

Perceptions of EFL Teachers/Instructors on the Use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) In Selected Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIS)

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary language pedagogy, an array of effective methodologies and approaches exists for the English language classroom. While instructional styles have evolved across generations, traditional frameworks such as the Direct Method (DM) and the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) remain widely utilized; yet, their student learning outcomes frequently fall short of learner expectations. To address the need for faster, more authentic communication within proper contextual boundaries, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged as a prominent classroom approach. Rather than acting as a total replacement for previous methodologies, CLT serves as a contemporary framework that is heavily studied within the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). While substantial global literature exists regarding English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' perceptions of CLT, very few studies specifically investigate its practical implementation within Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Consequently, this study is designed to critically investigate EFL instructors' understanding of English pedagogy, focusing specifically on the challenges and constraints they encounter when implementing CLT in Cambodian HEIs.

This research provides a comprehensive overview of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), analyzing its history, core principles, materials, and the evolving roles of teachers and learners. It investigates key psychological and professional factors, such as teacher attitudes, beliefs, and student motivation. The literature review anchors CLT within the Asian and Cambodian educational landscapes, addressing the global rise of English and the practical barriers to adopting communicative methodologies in EFL settings. Furthermore, the study evaluates CLT alongside other prominent language teaching methods—including the Grammar-Translation, Direct, Audio-Lingual, Silent Way, Natural, and Total Physical Response approaches—offering a localized perspective on their application in Cambodia.

Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, this study surveyed 80 English university teachers from Build Bright University, Norton University, National Meanchey University, and the University of Management and Economics. Data was collected via a 50-minute structured questionnaire aimed at assessing the viability and efficacy of CLT in Cambodia. The survey comprised four distinct parts: participant demographics, institutional backgrounds, teaching methodologies, and perceived barriers to CLT adoption. Ethical considerations were maintained by ensuring respondents understood that participation was voluntary, answers were subjective, and they could decline to answer any sensitive questions.

The results indicate that Cambodian HEI teachers face significant hurdles when adopting CLT, categorizable into four main dimensions: teacher-related, student-related, systemic, and methodology-inherent factors. Interestingly, despite a strong desire for pedagogical reform and an eagerness to embrace CLT, educators express a cautious lack of optimism regarding its complete implementation. Ultimately, the study suggests that the true benefits of CLT can only be realized if these interconnected challenges are addressed and more flexible, favorable institutional environments are created.

Finally, the study synthesizes twelve practical recommendations offered by the participating educators to facilitate the feasible implementation of CLT within Cambodian HEIs:

1. **Alleviate Teacher Workloads:** Reduce the heavy teaching loads currently imposed on educators.
2. **Improve Institutional Compensation:** Universities must address poor working conditions and low salaries to allow instructors to reach their full pedagogical potential for the benefit of their students.
3. **Strategic Reform:** Restructure and better plan English language curricula across higher education institutions.
4. **Adjust Tuition and Funding:** Reconsider university fee structures to generate the necessary revenue to manage and optimize classroom sizes
5. **Expand Faculty Recruitment:** Hire more qualified English instructors to allow for a dedicated focus on developing learners' communicative competence.
6. **Policy Reassessment:** Review and update institutional language teaching policies to align with communicative goals.
7. **Reduce Class Sizes:** Decrease student numbers per class, as language acquisition inherently relies on immersive, interactive communication.
8. **Examination System Reform:** Overhaul current assessment and examination systems to reflect communicative metrics.
9. **Targeted Assessment Research:** Conduct further research into effectively testing learners' listening and speaking skills within the Cambodian HEI context.
10. **Enhance Teacher Training:** Prioritize professional development focusing on the practical integration of CLT into English classrooms.
11. **Provide Practical Experience:** Offer educators hands-on opportunities to build confidence in utilizing CLT methodologies.
12. **Address Contextual Challenges:** Carefully analyze the comprehensive data in Chapter 5 regarding specific challenges and solutions, reaffirming that CLT remains a highly effective methodology for fostering authentic target-language communication among Cambodian university students.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. 1 Background of the Study

Originating in England during the 1970s, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged as a highly effective and efficient methodology for language instruction. This approach marked a major paradigm shift in education by prioritizing authentic communication and the active use of the target language within the classroom. Developed initially as an English as a Second Language (ESL) framework, CLT gained rapid and widespread acceptance across Western nations.

As a direct reaction against traditional, rote teaching methods, CLT eventually spread globally, profoundly shaping English Language Teaching (ELT) practices in both ESL and English as a Foreign Language

(EFL) contexts. Today, it stands as a dominant theoretical paradigm in ELT, widely celebrated for its success by scholars, instructors, and students alike (Hamid & Baldauf Jr, 2008; Kim, 2008; Rasheed, 2012).

CLT in the Asian Context: Despite its global success, CLT remains in its nascent stages across many Asian nations, particularly in Cambodia, where it was first introduced in the late 1990s (Yusra & Lestari, 2020). Within Cambodian education, the methodology continues to drive student-centered learning by fostering active participation through collaborative classroom activities (Nhem, 2019; Bon et al., 2022).

Despite the widespread popularity CLT has enjoyed over the past four decades, its logical appropriateness and practical feasibility in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings remain highly contested. Several scholars emphasize that language instruction must align with local needs and specific contextual realities, often highlighting the enduring benefits of traditional teaching methods (Bax, 2003; Harvey, 1985; Inceciy & Inceciy, 2009). Cambodia serves as a prime example of this dynamic, demonstrating how national language policies directly shape education, daily life, and future opportunities in a developing nation (Kosonen, 2019). Here, research underscores that English is primarily taught for pragmatic, socio-economic, and socio-cultural advancement.

Consequently, implementing CLT in Asian countries involves navigating steep pedagogical, technological, and policy-driven hurdles (Yusra & Lestari, 2020). While some researchers strongly advocate for adopting CLT across Asia regardless of these obstacles (Butler, 2011; Li, 1984; Liao, 2004; Maley, 1984), most English Language Teaching (ELT) scholars argue that neither extreme position is helpful.

The Consensus on Feasibility: Given current classroom conditions across Asia, mainstream research suggests that a full, unaltered implementation of the CLT approach is virtually impossible. Instead, success depends on identifying and systematically overcoming specific local barriers (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Chick, 1996; Ellis, 1996; Hiep, 2007; Hu, 2002; Li, 1998; Rao, 2002; White, 1989).

For decades, the Cambodian education system was predominantly defined by a teacher-centered paradigm focused heavily on rote learning. In these classrooms, instructional methods heavily favored teacher talk, repetitive drilling, memorization, and rote recitation. Consequently, students were rarely afforded diverse ways to participate, with learning tasks strictly confined to individual work within the classroom walls. This traditional dynamic was prevalent nationwide, across all educational contexts, and English language instruction was no exception—long remaining heavily dominated by the Grammar-Translation Methodology (Neau, 2003).

In recent years, however, a modern educational paradigm emphasizing student-centered learning and autonomous study has steadily integrated into Cambodian classrooms (Bunlay et al., 2009). As a result, contemporary students are beginning to drift away from the passive learning philosophies of the past, as evidenced by their evolving classroom engagement and study habits.

Progress at the Higher Education Level: This pedagogical evolution is most visible in university-level English programs. In higher education contexts, student-centered approaches and independent learning strategies have been prioritized at the forefront of the curriculum, and they continue to advance rapidly compared to other academic disciplines and lower educational levels.

The emergence of student-centered and CLT modalities at the collegiate level features a new challenge for both English classroom learning and teaching practices given that the whole context of learning and teaching in most programs and at all levels has been predominantly influenced by a long-lasting practice of Grammar-Translation Methodology and, if any, a so-called practice of CLT as in the case of the K-12

education (Neau, 2003). This mismatch has, in particular, had significant impacts on the current situation of student learning at college and has, thus, given rise to the quest among scholars to understand the emerging nature of student learning (see, for example, Keuk, 2008, 2009; Keuk & Tith, 2006; Khan, 2008; Ly et al., 2007). Unfortunately, none of these studies have extensively examined student learning beyond the classroom context. This practice, as implicitly challenged by Kuh et al. (1997), Kuh et al. (2007), Pascarella et al. (2008) and Terenzini et al. (1996), merely limits learning within the classroom context. Little is known about intact students' college experiences as viewed through their involvement both on and off campus. The paucity of empirical research as such is surprising given the growing demands from the public to account for the quality of student learning. Understanding the current trends and patterns in Cambodian student learning is vital for educators aiming to design curricula that effectively address and balance instructional gaps. Despite the theoretical benefits of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), a persistent question remains: why do instructors in Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) rarely, if ever, integrate CLT methodologies into their everyday practice? Identifying the specific systemic and practical obstacles blocking CLT from entering these EFL classrooms is critical. Investigating how Cambodian HEI teachers conceptualize English instruction—particularly the unique difficulties and challenges they face when trying to implement communicative activities—can offer invaluable insights. Such an exploration provides a practical roadmap for introducing CLT into EFL environments more effectively and efficiently. Ultimately, this study is essential for driving positive pedagogical reforms and offering tangible, evidence-based support to EFL practitioners across Cambodian higher education.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Existing literature indicates that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors within Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) encounter significant pedagogical and systemic challenges when attempting to implement Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). These persistent instructional barriers directly hinder the communicative development and linguistic competence of tertiary language learners. In Cambodia, English Language Teaching (ELT) has traditionally been dominated by the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), which emphasizes memorizing grammatical rules and translating sentences, reflecting a historical focus on structural competence rather than communicative proficiency (Akramy et al., 2022; Chan, 2015; Ellis et al., 2010). The teachers adopted the Grammar-translation method as the favored technique for teaching EFL in HEIs in Cambodia. Consequently, the products were more of grammar translators from Khmer to English or English to Khmer. This problem did not only exist in HEIs in Cambodia but also in other institutions offering EFL in other countries. In Laos, which has a relatively younger English learning tradition, the focus is on writing rather than speaking, with the Grammar Translation Method being the primary approach (Cherchata et al., 2023; Lukita, 2023). Meanwhile, in Thailand and the Philippines, similar methods are used, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and task-based language teaching (TBLT) (Karami & Zamanian, 2016).

1.3 Research Questions

This research examined EFL instructors' perceptions regarding the challenges of adopting a CLT approach in selected Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs). To achieve this objective, the study addressed the following specific research questions:

RQ1. What systemic and pedagogical challenges exist within English language instruction in Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)?

RQ2. Through what mechanisms and to what degree can these institutional and educational barriers be mitigated?

RQ3. In what ways does the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework contribute to the advancement of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in Cambodian higher education?

RQ4. What is the practical viability and adaptability of implementing communicative language teaching methodologies within the Cambodian higher education context?

1.4 Research Objectives

This study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

RO1: To investigate the systemic and pedagogical challenges underlying English language instruction within Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs);

RO2: To explore viable strategies and the potential extent to which these educational barriers can be mitigated;

RO3: To evaluate the specific pedagogical contributions of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework to the Cambodian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context; and,

RO4: To assess the practical viability and structural feasibility of implementing CLT methodologies in Cambodian universities.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this research offer substantial academic and practical contributions in several key areas. First, while Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been extensively researched within English Foreign Language (EFL) contexts (Ellis, 1996; Gorsuch, 2000; Inceciay & Inceciay, 2009; Li, 1998; Rao, 2002; Sun & Cheng, 2002), empirical literature focusing specifically on its implementation in Cambodia remains scarce. Despite growing local acceptance, systemic challenges to widespread CLT integration persist (Williams et al., 2016). Furthermore, existing Cambodian studies often rely on insufficient data, resulting in oversimplified conclusions that fail to document the reality of higher education classrooms. This study addresses this gap by providing a transparent, thorough account of current English Language Teaching (ELT) practices in Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Second, this study sheds light on the ongoing curricular evolution in Cambodia. Following the historical shift away from French educational dominance, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS, 2015) instituted reforms introducing English from Grade 4 onward, with eventual plans for preschool integration. This structural shift aimed to equip students with foundational language skills prior to entering tertiary education. Central to this reform was a CLT-based curriculum explicitly designed to prioritize oral and written communication over rote grammatical rules, resulting in the introduction of new, communication-oriented textbooks nationwide. However, a significant discrepancy remains between these policy-level ideals and actual classroom execution. By investigating the root causes of this implementation gap, this study offers critical insights into why this innovative approach faces friction in local classrooms. Moreover, these findings extend beyond Cambodia, offering valuable cross-contextual insights for other EFL nations grappling with similar pedagogical transitions.

Finally, this research holds practical value for institutional development and student engagement. By identifying the specific contributions of CLT to Cambodian higher education, this study champions the advancement of quality language instruction, foster higher student satisfaction, and promote active learning. Ultimately, by evaluating the operational feasibility of this approach, this study establishes a practical framework that can be adapted by other universities and language centers looking to optimize their communicative curricula.

1.6 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study specifically focused on identifying the inherent challenges of English language instruction wi-

thin Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Cambodia. To establish clear boundaries, the scope was delimited to examining actionable strategies for overcoming the barriers associated with implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) at the tertiary level.

The participant pool comprised a total of 80 university English language instructors drawn from four distinct institutions:

1. Build Bright University, Battambang Study Center (n = 27)
2. Norton University (n = 30)
3. National Meanchey University (n = 10)
4. University of Management and Economics, Banteay Meanchey Province (n = 13)

In addition to identifying challenges, this research elicited teacher perspectives on the specific contributions of the CLT framework to local English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Finally, utilizing a structured questionnaire as the primary research instrument, the study gauged how these educator-respondents evaluated the practical feasibility of integrating communicative language teaching methodologies into the Cambodian higher education context.

1.7 Definition of Terms

For clarity and common frame of reference, constructs and concepts used in this proposed study, the following terms are operationally defined and their parameters are established:

1. **HEIs** is Higher Education Institutions.
2. **RUPP** is Royal University of Phnom Penh.
3. **CLT** is Communicative Language Teaching.
4. **ESL** is English as a Second Language.
5. **EFL** is English as a Foreign Language.
6. **ELT** is English Language Teaching.
7. **CBI** is Content-based Instruction.
8. **TBLT** is Task-based Language Teaching.
9. **GTM** is Grammar-Translation Method.
10. **DM** is Direct Method.
11. **ALM** is Audio Lingual Method.
12. **SW** is Silent Way.
13. **NM** is Natural Method.
14. **TPR** is Total Physical Response.
15. **Approach** is theoretically well-informed positions and beliefs regarding the nature of language, the nature of language learning, and the applicability of both to pedagogical settings. In this study, approach refers to the way teacher teaches the students and the way students learn from their teacher.
16. **Teacher/ Instructor/ Educator** is both full-time and part-time lecturers, teaching at the Higher Education Institutions in Cambodia.
17. **Language Teaching** is a teaching process of a different language done by FESL teachers through the use of appropriate procedures and techniques of CLT.
18. **Technique** – any one of a wide variety of exercises, activities, or tasks used in the language classroom to realize lesson objectives.
19. **MoEYS** – Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport
20. **Perception** – the term perception can be simply defined as an opinion or belief which is held by people on how they view something. This means that people can have different perceptions based on their

individual view. According to Woolfolk (1995), perception can be defined as “an interpretation of sensory information” (p.245). In complementing it, Chaplin (1968) defines the perception as a process to understand something through the human sense which involves the awareness of people’s belief about something.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the theoretical literature and previous research establishing the foundation for this study. The first section examines the historical development, definition, and underlying principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), emphasizing communicative competence, the roles of classroom participants, and the utility of teaching materials. Additionally, it addresses how teacher beliefs, teacher attitudes, and student motivation influence instructional outcomes. The second half of the chapter contextualizes the study globally and locally by exploring English as a international lingua franca, language policy in Cambodia, and the broader implementation levels and barriers to CLT in Asian EFL environments. To contextualize these developments, the text reviews alternative teaching paradigms—including Grammar-Translation, the Direct Method, Audio-Lingualism, the Silent Way, the Natural Approach, and Total Physical Response. The chapter concludes with a targeted analysis of current communicative language teaching practices and challenges unique to the Cambodian context.

2.1 The History of Communicative Language Teaching

In the late 1960s, CLT approaches appeared in English language teaching in Western contexts, and expanded greatly throughout the 1970s. In fact, CLT became so popular that Harmer (1982, p.164) commented that “no self-respecting teacher, materials designer, or applied linguist would think of teaching as anything else”. Savignon (1991, p.263) tells us that the reason for this popularity is that CLT met “the language needs of a rapidly increasing group of immigrants and guest workers and a rich British linguistic tradition that included social as well as linguistic context in description of language behavior”. In other words, with the influx of migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds, the goals of language study changed. No longer was it enough for people to study the rules of a language, people had to be able to use the language for real-life communication. Communication, rather than grammar, became the focus of language teaching, and in the communicative classroom, rather than translating texts, students had to “use the language, productively and receptively in unrehearsed contexts” (Brown, 1994, p.245). Underpinning this communicative approach to language teaching is the notion of communicative competence. According to Ellis (2000, p.696), communicative competence is “the knowledge that users of a language have internalized to enable them to understand and produce messages in language”. Brown (2007a, p.218) adds that “recent trends have put less emphasis on structural and cognitive characteristics of communication and more on the myriad social, cultural, and pragmatic implications of what it means to communicate in a second language”.

One of the earliest theorists to investigate the notion of language competence was Chomsky who proposed a model of linguistic competence. Chomsky’s concept (1965, p.3) of communicative competence was that “linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance”. Chomsky (1965, p.4) also clearly distinguished between competence and performance: competence refers to the speaker-

hearer's knowledge of his language which is important for linguistic study, and performance is the actual use of the language in concrete situations. However, Chomsky's concepts of competence and performance were criticized by many theorists. One of the theorists who had strong ideas about Chomsky's concepts was Hymes.

Hymes (1972) proposed a concept of communicative competence that reacted against Chomsky's notion which was limited to the knowledge of language use. Therefore, Hymes' model, according to Hedge (2000) and Brown (2007a, pp.218-219) focused on both grammatical rules and language use. Hymes (1972) recommended, "... not only to see languages as part of systems of speaking but also to see systems of speaking from the standpoint of the central question of the nature of socio-cultural order" (p.70) and "Sociolinguistic description and taxonomy are joint conditions of success for understanding and explaining the interaction of language and social life" (p.71). Hymes believed that communicative competence encompasses conveying, interpreting and negotiating meanings interpersonally within specific cultural contexts.

Canale and Swain (1980, p.27) later refined the definition of Hymes by proposing a model of three distinctive components of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Later, Canale (1983, p.6) added discourse competence. The first two components of competence, grammatical and sociolinguistic are related to use of the linguistic system, and the second two, strategic and discourse, are related to the functional aspects of communication (Brown, 2007a).

In relation to use of the linguistic system of a language, grammatical competence is concerned with "knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology" (Canale & Swain, 1980, p.29).

Learners with good grammatical competence know how to use structures of language more precisely. However, sociolinguistic competence refers to "the knowledge of the socio-cultural rules of language and of discourse" (Brown, 2007a, p.220) in order "to perform a particular function or express an intention clearly". This is based on the social knowledge of how to choose when to use language forms so that they can achieve the aim of social interaction.

In the functional aspects of communication, strategic competence refers to "how to cope in an authentic communicative situation and how to keep the communicative channel open" (Canale and Swain, 1980, p.25). This includes achievement and reduction strategies, the former indicating that learners try "to say or find ways of compensating for their insecure or inadequate knowledge of English", and the latter indicating that learners avoid the forms they are not sure about and use what they know to limit misunderstandings. Hedge (2000) explains that "strategic competence is the way we manipulate language in order to meet communicative goals". However, discourse competence is concerned with relationships between sentences (Brown, 2007a, p.220). It means that learners of the language know how to string sentences together and to take turn in conversations, how to keep the conversation going on, and how to develop or end conversations. To do this, learners need to acquire typical discourse markers in spoken and written forms.

Whereas previously grammatical competence was the sole focus of the traditional language classroom in Vietnam, language teachers now need to pay attention to building their students' competence in all four components of communicative competence. Over the years there has been much debate and argument about how to do this, especially in relation to the teaching of grammar. In reaction to the traditional grammar focused curriculum, some people have argued that there should be no need to teach grammar at

all and that people will be able to just pick up languages as children do. However, it soon became clear to researchers that adults did not learn language in the same way as children for a range of reasons, resulting in a debate about how best to promote grammatical competence in the classroom alongside communicative competence. Moreover, as the aim of communicative classrooms is for students to be able to communicate outside that classroom, it is now recognized that communicative classroom learning must focus on the students' needs and goals, and be student-centered, conducted using a range of practical, authentic, and real-life situations, focusing on both the linguistic and functional aspects of communicative language. In other words, classroom practice should be conducted under CLT and learner-centered curriculum which is "a collaborative effort between teachers and learners, since learners are closely involved in the decision-making process regarding the content of the curriculum and how it is taught" (Nunan, 1988, p.2). He also points out key elements in the learner-centered curriculum as follows: "initial planning procedures (including data collection and learning grouping); content selection and gradation; methodology (which includes the selection of learning activities and materials); and ongoing monitoring, assessment and evaluation" (p.4).

The collection of information about learners is essential in order to understand learners' needs and help them sit in their relevant level / interests. The content selection, an important element of a learner-centered curriculum, provides guidance on the selection of learning activities and materials. It is an ongoing discussion process between teachers and learners related to their needs, expectations, and preferred learning styles. Therefore, the deeper the relationships between teachers and learners the more likely the selection of content and methodology is suitable. For this reason, learners should be encouraged to speak about their learning experiences and preferred learning styles. For low-level learners, it is possible to use bilingual assistance in order to support communication between teachers and learners. Methodology ideally consists of learning activities and materials which are negotiated between teachers and learners. The final element of the model is evaluation which parallels all curriculum activities and is separated from student assessment. The purpose of assessment is to determine whether the learning objectives have been achieved or not.

Evaluation of the teaching and learning processes and materials is carried out in order to find out reasons why learning objective may or may not have been achieved (Nunan, 1988, pp.4-7). Therefore, in order to contribute to English language learning and teaching improvement in the Cambodian context in general and in the private sector in particular, communicative classrooms comprised of the elements below are considered the most effective way forward.

2.1.1 The roles of teachers and learners

Lewis (2002, p.47) explains that when implementing communicative approaches to language learning, teachers "manage students and the environment to make the most of opportunities for learning and practicing the target language". It is generally considered (e.g. Jacobs and Hall, 2002; Lewis, 2002; Richards and Renandya, 2002; Richards and Rodgers 2001) that one way to maximize such opportunities is through the use of collaborative or cooperative learning activities in the classroom. Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.192) describe collaborative learning as an approach in which learners use cooperative activities such as working in pairs or small groups of learners, in order, as Jacobs and Hall (2002, pp.52-53) explain, to provide students with opportunities to share their ideas, express their opinions and debate with each other. They remind us that the benefits of incorporating cooperative learning activities into language teaching include less teacher talk, increased student talk, more negotiation of meaning, a greater amount of comprehensible input, a more relaxed classroom atmosphere, and greater motivation for

learning (p.53). Collaborative learning is a student-centered approach which, as Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.193) point out, provides opportunities for naturalistic language acquisition while at the same time enabling the teacher to focus the learners' attention on particular vocabulary and language structures. They also point out that the use of interactive tasks provides ideal opportunities for learners to develop communication strategies. Thus, it can be seen that student-centered collaborative learning assists in the development of students' overall communicative competence.

Lochana and Deb (2006, p.141) believe that nowadays (at least in Western contexts) teachers of language are aware of the importance of using student-centered approaches in teaching. Teachers believe that with this way of teaching, students can learn the target language in context so they can also effectively apply it to real situations inside or even outside the classroom. Additionally, Lea et al. (2003, p.322) point out some teachers' beliefs about student-centered learning: "reliance upon active rather than passive learning, an emphasis on deep learning and understanding, increased responsibility and accountability on the part of the student, an increased sense of autonomy in the learner, an interdependence between teacher and learner", mutual respect within the teacher learner relationship and reflexive approaches to the teaching and learning process on the part of both teacher and learner.

In order to put these beliefs into practice, Littlewood (1981) advised that while students are involved in a communicative activity, teachers should take the role of the observer who walks around and is ready to give students advice or to solve their disagreements. He also mentions that teachers should help learners participate in classroom activities in which students divide into groups of four or five or pairs and conduct their interactions without teacher supervision. He observed that it is usually difficult for students and teachers to conduct learner-centered activities if they are unfamiliar with the procedure. He also suggests that for those who have never applied this activity, teachers can help students with clear instructions and relevant language before working in groups or pairs so that they can build up confidence and independence (pp. 18-19). More recently, Green et al. (2002) have suggested that teachers should pay attention to the development of discussion skills, which, they maintain help students gain independence, confidence and self-direction in their learning. They advise that students should have "opportunities not only to participate in discussion but also to observe, describe and evaluate the process of discussion" (pp.225-227). They also suggest that teachers should pre-teach students vocabulary related to the topic they are going to study through brainstorming and mind mapping. By doing this, students will know enough words to express their ideas and participate in discussion.

Brown (2007b, pp.235-237) points out that teachers have five main roles to play when implementing student-centered collaborative activities such as group work and pair work. First of all, they should make sure that students have enough classroom language so that they can follow teachers' instructions. Next, teachers should choose group techniques relevant to students' needs and levels. He suggests a range of techniques such as games, role plays and simulations, drama (more formalized form of role play or simulation), projects, interviews, brainstorming, information gap, jigsaw activities (special form of information gap), problems solving and decision making, and opinion exchange (pp.231-234). Then, teachers should plan group work following the steps: (a) introduce the techniques, (b) justify the use of small groups for the technique, (c) model the technique, (d) give explicit detailed instructions, (e) divide the class into groups, (f) check for clarification, and (g) set the task in motion (pp.235-237). After that, teachers should monitor the task in which they take the role of both facilitator and resource person. Lastly, teachers should help debrief the students so that they can „let go“ of the activity.

When changing from traditional to student-centered collaborative learning approaches, students as well as teachers must take on new roles. Breen and Candlin (1980) describe the learners' role within CLT as "The role of learner as negotiator – between the self, the learning process, and the object of learning - emerges from and interacts with the role of joint negotiator within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities which the group undertakes. The implication for the learner is that he should contribute as much as he gains, and thereby learn in an interdependent way" (p.110).

In order to become interdependent, students must firstly be guided by teachers to be managers of their own learning process (Guo & Wills, 2005). Hedge (2000, p.36) explains that students can contribute to course design through telling the teacher their needs, negotiating the context, and monitoring the process; can contribute to activity design through exploring information needed or relevant for experimentation; can develop more independent approaches by continuing their searching and learning outside the classroom at home or in self-access facilities; and can take over their learning process by interacting throughout a lesson; and asking questions, with clarifications, suggestions and comments from both teachers and peers.

Indeed, students have the capacity to interact and support each other, and as Richards and Rodgers (2001) explain, in a collaborative learning environment "...students are expected to interact primarily with each other rather than with the teacher" (p.166).

This capacity requires students to have confidence, their own motivation and positive attitudes to their study (Liu, 2007, p.128; Scharle & Szabo, 2000).

Therefore, it is true that students can get knowledge of the target language more quickly if they are familiar with the topic, in order to prepare for classroom activities and build up confidence, O'Dwyer (2006, p.234); Han (2007, pp.13-15). Also, Raof and Yusof (2006, p.148) recommend that students have extra learning hours engaging in in-depth reading, and enrich their knowledge themselves prior to participating in classroom activities. They can do this in a number of ways such as through the internet, library, TV, and DVD. By preparing themselves in these ways, students will have more knowledge of the topic they are going to study and discuss, be able to participate in classroom activities more easily.

2.1.2 Definition and Principles of CLT

There is considerable debate as to appropriate ways of defining CLT, and no single model of CLT is universally accepted as authoritative (McGroarty, 1984; Markee, 1997). Yet, according to Richards and Rodgers (2001), CLT starts with a theory of language as communication, and its goal is to develop learners' communicative competence. Despite being a simplistic account of CLT, this idea of communicative competence is considered to be the main conception of CLT. Communicative competence included knowing what to say and how to say it appropriately based on the situation, the participants, and their roles and intentions. Traditional grammatical and vocabulary syllabuses and teaching methods did not include information of this kind. It was assumed that this kind of knowledge would be picked up informally.

In fact, CLT is not a monolithic and uniform approach to language teaching (Ellis, 2003). In accordance with a classification proposed by Howatt (1984), CLT consists of a 'weak' and a 'strong' version. The weak version of CLT is based on the assumption that the components of communicative competence can be identified, and thus systematically taught (Ellis, 2003). From this perspective, CLT can be thought to be an interventionist and analytic approach to language teaching, which means that CLT does not display a fundamental difference from the earlier traditional approaches. This weak version of CLT highlights the significance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and,

characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching (Howatt, 1984). Such a version of CLT proposes that instead of teaching the structural properties of language, teachers pay attention to particular notions such as ‘possibility’, ‘possession’, as well as language functions such as ‘making requests’ and ‘giving advice.’ Howatt (1984) describes the weak version of CLT as “learning to use English” (p. 279). It is possible to claim that this version is manifested in the proposals for notional/functional syllabuses put forward by Wilkins (1976) and Van Ek (1976).

On the contrary, a strong version of CLT is based on the claim that “language is acquired through communication” (Howatt, 1984, p. 279). In other words, learners do not go through a learning experience in which they acquire the structural properties of a language and then learn to use this structural system in communication. As a matter of fact, they discover the system itself as they learn how to communicate in a language. This version proposes that teachers provide learners with ample opportunities to familiarize themselves with how language is used in actual communication. As Howatt (1984) puts it, the strong version of CLT entails “using English to learn it” (p. 279).

Other authors in the field have defined and characterized CLT in various ways (Brown, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Littlewood, 1981; Richards, 2006; Savignon, 1991). According to Larsen-Freeman (1986), the most obvious attribute of CLT is that “almost everything that is done is done with a communicative intent” (p. 132). In CLT, meaning is given prime importance, which is achieved through interaction between reader and writer, and through negotiation between speaker and listener. There are a variety of communicative activities (e.g. games, role plays, simulations, and problem-solving tasks), which offer learners an opportunity to practice their communication skills meaningfully in different contexts and by taking on different roles. In the process of utilizing these kinds of performance activities, learners avoid using their native language and teachers occasionally, if ever, correct students’ mistakes.

Another typical feature of communicative language teaching is that “it gives planned emphasis on functional as well as structural features of language, combining these into a more completely communicative view” (Littlewood, 1981, p. 1). Teachers who espouse CLT move beyond teaching structural rules of the target language, and create opportunities for learners to use the target language in a meaningful way. In doing so, they help their learners build up communicative competence.

