tasks in their teaching. In contrast to this, the less proficient the students are, the less likely the teachers are to use fluency-oriented tasks. This is why the data elicited seem to point to teachers' preference for the adoption of the "weak version" of this approach in that more

importance should be given to the teaching of grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics before moving on to introduce learners to more fluency-based tasks. One burning question arises here is that, if learners' proficiency violates teachers' expectations, why do the teachers then abandon the use of CLT principles in one's classroom?

As pointed out earlier, teachers' lack of knowledge about how to implement the CLT approach is a significant obstacle too. Even when they were asked about the way they taught language skills and sub-skills, some of them did not know that their way of teaching, theoretically speaking, was informed by the Communicative Approach. They seemed to do it, but unaware of what that approach was called. One possible explanation lies in the inadequate training these teachers have received in the training centers. Spending less on teacher's training programs will affect the learners' competency severely, without a doubt.

### Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Further Research

The present study has many limitations. First, it included a limited number of participants (10 EFL teachers). Second, the researcher restricted the scope of the study to the investigation of teachers' perceptions and practices per se. Indeed,

investigating both perspectives (teachers and students) would have provided a more in-depth picture of the issue explored. Second, of the total number, only two teachers were observed. Doubtless, it is one of the main limitations of this study. For these reasons, the results obtained may not be over-generalized as further research is needed. Future research should explore both teachers' and students' perceptions of CLT. Additionally, future research needs to involve more representative samples to examine the frequency of communicativeness in both private and public schools. That is to say, without conducting more extensive empirical research, including more representatives, the results obtained may not be over-generalized.

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