Small group work can also be regarded as an important tenet of CLT. Larsen-Freeman (1986) puts forward that activities in a communicative class are commonly carried out by students in small groups. Negotiation of meaning can be accomplished by involving learners in group work in which they can freely interact with each other. Through small group activities, the students are engaged in meaningful and authentic language use rather than in the simply mechanical practice of language patterns. Emphasizing the importance of pair and group work as an indispensable aspect of CLT classroom, Richards (2006) argues that carrying out activities in pair and group work will benefit the learners in the following ways:

- They can learn from hearing the language used by other members of the group.
- They will produce a greater amount of language than they would use in teacher-fronted activities.
- Their motivational level is likely to increase.
- They will have the chance to develop fluency. (p. 20)

Similarly, it is desirable for a language teacher to present learners with the opportunity to develop strategies for understanding language as it is actually used by native speakers (Canale and Swain, 1980). In this respect, using authentic materials can be helpful for language teachers to expose their students to the target language the way it is used by native speakers. Richards (2006) lists the following arguments in favor of the use of authentic sources as the basis of communicative classroom learning:

- They provide cultural information about the target language.
- They provide exposure to real language.
- They relate more closely to learners' needs.
- They support a more creative approach to teaching. (p. 20)

Another feature of CLT is "its learner-centered and experience-based view of second language teaching" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 69). As cited in Li (1998), individual learners have their unique interests, learning styles, needs, and goals that should be reflected in the design of instructional methods (Savignon, 1991). Li (1998) further states that it is crucial for teachers to develop materials based on the established needs of a particular class. Besides, in a CLT classroom, students must be made to feel secure, unthreatened, and non-defensive, so teachers adopting CLT should avoid taking on a teacher-centered, authoritarian attitude (Taylor, 1983). Brown (2001), in describing the key principles of CLT, offers the following six characteristics:

1. Classroom goals are focused on all of the components (grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic) of communicative competence. Goals therefore must intertwine the organizational aspects of language with the pragmatic.
2. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus, but rather aspects of language that enable learner to accomplish those purposes.
3. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.
4. Students in a communicative class ultimately have to use language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom. Classroom tasks must therefore equip students with the skills necessary for communication in those contexts.
5. Students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an understanding of their own styles of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning.
6. The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide, not an all-knowing bestower of knowledge. Students are therefore encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with others. (p. 43)

Furthermore, Richards (2006) notes that with the introduction of CLT, language teachers and teaching institutions all around the world soon began to reorganize their teaching, syllabuses, and classroom materials. In planning language courses within a communicative approach, grammar was no longer the starting point. It was claimed that meaningful communication provides the learner with a better opportunity for learning than through a grammar-based approach. He then summarizes the overarching principles of CLT as follows:

- Make real communication the focus of language learning.
- Provide opportunities for learners to experiment and try out what they know.
- Be tolerant of learners' errors as they indicate that the learners are building up their communicative competence.
- Provide opportunities for learners to develop both accuracy and fluency.
- Link the different skills such as speaking, reading, and listening together, since they usually occur so in the real world.

- Let students induce or discover grammar rules. (Richards, 2006, p. 13)

I adopt the definition and principles of CLT proposed by Richards (2006) for the purposes of this thesis. As a final note, it can be maintained that there has been overwhelming agreement among the scholars in the field that the goal of CLT is to develop communicative competence. The authors concur that CLT has as its primary objective to help students develop communicative competence in the target language. Then the question that emerges is 'what is communicative competence?' The following section will review some common concepts dealing with the issue of communicative competence.

2.1.3 Communicative Competence

In his linguistic theories, Chomsky makes a distinction between two aspects of language, namely 'competence' vs. 'performance'. He argues that competence is consisted of the underlying knowledge of the grammatical system. By competence, Chomsky means the shared knowledge of the ideal speaker-listener set in a completely homogeneous speech community. Chomsky affirms that such underlying knowledge enables a user of a language to produce and understand an infinite set of sentences out of a finite set of rules. By performance, he refers to the use of this underlying knowledge to communicate. However, this linguistic model proposed by Chomsky has been harshly criticized for being too simplistic (Halliday, 1979; Hymes, 1972). They pointed out that this model fails to account for the social aspects of language. Agreeing with Chomsky on competence-performance distinction, most scholars feel that competence should involve, in addition to grammatical sectors, psycholinguistic, sociocultural, as well as de facto sectors, in Hymes' terms.

Hymes believes that Chomsky's view of competence is too idealized to describe actual language behavior, and therefore his view of performance is an incomplete reflection of competence. He also points out that the theory does not account for sociocultural factors or differential competence in a heterogeneous speech community. Claiming that a linguistic theory must be able to deal with a heterogeneous speech community, differential competence and the role of sociocultural features, Hymes (1972) offers a broader concept of competence, namely 'communicative competence'. He puts forward that native speakers, in addition to linguistic competence, attend to another rule system while speaking, which is labeled as the rules of language use. As cited in Li (1997), Hymes claims that a person who acquires communicative competence acquires both knowledge and ability for language use with regard to:

- whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible;
- whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available;
- whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated;
- whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what its doing entails. (Hymes, 1972, p. 281)

Compared to Chomsky's view of competence – that of abstract knowledge of grammar, Hymes' theory of what knowing a language involves presents a much more inclusive view.

Savignon (1997) promotes a classroom model of communicative competence that involves Canale and Swain's four components of competence. She defines communicative competence as "functional language proficiency; the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning involving interaction between two or more persons belonging to the same (or different) speech community" (Savignon, 1997, p. 272). In her book *Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice* (1997), Savignon portrays communicative competence as having the following elements:

1. Communicative competence is a dynamic rather than a static concept. It depends on the negotiation of meaning between two or more people who share to some degree the same symbolic system...
2. Communicative competence applies to both written and spoken language, as well as to many other symbolic systems.
3. Communicative competence is context specific. Communication takes place in an infinite variety of situations, and success in a particular role depends on one's understanding of the context and on prior experience of a similar kind...
4. There is a theoretical difference between competence and performance. Competence is defined as a presumed underlying ability and performance as the overt manifestation of that ability. Competence is what one knows. Performance is what one does.
5. Communicative competence is relative, not absolute, and depends on the cooperation of all the participants. (pp. 14-15)

While Savignon has explored and written extensively on communicative competence, it was Canale and Swain (1980) who created a more detailed theoretical framework for communicative that was highly recognized in the field.

Canale and Swain (1980) believe that the sociolinguistic work of Hymes is significant to the development of a communicative approach to language learning and teaching. Nonetheless, just as Hymes states that there are principles of grammar that would be useless without rules of language use, they uphold that there are rules of language use that would be useless without rules of grammar. Canale and Swain (1980) thus further developed the notion of communicative competence. They described communicative competence as consisting of four basic components, the total of which is assumed to enable a learner to acquire the target language to the extent that he/she can be an indistinguishable speaker of the target language:

Grammatical or Linguistic Competence: In a broader sense, the term refers to the grammatically appropriate usage of the linguistic structures of the language. For speakers of a language, it is a prerequisite that their speech be in line with the grammatical rules and within the boundaries drawn by the linguistic impositions of the language in question. Until recently, grammatical competence has mistakenly been put in the heart of the ultimate aim of language teaching, which has resulted in learners of a language, say English, who produce grammatically correct utterances but who are not able to communicate effectively in the language.

Sociolinguistic Competence: This term corresponds to the learner's ability to use the language properly in different social contexts. Sociolinguistic competence thus displays the learners' knowledge of going beyond the literal meaning of utterances, as well as recognizing intention beyond those utterances in particular social situations.

Discourse Competence: This competence deals mainly with the ability to organize the ideas in a coherent and smoothly flowing way to ensure unity in meaning. Discourse competence brings to our attention that learners must also be mindful of the discourse patterns of the language that they are learning.

Strategic Competence: Strategic Competence refers to the learners' ability to acquire verbal and non-verbal communication strategies. The strategies are the means by which learners deal with potential breakdowns in communication which arise from either "limiting conditions in actual communication or insufficient competence in one or more of the other areas of communicative competence, and to enhance the effectiveness of communication" (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 10). Dörnyei and Thurrel (1992) give a comprehensive account of the strategies communicators deal with in order to avoid potential breakdowns in communication. They cite the components of openings, turn-taking, interrupting, adjacency pairs,

conversational routines, topic shift and closings as elements of conversational rules and structures; message adjustment and avoidance, paraphrasing, using approximations, mime, and appeal for help as consisting conversational strategies; along with a brief summary of what actually a speech consists of.

This theoretical model of communicative competence has undergone some further modifications over time. Bachman (1990) has proposed a more complex model of communicative competence, which he calls “Language Competence.”

2.1.4 Communicative Approach

Language teaching has traditionally swung like a pendulum between the extreme poles as instructors looked for realistic answers to language teachers’ challenges in their classrooms (Batang, 2019; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The philosophy of language teaching has failed to distinguish between polar opposites as oral against written competencies, fluence versus precision, ability versus efficiency, expression versus form, object versus procedure, and analogy versus analytics. The motion of the pendulum can be seen by a change in methodologies of oral skills or those based on the type of context that priorities written skills (grammar-translation method, reading approach) (Kirkgoz, 2007). As a product of a pendulum swing between language modes and use, communicative language teaching has fulfilled the communicative needs of language learners, language teaching, and communication objectives (Kirkgoz, 2007).

CLT is a teaching theory focused on communicative usage and is characterized as an approach to language teaching or secondary learning which stresses the importance of communicative competence as the goal of language learning. The objective is to ensure effective communication and use of language in the classroom environment (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). The emphasis of CLT is communication rather than correctness and refinement of language, therefore, its functions are radically different for teachers and learners from those of conventional language programs (Knight, 2001). The CLT stresses the improvement of the skill of learners to interact, communicate, comprehend, and participate in social interactions. Students should feel comfortable in such a skills development classroom and prevent teachers from adopting a teacher-centered and oppressive attitude (Efrizal, 2012; Ho, 2020; Richards, 2005; Savignon, 1991; Solikhah & Budiharso, 2020). The instructor is therefore only an illustrator, an individual observer, an analyst of needs, an adviser, and a consultant (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

2.1.5 Teachers’ Beliefs

The main change in teaching was a reconceptualization of it as a cognitive rather than a behavioral phenomenon (Halbherr, 2020). It is not easy to conceptualize teachers’ beliefs as there is no universal conceptualization and definitions of teachers’ beliefs, different authors have defined teachers’ beliefs differently (Tang, Wong, Li & Cheng, 2019). In the conceptual context, teacher approaches can be theorized in three perspectives based on distinguishing factors, such as definitions of belief, methodology of research, and relations between belief and others (Bahcivan et al., 2019). The world definition considers the beliefs of teachers as an indicator of their teaching behaviors and describes and classifies the types of beliefs that teacher has (Rahman et al., 2020). Nishino (2012) defined belief in the EFL context as the teachers’ opinion and idea. Some studies in the quantitative measurements paradigm of research usually use Likert scale questionnaires to examine beliefs, for example (Rahman et al., 2018). Horwitz (1987) developed the phenomenon of BALLI, which describes beliefs about language learning and inventory, his framework is generalized in the applied linguistics settings i.e., in determining the learners’ and instructors’ beliefs.

Likewise, the cognitive and emotional model treats beliefs as accumulated understanding, extracted from the individuals’ experience of language learning, and instructing (Bahcivan et al., 2019). Ju (2013)

supports this approach by the advocacy theory. Few number of studies have used this theory through semi-structured interviews and is usually the most commonly used tool. The contextual approach, perhaps the common method used to explore the beliefs of the teachers (Choi, 2000; Hiep, 2007; Nishino, 2012). Majority of these studies explored teachers' beliefs using an interpretive approach. In addition to empirical approach, the current study uses a socio-cultural theoretical framework to explore teachers' beliefs of CLT.

2.1.6 Teachers' Attitudes

Attitudes are defined as an interaction between feelings and cognitions on behaviour (Edwards, 1990). The attitudes of teachers are of utmost important for changing the education system. Based on Diffusion Of Innovation (DOI), the success of an information sharing strategy aimed at implementing new educational ideas or practises depends on the nature of the breakthroughs, the targeted adopters and their social and organisational contexts, and the flow of information about advancement via different communications and channels such as media and interpersonal media (Kim, 2008). For educational innovations, compulsory actions lead to a lower rate of dissemination and change acceptance (Markee, 1992). With regard to the educators' personalities, optimistic and favourable attitudes to change are the factors that allow them to adopt change (Kaur, 2012; Paraskeva et al., 2008). EFL teachers have relatively favourable attitudes to communicative approaches in different countries, as seen in observational studies (Karavas-Doukas, 1996). However, these optimistic attitudes do not generally ensure that teachers use CLT in their classrooms. The opinions of teachers who comply with CLT values are inconsistent with their present practise. This shows that their attitudes deviate from the core principles of CLT (Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006). In some research, teachers have, however, shown pessimistic attitudes towards CLT (Burnaby & Sun, 1989) and perceive that it is for students from native English speaking background, not for EFL learners. Some instructors believe that if CLT is to be considered in their language schools, the communicative method should be updated based on its situational factors. "The attitudes and beliefs of teachers remain the most important guide in teaching" (Stockwell, 2007). Nhem (2019) contended that what the teachers believed about education differed greatly from what they actually implemented in the classrooms. However, they do not actually facilitate many students' activities in class. Most of the teachers' time was spent lecturing, leaving little time for interaction between students. These negative attitudes may cause difficulties in implementing CLT for teachers. Communication difficulties can lead to an increase in negative teacher attitudes or changes to CLT instructional approaches when implemented. In such cases, teachers may even revert to their existing practise.

2.1.7 Students' motivation

As with all learning, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are important factors in determining the success of language learning. Intrinsic motivation is involved with factors within the individual while extrinsic motivation is concerned with what takes place outside. However, Lewis (2002), points out that the two, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, are not mutually exclusive as extrinsic motivation can open up opportunities for students and support the development of their intrinsic motivation.

Harmer (2007) notes that students' intrinsic motivation is affected by such extrinsic factors as the goal for which students are learning; the society students live in and to what extent English is highly estimated; people around having the same enthusiasm about learning English; and curiosity to understand (pp.98-99). Similarly, Harmer (2007, p.51) defines extrinsic motivation as the student's desire of achievement, for external reward or recognition such as the need to pass examinations, the hope to get a job, or the dream of future travel.

Lepper (1988) noted that students with intrinsic motivation have their purpose of learning “for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes” (pp.289-309). Harmer (1991) and Lewis (2002) also agree that intrinsic motivation plays an important role in stimulating students to focus on their learning process. In order to foster intrinsic motivation in English language classrooms, Brown (2007b, pp.94-95) asks teachers to help their students understand that only their own will and desire can help them deeply engage in their learning process and achieve their goals. He says that students should take charge of setting up their own goals and learning strategies initially with their teachers’ support.

In short, in order best to assist students’ engagement, teachers should use communicative activities in which teachers pay attention to students’ interests and needs (Stribling, 2003) as well as allow them to contribute their choices in classroom activities. By doing this, students will be involved more in real life communicative purposes and build up their motivation.

2.1.8 The roles of teaching materials

As well as motivation, materials are essential in the promotion of communicative language use, with Nunan (1988, p.98) and Sheldon (1988, p.237) describing them as being at the heart of any CLT program. Richards and Rodgers (2001, pp.168-170) point out that in order to implement communicative approaches, a wide variety of text-based materials, task-based materials and realia are required.

According to Brown (1994, p.67), CLT textbooks are normally designed in the pattern of a notional-functional syllabus that provides opportunities for students to interact with others. Therefore, a typical lesson with CLT textbooks might include dialogues, drills, role plays, multiple choice exercises on functional conversations, and discussion activities.

Razmjoo (2007, p.127) and Crawford (2002, p.88) emphasize the roles and benefits of textbook materials. Firstly, textbooks can offer grammatical and functional frameworks that provide for the common needs of a group of students. Secondly, textbooks help students and teachers. Students can benefit from the materials not only at school but also at home where they can go back and revise what they have studied so far. For teachers, well designed teaching materials can help them be more responsive by saving them much preparation work and allowing more time to meet students’ needs. Thirdly, textbook materials do not necessarily prevent creative spin-offs in the classroom into other activities. Hence, Razmjoo (2007, p.127) notes, “textbooks play a pivotal role in language classrooms in all types of educational institutions - public schools; colleges and language schools-all over the world”.

In addition to textbooks, the use of teacher-designed text-based materials can be very effective in stimulating communication in the classroom. According to Crawford (2002, pp.84-87), Savignon (2002), Cunningsworth (1995, p.7), and Scarcella and Oxford (1992), there are some basic principles in designing effective teaching materials, for example: language needs to be functional and contextualized within the CLT frameworks; language development requires student engagement in purposeful use of language; language use should be realistic and authentic; classroom materials should usually seek to include an audiovisual component; students need to develop the ability to deal with written as well as spoken genres; effective teaching materials should be designed to meet the needs of students and aims of the program to foster student autonomy; materials should be flexible enough to allow for individual and contextual differences; and learning needs should engage students both affectively and cognitively.

In complementing well designed text-based teaching materials, task-based materials can include exercise handbooks, cue cards, activity cards, pair-communication practice materials, and student-interaction practice booklets. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), these materials provide “a variety of games,

role plays, simulations, and task-based communication activities” (p.169) in which students communicatively participate.

Other complementary materials include realia, real and concrete objects; which can be seen, touched and described. These are used in classrooms to illustrate and support students’ understanding. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.170), they might include money, signs, magazines, advertisements, newspapers, stationery, wall clocks, phones and all visual sources used to assist communicative activities in the learning process.

In order to make teaching materials work for both their students and themselves, it is generally considered (Brown, 2007b, p.188; Linley, 2006, pp.124-125; Richards, 2001) that they should be developed or adapted accordingly. In other words, teachers should make teaching materials work for both their students and themselves.

In short, both teachers and students play important roles in CLT classroom practice. Teachers manage students and the environment in which language is learnt and practiced through collaborative or cooperative learning activities while students are negotiators. In other words, student-centered approaches are applied throughout classroom activities where students are encouraged to state their preferences and to lead activities. Moreover, motivation also plays an important part in language learning which requires students’ self-recognition of their own goals and teachers’ support. The third element contributing to a CLT framework comprises the materials and resources available. These three, teachers’ management of the classroom environment, students’ motivation to learn and materials available are important points for consideration in evaluating CLT practice.

2.2 English in Asian countries

English is now considered the de facto language of Asia (Krasnick, 1995), and according to Kachru (1996), the number of English users and their interest in learning English in East Asian countries is remarkable. Therefore, in order to provide a context for the understanding of CLT in Cambodia, this chapter briefly overviews the growth of English language in the region.

2.2.1 Role of English in Asia

Kirkpatrick (2006, pp.22-23) notes that there are more non-native speakers of English than there are native speakers of English, with English being a communication tool that is used more between non-native speakers of English than native English speakers, particularly in communications between Asian countries. However, as this communication is particularly important for interchanges related to education and business, the cultures and backgrounds of the various people become an important issue, perhaps even more important than knowing the cultures and backgrounds of native English speakers. Kirkpatrick also points out that if English is primarily used as the mode of communication among Asian countries, understanding the way those people use English is more important than perfecting the way native English speakers speak.

Factors such as business, trade, employment, education and tourism have contributed to the growth in English language teaching and learning in many places, including in Vietnam, the focus of this study. Kam (2002) notes that as, English continues to be used and developed in the region due to being considered the most powerful language; most Asian countries have introduced English as a compulsory subject in their curriculum, even at primary school levels. The only reason that others have not yet introduced it to that level is due to shortage of teaching staff. He believes that in the future, people in the region will communicate in English easily, but in order to achieve this there should first be enough competent

teachers, and that communicative language teaching and skills integration will have been the main focus for several years.

Kam and Wong (2004a, p.6) note, “As an administrative language in regional, international and multinational organizations and in trade and industry and modern communication, English is spoken by millions in East Asia, although its specific role varies from country to country”. They also strongly point out that “English Language Teaching is flourishing in East Asia” (2004b, p.455). They show us that in China’s secondary education the ratio of English learners to those of other foreign languages is 99 – 1, with English being used for instruction in some subjects at university level, including information technology, finance, economics and law. Moreover, in Malaysia people expect English to be used as the medium of instruction for all subjects at school. The Department of Education and Culture of the Philippines has reconstructed its educational curriculum with increased time for English teaching, and in South Korea English is used for public signs alongside its own language.

In summary, English has now spread to such an extent that it is seen as “the global language” (Crystal, 2003, p.1). English is not only used for those who are originally from English speaking countries but also for those who are from non-English speaking countries, particularly in Asia. Therefore, ESL or EFL teachers in many Asian countries including Vietnam, now feel the need to research the best methods of teaching to ensure full communicative competence to their students (Pham Hoa Hiep, 2005, p.1).

2.2.2 English as the Global Language

Language is an important tool for information and communication in the age of globalization. Naisbitt and Aburdene (1990) made predictions of how the world’s society and culture come along in Megatrends 2000 and mentioned the prospects of English in glowing colors:

The most important factor accelerating the development of a single global lifestyle is the proliferation of the English language. Language is a great agent of homogenization; it is the frequency on which the culture is transmitted ... Today there are about 1 billion English speakers in the world. By the year 2000 that figure is likely to exceed 1.5 billion. The world’s most taught language, English is not replacing other languages; it is supplementing them ...(Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1990, p.140)

In fact, today, English is the language that is most frequently used across national boundaries and is the de facto global language (i.e., Crystal, 1997; Gladdol, 1997). However, it may be important to stress the point Naisbitt and Aburdene made about the role of English in relation to local languages: English is not replacing other languages. Hasman (2000) states: “Instead, it may supplement or co-exist with languages by allowing strangers to communicate across linguistic boundaries” (Hasman, 2000, p. 5).

Although English now enjoys this privileged status, there is some threat from rival languages. From a point of view protecting the current position of the English language, Graddol (2001) presents three possible future linguistic scenarios for rapidly developing Asia:

1. English will remain the preferred language of international communication within Asia, since the investment in English may be regarded as too great to throw away, or the social elites who have benefited from English in the past may be reluctant to let their privileged position become threatened. Or it may simply be the most common shared language.
2. Mandarin becomes regionally more important, beginning as a lingua franca within Greater China (for communication between the regions of Hong Kong, Beijing, Shanghai and Taiwan and building on increased business communication between the overseas Chinese in South-east Asia.
3. ... no single language will emerge as a dominant lingua franca in Asia and a greater number of regional languages will be learned as foreign languages. If intraregional trade is greatest between adjacent

countries, then there is likely to be an increased demand for neighboring languages (p. 30). As far as Cambodia is concerned, the first scenario seems to be the case, although the probability of the second sequence occurring could increase in the future.

English was introduced into Cambodia during the Khmer Republic or Lon Nol regime between 1970 and 1975, and at that time it was also included in the curriculum (Neau, 2003). Then it was forgotten at the start of the Khmer Rouge or Pol Pot regime between 1975 and 1979 (Neau, 2003). The Khmer Rouge regime collapsed in 1979, but English language teaching and learning were not encouraged immediately. Igawa (2008) noted that due to the influences of communism, the teaching and learning of English and French were forbidden. Those who learned and taught English or French were considered illegal and were arrested. During this period, the learning of Russian and Vietnamese was encouraged instead.

Neau (2003) and Moore and Bounchan (2010) noted that English reappeared in the curriculum in 1989, and it has been there until today. Currently, English has been included in the Cambodian curriculum from Grade 4 MoEYS, (2015). There was an intention to include English in the curriculum from pre-school education levels MoEYS, (2015). Although English has been included in the Cambodian curriculum for more than 30 years, the challenges of English learning and teaching are still a major problem for teachers of the English subject and Cambodian students, especially those who live in the countryside.

The English language plays an important role in people's lives because it allows them to communicate not only with their friends and family members but with most people worldwide (Kim, 2020). Besides, it is the world's most widely used language for studying at all learning levels. Students benefit from learning English because it broadens their horizons, develops their emotional abilities, and improves their quality of life by giving them career opportunities. English is even more special when students pursue their studies at a higher education level in their own countries or abroad. At this level, students need to read a lot of documents in English to complete assignments and other school work, and if they are not good at English, they might not succeed in their studies (Ilyosovna, 2020; Rao, 2019a, 2019b). In addition, when students, teachers, or authors search for different sources of documents on the internet, most of those sources are in English (Ilyosovna, 2020).

Moreover, because English is the primary means of communication across nations, its usage as an international or a global language is increasing with time, and most nations in the world need this language for different reasons (Ilyosovna, 2020; McKay, 2018; Rao, 2019b). English is also commonly used in literature and media; most authors write in English because the great majority of readers only know English rather than any other languages (McKay, 2018; Rao, 2019b). Furthermore, English is very important when writing articles for publication. If you write your articles in your native language rather than English, your work will only appeal to a small group of readers, most of whom will be your own nationals. In contrast, if you write your articles in English, your work can attract a global audience (Heng et al., 2021).

Even though English has progressed from its origins as a mother tongue to a second language, a foreign language, and a global language, and it has transformed into world Englishes, the challenges in learning and teaching it remain serious for many students in English as a foreign language (EFL) context such as Cambodia.

To examine the challenges, Moore and Bounchan (2010) conducted a study at the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL), Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP). They found four challenges to learning and teaching English. The first was the development of an indigenous form of English in Cambodia. That means English was preferred by small groups of people. The second issue was the challenges of teaching

standard English or English varieties because it had become an international or a global language. The third challenge was the attitude of the people in society towards those who spoke or wrote in English. Many Cambodian people view those who speak or write in English as arrogant. Finally, work opportunities were not frequently provided to those who knew English. Many Cambodian people valued those who know Chinese more than those who know English because job opportunities for those who know Chinese were much more accessible. Those who know Chinese could work in the garment factories as interpreters and receive a decent salary.

Another study conducted semi-structured interviews with 24 participants to find out the challenges faced by teachers and students in Cambodian tertiary institutions showed some challenges. These challenges included a lack of proper English for Specific Purpose (ESP) training for instructors, a lack of teacher motivation, limited English proficiency among students, and challenges in developing teaching and learning materials (Petraki & Khat, 2020). Neau (2003) also noted that the lack of teaching and learning materials for Cambodian teachers of English was a key challenge to teaching and learning English in Cambodia.

Many of the difficulties that Cambodian students face are related to the resources that schools have. The absence of resources such as course books, tape recorders, and computers significantly influences learners' interest in language learning and teaching. Teachers' low wages may have an impact on their students' learning experiences, too. Due to the low wages, teachers may lack the excitement and good attitudes needed in the classroom to create a pleasant learning environment. As a result, students may become bored with their teachers and lack excitement in the classroom, resulting in issues with morale and rapport in the classroom (Pachina, 2020).

2.2.3 Languages in Cambodia

Cambodia's official language is Khmer, a member of the Mon-Khmer subfamily of the Austroasiatic Language Group. 95% of the population speaks the language as their mother tongue (CIA FACTBOOK: Cambodia) and this official language is used heavily at the national level. The status of the Khmer language in Cambodia can be summarized in the words of Clayton (2006):

To a large degree, Khmer's utility in economic and political domains emerges organically without decision, even as most Cambodians acquire Khmer without choosing it. To a certain extent, however, utility derives from language choices, notably the decision promulgated with the 1993 constitution to privilege Khmer as the official national language (p. 212).

In education, at primary and secondary schools, the language of instruction is Khmer. In university education, however, the situation is different; Khmer has not yet been developed for the use in many fields of study. Clayton (2006) mentions: "While the national language serves as the medium of education in many universities, its utility at this level is limited, particularly in terms of its technical precision" (p. 213). Professors use English or French technical words.

Cambodians regained their freedom to learn and use the Chinese language in 1993, more than 20 years after the language ban was first enforced by the Khmer Republic in 1970 and then carried out by subsequent regimes. Many schools have been opened and numerous students study at these schools. Clayton (2006) observes: "The skyrocketing enrollment in Chinese-language schools provides one illustration of how Cambodians have embraced this new freedom" (p. 214). Clayton (2006) further explains the situation as follows:

If they choose Khmer by default at birth, Cambodians in increasing numbers are making conscious choices to learn Chinese. After having suppressed the language for decades, the Cambodian government

lifted restrictions on Chinese in 1992, and ethnic-Chinese Cambodians in particular have embraced their heritage language, as illustrated by the astonishing growth of Chinese-language schools (p. 236).

Speakers of Chinese are needed in present Cambodia for the “dual economic demand and utility” (Clayton, 2006, p. 215). Due to the globalization of today’s world economy, many businesses, looking for a more cost-efficient labor market, headquartered in Chinese-speaking countries, including China and Singapore, come to Cambodia and open garment factories and other enterprises. These businesses require Cambodians who possess the ability to speak Chinese. On the other hand, ethnic-Chinese Cambodians, comprising 1% of the population, own and manage many local businesses, which in many cases operate in conjunction with enterprises from Chinese-speaking countries; Chinese-speaking Cambodians are preferred by these local companies.

Sakanashi (2004) conducted a survey on the use of the Khmer and Chinese languages and asked high school students in Phnom Penh which language they use at home. An overwhelming majority of students of three public high schools (C, S, and P) said “Khmer only”; 98.8% of the students at School C, 95.8% at School S, and 91% at School P. All of the other students at these three schools said, “Khmer and Chinese”.

Students at a private high school for ethnic-Chinese (School T) responded quite differently. 80.8% of the students answered, “Khmer and Chinese”, while 12.0% said “Khmer only”, 3.2% “Chinese only”, and 4% “Other”, which means a trilingual family situation of “Khmer, Chinese, and Thai or English” (pp. 118-119).

Sakanashi (2004) stresses the points that almost all the students at School T can speak Khmer and Chinese and that ethnic-Chinese are raising their children bilingually so that they can find jobs both inside and outside of Cambodia.

The French language held a special status in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, the region formerly known as “French Indochina” because it was the language of their métropole. According to Wikipedia:

French, once the lingua franca of Indochina and still spoken by some, mostly older Cambodians as a second language, remains the language of instruction in various schools and universities that are often funded by the government of France. Cambodian French, a remnant of the country's colonial past, is a dialect found in Cambodia and is frequently used in government (Wikipedia, Cambodia).

The number of students learning French, however, has been declining since 1996 and in recent years, French has not been used very much at all in Cambodia; more and more people are studying English. This could be understood as part of a growing phenomenon, English as the Global Language.

France is famous for its policy to support French language education outside the country, particularly in its former colonies. In an article included on the homepage of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, however, de Lavaréne (1998) regrettably announces that Asia is the region where there are the fewest number of French-speaking countries and that only 1.1 million people are studying French in this region. As to the situation of French education in Cambodia, de Lavaréne explicates:

Of the 13,000 students enrolled at Phnom Penh universities in 1997, more than half, i.e. 7,000, are learning French. Financed by the Cultural Centre or the Aupelf-Uref, the courses are provided by 25 French-speaking lecturers, whose work also involves handing over the relay to Khmer professors. The secondary level has 200,000 pupils learning French.

In spite of France’s efforts to promote French with generous educational aids including teaching personnel and scholarships, Cambodians prefer English to French because of the utility of the English language. Although the communicative competence in French still gives an advantage to Cambodians in the field

of education, it is difficult to find more utility than cost attached to the French language in terms of both politics and economics (Clayton, 2006). Reporting a shift in foreign language preferences in Cambodia, Prusher (2001), in the Christian Science Monitor, explains: “Although appreciative of France's aid, many here feel that the insistence on French is a little impractical in an age when the argot of economic recovery is English.”

In today's Cambodia, English is the most preferred foreign language. It is the language used in international business and education. Clayton (2007) points out two political events in recent years that pronounced and promoted the use of English in Cambodia: (1) The era of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) (1992-1993) and (2) Cambodia's admission into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (1999).

Led by Yasushi Akashi, more than 20,000 international personnel came to Cambodia with UNTAC. Although this UN organization was designed as bilingual, English and French, English quickly became the major language and French was marginalized. Clayton (2007) observes: “In total, more than 60,000 Cambodians worked for the United Nations at some point during the 2-year mission, and most needed some degree of proficiency in English to perform their duties” (p. 101). This naturally marks the start of the dominance of English among foreign languages in Cambodia.

ASEAN is a powerful organization consisting of the ten member nations in Southeast Asia. Unlike other international organizations, which take a multilingual stance, ASEAN's only official language is English. This has given a strong drive for Cambodia to develop English-speaking personnel. Clayton (2007) mentions: “ASEAN's language policy has introduced what one ministry official in 2000 termed ‘tremendous pressure’ in Cambodia. Simply put, Cambodian representatives, delegates, and conferees must know English” (p. 101).

This language requirement by ASEAN is not only limited to politics. In the field of economics, Cambodians communicate internationally in English, rather than in French. Prusher (2001) explains: Today, Cambodia is struggling to emerge from that dark period and the crippling poverty of its aftermath. It dearly hopes to enter the World Trade Organization. But as Cambodians look for trading partners among their neighbors in ASEAN - the Association of Southeast Asian Nations - they find that the only common language is English.

English Language and its Education in Cambodia, a Country in Transition—351—Thus, there have been more job opportunities for Cambodians who speak English in the 2000s. Certainly, English is the “language of advantage” (Collins, 1990, p.211), as quoted in Mackay (2000, p. 63.).

These two political events also paved ways for the international community to offer development aids and grants, and technical and educational cooperation to Cambodia. Many donor countries have granted and loaned millions of dollars to Cambodia. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is a community in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and has 22 member countries that support the developing countries in the world. There were six major DAC countries; Japan, the United States, France, Germany, Sweden, and Australia; and their Official Development Assistance (ODA) in years 1996-1999. Japan has been the top donor to Cambodia and its total ODA in the past ten years is \$720 million dollars, “accounting for 25 percent of all assistance to Cambodia” (Government of Japan, 2007).

These countries, excluding France, facilitated the use and study of English in the process of implementing their development assistance in Cambodia even though only two of them, the US and Australia, are English-speaking countries.

According to Clayton (2007), international aid agencies, in developing countries like Cambodia, have influenced the Cambodian people's language choices in three ways:

1. ... the aid enterprise ... hires significant numbers of Cambodians, both directly as staff and indirectly as government counterparts ... Most aid organizations ... use and demand knowledge of English (p.102).
2. ... aid agencies have worked actively in schools and universities to provide foreign-language education and to train foreign-language teachers (p.103) [mostly French in the 1990's and overwhelmingly English now].
3. ... though actively promoting French and English, the international aid community has demonstrated inconsistent interest in Cambodian languages (p.103)

This observation symbolically confirms what has been discussed so far: Cambodians currently prefer English instead of French and the Khmer language is domestically active but holds a relatively minor status both internationally and academically. It might be significant to also point out that the Chinese language in Cambodian society is growing in terms of utility.

2.2.4 Foreign Language Education in Cambodia

Since gaining independence in 1953, there have been drastic changes in the choice of foreign language(s) taught at secondary schools in Cambodia. Neau (2002), a Cambodian applied linguist, describes the major changes in the choice of foreign languages: The changes are summarized in Table 1, according to the political periods in the current history of Cambodia.

Table 1. Changes in Cambodia's Foreign Language (FL) Education (Neau, 2002)

#	Period	Years	Foreign Language Education
1	King Sihanouk's Government	1953-1970	French only: French was the only language officially included in schools' curriculum. It was used in all sectors of Cambodia at that time.
2	Lon Nol Republic	1970-1975	French & English: Because of American involvement (politics and military) in the Indochina War, the study of "English" was also encouraged.
3	Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea	1976-1979	No use or study of foreign languages: No formal education was implemented. The study and use of FL were severely prohibited.
4	President Heng Samrin and the Age of International Politics	1979-1986	Vietnamese & Russian: Vietnamese and Russian were the languages officially included in schools' curriculum. The study of "English/French" was prohibited. If one was found to be learning either language, he/she would be severely punished and even imprisoned.
		1989-	English & French

5	The 1993 Elections & Afterwards	1993-	English & French
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French, the language of the former suzerain, was the only foreign language taught at secondary schools in Cambodia from 1953 to 1970. However, because of the pro-American nature of the Lon Nol Republic (1970-1975), English was added. But when Pol Pot, leader of the Khmer Rouge, took power and started his primitive communist regime, no foreign languages were taught. It was a time when town people were ordered to move to the countryside and at least one million Cambodians, about 15 percent of the total population, died for a variety of reasons, including execution. It was this time, Tully (2006) states, when: “Intellectuals and ‘book-learning’ were treated with particular contempt.” “The wearing of spectacles was sufficient to brand one as an intellectual and therefore an enemy of the people, and the consequences were often lethal” (p. 184). It was no time for teaching and learning foreign languages and, in fact, no time for school education at all. All the schools were closed in Cambodia during this period.

The fall of the Pol Pot regime in 1979 brought a totally different phase of foreign language education in Cambodia. Vietnamese and Russian were introduced as foreign languages and French and English were prohibited. Towards the end of the 1980s, at the end of the Cold War, people began to teach French and English once again at Cambodian secondary schools. The teaching of French and English in the schools has continued ever since that time (Neau, 2002). However, now English is treated as the first foreign language and French as the second. Clayton (2006) observes:

Most [Cambodians], however, have followed the shifting allocation of language resources away from French, toward English. More specifically, as teachers, books, and materials dedicated to English language learning have been made available by international assistance organizations and local educational administrators, Cambodians have grasped them and unceremoniously dropped French (p.236).

Foreign language education begins at secondary school level (7th grade) in Cambodia. Yet, it might be necessary to note that only a small portion of the primary school graduates go on to secondary schools in Cambodia.

While nearly 100% of the population attended primary school in 2004-2005, approximately 25% of primary school graduates continued their education to lower secondary schools, according to the homepage of Cambodia’s Ministry of Education: The enrollment ratio decreases even lower to 8% for upper secondary schools.

Since English language education starts in lower secondary school (7th grade) for Cambodian students, these low enrollment ratios to secondary schools indicate that only one fourth of the population currently has a chance to learn the language. This unequal access to English education contributes to a further disparity in the income of Cambodian people.

2.2.5 Levels of CLT in Asian countries

Recognizing the important role of English language in the Asian region and worldwide and the effectiveness of CLT in enabling learners to communicate more effectively, CLT has recently been introduced in language education systems in Asian countries. However, in some countries CLT has been successfully implemented, whereas in others it has not been as expected.

For example, Singapore has strong links to the English language due to its British colonial past. In fact, as British English is the first language in the country, many language schools have opened to welcome overseas students, mostly from regional areas, to study English. As Mee (2004, pp.369-370) notes, “The demand for English at all levels is growing and private language schools are mushrooming to offer English

to an increasing number of foreigners coming to Singapore for English immersion”. In Singapore English is the medium of instruction in its educational system. However, Lim (2004) notes that although there have been changes in ELT in Singapore’s education system, the syllabus still focuses on grammar as an important factor in English teaching and learning. According to Lim (2004, p.390), “the ability to speak, write and present effectively in internationally acceptable English that is grammatical, fluent and appropriate for purpose, audience, context and culture is a critical part of a pupil’s proficiency. The study of the grammar of English, its structures and language conventions, including spelling and punctuation is; therefore, an important aspect in the learning of English” (Curriculum Planning and Development Division, 2001a, pp.6-2). Nevertheless, while grammar is considered important, language use leading to effective communication is no less important as “pupils need to know how to communicate fluently, appropriately and effectively in internationally acceptable English. They need to understand how the language system works and how language conventions can vary according to purpose; audience, context and culture, and apply this knowledge in speech and writing in both formal and informal situations” (Curriculum Planning and Development Division, 2001a, p.4).

Similar to Singapore, Lee, Lena, Kam and Wong (2004b) have noted that English plays an important part in Brunei’s educational system because of its links with England dating from its colonization in the late 1800s. Therefore, English is mainly used in schools, courts and the mass media. Textbooks in Brunei are imported from overseas, mainly from England because of its colonial history. Many subjects including Science, Mathematics, Geography, History and English are taught in English, so it is very important for students to have the language levels to cope. Furthermore, the new English language syllabus focuses on the communicative approach; teaching and learning of English are encouraged to be in a more interactive, meaningful and enjoyable way. In order to support the focus, the Ministry of Education launched computer projects for primary schools in 1999 and high schools in 2001. Clearly, English teaching in Brunei has moved from a passive mode of learning to an active and creative mode of learning and communication (Martin & Abdullah, 2004, pp.91-98).

According to Foo and Richards (2004) and Pandian (2004), when Malaysia was a British colony, English was introduced as the medium of instruction in the primary and secondary schools. With national independence, Bahasa Malaysia was used as the medium of instruction in all schools. More recently, the Education Ministry of Malaysia has called for increasing students’ English proficiency especially since science and technology have become more globally focused. Now, some universities and colleges of science, engineering and medicine use English as the medium of instruction. Therefore, Malaysia attracts foreign students who come to undertake further studies in the common language of English.

English language is a second language in the Philippines and foreign students also go there to learn English (Magno, et al., 2009) with English being well established in its education system, but unlike Singapore and Brunei, its links are with America. Filipinos have been provided with native American teachers and instructional materials since the American occupation early last century. The development of English language was so successful that English was also used as the medium of instruction for subjects other than English in Philippines schools (Martin, 2008; Gonzalez, 2003). However, following World War II, the Americans left the country and a Bilingual Education Policy was introduced in 1974 with school subjects designed to be instructed in English (Science, Mathematics, and English) or Filipino (the rest). Since this time students have preferred to use Filipino for their communication, and teachers to use Filipino in the teaching of various subjects.

However, quality instructional materials are not continuously supported and training for teachers is not regularly scheduled. As a result, despite a long history of ELT, teachers in the Philippines still use traditional methods and teacher-centered approaches; even though, the curriculum is designed to focus on student-centeredness in the teaching and learning process (Castillo, 2004).

Due to its French colonial past, Laos also has a history of French colonization and Laos was a member of French speaking group of nations and membership requires Laos to continue considering French as an official foreign language. Therefore, French remains as a compulsory language in secondary schools (Phouthonesy, 2009). Teaching and learning English language have recently been paid much attention by the Lao government which, with aid from donor countries, the number of top officials who can speak English is to be increased so that they can participate in regional and international conferences. However, as in Cambodia, the teaching and learning of English language has not been successful for many regional school learners because of the geography of the country in which people live mostly on agriculture (Goh & Vonechith (2004); Phouthonesy, 2009). Furthermore, Phouthonesy points out the shortage of qualified English language teachers, suitable textbooks and audio-visual teaching aids is leading to a consequence that only few graduates are able to speak, read or write English (2009). Myint and Poe (2004) reveal that despite earlier colonization by France, English has long been the only foreign language taught as a compulsory subject in the Myanmar educational system, and introduced at kindergarten level. In 2002, in conjunction with a 30-year plan, papers on reforming curriculum by upgrading the teaching of English were presented in order to promote English language proficiency (Ministry of Education, 2002, p.6). However, due to established habits of traditional methods in which teachers use mother language to explain the meaning of words and requiring students to participate in rote learning, teachers have difficulties in implementing CLT in their classroom. Based on its role in economic and social development, ELT in Myanmar also needs to change from a reading and writing focus to speaking and listening, but as they say (2003, p.324) “Habits die hard”. On the other hand, science subjects are taught in English as the medium of instruction for all higher institutions (Fen, 2005).

According to Chiou-Ian (2004), English has been introduced into Taiwan education as a required subject from year 7 and an additional subject at primary school level since 2001. However, students do not have high motivation as they just expect to pass their English examinations with little incentive to communicate in English. Teachers feel uncomfortable applying new teaching methods such as discussion, pair group and group work due to their concerns about classroom management and learning outcomes (Wu, 2009). In addition, at university level teachers help students study to pass their examinations; they focus on reading and grammar translation. However, following the expansion and development in Taiwan, there is a need of English communication worldwide and learning English have become popular for all ages. Originally a Dutch colony, Nur (2004) points out that learning and teaching English language in Indonesia have been largely unsuccessful due to a lack of government attention. Although English is introduced at primary school level, it is not considered as a compulsory subject. In high school, it is a compulsory subject to be taken at students’ final examinations, but a survey conducted in Indonesia on the development of ELT says that generally Indonesian students lack motivation for learning English, do not receive enough resources, and are not able to communicate in English (Kirkpatrick, 2006). Dardjowidjojo (2000, p.21) points out five reasons leading to such failures in the English language learning process: “(a) large class sizes, (b) teachers with low levels of English proficiency, (c) the low salary of government English teachers, (d) the lack of adequate preparation to teach the new curriculum, (e) and cultural barriers”.

Therefore, a change in government priorities and increased assistance will be needed to improve CLT in Indonesia.

Unlike the situation in Taiwan, however, Honna and Takeshita (2004, p.217) point out that learning and teaching the English language in Japan has been successful due to a good understanding of the role of English in development. For example, English is considered as the second official language in Japan; English was introduced into primary level from 2002 and English programs for junior and senior high school are focused on oral communication. “College students of English are informed of English as a cross-national and cross-cultural language”. Seeing English as a language for communication worldwide, high school teachers in Japan have renewed their attitude to embrace CLT as the way to improve ELT outcomes. In fact, teachers conduct communicative activities such as pair work and group work in the EFL classrooms (O’Sullivan, 1996).

Similar to Japan, Shim and Baik (2004) point out that English plays an important part in the official language training curriculum in South Korea. Korean people understand the role of English and are willing to achieve oral communication goals in order to communicate worldwide. Here, parents even send their children to private English institutions before they start first grade (90%). The government has changed its educational policy to meet the needs of the people, stating objectives for English education in the seventh NEC (National Education Curricula) as: “(a) develop a basic communicative competence that enables students to understand and use every day English. In addition, English education should provide students with appropriate understanding of foreign cultures so as to further develop the Korean culture and introduce it to foreigners; (b) allow students to develop an interest in English and then develop the ability to communicate in English; (c) allow students to communicate naturally on everyday conversation topics; (d) allow students to understand a variety of information from foreign countries and enable them to make use of this information; (e) allow students to renew their understanding of the Korean culture through their understanding of foreign cultures and thus develop an appropriate view of the world” (cited in Shim & Baik, 2004, p.245).

However, despite the positive role of ELT in Korea, Jeon and Hahn (2006, pp.136-137) point out that most Korean teachers of English still use traditional teaching methods in their classrooms’ settings. Jeon and Hahn suggest several reasons why teachers hesitate to use task-based methods: (1) teachers do not have enough knowledge and confidence in applying the methods, (2) teachers do not like to face some new disciplinary problems in using task-based methods, and (3) teachers would need to redesign teaching materials to make the available textbooks relevant to students’ learning and matched with the principles of promoting interaction and collaborative learning.

Wongsothorn et al. (2004) note that in Thailand English is the most popular foreign language. Since 2002, there has been a new curriculum and many changes in English language education. Teachers in English language classrooms have become facilitators employing co-operative learning focused on the international community. However, Nonkukhetkhong, Baldauf and Moni (2006, p.8) describe ongoing difficulties of implementing CLT in classrooms as because “the inadequate facilities, resources and learning environments have made the policy goals unrealistic and all but impossible to achieve”. In addition, in a recent study, Segovia and Hardison (2009) reported that it is hard to conduct a proposed move from teacher-centered to learner-centred approaches in English language education due to similar constraints.

Realizing that English language is essential to future development, Jin and Cortazzi (2004, p.119) note that the Chinese government announced “learning English is for the whole nation-not only for students

and young adults but also for those of all ages and occupations”. China now provides English language training centers throughout the country to encourage English competence to both children and adults. They also use technology and employ foreign teachers to work alongside their local English teachers for learning and teaching English, especially in the cities (Vance, 2008). However, even with this investment the results in implementing CLT are low. Wang (2008) revealed that there is a big gap between policymakers and implementers as classroom teachers. Policymakers expect classroom teachers to implement curriculum innovation where they emphasize learner-centered approaches and maximize the use of English in instruction. On the contrary, classroom teachers carry out teacher-centered approaches, using their first language in instruction and focusing on testing textbooks.

Namsrai (2004) and Cohen (2004) point out that due to its relative isolation, teaching and learning English in Mongolia is at its early stage of development. However, Mongolians realize that English is an international language required for every job interview at international organizations. English, hence, is expected to achieve good results in the near future because the national curriculum and textbooks have been designed in terms of a communicative approach and follow themes. In addition, Namsrai believes that with students’ motivation to learn English, teachers using communicative approaches can help students develop their communicative skills as well as fulfill their personal needs (2004). Therefore, Cohen (2004, p.22) concludes, “Whatever the case may be, one important fact remains for the future generation of Mongolians: English is here to stay”.

In summary, for those countries where CLT has not yet been successfully implemented, although most ELT teachers know the effectiveness of using CLT in the language teaching environment, they still keep to their safe traditional methods. Kam and Wong (2004b, p.456) note that some major problems facing ELT in East Asia include (a) traditional versus modern: old ways of teaching English remain unchanged although the official rhetoric is to adopt newer and more effective ELT methodologies; (b) continuity versus change: which is an aspect of the same problem where some teachers continue to use traditional methods of teaching which they regard as effective; and (c) quantitative versus qualitative: large numbers of teachers still need to be trained as English teachers, and those currently teaching English need to have their proficiency and knowledge of English improved. In addition, Jeon (2006, p.193), Kam and Wong (2004b, p.456), and Le Van Canh (1999) point out that the common problems for many countries in East Asia are large classes, poor facilities, and over-centralized systems in which ELT is always understood in accordance with political, historical, social and cultural contexts.

Even when there is government policy supporting the implementation of communicative approaches, that policy may not be put into practice at local levels by managers and/or teachers for a range of reasons. Teachers may not be ready or lack confidence in implementing communicative approaches in the classrooms. Likewise, students may not have motivation or confidence to use language communicatively. Even when teachers are willing to implement CLT, training organizations do not always assist them in developing the skills. Therefore, an entire top-down agreement on implementing CLT in the education system along with adequate resourcing may be necessary. In order best to conduct change, governments should publicly express the important role of English and plan how to globally achieve communicative goals.

More importantly, their understanding should not stop at theory alone; they must strictly bring communicative approaches into practice. Teaching materials should be designed based on communicative principles and teachers trained on how to use and make sure they apply communicative approaches in their classrooms. School management also needs to pay attention to learning and teaching resources. Learners

will then soon recognize the role of English and set up their aims to positively affect their lives both in the present and future so that they can achieve those goals.

2.2.6 Use of CLT in EFL Contexts and Barriers to Adopting CLT

It has been argued by researchers and writers that taking a set of teaching methods developed in one part of the world and using it in another part bring about problems and challenges (Holliday, 1994; Kramsch and Sullivan, 1996; Pennycook, 1989). According to these authors, education is bound to a particular cultural environment, and good teaching practices are socially constructed in this environment. Accordingly, as cited in Hiep (2007), assuming that what is suitable in one particular educational setting will naturally be suitable in another is to disregard the fact that ELT methodology is rooted in an Anglo-Saxon view of education. Likewise, Phillipson (1992) maintains that since Anglo-American ELT trends lack appreciation of various distinct linguistic, cultural, and educational contexts around the world, they cannot thus produce appropriate teaching and learning materials that will address the local and culture-specific needs of learners. The particular context in which an innovation is introduced determines its success or failure. Markee (1997) argues that "as a socially situated activity, its success is affected by ethical and systemic constraints, the personal characteristics of potential adopters, the attributes of innovations and the strategies that are used to manage change in particular contexts" (p. 41). Breen and Candlin (2001) similarly suggest that "any realization of communicative curriculum must reflect a realistic analysis of the actual situation within which the language teaching will take place" (p. 24).

CLT was initially developed as a Western ELT methodology in the 1970s. However, since then, it has been extensively adopted in both ESL and EFL contexts all around the world. Although implementing CLT in EFL contexts results in a number of problems and challenges, it would be dubious to claim that these problems cancel out its potential usefulness as a language teaching methodology in EFL environments. Larsen-Freeman (2007) warns that in the battle against imported methods, "we may fail to understand the cause of the problem and run the risk of overacting and losing something valuable in the process" (p. 67).

In this framework, along with the growing popularity of CLT in most EFL countries, there have been many studies conducted on the feasibility of CLT innovation and potential problems in its use in EFL contexts such as China, Greece, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, Vietnam and so on.

Ellis (1994) examined the suitability of the communicative approach in the Vietnamese context. He found that one of the main problems in using a communicative approach in Vietnam was that teachers were dependent on the inherent traditional teaching practices. Also, there was too much focus on grammar-translation in the Vietnamese examination system. According to the study, teachers reported that they did not have the essential knowledge of the target language culture. Based on the findings of the study, Ellis concluded that CLT in its unique form is not suitable for Vietnamese context. He pointed out that "although there is a strong demand for communicative competence in Vietnam, it is not matched by adequate teacher training, communicative language materials and suitable learning environments" (p. 69). In a similar study, Karavas-Doukas (1996) investigated teachers' attitudes toward the use of communicative approach in Greece. It was reported that although the English curriculum in Greece was based on the premises of communicative language teaching, teachers showed a tendency to carry on the traditional teacher-oriented instruction style. The findings of this study suggested that teachers either did not understand or were unable to see the practical implications of the CLT principles.

In another significant study, Li (2004) looked into Korean teachers' perceptions of the implementation of CLT. The results of Li's study confirmed that the teachers encountered difficulties in using CLT practices

in their classes. The difficulties reported by the Korean teachers were divided into the following four categories:

- **Difficulties caused by teachers:**

- Deficiency in spoken English,
- Deficiency in strategic and sociolinguistic competence,
- Lack of training in CLT,
- Few opportunities for retraining in CLT,
- Misconceptions about CLT,
- Little time for and expertise in material development

- **Difficulties caused by students:**

- Low English proficiency,
- Little motivation for communicative competence,
- Resistance to class participation

- **Difficulties caused by the educational system:**

- Large classes,
- Grammar-based examinations,
- Insufficient funding,
- Lack of support

- **Difficulties caused by CLT itself:**

- CLT's inadequate account of EFL teaching,
- Lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments. (Li, 1998, p. 687)

According to Li (2004), teachers were reluctant to implement CLT in their language classrooms due to these problems listed above. He claimed that in order for teachers to be willing to make use of CLT in EFL contexts, many adjustments must be made. He further stated that “a conflict apparently exists between what CLT demands and what the EFL situation in many countries, such as South Korea, allows. This conflict must be resolved before EFL teaching in these countries can benefit from CLT” (pp. 695-696).

Sato and Kleinsasser's (1999) research on the potential problems of teachers in Australia teaching Japanese as a foreign language in using CLT in their classes revealed that there was inconsistency between teachers' perceptions of CLT and their actual classroom practices. Those teachers predominantly employed grammar-based activities in their classes rather than the communicative ones. It was reported that they lacked time to prepare authentic teaching materials for their classes. Moreover, teachers had fragmented knowledge of CLT, and their beliefs about language teaching and learning were mostly anchored in their own second language learning experiences.

In addition, in a study that addressed the issues of CLT use in Taiwan, Liu (2007) found out that despite the prevalent popularity of CLT in Taiwan, it was rather difficult to apply CLT into the actual language classroom. Since the education system is mainly exam-oriented in Taiwan, EFL teachers put a heavy emphasis on preparing their students for the National College Entrance Examination in Taiwan. They essentially teach grammatical structures of English because the exam largely consists of questions that assess that structural forms of the language.

Finally, a case study should be conducted in order to investigate the perceptions of EFL teachers to see the appropriateness and effectiveness of communicative and non-communicative activities in their EFL classes. The results of this study will suggest that HEI's in Cambodia need to modify their teaching

methods in a way that will take students' previous educational habits into consideration. Students will benefit from CLT if communicative and non-communicative activities are combined in English classrooms. That is, aligning CLT with traditional teaching practices seems to be beneficial for EFL students.

2.2.7 The Previous Research on Communicative Language Teaching

Teachers need to use English to explain their lessons and communicate with students. They also need to use English both inside the building and on the campus, as 56% of students surveyed considered that it is useful to practise English on campus, and 59% preferred teachers to use only English. While teachers can use the mother tongue to clarify meanings when students do not understand, 78% of students surveyed prefer teachers to use English more than Vietnamese (see Table 2).

Table 2: Summary of results gained from students' responses on teachers' use of English

In class, I would prefer the teacher to speak ...	Strongly agree ☐ ☐ Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. English only.	33%	26%	32%	7%	1%
b. English more than Vietnamese.	45%	33%	18%	2%	2%
c. English less than Vietnamese.	2%	6%	42%	23%	28%

* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

However, Bao Dat (2007) concluded that when teachers use their mother tongue to provide instructions, the process of generating target language input is negatively affected.

A part from having the ability to use appropriate teaching teachers also need to have a good personality, methodologies however, this is because learning a language is imitating whatever teachers or native language speakers say and do. Indeed, the way teachers behave in the classroom has a certain influence on the students as "a common phenomenon in communicative interaction between parent and very young child is recasting of some of the child's utterances by the parent(s)" (Tomlinson, 2007, p.141). The way of acting and speaking of teachers both in and outside the classroom can affect their students, as learning a language is also learning its cultural norms. In addition, Tomlinson (2007) believes that teacher recasting of learners' utterances may help learners benefit most if they pay attention to both meaningful content and linguistic form. He points out that teachers recasting with well-formed and appropriate utterances helps learners to communicate more effectively and appropriately. Students can imitate the models presented by teachers after meaning focused activities, and the number of models can be reduced after that.

Teachers should build up a good relationship with students in order to minimize the gap between teachers and students. Dornyei and Murphey (2003) note that a teacher knowing a student's name, and the student knowing that the teacher knows it, is extremely important for that student's constructed identity in that class. Teachers and students should consider each other as friends, putting themselves in their students' positions while teaching. As a good relationship with students can also build up their interest in learning, teachers need to do everything to build up an interesting and motivating atmosphere while paying attention to students' needs and assisting them as Dang's recent study found similar result (2006). Arnold and Fonseca (2007, p.111) also point out that when teachers give students constructive feedback on their work,

either in written or oral form, the students feel that their teachers know and understand them. In addition, when teachers praise students' work and listen to them, they can be more flexible to adjust what they are going to teach in accordance with students' needs. Moreover, teachers should treat all students the same, and be willing to help them. As Kelly et al. (1995) add that an empathic relationship between teachers and students can also be built by having conversations with students before the class begins. This helps students feel relaxed, about going to class and happy to get involved in all activities Nunan (1988).

Teachers need to be clear about the purposes of students' learning English and shape their teaching methods accordingly. For example, teachers need to continually mention the importance of English, because even students who are attending English classes have some incentives, they may be unsure of how important English is to their future. Therefore, teachers should transfer all updated or essential information about the importance of communicative English language learning to their students.

Teachers at an ideal English language center need to understand that the term "communicative approach" does not stop at the stage of using English in class. As the reading teacher at Centre 1 explained "I have to use English all the time", thinking that this was all it required. However, Littlewood et al. (1996) points out that if teachers talk too much in class time, students lose their opportunities to improve their communication skills. Therefore, teachers should create English environments in which students use four macro skills. Teachers of course use English in class, but they also make sure that students use English to contribute to the activities. As Lewis (2002, p.47) points out, teachers have to "manage students and the environment to make the most of opportunities for learning and practicing the target language". Students should share ideas in pairs / groups and understand the situations in English contexts without converting from Vietnamese into English. Therefore, teachers should create natural English settings which are embedded in students' minds, so that they can produce English naturally.

Students' questionnaires revealed that teachers should have the role of providing students with knowledge around an issue under discussion as well as any new vocabularies prior to any activities to ensure that students have enough knowledge to absorb the lesson content. Here, Green et al. (2002) recommend that teachers pre-teach vocabulary related to topics students are going to study, through brainstorming and mind mapping. By doing this, students are able to fully participate and express their ideas in discussion. Therefore, in making sure everyone joins in the discussion, teachers should give students time to practice orally and discuss before reading or writing in accordance with the preferences of 81% of students. On the other hand, only 14% of students agreed that copying from the board was valuable. However, even though a few students may not always like it, students benefit when forced to use English in class. Bao Dat (2007) found that following the use of communicative teaching, 73.75 % of students improved their oral communication. They were able to speak without fear of making mistakes. They also believed that communicative teaching methods stimulate them to participate in classroom discussion and create good interactions and relationships between them.

The provision of homework for students that is corrected by the teacher the following day is in accordance with 41% strongly agreeing and 39% agreeing (see Table 3) that homework is beneficial.

Table 3: Summary of results gained from students' responses on homework

	Strongly agree □ □ Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
Homework is useful.	41%	39%	16%	3%	2%

* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Teachers can let students correct mistakes in pairs or groups so that they can talk and compare their answers. Finally, teachers should check which answers are appropriate in accordance with 88% of students who agreed that they prefer their work to be corrected by the teacher (see Table 4).

Table 4: Summary of results gained from students' responses on mistake correction

I prefer my work to be corrected by ...	Strongly agree ☐ ☐ Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. other students	10%	33%	41%	10%	5%
b. the teacher	60%	28%	10%	2%	1%
c. self	16%	22%	51%	5%	5%

* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

Before giving students topics to discuss, it is useful for teachers to brainstorm them for vocabulary and general discussion. As Bao Dat (2007) pointed out, it is good practice to invite students to write down topics they have knowledge of as well as related words to express their ideas. From there, teachers can provide them with more vocabulary to enrich class discussions. Teachers can record what students discuss or debate and play back selected parts to all students. As a lesson for the next day, teachers could spend time correcting any mistakes recorded.

At the start of the class, teachers make sure that students attend classes by marking the roll delivered from the administration office. Before students begin the lesson, teachers should spend time going over what they have studied the previous day including spelling, dictation, raising questions and receiving answers. Furthermore, they should regularly set up pair work at least and preferably group work for students to discuss and share their opinions. Teachers should also be able to create extra activities and tasks in place of lessons that students do not like to study provided they are relevant to their level. In addition, teachers should not worry too much about covering all materials assigned, but more about students' understanding what they have learnt. Teachers should design the lesson plan based on the level of the majority of the students in class and be flexible in covering the important parts of the session if there is not enough time. According to students' surveys, students at most centers are also students of mainstream schools while some are working and attending English classes after they finish their study or work. Therefore, they come to English class somewhat tired and unable to concentrate. Even if they have high motivation, their capacity may be limited. Teachers should understand this issue and conduct their lessons in a manner that is visually appealing and able to be understood. Thus, lessons should include pictures and visual clues, and teachers should create a happy atmosphere for all students in the classroom.

In teaching English, listening, speaking, reading and writing need to be taught in this order. Listening and speaking skills need to be developed first so that students can keep on track with mastering all aspects of the language in a natural order. Here, students might be embarrassed and uncomfortable, but later they will become confident and improve their skills faster. Teachers need to focus on listening and speaking skills more than the other language skills as occur in the language development of children who see and understand what is said before they learn to speak. They only later develop the ability to master the written language and read (Tomlinson, 2007, p.2). Indeed, a child spends months listening alone, observing

thousands of activities before he utters a single word, then a phrase. Finally, after being helped, encouraged and imitated thousands of times, he can build up a simple sentence. Then he keeps on imitating, speaking for years before he can go to school to practice reading and writing. There he also takes time to improve the new skills. When teachers understand this pattern, they do not expect students to learn English as a second language by starting with reading and writing as occurred in the past.

Teachers have to make sure which teaching methods can be applied to particular situations most effectively. They need to use teaching aids, videos, DVD players and cassette players in order to illustrate what they are teaching. They should also develop the skill of drawing to quickly picture new words that are hard to understand. In this way teachers are not only actors, but artists as well. Teachers in the ideal English language center never use grammar translation methods as these cannot help students develop skills they need and society requires. Therefore, all teachers should cease using traditional grammar translation teaching approaches and focus on enabling conversations which consist of real-life situations. This is in accordance with students' expectations in which 91% expect to be assessed in real life situations (see Table 5).

Table 5: Summary of results gained from students' responses on assessments

Assessment is important with ...	Strongly agree ☐ ☐ Strongly disagree *				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. written tasks set by the teacher.	22%	44%	30%	3%	2%
b. oral tasks set by the teacher.	29%	39%	27%	3%	1%
c. checking your own progress by making tapes,	14%	26%	53%	5%	2%
d. setting up real life English situations.	67%	24%	6%	2%	1%

* (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

In teaching reading, teachers should provide students with reading strategies rather than paying attention to vocabulary and grammar structures in the way that one of the two teachers at Centre 1 conducted his reading session. Teachers should focus on not only skimming and scanning, but also on teaching students strategies requiring them to guess, infer, and exploit knowledge to develop fluency. Students who are equipped with these strategies become more confident in their reading skills.

In applying student-centered methods in reading classes other English skills are combined with the reading skill. In addition, a wide variety of activities will make reading sessions more comprehensible and enjoyable. Therefore, teachers should give students a range of opportunities to practice using reading strategies, and then discuss it in groups or pairs in order to develop their communication skills. Here teachers should be flexible in covering the important parts of the session if there is not enough time. In addition, teachers should give students homework to do outside the classroom, and more importantly, check their reading comprehension through setting up activities in which students present the controlling idea of the text.

As some teachers are not sure about communicative approaches, they are inclined to cling to grammar-translation approaches in which they can satisfy requirements and help students achieve end of term exam results. Consequently, many students are confused with which way can best help them achieve their goals. However, these students are not able to participate in activities, such as speaking in front of people. In addition, their listening is weak because they have not had the opportunity of being in an English environment. Instead, even though it is difficult at first, teachers should help them build up a new path to help them achieve their goal. These teachers should not think that their students are passive and lazy because they do not use English in communication or participate in activities due to not having enough language and ideas to respond (Green et al., 2002). Instead, teachers should create opportunities for students to discuss and share ideas before providing answers (Jacob & Hall, 2002, pp. 52-53). Furthermore, teachers who control most of the class time and explain every single point leaving no chance for students to brainstorm, search, discuss and exchange ideas in pairs / groups. If teachers are concerned about their students' goals and social requirements as a potential human resource, they should feed them with English language all the time so that they can master the language. As students have showed in the various answers recorded throughout this thesis, they prefer a learning approach that can enable them to communicate.

2.3 Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

During the late Middle Ages, the establishment of universities led to the development of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), also known as the classical method, which was designed for studying Latin and Greek texts (Rajput et al., 2023). This method gained widespread popularity as a historical preference for teaching grammar, vocabulary, and text translation (Humphreys, 2023). By the 15th century, Europeans had broadened the scope to include modern vernacular languages of the region (Celce-Murcia, 2014), and GTM was introduced in English language teaching by the 16th century (Spahiu & Kryeziu, 2021). Between the 15th and 19th centuries, a synthesis of the Grammar Translation Method's key components, as discussed by Fotos (2005) and Celce-Murcia (2015), highlights several principles: (1) instructors and learners frequently use the mother tongue, resulting in minimal use of the target language in classroom interactions; (2) it emphasizes learning grammar forms and vocabulary; (3) instruction begins with complex reading texts; (4) exercises primarily involve translating sentences between L1 and L2; (5) students show minimal improvement in communicative competence; (6) fluency in the target language is not a high requirement for instructors; and (7) cultural and grammatical elements are taught deductively. In the 19th century, the GTM evolved further, incorporating grammar presentations, memorization, and citation tasks. These innovations allowed students to effectively learn vocabulary, grammar rules, and sentence structures (Spahiu & Kryeziu, 2021; Celce-Murcia, 2001). Despite advancements in language teaching, GTM remains significant in teaching English as a second language. In critical situations, researchers have examined GTM and learners' attitudes towards it. Prastyo (2015) emphasized the importance of combining GTM with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to achieve success in accuracy and fluency in ELT. Additionally, Khan et al. (2016) found that college students felt comfortable communicating with teachers, understood learning concepts with ease, and achieved high scores through GTM.

2.3.1 Grammar Translation Methods (GTM) in the Cambodian Context

The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), which emerged in the 19th century, was widely used in European language education and later became the dominant approach in Cambodia during the French

colonial era (1863-1953) (Akramy et al., 2022; MoEYS, 2020). This method persisted after independence, heavily influencing English Language Teaching (ELT) in the country.

In the context of Cambodian ELT, GTM has historically been the primary instructional approach, emphasizing structural competence over communicative proficiency (Ellis et al., 2010; Chan, 2015). The method's persistence in Cambodian classrooms can be attributed to colonial educational legacies, which have deeply influenced contemporary ELT practices, including teacher training programs (Sok, 2018; Kim & Lee, 2020). As a result, memorization and translation continue to dominate classroom practices, reflecting traditional educational priorities (Khan et al., 2016).

2.4 Direct Method (DM)

The Direct Method is an approach to teaching a foreign language, particularly modern languages, that emphasizes instruction through dialogues, discussions, and reading in the target language without translation or reliance on the student's native language (Laela, 2018). In the late 19th century, as Europe transitioned from classical languages to modern languages like French, Italian, German, and English, these languages developed their own speech communities focused on spoken communication skills (Krogull, 2021; Tröhler, 2016). This emphasis on oral communication developed the Direct Method (DM), which François Gouin pioneered in the 1880s, drawing inspiration from patterns observed in first language acquisition (Celce-Murcia, 2015). DM gained widespread popularity in France and Germany and soon influenced language educators across various countries (Celce-Murcia, 2015). By the early 20th century, DM had been officially adopted by the governments of Austria, Belgium, France, and Germany and was similarly debated in the United States by Hennes, Sauveur, and Berlitz. In Great Britain, DM was integrated into language teaching policy between the two World Wars (Çelik, 2014).

2.4.1 Direct Methods (DM) in the Cambodian Context

The progression of the Direct Method in Cambodia's English Language Teaching (ELT) has been both gradual and complex. Traditionally, ELT in Cambodia heavily utilized the Grammar-Translation Method, which emphasized the memorization learning of grammar and the translation of sentences (Lor, 2021; MoEYS, 2020). However, as the country became more influenced by global trends and a greater need for communicative skills emerged, the Direct Method began to gain prominence (Usman et al., 2020). The Direct Method, which emphasizes learning through listening and speaking without the use of translation, became increasingly relevant during Cambodia's educational reforms in the 1990s, particularly as the country reintegrated into the global community (Nhem, 2019). By the early 2000s, its influence became more evident as Cambodia adopted international educational standards. Schools began to implement Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) alongside the Direct Method, following regional trends in Southeast Asia that prioritized communicative fluency (Dos Santos, 2020). Despite obstacles like insufficient teacher training and limited resources, Cambodia incorporated Direct Method principles, such as language immersion, into its classrooms. More recently, the Direct Method's focus on active language usage has aligned well with the rise of digital platforms that support speaking and listening exercises (Sitorus & Silitonga, 2018). As a result, Cambodia's ELT now employs a blended approach, integrating traditional methods like Grammar-Translation with communicative strategies such as the Direct Method and Task-Based Learning, addressing local educational needs while striving to meet global standards (Lor, 2021).

2.5 Audio-lingual Method (ALM)

In the early 20th century, B.F. Skinner and others expanded the behaviorist framework, which proposed that education operates through conditioning and that language learning involves the formation of habits (Goddard, 2018). During the 1940s and 1950s, the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) emerged from this foundation. ALM became highly popular in the United States during the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, focusing on phonological (sound) and morphological (word construction) systems (Nagy, 2019). It was initially developed to train U.S. military personnel in speaking foreign languages, with the goal of understanding native speakers for military and political purposes (Ghofur et al., 2017; Celce-Murcia, 2014). ALM also evolved to meet global demands, especially in scientific and technological advancements (Çelik, 2014, p. 29). The method stemmed from the structural linguistics of the Aural-Oral approach. The roles of the teacher and student in ALM are clearly defined. The teacher plays a dominant, active role, while students function primarily as imitators, heavily dependent on the teacher's guidance (Sidabutar, 2021). Compared to the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and the Direct Method (DM), ALM offers notable advantages to both teachers and learners (Bidenko & Bepalova, 2017). Ongoing research continues to explore variations of ALM due to its efficacy. Abduh (2016) found that ALM significantly improves learners' listening comprehension, while Aprianto et al. (2020) reported positive outcomes in developing Arabic-speaking skills. Similarly, Ghofur et al. (2017) highlighted the method's effectiveness in enhancing basic speaking abilities, and Maaliah et al. (2017) emphasized its structured approach in supporting both instructors and learners. Furthermore, Bidenko & Bepalova (2017) confirmed that ALM strengthens communicative competence by integrating speaking and conversational exercises.

2.5.1 Audio-lingual Method (ALM) in the Cambodian Context

The Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), developed in the United States during World War II, focuses on language learning through repetition, drills, and the development of speaking and listening skills without direct grammar instruction (Celce-Murcia, 2015). ALM gained global recognition in the mid-20th century and began influencing language teaching in Southeast Asia, including Cambodia (Celce-Murcia, 2001). After gaining independence in 1953, Cambodia looked to modernize its education system, incorporating global educational frameworks, which introduced methods like ALM (Nhem, 2020). In the post-colonial era (1950s-1970s), Cambodia's education system was still largely shaped by the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) from the French colonial period (UNESCO, 2010). However, global trends, particularly American pedagogy, started to influence reforms, and ALM began to surface, supported by international aid and collaborations with Western educational institutions (Richter & Lara Herrera, 2017). The rise of the Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s, however, disrupted educational progress, including English language teaching (ELT). The destruction of the nation's educational infrastructure left little room for structured methods like ALM (UNESCO, 2010). By the 2000s, Cambodia actively modernized its ELT practices, and while ALM continued to be used, particularly in state-run schools where resources were limited, the method was increasingly blended with newer approaches, such as Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Content-Based Instruction (CBI) (Vong & Kaewurai, 2017). Today, despite of digital learning tools and more communicative methods, ALM still plays a role in foundational language instruction, especially in rural areas where modern resources are scarce (Sovachana, 1991).

2.6 Silent Way Method (SWM)

The Silent Way is the name of a method of language teaching devised by Caleb Gattegno in the 1960s. It is based on the premise that the teacher should be silent as much as possible in the classroom but the

learner should be encouraged to produce as much language as possible. Elements of the Silent Way, particularly the use of color charts and the colored Cuisenaire rods, grew out of Gattegno's previous experience as an educational designer of reading and mathematics programs. The Silent Way shares a great deal with other learning theories and educational philosophies. Very broadly put, the learning hypotheses underlying Gattegno's work could be stated as follows:

1. Learning is facilitated if the learner discovers or creates rather than remembers and repeats what is to be learned.
2. Learning is facilitated by accompanying (mediating) physical objects
3. Learning is facilitated by problem solving involving the material to be learned.

The Silent Way belongs to a tradition that views learning as a problem-solving, creative, discovering activity, in which the learner is a principal actor rather than a bench-bound listener (Bruner, 1966). Bruner discusses the benefits derived from “discovery learning” under four headings: (a) the increase in intellectual potency, (b) the shift from extrinsic to intrinsic rewards, (c) the learning of heuristics by discovering, and (d) the aid to conserving memory (Bruner, 1966. P. 83). Gattegno claims similar benefits from learners taught via the Silent Way. The Silent Way is a language-teaching approach that was created by Caleb Gattegno, a mathematician. First introduced by Gattegno in 1963 in his book “Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools: The Silent Way”, the approach is a clear response to the rigid and restrictive teaching approaches that were common at the time. As such, it is commonly regarded as an “alternative” language-teaching method; Cook (2008) groups it under “other styles”, Richards (1986) places it under “alternative approaches and methods” and Cortazzi & Jin (2009) categorize it under “Humanistic or Alternative Approaches”. As the name suggests, this approach requires the teacher to use their silence as a tool to develop learner autonomy and encourage active student participation. A mixture of silence and simple gestures means that it's impossible for the teacher to dominate the lesson. Rather the role of the teacher is to redirect and correct where necessary, but students are encouraged to speak as much as possible and are better able to develop their independent problem-solving skills.

2.7 The Natural Approach (NA)

The natural approach is a method of language teaching developed by Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Natural Approach has been used in ESL classes as well as foreign language classes for people of all ages and in various educational settings, from primary schools to universities. It aims to foster naturalistic language acquisition in the classroom setting by emphasizing communication and limiting conscious grammar study and explicit correction of student errors. Efforts are also made to make the learning environment as stress-free as possible, by lowering the affective filter. In the natural approach, language output is not forced, but allowed to emerge spontaneously after students have attended to large amounts of comprehensible language input. Comprehensible input is the content that language learners are exposed to in the target language. Krashen suggests that language learners should be able to understand the comprehensible input provided at their current levels of language acquisition, while also making it as interesting and engaging as possible.

The natural approach was originally created in 1977 by Terrell, a Spanish teacher in California, who wished to develop a style of teaching based on the findings of naturalistic studies of second-language acquisition. After the original formulation, Terrell worked with Krashen to further develop the theoretical aspects of the method. Terrell and Krashen published the results of their collaboration in the 1983 book *The Natural Approach*.

The natural approach was strikingly different from the mainstream approach in the United States in the 1970s and early 1980s, the audio-lingual method. While the audio-lingual method prized drilling and error correction, these things disappeared almost entirely from the natural approach. Terrell and Krashen (1983) characterized the natural approach as a "traditional" method and contrasted it with grammar-based approaches, which they characterized as new inventions that had "misled" teachers.

The natural approach shares many features with the direct method (itself also known as the "natural method"), which was formulated around 1900 and was also a reaction to grammar-translation. Both the natural approach and the direct method are based on the idea of enabling naturalistic language acquisition in the language classroom; they differ in that the natural approach puts less emphasis on practice and more on exposure to language input and on reducing learners' anxiety.

The aim of the natural approach is to develop communicative skills, and it is primarily intended to be used with beginning learners. It is presented as a set of principles that can apply to a wide range of learners and teaching situations, and concrete objectives depend on the specific context in which it is used. Terrell outlines three basic principles of the approach: "Focus of instruction is on communication rather than its form. Speech production comes slowly and is never forced. Early speech goes through natural stages (yes or no response, one- word answers, lists of words, short phrases, complete sentences.) These principles result in classrooms where the teacher emphasizes interesting, comprehensible input and low-anxiety situations. Lessons in the natural approach focus on understanding messages in the foreign language, and place little or no importance on error correction, drilling or on conscious learning of grammar rules. They also emphasize learning of a wide vocabulary base over learning new grammatical structures. In addition, teachers using the natural approach aim to create situations in the classroom that are intrinsically motivating for students.

Terrell sees learners going through three stages in their acquisition of speech: comprehension, early speech, and speech emergence. In the comprehension stage Terrell focuses on students' vocabulary knowledge. His aim is to make the vocabulary stick in students' long-term memory, a process which he calls binding. Terrell sees some techniques as more binding than others; for example, the use of gestures or actions, such as in total physical response, is seen to be more binding than the use of translation.

According to Terrell, students' speech will only emerge after enough language has been bound through communicative input. When this occurs, the learners enter the early speech stage. In this stage, students answer simple questions, use single words and set phrases, and fill in simple charts in the foreign language. In the speech emergence stage, students take part in activities requiring more advanced language, such as role-plays and problem-solving activities.

Although Terrell originally created the natural approach without relying on a particular theoretical model, his subsequent collaboration with Krashen has meant that the method is often seen as an application to language teaching of Krashen's monitor model. Krashen outlined five hypotheses in his model:

The acquisition-learning hypothesis. This states that there is a strict separation between conscious learning of language and subconscious acquisition of language, and that only acquisition can lead to fluent language use.

The monitor hypothesis. This states that language knowledge that is consciously learned can only be used to monitor output, not to generate new language. Monitoring output requires learners to be focused on the rule and to have time to apply it. The input hypothesis. This states that language is acquired by exposure to comprehensible input at a level a little higher than that the learner can already understand. Krashen names this kind of input "i+1".

The natural order hypothesis. This states that learners acquire the grammatical features of a language in a fixed order, and that this is not affected by instruction. The affective filter hypothesis. This states that learners must be relaxed and open to learning in order for language to be acquired. Learners who are nervous or distressed may not learn features in the input that more relaxed learners would pick up with little effort. Despite its basis in Krashen's theory, the natural approach does not adhere to the theory strictly. In particular, Terrell perceives a greater role for the conscious learning of grammar than Krashen. Krashen's monitor hypothesis contends that conscious learning has no effect on learners' ability to generate new language, whereas Terrell believes that some conscious learning of grammar rules can be beneficial. Terrell outlines four categories of classroom activities that can facilitate language acquisition (as opposed to language learning): "Content (culture, subject matter, new information, reading, e.g. teacher tells interesting anecdote involving contrast between target and native culture.) Affective-humanistic (students' own ideas, opinions, experiences, e.g. students are asked to share personal preferences as to music, places to live, clothes, hair styles, etc.) Games [focus on using language to participate in the game, e.g. 20 questions: I, the teacher, am thinking of an object in this room. You, students, have twenty questions to guess the object. Typical questions: is it clothing? (yes) is it for a man or a woman? (woman) is it a skirt? (yes) is it brown? (yes) is it Ellen's skirt? (yes)] Problem solving (focus on using language to locate information, use information, etc., e.g. looking at this listing of films in the newspaper, and considering the different tastes and schedule needs in the group, which film would be appropriate for all of us to attend, and when?)

The natural approach enjoyed much popularity with language teachers, particularly with Spanish teachers in the United States. Markee (1997) puts forward four reasons for the success of the method. First, he says that the method was simple to understand, despite the complex nature of the research involved. Second, it was also compatible with the knowledge about second-language acquisition at the time. Third, Krashen stressed that teachers should be free to try the method, and that it could go alongside their existing classroom practices. Finally, Krashen demonstrated the method to many teachers' groups, so that they could see how it would work in practice. The natural approach has become closely associated with Krashen's monitor model, and it is often seen as an application of the theory to language teaching. Despite this perception, there are some differences, particularly Terrell's view that some degree of conscious grammar study can be beneficial.

2.8 Total Physical Response (TPR)

Total physical response (TPR) is a teaching method that incorporates language learning with physical movements. TPR was developed in the 1960s by psychology professor Dr. James J. Asher, who based it on his observations and experiences. Asher (1969) created a system by which teachers can say a word or phrase while physically modeling it for students. Students then repeat the verbal and physical information. TPR is based on studies of early childhood linguistic development, and many proponents feel that TPR is a natural, effective, and potentially fun method of creating internalized language skills.

Educators have long searched for methods to teach new vocabulary and language skills to both native and non-native speakers. Languages can present significant challenges due to their unique complexities and the difficulty of conveying new ideas using only the most fundamental terms and cues. In the 1960s, a psychology professor at San Jose State College, Dr. James J. Asher, began experimenting with new means of conveying language lessons to students, particularly those learning new languages.

Asher's early studies focused on the concept of first-trial learning. First-trial learning theories suggest that information that is learned basically immediately upon its first exposure to the learner is retained more

strongly than information that is learned over multiple exposures and a longer process of studying and memorization. Asher developed the concept based largely on his own struggles to learn foreign languages in school. He found lengthy traditional learning exercises to be less effective in creating lasting knowledge than brief moments in which he suddenly internalized a new word or term.

During his research, Asher designed learning experiments with himself as the subject. He asked bilingual students to attempt to teach him words in their native languages. The most helpful test occurred with a Japanese American student who tried to teach Asher rudimentary Japanese. When Asher and the student incorporated physical motions into the lesson, such as sitting down when the student said the Japanese phrase for “sit down,” Asher found that he was learning much more quickly and effectively.

This simple test provided the first demonstration of the technique known as Total Physical Response (TPR). Asher would introduce TPR in the 1960s, after which it spread quickly through North America and Europe. Repeated tests backed up the validity of the theory and expanded its uses. While its original functions usually dealt with vocabulary acquisition, researchers found additional applications in other language skills, including reading, writing, and speaking. In the twenty-first century, elements of TPR appear in many kinds and levels of the classroom.

The roots of TPR can be traced to studies of the development of language skills in very young children. In general, young children learn the basics of their native language through interactions with their parents, family members, or other adult guardians. Even before children begin to speak themselves, adults speak to them. Often, the words being spoken are connected to physical movements, which the parents often model. For example, a parent might say, “Smile for the camera!” or “Eat one more bite of your food!” While speaking, the parent may model a smile or mimic the gestures of eating. Asher referred to these interactions as “language-body conversations.”

Asher posited that, even though the child is not developed enough to respond verbally, they learn from each interaction. The child not only learns the actions and behaviors being modeled but also internalizes the words involved and the other sounds, patterns, and cues used to communicate the information. The simultaneous internalization of verbal information and visual cues, along with the action taken by the child, can help plant lasting learning into the brain. Asher elaborated on this point by explaining how the physical motions and language use activated both the right and left hemispheres of the brain at the same time.

After a lengthy period during which a child is exposed to verbal and visual cues but does not verbally reply, the child has learned enough basic information to begin speaking. Asher proposed that TPR, while a naturally occurring process among very young children, could be adapted for use among older children and even adults in language classes. TPR practices in the classroom combine physical motion and language use, in theory, deeply planting learning in older students’ minds just as children learn their first languages. In addition, proponents of TPR suggest that the TPR learning process is more natural, engaging, and informal than traditional means of teaching students’ languages and thus can reduce student stress and make students feel more comfortable and open to experience and learning. Many TPR teachers and students even find the activities enjoyable since they are active, participatory, and may be humorous or amusing. Asher (1969) supported the idea of a stress-free approach. He cautioned that, just as infants need a period of learning without speaking themselves, older language students should be given ample time to listen, observe, and internalize lessons before they are pressed to verbally demonstrate results.

Teachers can apply TPR lessons with relatively few complications or restrictions. An example of a TPR lesson might begin with the teacher selecting appropriate vocabulary words for the class to explore. The

teacher might want to gather aids, including pictures or props, to help show the meaning of the words. Then, the teacher will say the vocabulary words while demonstrating the meaning of the words. Teachers may use movements, expressions, or props. An example would be saying “write” while holding a pencil and miming writing gestures. Next, students should model the same gestures or actions taken by the teacher while saying the new word introduced by the teacher. Writing the word and then prompting repetition and practice exercises can help to engrain the lesson in students’ minds.

Teachers may use TPR lessons in many situations, though it most commonly appears in classes that teach languages to non-native speakers. TPR exercises are highly adaptable and may take the form of activity circles or even games such as “Simon Says.” Teachers should, however, be sensitive to the needs and feelings of students. Some students may have physical limitations or feel that TPR exercises are embarrassing and are disinclined to participate. In addition, more advanced students may not benefit as greatly from TPR as students at more basic levels of learning.

2.9 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

In the 1970s, with the increasing popularity of Krashen’s cognitive theory model, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged (Nato Sierra, 2023). This approach recognized language as a social phenomenon closely tied to expressing, interpreting, and negotiating meaning (Zulu, 2019). CLT encourages learners to focus on exchanging new information (Cheruiyot & Ongeti, 2023), and it strongly supports anthropological linguistic research in the United States (Meesing, 2017). According to Adem & Berkessa (2022), a key characteristic of CLT is the teacher’s role. In such role, teachers guide students by transforming their understanding of grammar into tools for communicative interaction in language learning.

Some defining characteristics of CLT include: (1) promoting students' ability to communicate in the target language, (2) engaging learners in active learning through pair work and group activities, (3) involving students in enjoyable learning experiences connected to the cultural, social, and real-world contexts of the target language, (4) using classroom materials and tasks that are authentic and meaningful, and (5) requiring teachers to be highly fluent and culturally competent in the target language (Sarikha & Chumworathayee, 2022).

However, Nowlan & Samuell (2020) found that teachers of Japanese as a second language often lack sufficient academic knowledge of CLT, as they tend to prioritize language instruction over teaching methodology. Studies by Sarfraz et al. (2015) and Christianto (2019) suggest that CLT facilitates highly interactive and enjoyable learning experiences.

2.9.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the Cambodian Context

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has become a dominant approach in Cambodia's English Language Teaching (ELT) landscape, particularly in the years following the Khmer Rouge regime (Nhem, 2020). Educational reforms during this period aimed at rebuilding the education system, and CLT, with its focus on active student engagement, collaborative activities, and real-world communication skills, began to gradually replace the traditional Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). By encouraging teachers and students to take active roles in the learning process through group discussions, task-based activities, and interaction, CLT has shifted the pedagogical emphasis from linguistic memorization to communicative proficiency (Bon et al., 2022). The method has been particularly effective at the university level, where fostering communication is a priority. However, its success is often based on the attitudes and beliefs of teachers. According to Doeur (2022), the effectiveness

of CLT depends significantly on whether teachers are receptive to integrating its strategies into their classrooms. Those who are well-trained in CLT principles and adopt its techniques tend to cultivate more dynamic and communicative learning environments, which enhance student outcomes. Some defining characteristics of CLT include: (1) promoting students' ability to communicate in the target language, (2) engaging learners in active learning through pair work and group activities, (3) involving students in enjoyable learning experiences connected to the cultural, social, and real-world contexts of the target language, (4) using classroom materials and tasks that are authentic and meaningful, and (5) requiring teachers to be highly fluent and culturally competent in the target language (Sarikha & Chumworathayee, 2022).

Globally, CLT emerged in the 1970s as a response to the limitations of GTM. In Cambodia, it was not until the late 1990s—after the country had begun to rebuild its educational infrastructure—that CLT was incorporated into the national education curriculum. According to Chhinh & Dy (2009), the educational reforms in the post-war period placed greater emphasis on communicative competence, leading teacher training programs to introduce CLT strategies that aimed to improve student interaction and language use in real-world contexts. Regardless of its growing acceptance, challenges remain in the widespread implementation of CLT in Cambodia (Williams et al., 2016). Limited teacher training, inadequate resources, and the persistence of traditional methods in certain areas continue to hinder the full realization of CLT's potential. Nevertheless, the integration of CLT marks a significant shift toward a more interactive and learner-centered approach, aligning Cambodian ELT with international educational standards (Bon et al., 2022).

CHAPTER III RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methodology and details the systematic procedures employed in the study. Specifically, it delineates the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, the research design, and the selection and description of the participants. Additionally, it provides a comprehensive overview of the data collection instruments, the statistical treatments and analysis techniques utilized, and the organizational structure of the study.

3.1 Theoretical / Conceptual Framework of the study

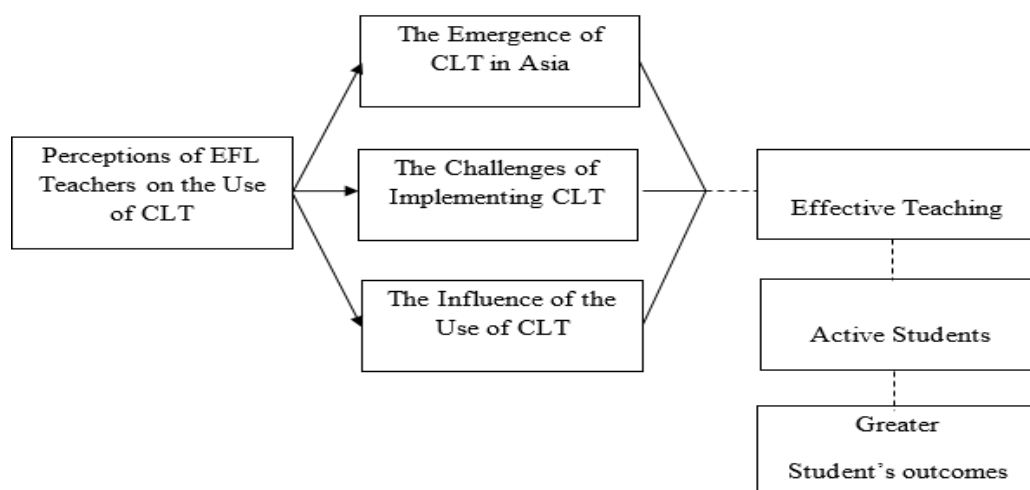


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study

3.2 Research Design

To adequately address research questions that comprise both qualitative and quantitative dimensions, this study adopted a mixed-methods approach, utilizing data collection and analysis techniques from both paradigms. Creswell et al. (2003) define mixed-methods research as the gathering or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data within a single study. In this design, data are collected either concurrently or sequentially, prioritized according to the study's objectives, and integrated at one or more stages of the research process (p. 212).

A mixed-methods framework allows researchers to leverage a full range of analytical possibilities (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) and offers a more comprehensive perspective, as qualitative insights can capture nuances that quantitative data might overlook (Creswell, 2003). By combining these two data forms, researchers can simultaneously generalize findings from a sample to a broader population while cultivating a profound, context-rich understanding of the central phenomenon.

In this study, a mixed-methods design proved beneficial in two distinct ways: the survey questionnaire systematically captured the Cambodian EFL teachers' perceived difficulties / challenges in the implementation of CLT, while the open-ended responses revealed unanticipated challenges not covered by the structured items.

A foundational element of mixed-methods research is triangulation, which serves to validate findings and ensure analytical credibility. Amores (1997) defines triangulation as "the collection and comparison of data from two or more separate observations or illustrations of the behaviors being studied" (p. 521). This study utilized this approach to cross-examine and validate participant responses. By integrating different types of data gathered through the survey questionnaires, the researcher could cross-verify the findings to ensure a highly credible report.

3.3 Respondents of the Study

The target population consisted of over 100 English language instructors across the four selected universities (BBU, NU, NMU, and UME), from which a sample of 80 respondents was selected. The sample distribution included 27 teachers from BBU (where the researcher had taught for nearly four years starting in 2012), 30 from NU (where the researcher had previously taught for four years beginning in 2009), 10 from NMU, and 13 from UME (where a professional peer served as the Head of the English Department). The 37 respondents from BBU and NMU were approached directly by the researcher. For data collection at NU and UME, the researcher utilized institutional contacts to facilitate the distribution and explanation of the structured questionnaire to their respective faculty members. Demographically, the final sample comprised 19 female and 61 male participants, reflecting an unequal gender distribution within the study population (Table 6).

Table 6: Gender ratio of survey participants

	Frequency	Percentage
Female	19	23.75%
Male	61	76.25%
Total	80	100.00%

Regarding the age demographics of the sample, 18 respondents were between 26 and 29 years old, while the largest cohort consisted of 27 participants aged 30 to 39. Additionally, 25 teachers fell within the 40–49 age range, whereas only 10 participants were in their early fifties (Figure 2).

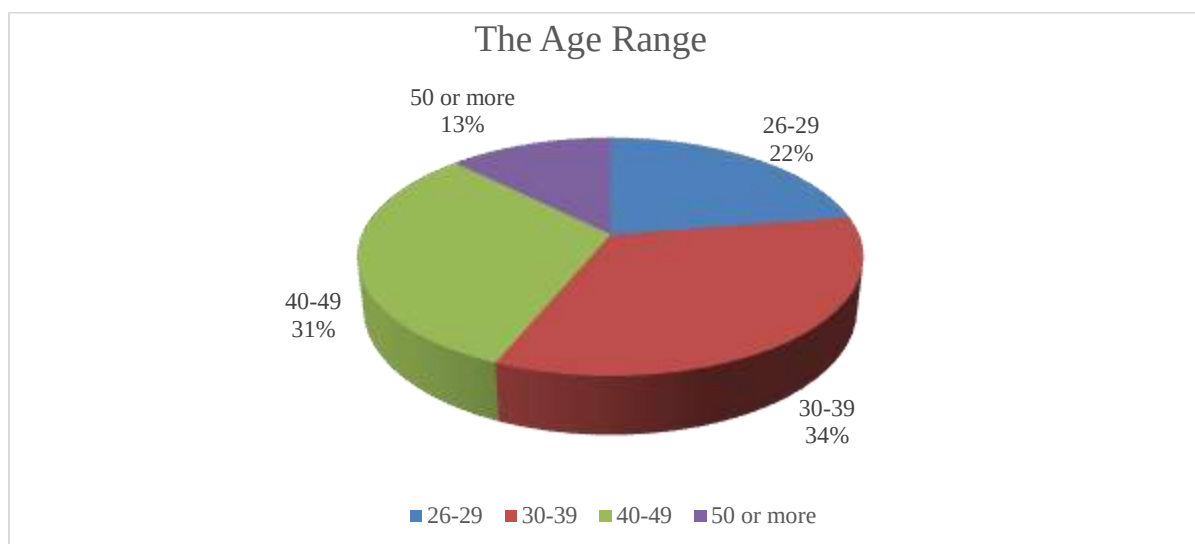


Figure 2: Age distribution of survey respondents

The participants' teaching experience spanned a wide range, from 1 to 30 years. Specifically, 5 teachers possessed 1–3 years of experience, 10 had 4–6 years, and 15 had 7–9 years. The largest cohort consisted of 30 participants with 10–12 years of experience, while the remaining 20 teachers had been teaching for 13 or more years (Table 7).

Table 7: Teaching Experience of Survey Participants

	Years of Experience	Percentage
1-3 years	5.00	6.25%
4-6 years	10.00	12.50%
7-9 years	15.00	18.75%
10-12 years	30.00	37.50%
13- or more years	20.00	25.00%
Total	80.00	100.00%

In terms of academic qualifications, 12 participants hold a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), while 18 possess both a BA and a Master of Business Administration (MBA). The majority of the sample (n = 40) hold a Master of Arts (MA) degree, and the remaining 10 participants hold a Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree (Figure 3).

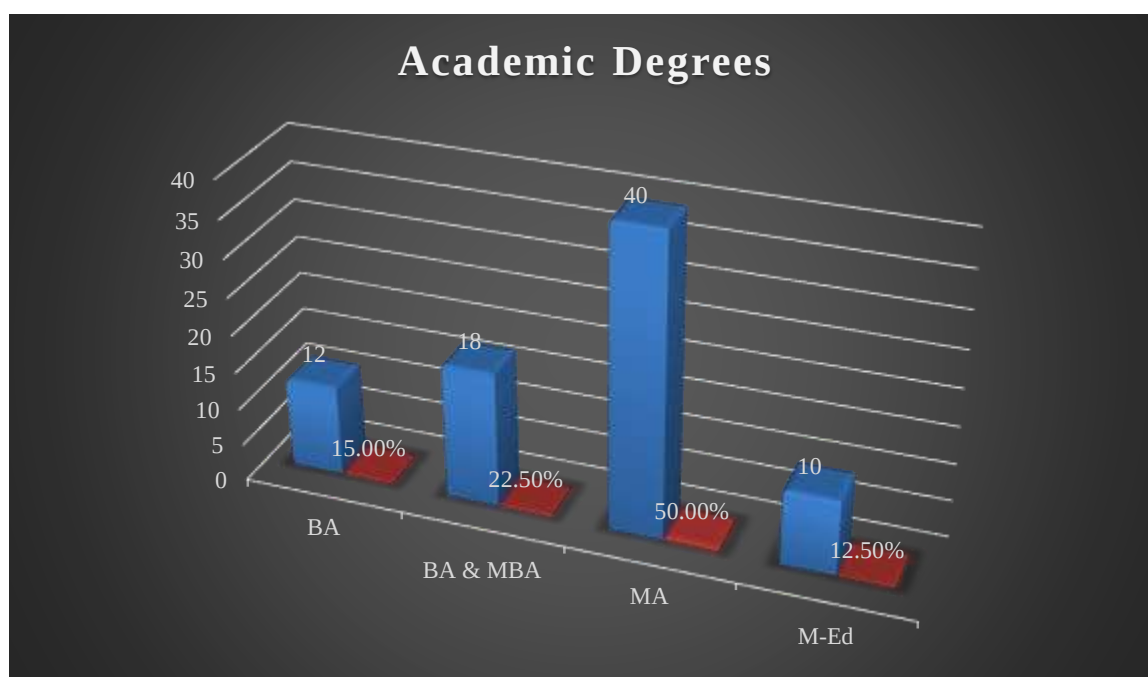


Figure 3: Academic degrees of survey participants

3.4 Research Instruments

A mixed-methods approach was selected as the most suitable methodology for this study. Beyond merely documenting EFL teachers' perceptions of CLT in Cambodian HEIs, it was essential to understand how the broader EFL context influences and shapes these viewpoints. Data collection relied primarily on a written survey questionnaire (Appendix A). This instrument allowed participants to describe, in their own words, the specific cultural, economic, political, or administrative contextual factors they perceive as barriers to implementing CLT.

3.4.1 Written Questionnaires

The primary advantage of utilizing questionnaires as data collection instruments is their capacity to gather extensive datasets efficiently and economically from large samples (Krathwohl, 1998). As one of the most prevalent data collection tools, questionnaires also allow for straightforward assessments of reliability—defined by Leftwich (2007) as an instrument's ability to yield consistent and dependable results across different administrations. Furthermore, the general strengths of surveys include accuracy, generalizability, and logistical convenience (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Conversely, Marshall and Rossman (1999) note that questionnaires often fall short when investigating intricate interaction patterns or complex social dynamics. Designed specifically for Cambodian HEI EFL instructors, the written survey in this study featured both open-ended and closed-ended items. It was administered to 80 participants to investigate the barriers they face when implementing CLT, alongside their insights regarding potential strategies to overcome these challenges.

The survey comprised of four main parts. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of questions that dealt with participants' personal information. The questions in this section asked about participants' Demographic Profile and Personal Information - age, gender, academic background, years of experience in teaching English, whether they had any work experience in an English-speaking country, and lastly if they had ever taken a test of English such as TOEFL, IELTS and so on.

The second part involved questions that relate to participants' Institutional Profile and Classroom Demographics. The first-one question in this section asked the teacher-respondents the year levels they are teaching. Other related questions in this part are about the number of classes they are presently teaching, about the number of class hours they are teaching per week, and finally about the average number of students in their classes. The results of the first two sections were partially discussed earlier in this paper.

The third part of the survey questionnaire included questions pertaining to Pedagogical Practices and English Teaching Methodologies, particularly CLT. This section required participants to specify the pedagogical methods they employ in their classrooms, alongside the frequency with which each approach is used. Additionally, respondents reflected on their own prior experiences as language learners under distinct teaching methodologies. The inquiry further explored whether participants had previously implemented CLT, their rationale for adopting or rejecting the approach, and their history of CLT-specific professional development, including the perceived benefits of such training. Finally, teachers were invited to define CLT in their own terms and outline its core methodological components, supplemented by several open-ended questions designed to capture qualitative insights regarding CLT implementation.

The fourth and final part of the survey sought to explore the participants' opinions with regard to the Perceived Difficulties and Challenges in Implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in their classes. The difficulties and challenges explored in this section were categorized into four distinct dimensions: teacher-, student-, educational system-, and CLT-related difficulties. For each category, participants evaluated the items using a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from major challenge to not a challenge at all. Furthermore, open-ended items were embedded within the survey to elicit qualitative insights regarding the precise obstacles instructors faced during CLT implementation, as well as their context-specific recommendations for optimizing the framework in Cambodia. The full instrument is provided in Appendix A.

3.4.2 Data Collection Procedures

Strict ethical guidelines were observed throughout the data collection process. Prior to launching the study, potential participants from four selected higher education institutions—BBU, NU, NMU, and UME—were contacted directly at their workplaces to outline the scope and purpose of the research. Teachers were encouraged to participate through the explanation that the study offered a valuable platform to voice their environmental concerns and reflect on these challenges for their own professional growth.

Following official approval of the research proposal by the Graduate School Committee at Maryland State University, the survey was administered to the participating teachers. An informed consent form (see Appendix B) preceded the questionnaire to ensure participants were fully briefed on the study's purpose, nature, and their rights. The form explicitly stated that participation was entirely voluntary and that all collected data would remain strictly confidential, identifiable only with their permission. Furthermore, participants were assured that the study posed no greater physical, psychological, social, or legal risks than those encountered in daily life, involved no financial costs, and that their choice to participate would not affect their relationship with the investigators or their respective institutions (BBU, NU, NMU, and UME). Upon signing the consent forms, participants completed the survey questionnaire, which required approximately 45 to 55 minutes to answer. The survey remained open for data collection over a one-and-a-half-month period, spanning from September to November 2023.

3.4.3 Statistical Treatment and Analysis

Data analysis is defined by Burns (2000) as the mechanism through which researchers derive meaning

from and interpret their findings (p. 430). In a similar vein, Marshall and Rossman (1999) assert that the core objective of analyzing data is to impose structure, order, and meaning onto the collected information. This interpretive process demands a deep familiarity with the data, intense focus, and a receptive awareness of the nuanced dynamics of social life.

Data analysis will commence with a comprehensive reading of all completed survey questionnaires. Because the researcher shares the same professional background as the respondents, they possess an insider perspective on the participants' beliefs and experiences. Specifically, the researcher's background in EFL education, experience at BBU and NU, and leadership roles as a school director and founder provide a valuable framework for interpreting the nuances within the data. Furthermore, the literature review served as a conceptual guide for the analysis, informing the identification of the difficulties and challenges and recommendations explored in the questionnaire. To ensure a systematic coding process, the analysis synthesizes this theoretical grounding with the intuitive insights gained from the researcher's insider expertise.

Questionnaire data analysis included the analysis of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were analyzed with the help of the statistical analysis software program SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Frequency calculations (i.e. how many teachers selected each answer) were used to produce descriptive central tendency statistics that would be used to present an overall picture of the teachers' perceptions of CLT, and the difficulties and problems they have faced in their attempts to implement CLT in English classrooms.

Conversely, the open-ended responses were evaluated using content analysis to identify emerging themes and categories related to teachers' comprehension of and attitudes toward CLT within Cambodian HEIs. As described by Merriam (2001), content analysis allows researchers to systematically organize vast amounts of qualitative data by establishing coded categories and sorting segments of the responses accordingly. Through this process, distinct patterns were identified and categorized. Furthermore, thematic analysis was employed to evaluate the viability, methods, and extent to which reported barriers could be overcome, while also synthesizing participant suggestions for optimizing CLT implementation.

3.4.4 Organizational Study

The study was conducted across four selected higher education institutions (HEIs) in Cambodia: Build Bright University (BBU) at the Battambang Study Center; Norton University (NU) in Phnom Penh; National Meanchey University (NMU) in Banteay Meanchey Province; and the University of Management and Economics (UME) at the Banteay Meanchey Study Center. While NU is located in the capital city of Phnom Penh, the remaining institutions are situated in northwestern Cambodia. Specifically, the BBU site operates as one of eight provincial branches of its primary Phnom Penh campus, while both NMU and the UME study center are located within Banteay Meanchey Province.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter presents the questionnaire results, analyzing both closed-ended and open-ended responses. The findings are organized into four primary thematic categories: teacher attitudes toward English and the ELT profession; concerns regarding the systemic problems in Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs); a expressed desire for instructional reforms; and an exploration of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), focusing on both its potential and the challenges of its implementation.

4.1 Attitudes towards English and ELT Profession

According to the findings of why they chose English language teaching profession, all respondents shared a highly positive outlook on English and the teaching profession, largely rooted in their initial enthusiasm as students which led them to pursue university degrees in foreign languages.

Seyha (2023) attributed his career path to a genuine, lifelong love for the language and a decade of personal study before deciding to teach.

Similarly, Mao (2023) demonstrated strong integrative motivation, noting that their passion for ELT began in middle school while drafting long letters to relatives in the US, a habit that sparked a deep interest and prompted dedicated study at an English language center.

On the other hand, fifty participants indicated that their drive to learn English was practically instrumental. They anticipated that bilingual proficiency in both Khmer and English would grant them access to lucrative employment opportunities. Furthermore, within the education sector, instructing English is perceived as a higher-status position that yields greater financial compensation than teaching other academic disciplines.

This sentiment is exemplified by Nara (2023), who recalled recognizing during high school that mastering English was key to a more prosperous future. This realization prompted a dedicated effort to achieve advanced language proficiency. Interestingly, Nara noted that becoming an educator was not the initial goal; rather, the objective was simply to secure any promising career path tied to English competency.

4.2 Concerns over the Problems in English Teaching in Cambodian HEIs

The major problems that the respondents reported in English teaching in HEI's in Cambodia included: large classes; teachers' heavy workload; heavily-loaded program to cover; mismatch between curriculum and assessment; and students' poor communicative abilities. Table 8 summarizes the data pertinent to inherent problems of English teaching in HEI's in Cambodia, which will then be discussed item by item. The number of participants who emphasized the relevant theme is indicated. As there were eighty participants in the questionnaire, the maximum number possible for each category was 80.

Table 8: Problems inherent in English teaching in Cambodian HEIs

	Frequency	Percentage
Overcrowded classrooms	78	97.50%
Excessive faculty workloads	80	100.00%
Over-packed curricula	77	96.25%
Misalignment between instructional content and assessment	80	100.00%
Deficient communicative skills among learners	78	97.50%
Low student motivation	70	87.50%

4.2.1 Overcrowded Classrooms

A total of thirty-six survey participants identified large class sizes as a significant obstacle in their teaching. Notably, an educator employed at Build Bright University (BBU) shed light on the structural

cause behind this issue, explaining that the university administration enforces a strict policy requiring at least 35 students per classroom.

This mandate stems from financial pressures; because the private institution maintains low tuition rates, it must hit this enrollment threshold simply to offset classroom expenses and generate substantial profits, Channa (2023).

Almost of the eighty teachers confessed that large classes made it hard for them to make use of group work, especially in the classrooms with fixed and immovable desks and chairs. Additionally, it was expressed that due to the over-crowded classes, it was almost impossible to give individualized attention to each learner. Moreover, disciplinary issues were said to dominate large classes. The teachers complained much about the classroom management problems that were resulted from over-crowded classrooms.

Excessive class sizes present severe obstacles to effective classroom management, frequently resulting in a chaotic learning environment. This issue is highlighted by Dara (2023), who noted that implementing collaborative group activities triggers disruptive levels of student excitement that are exceptionally difficult to regulate. Furthermore, due to the high volume of learners in a single room, an instructor can realistically provide no more than thirty seconds of direct, individualized support to any given student.

The data collected from the questionnaires confirmed the severity of this issue. Survey outcomes indicated that a mere two instructors taught smaller classes containing between 21 and 25 students. Meanwhile, eleven educators reported having an average class size of 26 to 30 individuals, and a substantial group of 37 teachers noted their averages hovered between 31 and 35 students. Furthermore, approximately twenty participants stated their typical student count fell between 36 and 40, while the remaining ten instructors expressed concern over dealing with large cohorts exceeding 41 students per class. These varying classroom densities, compiled from responses to question 17, are visually represented in Figure 4.

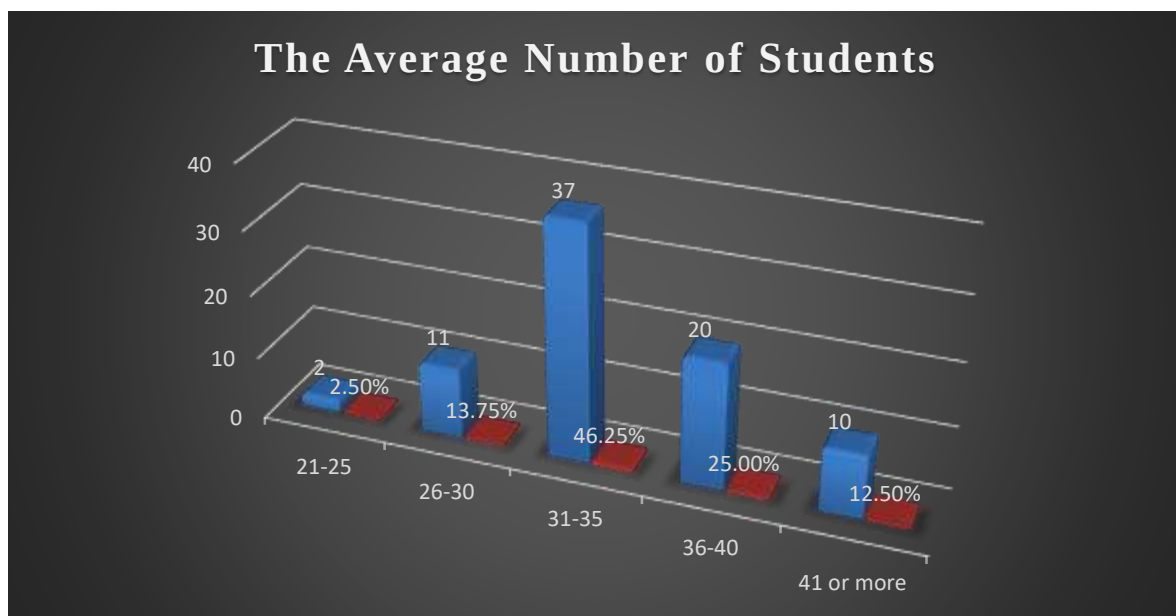


Figure 4: Average number of students in a classroom

Every respondent expressed deep concern regarding the overwhelming workload faced by English teachers in HEIs in Cambodia, noting that excessive responsibilities negatively impacted their teaching

efficacy. Maintaining an optimal standard of instruction proves difficult because faculty must balance their teaching with supplementary administrative duties, such as attending school-wide and departmental meetings, allocating recess and lunchtime duties, and so on, it was hard to keep up with all the work at an optimal level. Two of the teachers even admitted that when the university was over, most teachers run away from it instantly.

This systemic exhaustion is highlighted by a case of an instructor managing 10 separate classes spanning all university levels, totaling 36 instructional hours weekly. Such an extensive teaching load severely restricts the time required to design genuine communicative classroom activities, evaluate written assignments, grade examinations, and maintain a functional work-life balance (Razity, 2023).

Smey (2023) mentioned that excessive teaching hours lead to chronic physical and emotional exhaustion, drastically reducing instructional quality, especially sadly unable to use CLT in the class. Educators often face depleted energy, heightened anxiety, and compromised work-life balance. This "teacher burnout" frequently results from an unsustainable combination of long direct-instruction hours and heavy administrative and grading workloads.

To be more detailed, the teachers' heavy workload was also demonstrated as follows. When asked about the number of classes that they teach a year, eighteen teachers responded that they taught seven different classes. Thirty-two teachers expressed that they taught eight different classes in total. Likewise, it was interesting to see that twenty-two teachers reported teaching ten class sections. There were no teachers who taught one single class; yet, eight teachers elucidated that they taught four classes only, which was the lowest number of separate classes taught as reported by the participants. Figure 5 summarizes the data pertaining to the number of classes taught by the respondents.

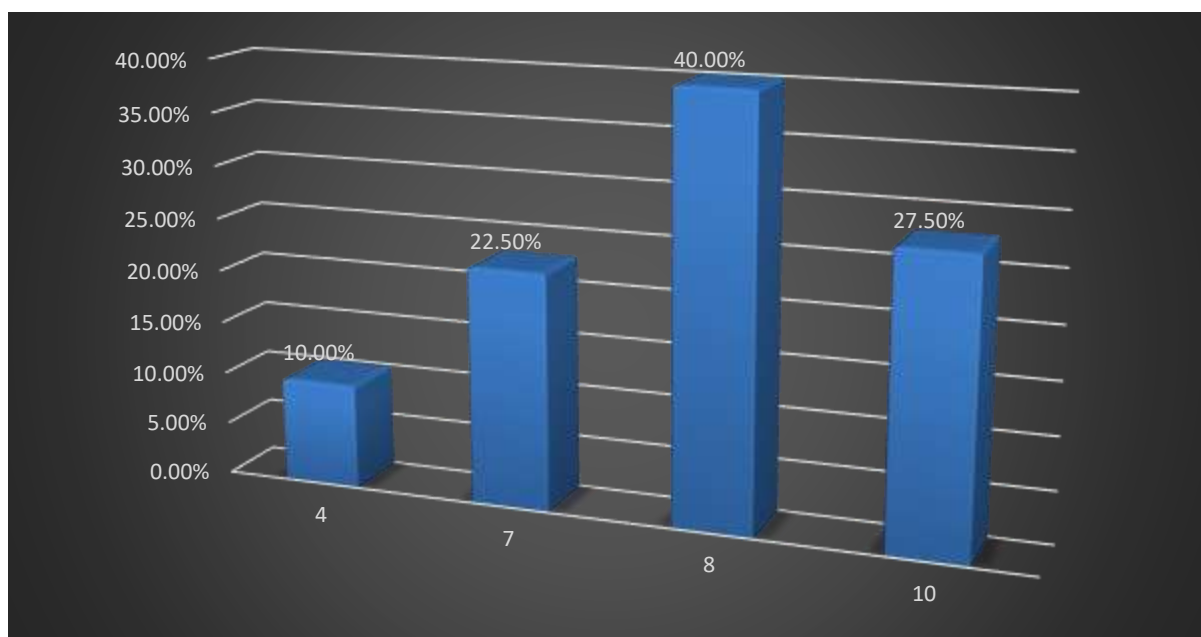


Figure 5: Number of classes taught by survey participants (per academic year)

In addition, the questionnaire data with reference to the hours of class that the teachers taught per week presented a clearer depiction of the heavy workload of the survey respondents. According to the survey data, thirty-two teachers disclosed that they taught some 26 – 30 hours of class per week. This only included the teaching hours; grading and other out-of-class duties were excluded from these data. What is

more, twenty-two of them affirmed that they taught 31 to 36 hours of English class while some 18 teachers had 21 to 25 hours to teach each week. The sum of teachers who taught less than 20 hours of English classes appeared to be eight teachers only out of 80 respondents. Figure 6 gives a detailed account of weekly class hours taught by the participants.

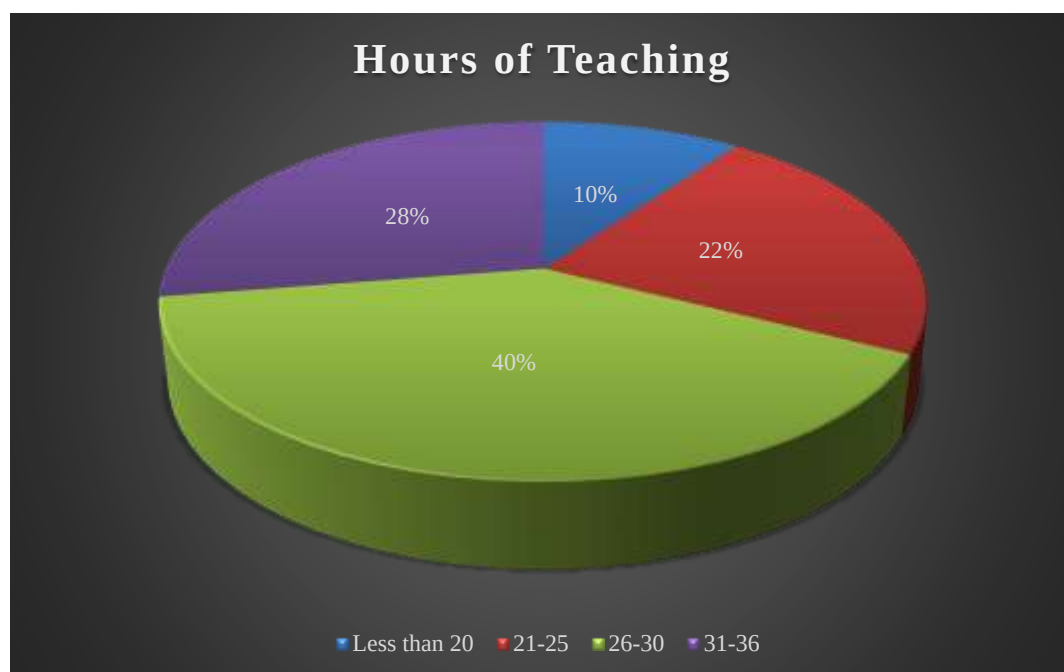


Figure 6: Hours of class taught by participants (per week)

4.2.2 Excessive Faculty Workloads

In response to question 30 of the survey, nearly all participants identified an overly dense English curriculum as a significant obstacle. Teachers expressed anxiety over the pressure to instruct an excessive number of linguistic elements—primarily focused on grammar—within a highly restricted timeframe. Consequently, instructors routinely abandoned tasks aimed at developing productive competencies, such as speaking and writing, to ensure all mandated grammar components were completed on schedule. The respondents emphasized that keeping pace with these grammar units was crucial because the year-end nationwide standardized examinations assess students exclusively on grammatical knowledge.

This educational constraint proves highly frustrating for teachers, a sentiment shared by Phea (2023), who explained that the sheer volume of the curriculum forces teachers to rush through exercises. In this restrictive environment, communicative and expressive activities are immediately discarded; Phea noted with frustration that true composition writing has been reduced merely to students generating isolated sentences to practice grammatical structures, rather than engaging in authentic, meaningful writing.

Another participant highlighted the immense strain that this overly dense curriculum imposes on both teachers and learners, questioning the pedagogical utility of overwhelming students with excessive linguistic content within tight deadlines. Theng (2023) argued that the current framework unrealistically expects Cambodian university students to achieve an advanced level of proficiency through a crowded curriculum.

This excessive volume deprives students of necessary practice opportunities, ultimately hindering their speaking abilities. Furthermore, a glaring contradiction exists within the institutional guidelines: while the

mandated syllabus officially champions a student-centered, communicative approach emphasizing creativity and authentic interaction, the rigid time constraints force the majority of teachers to discard collaborative exercises, pair work, and interactive tasks simply to complete the required course content (Theng, 2023).

Another problem inherent in English teaching in HEI's in Cambodia was reported to be the mismatch between the English curriculum and the assessment practices, which will be discussed now.

4.2.3 Misalignment between Instructional Content and Assessment

A universal concern among the participants was the profound misalignment between the official curriculum goals and the actual content of the high-stakes, year-end standardized examinations. While the national English curriculum mandated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) explicitly promotes communicative language teaching, the standardized tests exclusively feature multiple-choice questions targeting grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and sentence-level translation. Consequently, vital productive and receptive skills such as speaking, listening, and writing are completely omitted from these evaluations.

Dy (2023) highlighted this severe systemic mismatch among textbooks, university-provided instructional materials, and state exit exams, noting that the heavy communicative focus of course books becomes futile because instructors cannot justify teaching speaking when it is entirely absent from the final multiple-choice tests.

Furthermore, educators face intense external pressure because student performance directly influences their professional standing. Lower exam marks frequently result in criticism from both parents and school administrators, who equate poor scores with teaching incompetence. Participants revealed that student test outcomes directly impact their career advancement, self-worth, peer status, and general popularity. This environment creates immense anxiety, particularly for instructors at private universities who face the constant threat of termination if their students' scores fall short of administrative expectations.

The academic culture in Cambodia prioritizes final examination scores above all else; regardless of an educator's dedication to building communicative fluency, professional success is ultimately dictated by exam metrics (Pheak, 2023).

As a result, teachers feel compelled to distort their pedagogy in favor of test preparation, acknowledging that even highly proficient speakers struggle on these exams without targeted training. This intense pressure leads to a severe narrowing of the curriculum, where teachers routinely discard communicative materials to focus strictly on evaluated content. Consequently, the primary objective of university-level English instruction shifts from fostering comprehensive language proficiency to maximizing exam scores, making grammatical reviews, test-taking strategies, and practice exams the most prevalent classroom activities. Because higher education in Cambodia is exclusively centered around test outcomes, students find themselves in a state of intense rivalry with one another. This assessment-driven environment inherently encourages an individualistic approach to education, leaving learners isolated because they must ultimately face high-stakes final examinations on their own.

According to Pov (2023), since performance on these tests serves as the sole metric for academic advancement, instructors are forced to abandon collaborative group work entirely within their English language classrooms. As this perspective highlights, such rigid evaluation structures leave virtually no space for communicative, interactive, or creative educational methods in the classroom.

4.2.4 Deficient Communicative Skills among Learners

Survey data revealed widespread concern among participants regarding the limited communicative comp

etence of Cambodian students, despite multiple years of English instruction. This deficit is largely attributed to the continued reliance on traditional pedagogical approaches across most higher education institutions (HEIs). Highlighting these systemic instructional challenges, one educator observed the following.

According to Samuth (2023), the primary obstacle in higher education is a deep-rooted reliance on conventional instruction. A lack of training prevents faculty from adopting modern approaches that extend beyond basic Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Furthermore, even qualified educators face systemic hurdles, including rigid curricula, misaligned assessments, substandard teaching materials, and low student engagement. Consequently, these compounding difficulties eventually lead to teacher burnout and a loss of professional motivation.

In this educational context, English language instruction typically overlooks the practical application of communication. Students are seldom given the chance to practice or implement their classroom learning in real-world scenarios, compounded by the fact that they have little incentive to speak English in their daily lives.

Consequently, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Cambodia face widespread criticism from all generations for producing students who remain unable to speak English fluently despite years of study. As highlighted by Theary (2023), it is deeply perplexing how individuals can dedicate five to ten years to learning the language yet still struggle to speak it.

According to respondents, the Cambodian higher education system places a heavy emphasis on memorizing facts and structural rules. Consequently, when students begin studying English, they face significant difficulties adjusting to instructional methods that differ from the traditional rote learning they are used to—a challenge that intensifies when they transition to university.

Because high school education heavily shapes subsequent university performance, students who have been trained exclusively in rote memorization find it highly challenging to adapt to the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Accustomed to committing formulas and rules to memory, they attempt to apply rigid frameworks to all language usage and remain heavily dependent on grammar. As a result, they often view active skills like speaking, listening, and reading as unproductive. Having had little to no exposure to collaborative group work, pair activities, or interactive communication, they struggle to comprehend the underlying value of these practical learning methods (Reth, 2023).

4.2.5 Low Student Motivation

Most survey participants noted that a primary challenge in Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs) is students' lack of enthusiasm for acquiring or practicing English. Educators pointed out that while a growing number of students recognize how vital English is for their professional futures, an excessive focus on passing exams ultimately dampens their genuine drive to learn the language. Furthermore, during high school, Cambodian students choose specific academic tracks for their upper-secondary years, such as social sciences, mathematical sciences, or foreign languages. Because choosing the social sciences track exempts students from English exam requirements, the large percentage of twelfth graders in this track see little practical benefit in studying English, leading to a significant decline in their interest and engagement.

When students perceive English as unnecessary for their immediate goals, they are reluctant to invest time in mastering it. A major contributing factor is that the university entrance examination completely excludes English, unless a student is specifically pursuing a foreign language major. Because they will not encounter any English questions on the exam, students choose to allocate their energy entirely toward test

preparation, making it exceptionally difficult for educators to engage them in routine coursework, homework, or worksheets (Dine, 2023).

One participant highlighted a continuous decline in the number of university students choosing foreign languages, specifically English, as their primary major.

For instance, only 10 out of 500 students opted for English in the previous year, underscoring a sharp decline in learner motivation. Even when students lean toward the English department, they frequently give in to parental pressure to pursue the natural sciences instead. This preference is driven by the expectation that engineering careers offer far better financial returns than roles like translating or English teaching. As a result, students lose their personal drive, making classroom motivation efforts highly ineffective since the students lack the freedom to make their own academic choices (Chay, 2023).

The main reason for this decrease was tied to the low motivation of students, as well as the pressure parents put on students to select mathematical sciences when they are asked to choose their majors of study.

4.3 Desire for Changes in English Teaching in Cambodian HEIs

A prominent theme emerging from this study is the unanimous call among participants for structural changes in English education within Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs). Respondents emphasized a glaring disparity: the average university graduate has already undergone 10 to 12 years of English instruction, yet still struggles to achieve the proficiency required to express themselves clearly in the language. Driven by this shortfall, educators expressed an urgent need for positive reforms. Specifically, a participant named Norak (2023) recommended that university chairs or owners increase financial investment in English departments, allocating more capital to directly upgrade learning resources and teaching conditions.

To begin with, substantial financial resources must be secured. It is necessary to expand the availability of higher education institutions while reducing class sizes, which consequently requires hiring a larger workforce of educators. Furthermore, learning environments should be modernized through the provision of updated English instructional materials and the installation of dedicated listening and speaking laboratories, technological tools, and LCD projectors (Norak, 2023).

Sambar (2023) highlighted the necessity of enhancing students' analytical and interpretive capabilities, which in turn fosters creative problem-solving and reduces the reliance on rote memorization as an instructional method. Academic environments need to evolve into spaces where students can cultivate higher-order cognitive skills and freely apply their creativity.

Because Cambodian students are traditionally unaccustomed to generating original output, classroom practices should minimize memorization and instead foster independence, ensuring active productivity during English lessons (Sambar, 2023). Participants in the study linked this pervasive reliance on memorization, alongside the widespread deficit in student creativity and production, to the country's grammar-focused examination system.

Specifically, Hong (2023) identified these standardized tests as the root cause of substandard English instruction in Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs). Consequently, he proposed that these examinations either be completely removed from higher education or, at the very least, no longer serve as the primary or sole benchmark for student assessment and placement.

Standardized examinations ought to be abolished, or at the very least, stripped of their status as the sole metric for student advancement. Instead, individual universities should have the autonomy to design their own assessment methods. The ultimate goal of an educator should be to graduate students with an independent mindset, allowing them to prepare for their chosen academic paths independently outside of

regular classroom hours rather than making test preparation a teacher's primary focus. Alternative evaluation formats could include oral interviews or project submissions tailored to specific departments. Furthermore, admissions and progression criteria should expand to incorporate holistic measures, such as instructor recommendation letters and extracurricular involvement, to finally elevate English to its rightful status within the educational system (Hong, 2023).

Furthermore, Math (2023) underscored the vital importance of a clearly articulated instructional philosophy. He argued that maximizing the effectiveness of an educational system depends heavily on forging robust integration and synergy among the institution's distinct departments, which collectively operate like a single organism.

Effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction begins with a robust and well-defined pedagogical philosophy. Consequently, educational systems must explicitly outline every core component of instruction—including learning objectives, learner needs, and the methodologies required to realize those goals—at both the institutional and national levels. Once established, this philosophy must be clearly communicated to all stakeholders before attempting to structure specific educational units. A primary obstacle in higher education is the failure to systemically organize an institution's operations. Because a university functions like a biological organism where a single failing organ disrupts the entire system, the most critical step is establishing a cohesive teaching philosophy, a process in which educators play an indispensable role (Math, 2023).

Notably, the study's participants exhibited a sincere commitment to reforming English instruction within Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs). Their insights reflected both extensive practical experience in Cambodian HEIs and a profound understanding of language pedagogy. Nevertheless, systemic constraints—including oversized classrooms, teacher shortages, restricted time and resources, and high-stakes, grammar-centric testing—ultimately restricted educators from implementing their pedagogical ideals within the classroom.

4.4 Understanding of CLT and Its Potential for English Teaching in Cambodian HEIs

One of the questions in the survey intended to elicit teachers' perceptions regarding the general principles of CLT. This question involved 10 items, some of which are descriptive characteristics of CLT, and the others are common misconceptions about CLT that have been reported in the literature. Responses to this question demonstrate teachers' understanding of what is involved in CLT in HEIs in Cambodia.

Most frequently selected items by the survey participants as characteristics of CLT are:

- CLT is student/learner-centered approach (96.25%)
- CLT emphasizes communication in a second language (L2) (87.50%)
- CLT emphasizes fluency over accuracy (100.00%)
- CLT relies heavily on speaking and listening skills (81.25%)

The items selected most frequently as "Not true", i.e., as not characteristics of CLT are:

- CLT involves teaching speaking only (90.00%)
- CLT involves no grammar teaching (87.50%)
- CLT involves only group work or pair work (80.00%)

It is notable that the participants showed a clear variation in their response to the item that stated that CLT requires teachers to have a high proficiency in English. 93.75% of the respondents indicated that this statement was "True" while few 6.25% of them chose "Not true" as their response. A similar trend was seen for the item stating that CLT requires higher knowledge of the target language culture. Even though

25.00% of the participants expressed that this conception was “Not true”, 75.00% of them maintained that it was “True.” Table 9 summarizes the participants’ responses with regard to the general principles of CLT.

Table 9: Survey participants perceptions about CLT

	True		Not True		Don't know		T.R
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
CLT is student/learner-centered approach.	77	96.25%	2	2.50%	1	1.25%	80
CLT emphasizes fluency over accuracy.	80	100.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	80
CLT emphasizes communication in a second language (L2).	70	87.50%	5	6.25%	5	6.25%	80
CLT relies heavily on speaking and listening skills.	65	81.25%	10	12.50%	5	6.25%	80
CLT requires teachers to have a high proficiency in English.	75	93.75%	5	6.25%	0	0.00%	80
CLT involves only group work or pair work.	16	20.00%	64	80.00%	0	0.00%	80
CLT requires higher knowledge of the target language culture.	60	75.00%	20	25.00%	0	0.00%	80
CLT involves no grammar teaching.	8	10.00%	70	87.50%	2	2.50%	80
CLT involves teaching speaking only.	6	7.50%	72	90.00%	2	2.50%	80
CLT is basically an ESL methodology, not EFL.	8	10.00%	44	55.00%	28	35.00%	80

On the whole, teachers' identification of the major principles involved in CLT and those that are not involved in CLT, which are commonly held as misconceptions about CLT, demonstrated that the teachers in this sample had generally a clear understanding of the attributes of CLT.

Finally, it is relevant to point out that the respondents differed in their perceptions about the feature that CLT is basically an ESL methodology, not EFL. While 35.00% percent of the respondents chose "Don't Know" as their response, 55.00% of them picked “Not true” as an answer. Only 10.00% of the teachers thought CLT was basically an ESL methodology, not EFL. The results of this question demonstrated a visible uncertainty on part of the participants regarding this feature of CLT.

The survey data also proved that the teachers showed a lucid understanding of CLT. The participants highlighted the importance of meaning over form, the ability to use the language for communicative

purposes, and the use of real, authentic materials in language teaching. David (2023) defined communicative language teaching as follow:

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) primarily focuses on developing students' ability to convey and understand intended meanings effectively by leveraging both formal linguistic and sociolinguistic skills (David, 2023).

Furthermore, a core tenet of CLT is the integration of meaningful, real-world scenarios into the language classroom; this approach engages learners in practical communication, allowing them to acquire and master the language organically through interactive experiences that mirror life outside the classroom (Peter, 2023).

Study participants strongly believed that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), as a contemporary instructional methodology, holds significant potential for English language education within Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs). Survey data supported this positive outlook, revealing that a large majority anticipated substantial benefits from adopting CLT. Furthermore, when surveyed about their instructional practices, 80% of the respondents reported having implemented CLT in their classrooms, whereas 20% indicated they had never utilized the approach (Table 10).

Table 10: Survey participants' experience in using CLT

Have you ever tried using CLT in your classes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	62	80.00%
No	18	20.00%
Total	80	100.00%

According to Rith (2023), CLT has already transformed how language instruction is perceived within Cambodian higher education institutions. He noted that even students express a preference for interactive communication when lesson plans rely too heavily on passive, recognition-level tasks.

Additionally, Rith pointed out that the Khmer language has traditionally been taught through a grammatical lens rather than as a tool for genuine interaction; consequently, he argued that CLT offers a vital opportunity to pivot away from isolated structural drills toward functional, communication-based language usage.

Historically within Cambodian higher education institutions, linguistic proficiency was evaluated solely by a student's grammatical knowledge, a perspective that some individuals still hold today. However, Rith (2023) contends that effectively integrating CLT into English classrooms to prioritize authentic communication will yield a significant shift; as a result, university graduates will gain the fluency and confidence necessary to converse easily with both native and non-native English speakers.

Sela (2023) noted that CLT highlighted the critical role of oral proficiency in language education. He maintained that learners across all proficiency levels require consistent exposure to spoken English and must actively practice speaking to improve their communicative skills.

Sela (2023) explained that CLT shifted his instructional focus primarily toward developing students' communicative abilities, with a distinct emphasis on speech. To achieve this, he designs activities centered on self-expression in the target language, requiring students to interact and collaborate with their peers. Regardless of whether the class is at a beginner or advanced level, he utilizes task-based group and pair work to actively compel learners to practice the language orally (Sela, 2023).

The next section mainly lays out the difficulties and challenges that the participants encountered in their attempts to use CLT in English classrooms.

4.5 Challenges in Implementing CLT in Cambodian HEIs

While a majority of participants have attempted to incorporate CLT and recognize its necessity for enhancing English language instruction in Cambodian higher education institutions, they simultaneously report experiencing numerous obstacles under current institutional conditions. These documented challenges are multifaceted; consequently, to analyze the constraints hindering CLT implementation in this specific context, the data was organized using Li's (1998) framework. This taxonomy classifies the difficulties into four distinct categories: those stemming from the instructors, the learners, the prevailing educational system, and the inherent characteristics of the communicative approach itself.

4.5.1 Teacher-related Challenges

In this category, revealed five major constraints related to the teachers themselves. These reported difficulties involved: teachers' deficiency in spoken English, lack of knowledge about the appropriate use of language in context; few opportunities for teachers to get training in CLT; little time for developing materials for communicative classes; and teachers' misconceptions about CLT.

4.5.1.1 Deficiency in Spoken English

The questionnaire data showed that thirty of them reported their own deficiency in spoken English as a challenge while twenty-six of them considered this as a major challenge constraining them in applying CLT in their classrooms. Only eight respondents thought that this was not a challenge at all; yet, sixteen of them considered it as a mild challenge (Figure 7). Considering the earlier information stating that CLT requires fluency on the part of the teacher, this stands as a big challenge in the effective use of CLT in HEI's in Cambodia.



Figure 7: Deficiency in spoken English

A primary factor contributing to instructors' limited spoken English proficiency is their own historical reliance on traditional language learning methods. Participants noted that they were rarely provided with opportunities to practice speaking English during their education. As Makara (2023) observed, English instruction traditionally prioritized grammatical drills and examinations at the expense of authentic classroom interaction.

Makara (2023) recounted that their public school English education was dominated by grammar assessments and repetitive drills, with minimal room for verbal interaction or speaking exercises. While this conventional approach resulted in a strong mastery of grammatical rules, it failed to develop functional speaking skills; furthermore, though the participant initially favored this structure, they later expressed regret regarding its long-term limitations.

When I was a student of English, I was inspired to focus more on grammar rather than on communication or speaking fluency. Those who were good at grammar were recognized as the outstanding students and being praise highly by teachers (Raksa, 2023).

The questionnaire data also demonstrated that the majority of the participants predominantly experienced the Grammar Translation method as they were learners of English. More 90 percent of the participants stated that they “always” experienced the Grammar Translation Method as they were students of English. On the other hand, fewer than 10 percent of the respondents explained that they either “often” experienced the practices of CLT in their English classes when they were students.

The following chart illustrates the respondents’ experience with these language teaching methodologies (Figure 8):

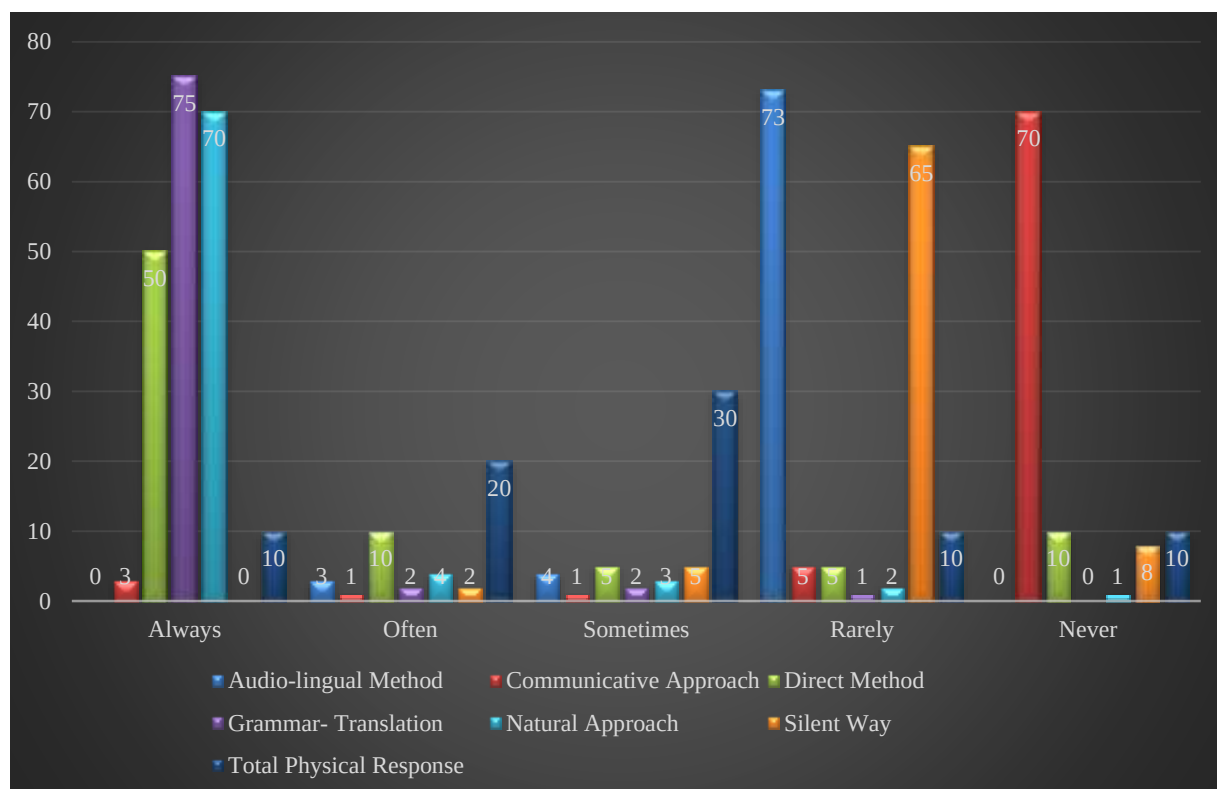


Figure 8: Participants’ experience with language teaching methods as language learners

Another key factor contributing to instructors' limited spoken English proficiency is their lack of academic or professional experience in English-speaking nations. Quantitative data indicated that the vast majority

of participants (76 individuals) had never studied or worked in an English-dominant country. Conversely, only four participants had accrued such international experience, all of whom were expatriates originating from Great Britain (three) and South Africa (one) (Table 11).

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	4	5.00%
No	76	95.00%
Total	80	100.00%

Table 11: Study/work abroad experience of survey participants

4.5.1.2 Lack of knowledge about the appropriate use of language in context

Instructors reported that deficiencies in their strategic and sociolinguistic competencies presented a noticeable barrier to executing CLT in the classroom. This issue was recognized as a constraint by the vast majority of educators: 35 respondents identified it as a general challenge, while 20 categorized it as a major obstacle. In contrast, 21 participants viewed it as only a mild difficulty, and a small minority of four respondents felt it was not a challenge at all. This latter group likely consists of the four expatriate teachers from Great Britain and South Africa, who naturally possess a deep familiarity with the cultural nuances of the target language.

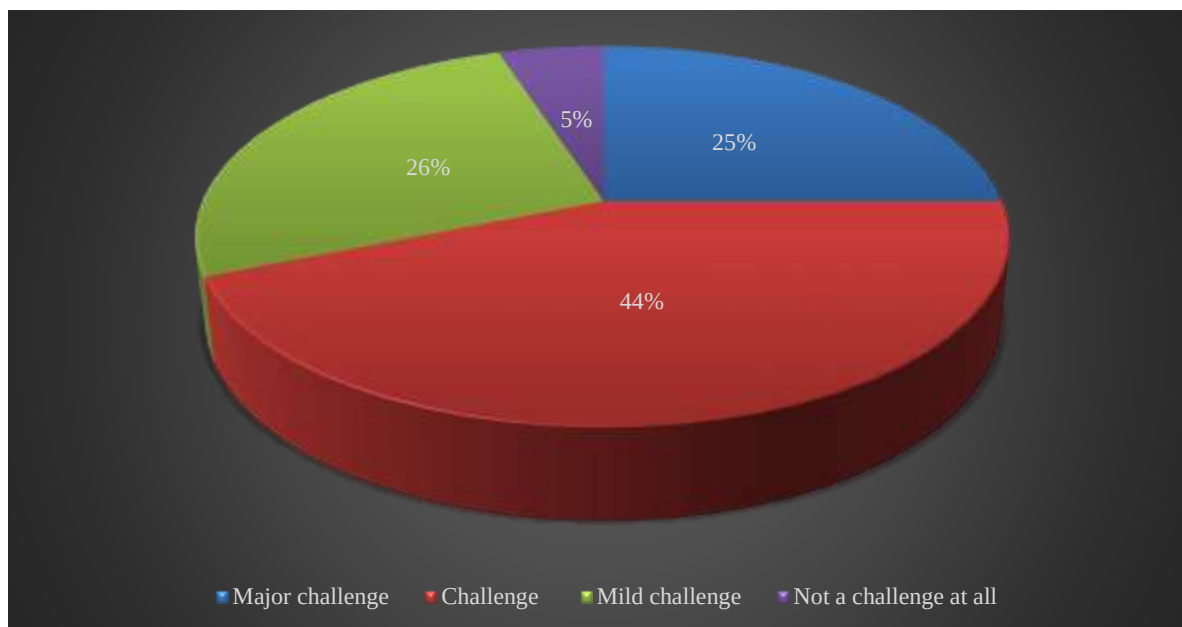


Figure 9: Lack of knowledge about the appropriate use of language in context

Two participants expressed anxiety regarding their ability to address student inquiries about appropriate language usage in diverse contexts. This apprehension stemmed from their self-reported low sociolinguistic competence and a lack of familiarity with the cultural nuances of the target language. Ridet (2023) highlighted that contemporary course books often contain numerous cultural elements, making it difficult for instructors to navigate diverse cultural uses of English. This creates apprehension during communicative activities, as educators worry that students might ask complex questions regarding contextual language use, particularly concerning idioms and colloquialisms. To mitigate these feelings of

instructional inadequacy, teachers often intentionally revert to grammar-focused lessons, where they feel a higher level of professional competence.

Sokly (2023) wrote that she is afraid to make mistakes, so she is reluctant to use CLT in her teaching to avoid misunderstandings, inappropriate tones, or perceived rudeness. Hence, grammar section is her best choice.

4.5.1.3 Lack of Professional Development in CLT

Educators expressed varying perspectives regarding their access to professional development and retraining opportunities in CLT. A combined total of 38 participants identified training access as an impediment, with 20 characterizing it as a mild constraint and 14 viewing it as a major obstacle. Conversely, a small minority of eight respondents indicated that securing training in the communicative approach presented not a challenge at all.



Figure 10: Lack of training in CLT

While a notable portion of the cohort—comprising 20 respondents—had attended at least one professional development program dedicated to CLT, a substantial majority of 52 participants had received no training in the methodology whatsoever. This deficit in professional development was highlighted by Theara (2023), who observed that seminars, workshops, and training sessions regarding CLT are exceptionally rare in Cambodia. Furthermore, the researcher noted that the Ministry of Education has historically overlooked the significance of these training opportunities, leaving educators with limited access to formal preparation in the communicative approach.

When discussing professional development opportunities in CLT, Kheng (2023) offered a notable observation regarding teacher demographics. He indicated that early-career educators demonstrate a significantly higher level of enthusiasm and willingness to participate in communicative training initiatives compared to their mid-career colleagues.

Kheng (2023) noted that ample professional development avenues exist through university-led seminars, conferences, online courses, and Ministry of Education in-service training programs conducted in

partnership with external organizations. He suggested that self-improvement ultimately depends on an instructor's personal initiative, though age significantly influences this motivation. Specifically, younger generations of English educators exhibit greater enthusiasm for participating in CLT training and implementing the methodology in their classrooms. Conversely, as teachers advance in age, they tend to favor conventional instructional habits and show a corresponding reluctance to attend communicative workshops or seminars.

Leang (2023) highlighted that the lack of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) training in Cambodia persists due to systemic educational constraints, large class sizes, and a historical reliance on the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM).

4.5.1.4 Lack of time for developing communicative materials

According to the study, a primary obstacle to implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was a shortage of preparation time. While respondents noted that recently published primary school textbooks naturally align with communicative goals, they found tertiary-level course books to be rigidly structured around grammar units.

Consequently, university-level instructors felt compelled to design supplementary activities to make their lessons communicative. Questionnaire data illustrated in Figure 11 highlights this time crunch: out of 80 total respondents, 40 identified the lack of material development time as a major challenge, 20 viewed it as a regular challenge, 16 classified it as a mild challenge, and only 4 did not see it as a problem.

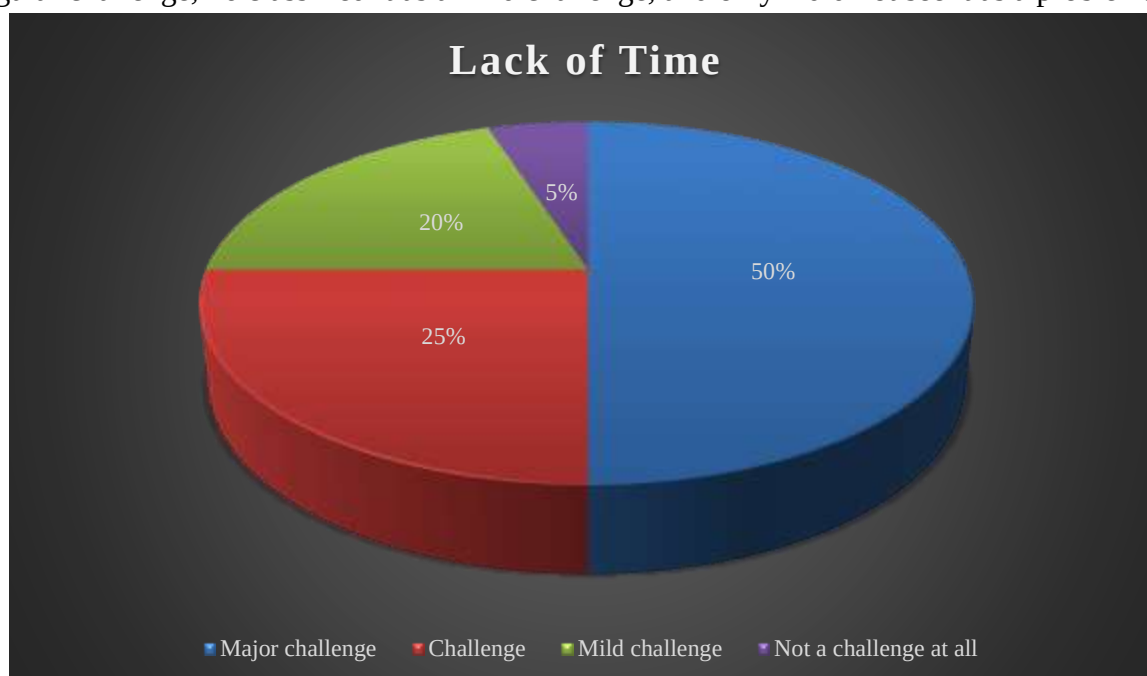


Figure 11: Lack of time for developing materials for communicative classes

This widespread time constraint is primarily driven by the excessive workloads carried by educators. This issue directly mirrors broader discussions regarding the challenges of English language instruction within higher education institutions (HEIs) in Cambodia, where heavy teaching loads are standard practice (see Section 4.2.2). This finding is consistent with research by Pong and Heng (2023), who noted that overwhelming institutional demands leave instructors with insufficient time to create the supplementary materials required for communicative classrooms.

The severe time constraints faced by educators are underscored by the extreme demands of their weekly schedules. Teachers report working 13-hour days (from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM), managing weekly teaching

loads exceeding 36 hours across twelve separate classes, and conducting mandatory Saturday tutoring sessions. In addition to their direct instructional hours, faculty members are responsible for supervising students during breaks, grading assignments, and completing administrative reports. This workload is further compounded by a high volume of mandatory meetings, leaving instructors with virtually no time to design supplementary communicative teaching materials (Pong & Heng, 2023).

4.5.1.5 Misconceptions about CLT

Survey results indicated that most instructors possessed a robust understanding of CLT principles (see Section 4.4). Despite minor ambiguities regarding a few specific concepts, the vast majority demonstrated a clear awareness of the methodology's core tenets. Consequently, most participants agreed that ideological misconceptions about CLT did not pose a significant barrier to implementation. As illustrated in Figure 12, thirty educators viewed misleading notions about CLT as a mild challenge, twenty considered them a standard challenge, and eighteen reported that they were not a hurdle at all. Conversely, only twelve respondents felt that these misconceptions represented severe obstacles to the successful execution of communicative activities.

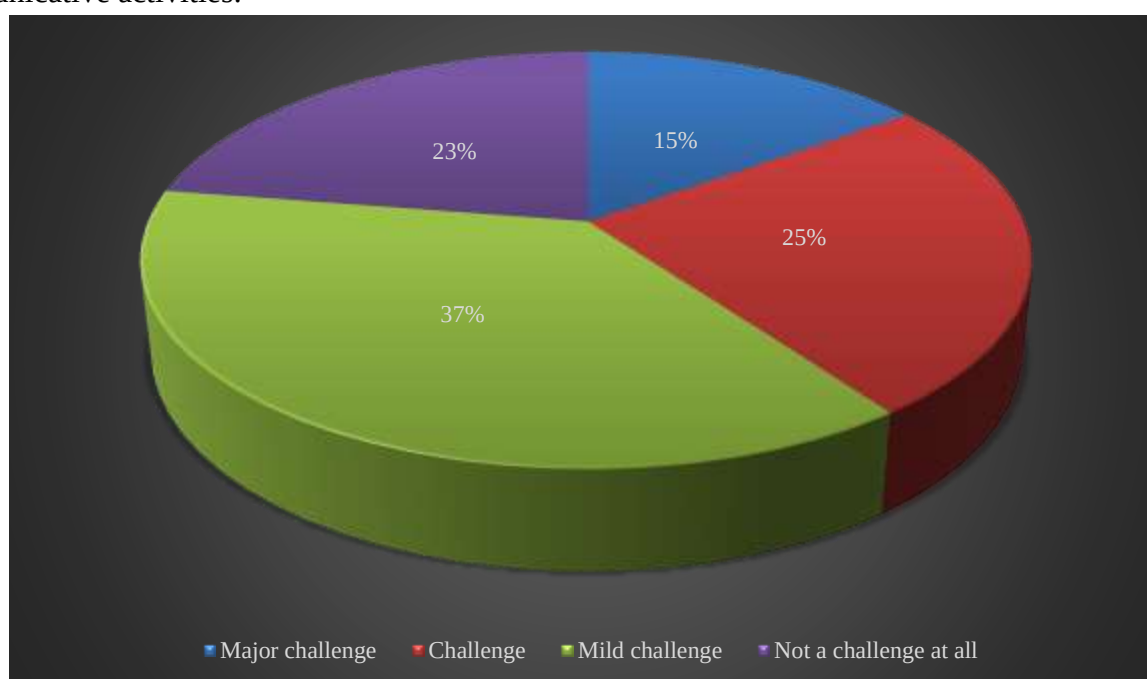


Figure 12: Misconceptions about CLT

4.5.2 Student-related Challenges

The second primary category of constraints centered directly on student-related factors. These impediments included generally low English language proficiency, an ingrained passive learning style, a reluctance to engage in communicative classroom tasks, and a distinct lack of motivation to cultivate communicative competence.

4.5.2.1 Low English proficiency

Survey results indicated that overall deficiencies in students' English language skills represented one of the foremost impediments to implementing CLT. The vast majority of instructors identified low learner proficiency as a notable hurdle. Specifically, as illustrated in Figure 13, 38 participants classified this issue as a major challenge, while an additional 24 regarded it as a standard challenge. Twelve educators viewed it as a mild difficulty, whereas only six respondents felt that low language proficiency posed no obstacle to their communicative teaching efforts.

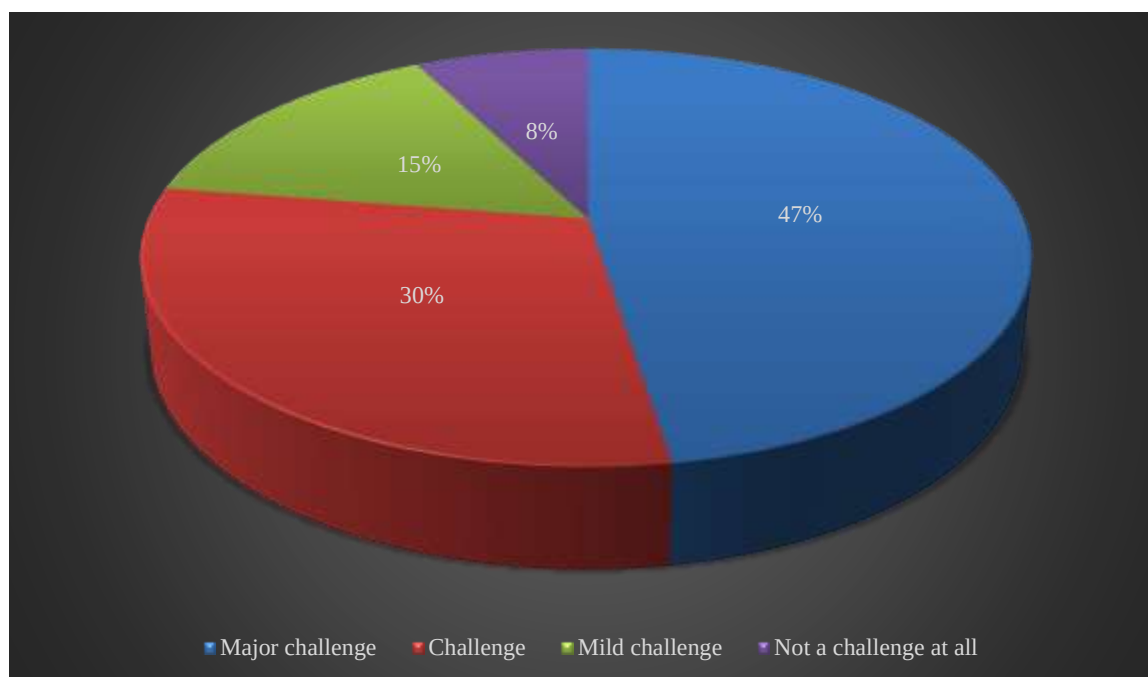


Figure 13: Students' low English proficiency

Participants noted that despite recent curriculum revisions increasing weekly English instructional time for courses like Core English and Cultural Studies from three to four and a half hours, this allocation remains inadequate for cultivating spoken proficiency. Respondents reported that restricted classroom hours severely stagnate student progress; by the conclusion of these two courses, learners typically acquire a vocabulary of only 150 to 200 words. Consequently, instructors expressed frustration that implementing CLT is deeply impractical because students lack the foundational oral communication skills required to participate.

The practical challenges of low language proficiency are further illustrated by qualitative data. One educator noted that a profound lack of foundational knowledge often leads to severe student anxiety, causing learners to remain entirely silent out of fear of making grammatical errors. The participant argued that CLT is essentially ineffective without a baseline level of listening and speaking comprehension. Furthermore, the teacher emphasized that classroom hours alone do not provide the necessary language exposure to build these skills, noting that students require external linguistic input outside of school to truly benefit from communicative approaches (Smay, 2023).

A similar institutional dynamic was observed at another university. Razity, a department chair, noted that students' grammatical deficits and limited spoken English proficiency severely hinder their ability to complete communicative activities. Consequently, this persistent linguistic barrier ultimately results in widespread frustration among the learners when attempting interactive tasks.

Qualitative data indicates that while students possess a genuine interest in communicative activities, their limited oral proficiency severely impedes peer-to-peer interaction. One department head noted that a lack of spoken English skills frequently prevents learners from successfully completing assigned interactive tasks. This linguistic barrier eventually leads to student frustration, which ultimately diminishes their intrinsic motivation and curiosity to practice speaking the language (Razity, 2023).

Consequently, it is essential for educators to cultivate a supportive classroom environment that mitigates affective barriers, thereby encouraging lower-proficiency learners to actively communicate in the target language.

4.5.2.2 Passive style of learning

Notably, the vast majority of participants identified an ingrained passive learning style among students as a significant impediment to implementing CLT. This behavioral pattern was widely viewed as a primary obstacle to communicative instruction. As illustrated in Figure 14, 48 educators categorized student passivity as a major challenge, while 18 viewed it as a standard challenge. Ten respondents classified the issue as a mild difficulty, whereas a mere four participants felt that a passive learning style posed no challenge at all to their classroom practices.

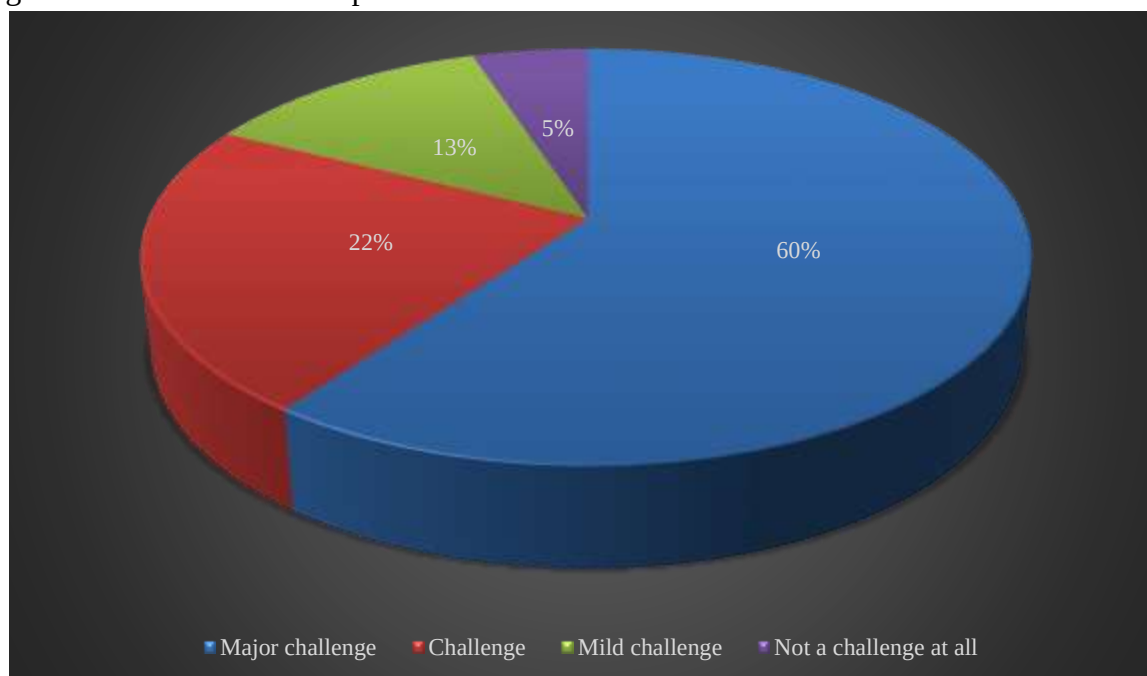


Figure 14: Students' passive style of learning

The participant further noted that an ingrained passive learning style among students frequently acts as a direct impediment to the successful execution of CLT.

Qualitative evidence indicates that initial student passivity often stems from performance anxiety. One educator noted that learners frequently experience discomfort and reluctance when required to speak English in front of the entire class. To mitigate this apprehension, the instructor utilizes a scaffolded approach, transitioning students from small-group or peer-paired interactions before demanding whole-class participation. This strategic pedagogical shift helps students acclimate to the communicative environment, ultimately fostering greater engagement and enjoyment (Robert, 2023).

Importantly, participants indicated that this particular challenge could be readily managed through proactive teacher encouragement and support.

4.5.2.3 Resistance to participate in communicative activities

Learner resistance to participating in interactive tasks was identified as another notable constraint on implementing CLT within Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs). Faculty members reported varying degrees of difficulty regarding student engagement. As illustrated in Figure 15, 30 participants classified this resistance as a major challenge, while 18 viewed it as a standard challenge. Furthermore, 22 educators characterized student reluctance as a mild difficulty, whereas only 10 respondents indicated that their students generally showed no resistance to participating in communicative activities.

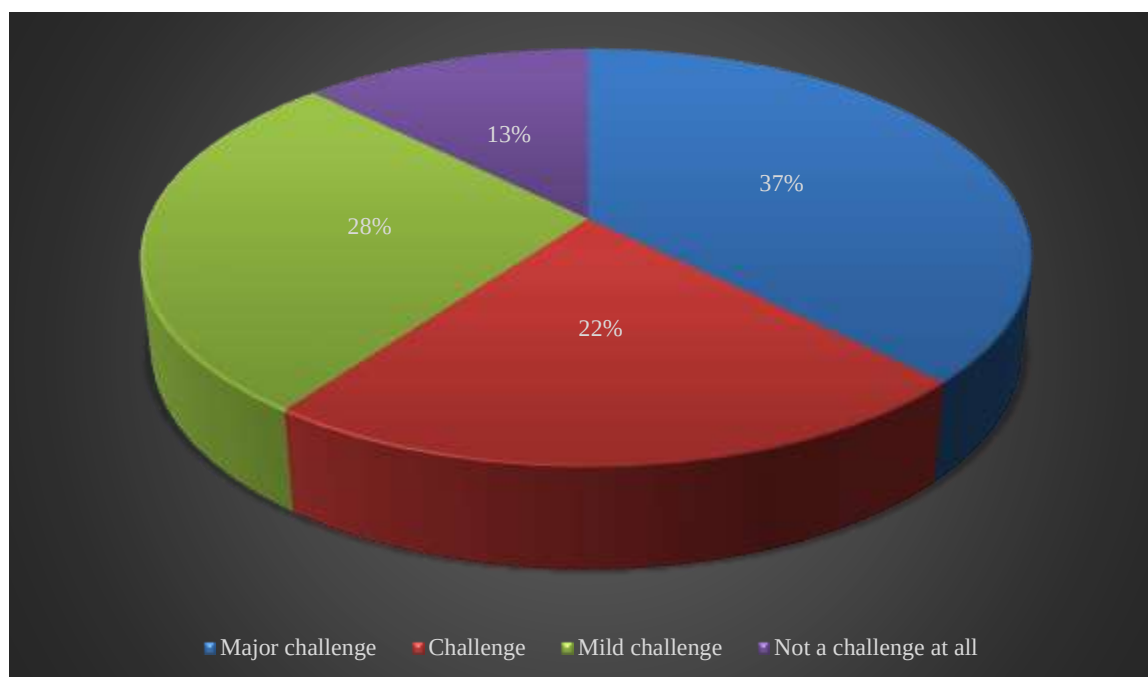


Figure 15: Students' resistance to participate in communicative class activities

Participants emphasized that the primary driver behind student resistance to communicative tasks stems from the immense pressure generated by grammar-focused entrance examinations.

Qualitative data demonstrates how high-stakes assessment structures dictate learner engagement. One educator reported that whenever an innovative communicative task is introduced, students primarily inquire about its relevance to upcoming examinations. If a task lacks direct assessment utility, learners immediately lose interest, perceiving interactive exercises as an inefficient use of time. Consequently, this fixation on test performance leads to outright refusal to participate in non-examined communicative practices (Bora, 2023).

The findings demonstrate that students are intensely focused on examination preparation; consequently, when they discover that a specific communicative task will not be formally assessed, they actively resist participating in the activity.

4.5.2.4 Lack of motivation for developing communicative competence

Instructors also identified a lack of student motivation to cultivate communicative competence as a substantial barrier to the effective execution of CLT. This deficit in learner drive was widely recognized across the sample as an operational hurdle. As illustrated in Figure 16, 34 participants classified this motivational deficit as a major challenge, while 28 identified it as a standard challenge. Meanwhile, twelve educators viewed it as a mild difficulty, leaving a small minority of only six respondents who felt that student motivation posed no challenge whatsoever to their teaching practices.

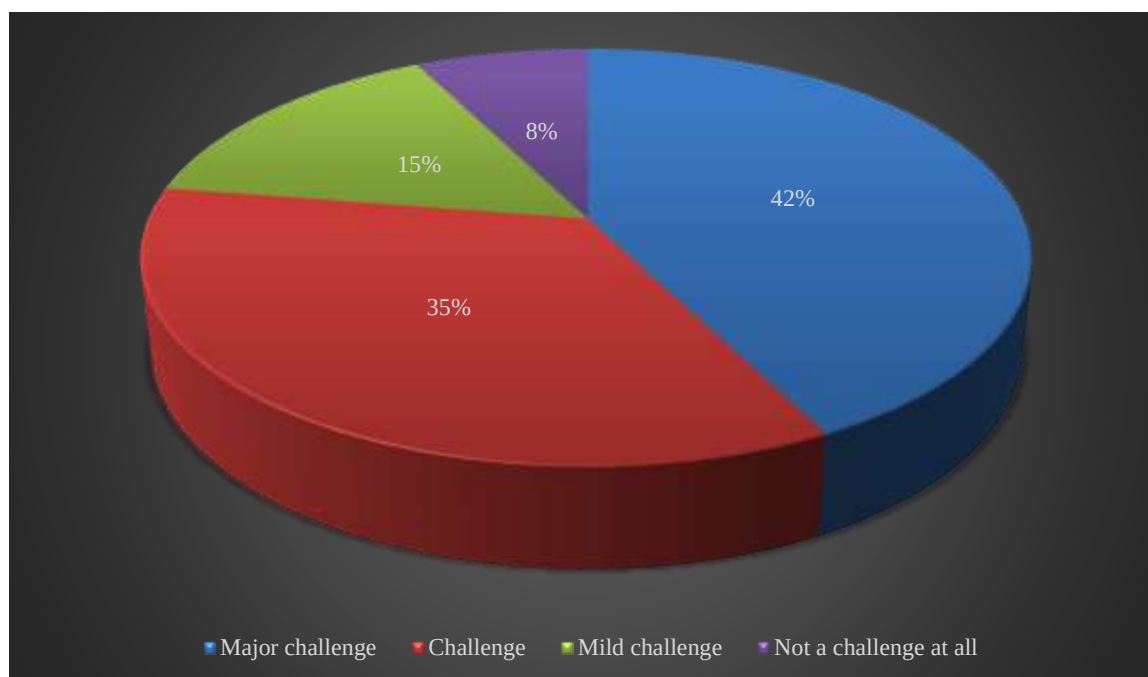


Figure 16: Students' lack of motivation for developing communicative competence

In Cambodia, there is a growing societal recognition of the importance of spoken English proficiency, particularly driven by regional integration and the need to participate in international conferences, workshops, and summits. Nonetheless, this awareness has not translated into classroom priorities; a majority of Cambodian students continue to prioritize structural grammar over oral communication skills. This persistent emphasis on grammatical mastery is directly tied to the washback effect of high-stakes, structure-heavy examinations. Because progression through Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs) depends heavily on passing these grammar-centric assessments, students are systematically incentivized to focus on rote structural drilling rather than the development of communicative competence. Nob (2023) expressed her views on this matter in the following way:

Nob (2023) asserted that CLT alone cannot address the educational obstacles present in Cambodian HEIs due to a fundamental mismatch between instructional goals and assessment realities. In this context, the primary objective of language learning is not functional communication, but rather the acquisition of high test scores on grammar-heavy assessments. This extreme focus on examinations creates an environment where effective communicative language teaching is nearly impossible to sustain.

4.5.3 Challenges Related to the Educational System

The third primary category of impediments concerns the systemic characteristics of higher education in Cambodia. Within this institutional domain, four key structural constraints emerged: a lack of administrative support, an insufficiency of authentic materials, excessive class sizes, and the pervasive influence of grammar-based examinations.

4.5.3.1 Lack of support

Survey data indicated that an absence of institutional support constitutes one of the most formidable barriers confronting EFL instructors in Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs) during their implementation of CLT. This administrative deficit was heavily emphasized across the sample. As illustrated in Figure 17, more than half of the participants—44 educators—categorized the lack of support as a major challenge, while 16 identified it as a standard challenge. Furthermore, 14 respondents perceived

this issue as a mild difficulty, leaving a small minority of only six individuals who felt that a lack of support presented no obstacle at all to their instructional practices.

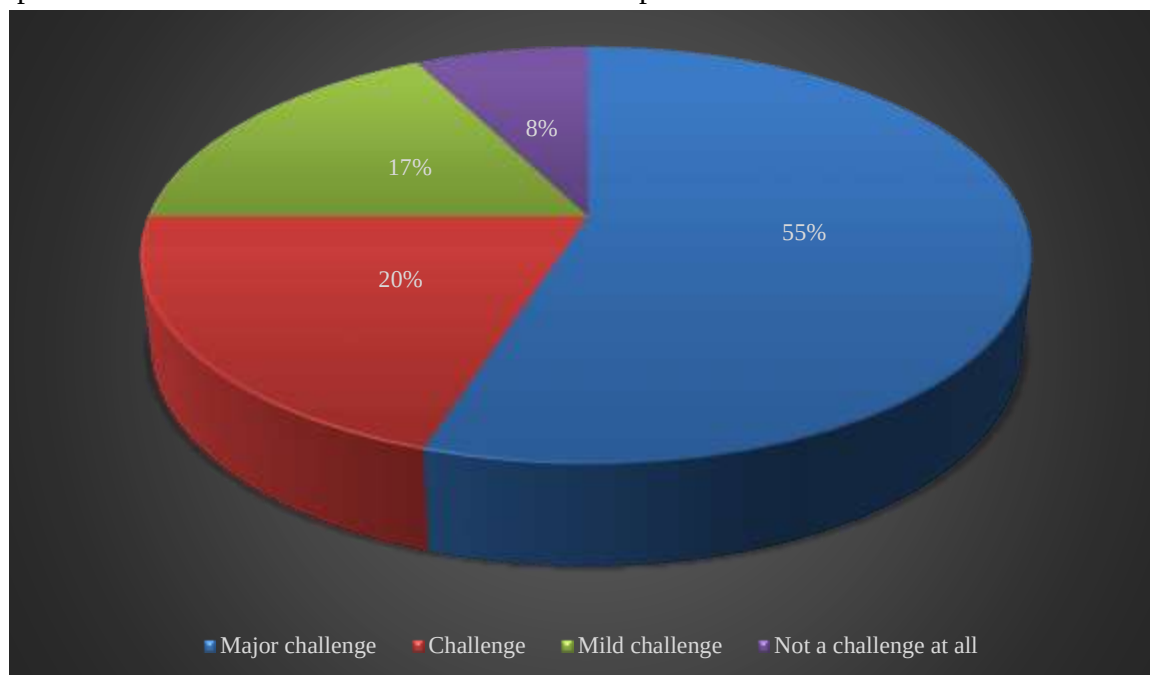


Figure 17: Lack of support

Thy (2023) noted that widespread pedagogical hesitation regarding CLT among Cambodian higher education faculty often stems from perceived methodological deficiencies. Specifically, many EFL instructors feel ill-equipped or unfamiliar with the core tenets of communicative teaching. To address this gap, the author emphasizes a critical need for targeted professional development in CLT strategies, particularly for veteran educators who have spent years teaching through traditional frameworks.

Thy (2023) highlighted that a critical lack of pedagogical knowledge prevents many instructors in Cambodian HEIs from embracing CLT. This issue is particularly pronounced among senior faculty with 26 to 30 years of traditional lecturing experience, whereas newer teachers are often better acquainted with communicative methods. The excerpt underscores that for CLT to become viable, the academic community must prioritize and actively pursue intensive professional training to overcome ingrained, grammar-oriented teaching habits.

Furthermore, four participants highlighted a deficit in administrative assistance. According to Deth (2023), leadership focused exclusively on student grades rather than practical language acquisition, creating a frustrating environment where actual English proficiency was overlooked.

Deth (2023) highlighted a disconnect between curriculum policy and administrative priorities, explaining that university leaders discourage the use of CLT in favor of high student pass rates. In this environment, institutional success is measured entirely by exam performance rather than a student's practical ability to speak the language.

In addition to administrative hurdles, insufficient funding emerged as a significant barrier. Participants emphasized that the successful execution of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) relies on specific facilities and equipment, noting that financial assistance is essential for acquiring the supplementary resources and materials required for interactive communication tasks.

Sara (2023) illustrated how financial constraints directly impede the creation of an immersive language environment. While educators recognize the importance of exposure to natural input—such as English

media and authentic reading materials—students frequently lack domestic internet access and the financial means to purchase books. This challenge is compounded by institutional limitations, as universities often decline to fund supplementary resources under the assumption that standard course textbooks are sufficient for language acquisition.

4.5.3.2 Lack of authentic materials

A scarcity of authentic materials emerged as another formidable obstacle to implementing CLT within Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs). Quantitative data from the questionnaire indicated that a significant majority of participants viewed this as a hindrance, with 46 identifying it as a major challenge and 16 classifying it as a moderate challenge. Furthermore, 14 respondents perceived it as a minor difficulty, whereas only a negligible minority of four participants felt that the availability of authentic materials posed no challenge at all (Figure 18).

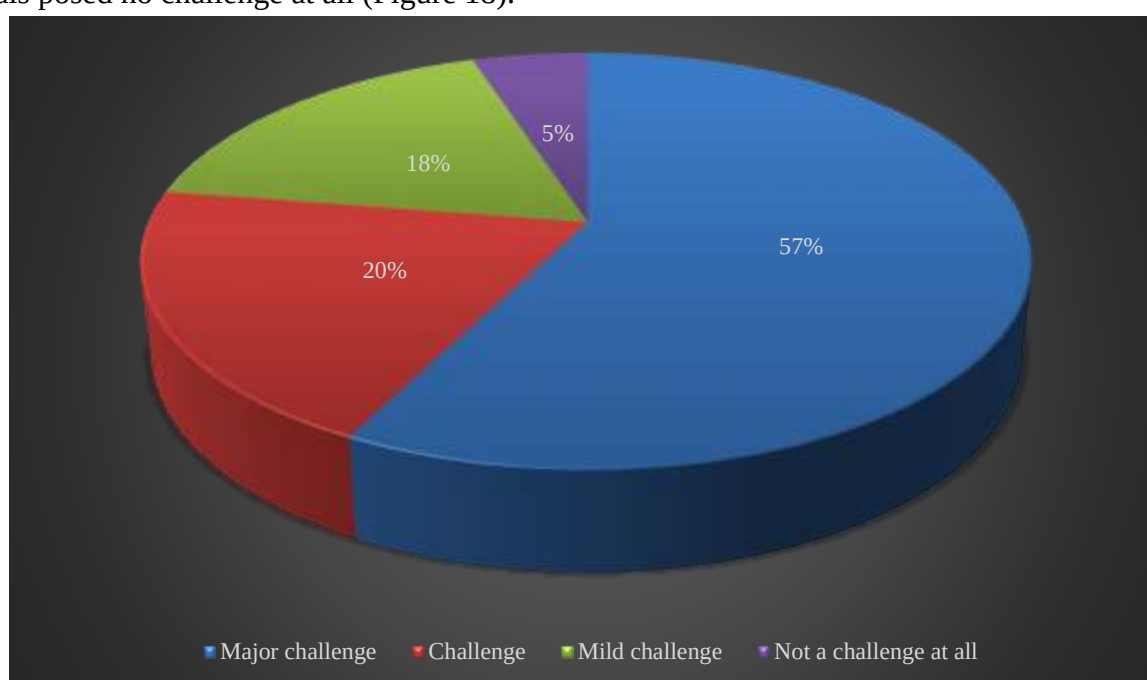


Figure 18: Lack of authentic materials

4.5.3.3 Overcrowded Classrooms

Consistently with the broader institutional challenges identified earlier in this study (see Section 4.2.1), overcrowded classrooms represent a fundamental obstacle within Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs). The questionnaire data confirmed that high student enrollment remains a critical bottleneck for implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Specifically, 42 participants categorized large class sizes as a major challenge, while 20 viewed it as a standard challenge. An additional 14 educators perceived it as a minor difficulty, leaving a minimal cohort of only four respondents who felt that class size did not serve as a barrier to CLT execution (Figure 19).

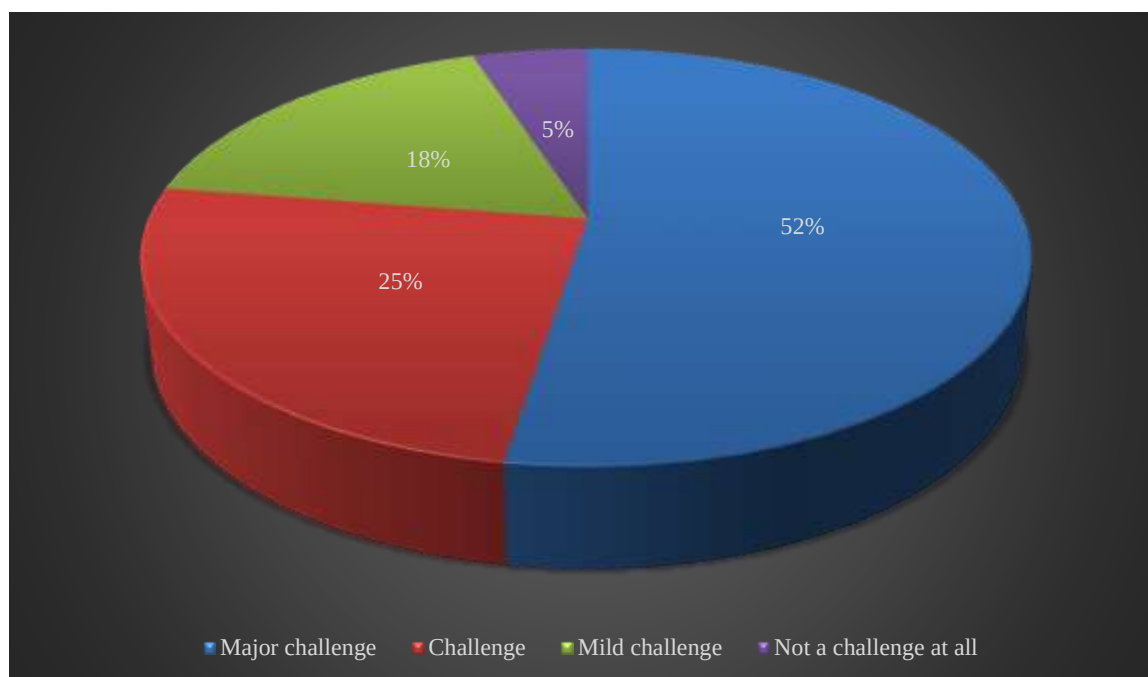


Figure 19: Overcrowded classrooms

Qualitative insights from the open-ended responses further corroborated these findings. Three participants from the selected Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs) identified excessive class size as a primary impediment to utilizing CLT. They emphasized that the successful integration of communicative methodologies requires a substantial reduction in current class sizes. Kun (2023), for example, highlighted a critical reduction in individual student talk time, expressing concern that high student enrollment directly limits opportunities for active verbal engagement during English lessons.

Thea (2023) provided a practical mathematical breakdown of how overcrowded classrooms directly undermine communicative practices. For CLT to be effective, optimal class sizes should ideally be capped at 21 to 25 students to facilitate meaningful dialogue. However, typical class sizes in Cambodian higher education range from 35 to 50 learners. Within a standard 90-minute instructional block, fixed administrative tasks—such as attendance checks, homework reviews, and lesson recaps—leave approximately 20 minutes for active production. In a class of 50, this distribution restricts each student to a mere 30 seconds of individual expression, rendering the systematic application of CLT highly impractical.

Conversely, Ath (2023) observed that attempts to implement communicative activities frequently compromised classroom management, identifying behavioral and structural control as a distinct challenge. Ath (2023) explained that over-enrolled classrooms inherently complicate classroom management, particularly during collaborative tasks where student enthusiasm can easily lead to a loss of structural control. Furthermore, this issue is exacerbated by an institutional lack of pedagogical awareness; administrative staff and colleagues unfamiliar with English language teaching methodologies often misinterpret the necessary, productive noise of a communicative activity as a sign of poor discipline or inadequate classroom control.

As noted by Ath (2023), an institutional unfamiliarity with CLT often causes administrators and peer educators to become disturbed by the noise levels generated during communicative lessons. This reaction highlights a broader disconnect, where the productive, interactive dialogue necessary for language acquisition is misinterpreted by observers as a disruption rather than a tool for learning.

4.5.3.4 Grammar-based examinations

Assessment structures heavily influenced pedagogical choices, with grammar-based examinations emerging as a formidable barrier to CLT implementation within Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs). Quantitative survey data reflected this constraint: 36 participants categorized structure-centric evaluations as a major challenge, while 22 identified them as a standard challenge. Furthermore, 18 respondents perceived these assessments as a minor difficulty, leaving only a negligible minority of four educators who felt that grammar-based testing posed no obstacle to their teaching practices (Figure 20).

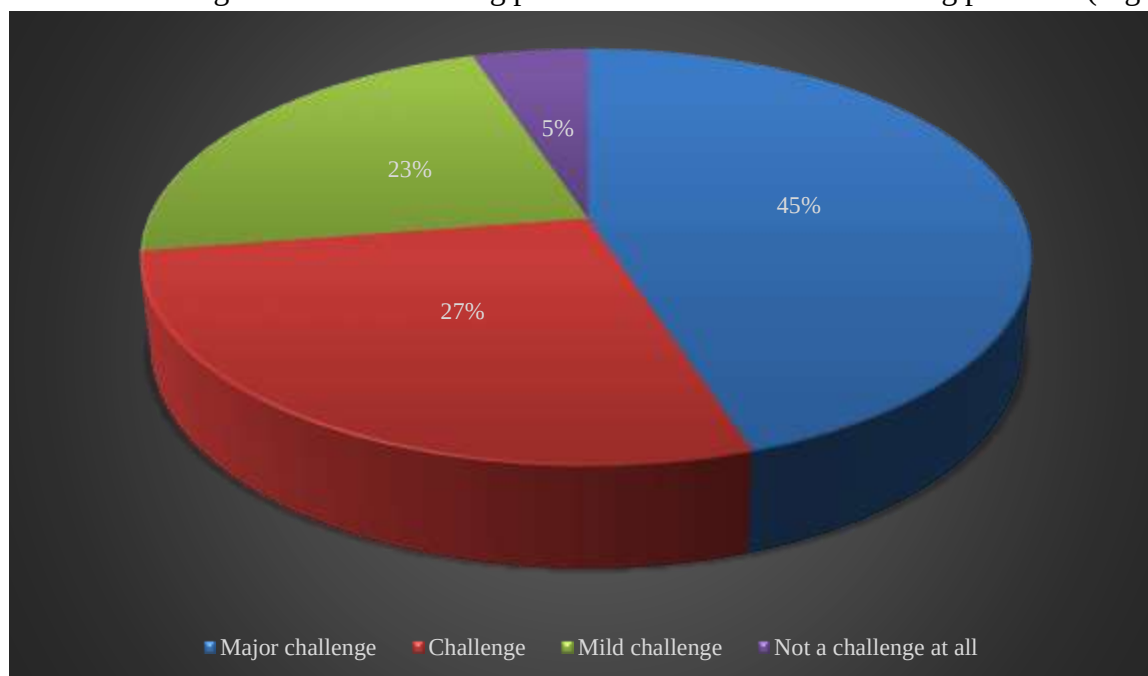


Figure 20: Grammar-based examinations

4.5.4 CLT-related Challenges

The fourth and final thematic category concerning difficulties and challenges to implementing CLT within Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs) centers on the inherent limitations of the methodology itself. Within this category, participants identified two primary issues: the lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments and CLT's inadequate account of EFL teaching.

4.5.4.1 Lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments

While a deficiency in effective and efficient evaluation tools was identified as an obstacle to CLT implementation, the quantitative data indicates that most participants viewed this as a negotiable hurdle. Specifically, 80 respondents categorized this issue as a manageable problem. In contrast, 20 participants identified it as a standard challenge, and 40 regarded it as a mild difficulty. Remarkably, a marginal cohort of only eight educators viewed the lack of assessment instruments as a major impediment, while the remaining 12 reported that it posed no challenge at all (Figure 21).

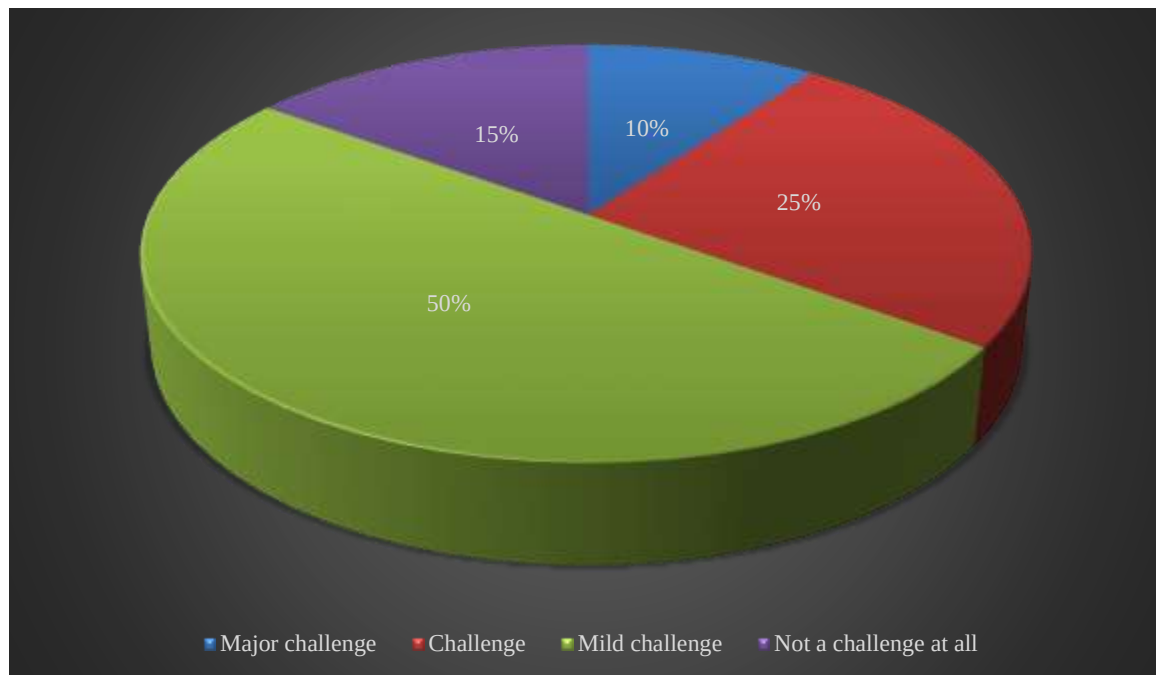


Figure 21: Lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments

4.5.4.2 Inadequate pre-lesson planning

A substantial majority of the participants maintained that CLT fails to adequately accommodate the unique dynamics of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. Quantitative data from the survey indicated that 58 respondents viewed this theoretical mismatch as a significant barrier to implementation within Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs). Additionally, 14 educators classified this mismatch as a major challenge, while six perceived it as a mild difficulty. Notably, a negligible minority of only two respondents felt that CLT's pedagogical misalignment posed no obstacle at all to their teaching (Figure 22).

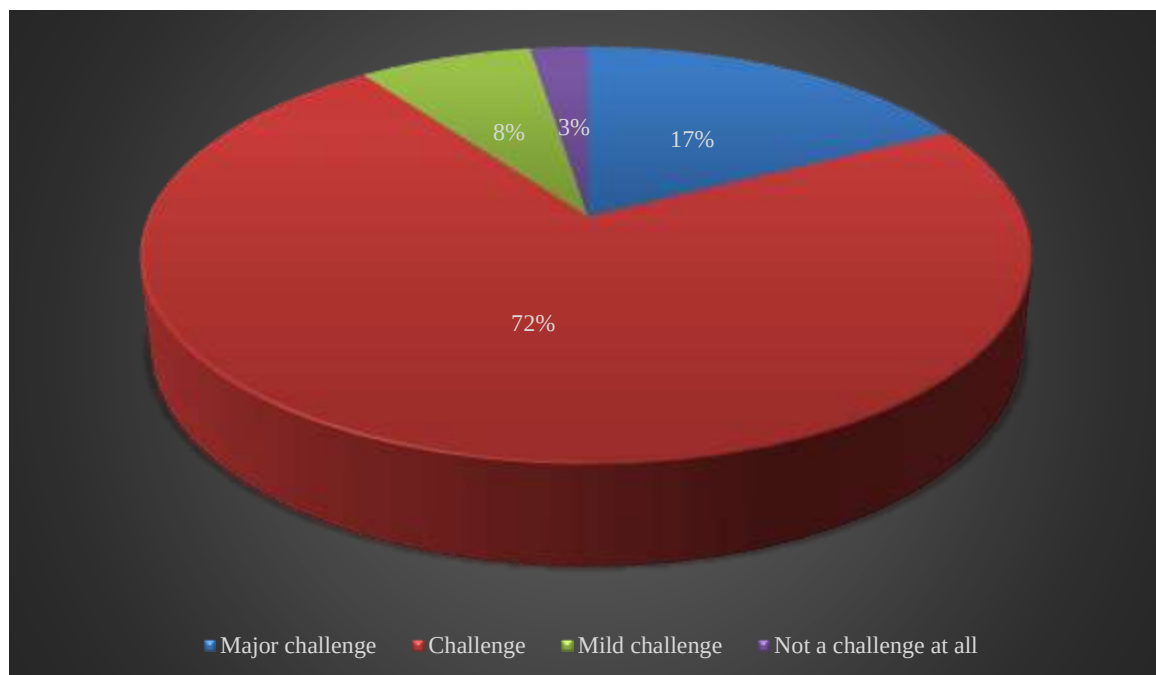


Figure 22: CLT's inadequate pre-lesson planning

Qualitative insights from the open-ended responses highlighted critical distinctions between English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, primarily centered on the language environment. Participants argued that EFL settings fail to offer an input-rich environment, as the formal classroom often serves as the sole source of English exposure. This limitation is frequently exacerbated by a shortage of native-speaking instructors, which can lower the overall quality of available linguistic input, alongside a scarcity of authentic pedagogical materials. Conversely, learners in ESL contexts benefit from continuous linguistic immersion both within and outside the classroom, naturally reinforcing the practical necessity of developing target language proficiency.

Lida (2023) illustrated the fundamental friction of implementing CLT in homogenous linguistic environments, noting that students often perceive little practical utility in speaking English when their educators, peers, and broader community share the same native language (Khmer). This structural environment inherently limits learner motivation to communicate in the target language. The issue is further compounded by a shortage of native-speaking instructors and an undersupply of authentic materials, which confines English exposure strictly to the classroom. Even within this formal setting, target language input is frequently compromised, as both instructors and students routinely revert to Khmer for peer interaction and classroom management, resulting in an environment that fails to foster communicative skills.

Divergent student motivations represent another key distinction between the two educational contexts. A participant observed that within Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs), students primarily study English to satisfy examination requirements, which naturally aligns their immediate academic needs with the development of reading and writing literacy. Conversely, learners in ESL environments face a far more pressing imperative to cultivate their oral communication skills for daily and societal integration.

Phan (2023) underscored the shared understanding between teachers and students regarding the true purpose of their English education. With more than 80% of learners expected to remain locally within Cambodia, their primary motivation is to pass annual proficiency benchmarks rather than prepare for international education. As a result, the academic environment demands strong reading and writing abilities rather than oral fluency. While a well-rounded command of all four language skills remains an ideal, local higher education dynamics dictate that literacy-based skills take clear precedence over speech.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first discusses the respondents' feedback, followed by an analysis of how these results align with existing literature. The final section concludes by revisiting the study's primary research questions.

5.1 Discrepancies and Inconsistencies in Teacher

The study comprises 80 English language teachers across four universities, including one public institution that charges a moderate tuition fee. Despite their diverse institutional backgrounds, their responses regarding EFL teaching in HEIs in Cambodia showed far less variation than expected. Notably, the majority of respondents across both selection questionnaires and written responses shared remarkably similar perceptions regarding the challenges of implementing CLT.

The few differences that did emerge were highly subtle. The primary divergence lay in student motivation regarding spoken English versus grammar. Teachers of third- and fourth-year students reported a distinct lack of student interest in oral skills, forcing a focus on grammar. Conversely, first- and second-year

students were viewed as possessing the time, energy, and motivation required to improve speaking skills. A second difference related to class size, with most teachers managing groups of over thirty students. This issue stems from institutional financial policies; even the public university operates as a profit-seeking educational business that must entirely self-fund salaries and operational expenses through large enrollment sizes.

Over 80% of the surveyed educators struggle to CLT due to large class sizes. Aligned with the systemic institutional challenges previously identified in this study, overcrowded classrooms constitute a primary barrier within HEIs in Cambodia. The questionnaire data validated that high student volume remains a critical bottleneck for CLT execution. Specifically, 42 respondents classified large class sizes as a major challenge, 20 identified it as a standard challenge, and 14 viewed it as a minor difficulty. Conversely, a negligible cohort of only four participants reported that class size posed no obstacle to their teaching (Figure 19).

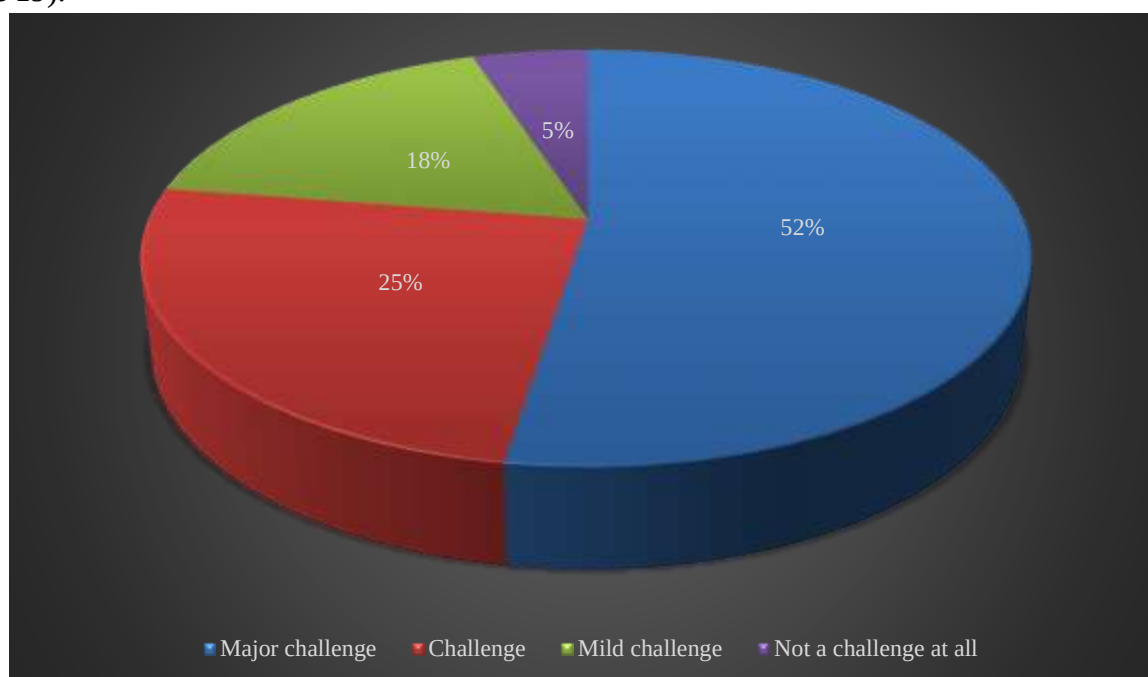


Figure 19: Teachers' perceptions differ as to how much difficulty that the overcrowded classrooms pose in the use of CLT

5.2 Consistency Between Empirical Results and the Literature

The findings of this study closely align with existing literature, suggesting that EFL teachers globally navigate comparable obstacles when implementing CLT. Documented systemic hurdles—such as highly-centralized grammar-based examinations, overcrowded classrooms, and heavy instructional workloads—mirror the challenges identified in this research. Furthermore, previous studies corroborate the external barriers noted by respondents, including sparse professional development opportunities, low student motivation toward communicative competency, and the theoretical limitations of applying CLT within EFL contexts. In their studies, Hiep (2007), Incecay and Incecay (2009), Li (1998), Li (2004), Rao (2002), and Wu (2001) reported that centralized grammar-based exams had negative washback on the teachers' classroom practices. During the late Middle Ages, the establishment of universities led to the development of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), also known as the classical method, which was designed for studying Latin and Greek texts (Rajput et al., 2023). This method gained widespread popularity as a historical preference for teaching grammar, vocabulary, and text translation (Humphreys, 2023). By the

15th century, Europeans had broadened the scope to include modern vernacular languages of the region (Celce-Murcia, 2014), and GTM was introduced in English language teaching by the 16th century (Spahiu & Kryeziu, 2021). Between the 15th and 19th centuries, a synthesis of the Grammar Translation Method's key components, as discussed by Fotos (2005) and Celce-Murcia (2015), highlights several principles: (1) instructors and learners frequently use the mother tongue, resulting in minimal use of the target language in classroom interactions; (2) it emphasizes learning grammar forms and vocabulary; (3) instruction begins with complex reading texts; (4) exercises primarily involve translating sentences between L1 and L2; (5) students show minimal improvement in communicative competence; (6) fluency in the target language is not a high requirement for instructors; and (7) cultural and grammatical elements are taught deductively. In the 19th century, the GTM evolved further, incorporating grammar presentations, memorization, and citation tasks. These innovations allowed students to effectively learn vocabulary, grammar rules, and sentence structures (Spahiu & Kryeziu, 2021; Celce-Murcia, 2001). Despite advancements in language teaching, GTM remains significant in teaching English as a second language. In critical situations, researchers have examined GTM and learners' attitudes towards it. Prastyo (2015) emphasized the importance of combining GTM with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to achieve success in accuracy and fluency in ELT. Additionally, Khan et al. (2016) found that college students felt comfortable communicating with teachers, understood learning concepts with ease, and achieved high scores through GTM. GTM, which emerged in the 19th century, was widely used in European language education and later became the dominant approach in Cambodia during the French colonial era (1863-1953) (Akramy et al., 2022; MoEYS, 2020). This method persisted after independence, heavily influencing English Language Teaching (ELT) in the country. In the context of Cambodian ELT, GTM has historically been the primary instructional approach, emphasizing structural competence over communicative proficiency (Ellis et al., 2010; Chan, 2015). The method's persistence in Cambodian classrooms can be attributed to colonial educational legacies, which have deeply influenced contemporary ELT practices, including teacher training programs (Sok, 2018; Kim & Lee, 2020). As a result, memorization and translation continue to dominate classroom practices, reflecting traditional educational priorities (Khan et al., 2016). The questionnaire data also demonstrated that the majority of the participants predominantly experienced the Grammar Translation method as they were learners of English. More 90 percent of the participants stated that they “always” experienced the Grammar Translation Method as they were students of English. On the other hand, fewer than 3 percent of the respondents explained that they either “often” experienced the practices of CLT in their English classes when they were students. The following chart illustrates the respondents' experience with these language teaching methodologies (Figure 8):

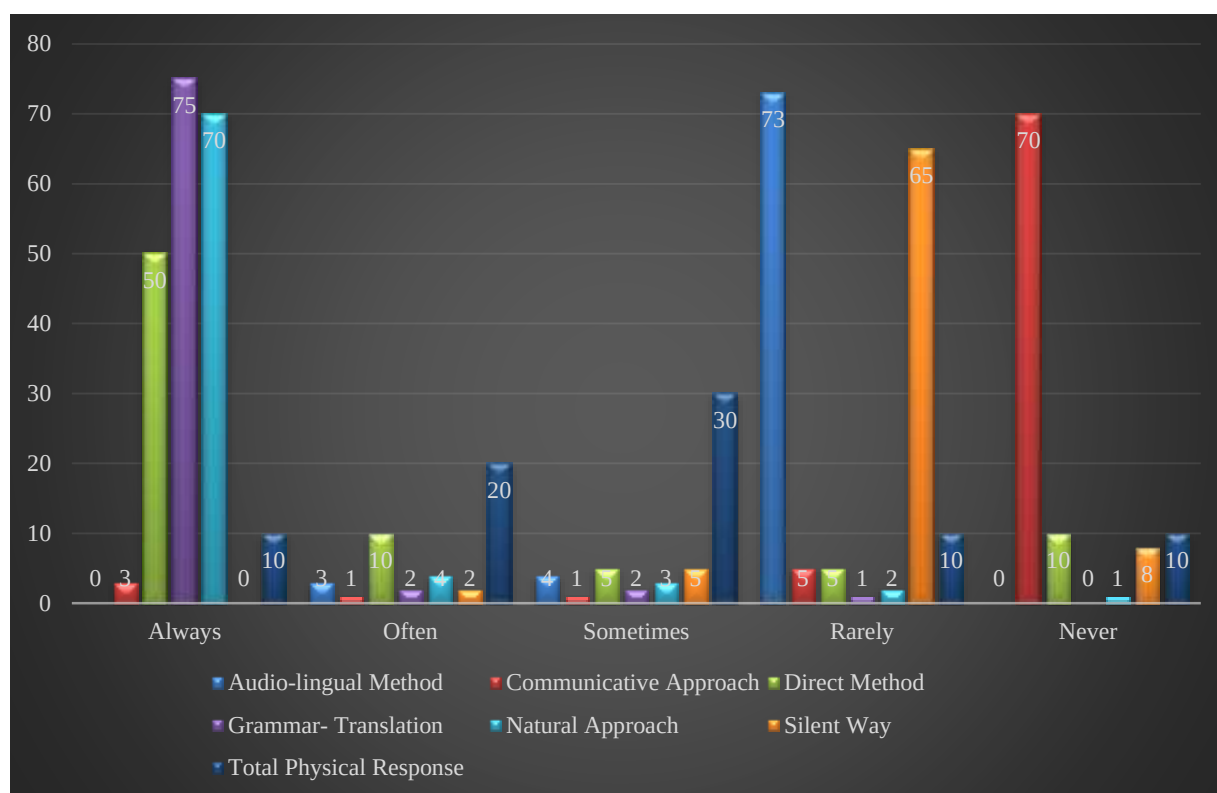


Figure 8: Participants' experience with language teaching methods as language learners

As illustrated in the figure, the participants possess prior experience with alternative language teaching methodologies, all of which are documented in the literature. This deep-seated familiarity with traditional or alternative approaches often dilutes their focus on CLT. Consequently, teachers frequently revert to these established methods, inadvertently hindering the consistent implementation and utilization of CLT in their classrooms.

Similarly, this issue emerged as a recurring theme among respondents, who identified it as a primary impediment to CLT adoption. Overcrowded classrooms and excessive instructional workloads constitute additional systemic hurdles highlighted in this research—reported in this study that was vastly mentioned by other authors, too. Burnaby and Sun (1984), Holliday (1994), Hui (1997), Li (1998), Li (2004), and Rao (2002) demonstrated in their studies that this issue was a significant institutional constraint that hindered the effective implementation of CLT in EFL classrooms.

In the literature, fewer opportunities for retraining in CLT was referred to as another key challenge in using CLT in EFL contexts (Campbell & Zhao, 1993; Hui, 1997; Li 1998; Penner, 1995; Wu, 2001). In the same vein, it was confirmed that the responses of the teachers in this study aligned with what was suggested by those authors in general. In addition, students' low motivation for communicative competence was identified in the literature as a further significant challenge that needed to be overcome to use CLT. Hiep (2007), Li, (1998), Li (2004), and Rao (2002) pointed out that students felt that they primarily needed to learn grammar, and thus they did not have much motivation to develop their spoken English for communicative purposes. In short, in order best to assist students' engagement, teachers should use communicative activities in which teachers pay attention to students' interests and needs (Stribling, 2003) as well as allow them to contribute their choices in classroom activities. By doing this, students will be involved more in real life communicative purposes and build up their motivation.

The findings indicate that Cambodian English learners exhibit identical attitudes to those documented in wider research. Furthermore, the participating educators strongly emphasized that the theoretical limitations of CLT—specifically its failure to adequately account for the realities of the EFL context—serve as a major structural constraint on classroom implementation. This was recursively argued as a major difficulty by other researchers in the literature, as well (Hiep, 2007; Li, 1998, Li, 2004). These researchers noted that there are considerable differences between EFL and ESL teaching such as the purposes of learning English, learning environments, teachers' English proficiency, and the availability of authentic English materials.

5.3 The Research Questions Answered

5.3.1 Research Question 1: What systemic and pedagogical challenges exist within English language instruction in Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)?

While acknowledging that Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs) have made remarkable strides in English language instruction over recent decades, systemic challenges still persist. Post-colonial educational reforms laid the groundwork for modern EFL pedagogy, eventually embedding English into the national curriculum starting in Grade 4, with long-term strategic plans aiming to extend this introduction down to the preschool level (MoEYS, 2015). Nominally, this early exposure is designed to provide students with essential linguistic foundations before they enter university. Yet, despite these notable advancements, tertiary EFL instruction remains hampered by significant institutional constraints. Extant literature identifies these core systemic barriers as overcrowded classrooms, excessive faculty workloads, over-packed curricula, misalignment between instructional content and assessment, low student motivation, deficient communicative skills among learners, and a critical lack of professional pedagogical training for educators.

The prevalence of overcrowded classrooms is a critical concern within Cambodian HEIs. Driven primarily by affordable tuition fees, high enrollment rates frequently lead to overcrowded classrooms. This structural bottleneck is compounded by a shortage of qualified English language teachers. Under these conditions, providing individualized attention to learners becomes increasingly difficult. Furthermore, managing interactive tasks in such dense environments is logistically challenging, as pair and group work can easily devolve into classroom management issues. Excessive class sizes present severe obstacles to effective classroom management, frequently resulting in a chaotic learning environment. This issue is highlighted by Dara (2023), who noted that implementing collaborative group activities triggers disruptive levels of student excitement that are exceptionally difficult to regulate. Furthermore, due to the high volume of learners in a single room, an instructor can realistically provide no more than thirty seconds of direct, individualized support to any given student. This friction is also exacerbated by fixed classroom furniture and high student-to-teacher ratios, both of which severely restrict physical mobility and collaborative learning.

Excessive teacher workload represents another critical challenge within Cambodian HEIs, stemming directly from a shortage of qualified English language teachers. This systemic exhaustion is highlighted by a case of an instructor managing 10 separate classes spanning all university levels, totaling 36 instructional hours weekly. Such an extensive teaching load severely restricts the time required to design genuine communicative classroom activities, evaluate written assignments, grade examinations, and maintain a functional work-life balance (Razity, 2023). Although the volume of English courses has expanded steadily since 1997, faculty recruitment has not kept pace with enrollment growth.

Consequently, existing instructors must absorb disproportionately heavy teaching loads. Because current institutional salary structures offer little financial incentive for this heightened labor, teacher motivation has severely waned. To compensate for these low academic wages, many lecturers take on multiple teaching positions across different campuses—a coping mechanism that ultimately compromises their capacity for lesson planning and professional development.

A third major impediment to effective EFL instruction is the dense nature of university English curricula. Participants noted that syllabi are often overburdened with topics, forcing teachers to prioritize content coverage over deep learning. Consequently, instructors frequently bypass core textbook activities deemed too time-consuming. These omitted components are typically listening and speaking exercises, which are precisely the communicative skills necessary for students to achieve high linguistic proficiency. This excessive volume deprives students of necessary practice opportunities, ultimately hindering their speaking abilities. Furthermore, a glaring contradiction exists within the institutional guidelines: while the mandated syllabus officially champions a student-centered, communicative approach emphasizing creativity and authentic interaction, the rigid time constraints force the majority of teachers to discard collaborative exercises, pair work, and interactive tasks simply to complete the required course content (Theng, 2023).

A critical structural issue in Cambodian higher education is the misalignment between curricular objectives and assessment practices. Although official guidelines mandate the use of CLT, formal evaluations remain overwhelmingly grammar-centric. Because these examinations serve as the primary metric for academic success, they exert a powerful washback effect on pedagogy; instructors feel compelled to prioritize high test scores, subsequently tailoring classroom activities to match exam formats. The academic culture in Cambodia prioritizes final examination scores above all else; regardless of an educator's dedication to building communicative fluency, professional success is ultimately dictated by exam metrics (Pheak, 2023). Consequently, tertiary English education is heavily examination-driven. This systemic rigidity is further exacerbated by outdated syllabi that emphasize rote memorization over communicative fluency, alongside a pervasive deficit of modern educational infrastructure, such as contemporary textbooks, computers, and digital learning tools. Dy (2023) highlighted this severe systemic mismatch among textbooks, university-provided instructional materials, and state exit exams, noting that the heavy communicative focus of course books becomes futile because instructors cannot justify teaching speaking when it is entirely absent from the final multiple-choice tests.

These structural constraints directly contribute to students' limited communicative competence, which remains a primary concern within Cambodian HEIs. Because instructors feel compelled to cover every grammar component within the prescribed syllabus, they routinely sacrifice the interactive activities necessary for developing spoken language proficiency. Consequently, despite years of formal English instruction, students frequently struggle to communicate effectively. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Cambodia face widespread criticism from all generations for producing students who remain unable to speak English fluently despite years of study and it is deeply perplexing how individuals can dedicate five to ten years to learning the language yet still struggle to speak it (Theary, 2023). This issue is further exacerbated by two distinct student-related barriers:

- **Mixed-Ability Classrooms:** Institutions often group learners with vastly disparate linguistic backgrounds together, making it exceedingly difficult for educators to differentiate instruction or tailor lessons to an appropriate baseline.

- **Low Baseline Proficiency:** A significant portion of incoming first-year students enter higher education lacking both fundamental academic vocabulary and basic oral communication skills.

A further obstacle is low student motivation to acquire English proficiency, a pervasive issue across Cambodian HEIs. Students frequently exhibit limited interest in the language unless they intend to pursue specialized degrees in English language teaching, translation and interpretation, or Western languages and literature. Paradoxically, despite this widespread disinterest, English—alongside Mathematics—commands the highest number of instructional hours in the national secondary school curriculum. This suggests that students often underestimate the long-term utility of English for their career trajectories. Furthermore, localized economic shifts influence these attitudes; in certain regions, families increasingly prioritize languages like Chinese due to the immediate, lucrative employment opportunities available in manufacturing and tourism. This shifting economic landscape diminishes the perceived value of English, a problem compounded by a lack of out-of-class language exposure, which restricts student usage to rigid classroom drills rather than authentic communication. When students perceive English as unnecessary for their immediate goals, they are reluctant to invest time in mastering it. A major contributing factor is that the university entrance examination completely excludes English, unless a student is specifically pursuing a foreign language major. Because they will not encounter any English questions on the exam, students choose to allocate their energy entirely toward test preparation, making it exceptionally difficult for educators to engage them in routine coursework, homework, or worksheets (Dine, 2023).

Finally, a critical institutional challenge is the deficit in specialized professional training. Kheng (2023) noted that ample professional development avenues exist through university-led seminars, conferences, online courses, and Ministry of Education in-service training programs conducted in partnership with external organizations. He suggested that self-improvement ultimately depends on an instructor's personal initiative, though age significantly influences this motivation. Specifically, younger generations of English educators exhibit greater enthusiasm for participating in CLT training and implementing the methodology in their classrooms. Conversely, as teachers advance in age, they tend to favor conventional instructional habits and show a corresponding reluctance to attend communicative workshops or seminars. Frankly speaking, many English instructors, particularly within rural HEIs or smaller regional universities, lack formal qualifications in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and specifically, CLT methodology.

5.3.2 Research Question 2: Through what mechanisms and to what degree can these institutional and educational barriers be mitigated?

The challenges preventing educators from successfully adopting Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) generally fall into four main categories: teacher-related, student-related, educational system-related, and CLT-inherent difficulties.

1. Teacher-Oriented Challenges and Solutions

Many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators in Cambodian HEIs face limitations in spoken English fluency and struggle with contextual language application due to gaps in sociolinguistic and strategic competence. Paradoxically, while most teachers understand CLT principles theoretically, they struggle to implement them practically. This is driven by a lack of professional development opportunities, low encouragement to attend available training, and a shortage of time and expertise needed to design communicative tasks. This deficit in professional development was highlighted by Theara (2023), who observed that seminars, workshops, and training sessions regarding CLT are exceptionally rare in Cambodia.

Mitigation Strategy: To bridge this gap, institutions must cultivate spoken fluency and contextual confidence in teachers. Educators should be heavily incentivized to use English continuously, both inside and outside the classroom. Building this level of fluency requires deep personal commitment, consistency, and persistence.

2. Student-Oriented Challenges and Solutions

On the student side, low baseline English proficiency makes it difficult for teachers to give instructions and for peers to collaborate. Furthermore, students often exhibit a passive learning style, resist communicative tasks, and lack the motivation to develop speaking skills. This resistance stems largely from the washback effect of high-stakes, grammar-heavy examinations, leading students to prioritize structural grammar over active communication.

Mitigation Strategy: Teachers can ease this tension by blending traditional grammar-translation methods with communicative tasks. Delivering explicit grammar instruction satisfies exam requirements, which can then be immediately followed by brief communicative activities to practice fluency. To address linguistic anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low motivation, teachers should use systematic scaffolding, peer collaboration, and a risk-tolerant classroom environment. This structural support transforms passive listeners into active participants, reinforced by the philosophy that "a mistake today makes perfection tomorrow."

3. Systemic and Institutional Barriers

The educational system itself presents severe structural roadblocks. Educators face a lack of administrative and peer support, alongside insufficient institutional funding. This financial deficit results in a severe shortage of authentic target language materials. Furthermore, overcrowded, large classrooms make it nearly impossible for teachers to provide individual attention or monitor communicative groups effectively. Ultimately, the biggest obstacle remains the grammar-based exam system, which forces students, teachers, parents, and administrators to focus exclusively on structural accuracy rather than functional fluency.

Mitigation Strategy: To bypass the lack of expensive, authentic materials, teachers can design locally relevant resources using everyday items, regional news, and familiar cultural scenarios. This minimizes cognitive load while maximizing student engagement. At the institutional level, university fee structures should be reevaluated and adjusted to fund smaller class sizes, allowing for more manageable student numbers.

4. Inherent Difficulties of the CLT Framework

Finally, the nature of CLT itself presents contextual challenges in Cambodia. First, there is an absence of effective assessment tools to measure communicative competence in formal school settings, and there is currently little institutional debate about creating them. Second, because CLT was originally designed for English as a Second Language (ESL) environments, it requires significant adjustment to work effectively in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings like Cambodia, where exposure to English outside the classroom is limited. Despite recent policy shifts, a successful transition has not yet materialized in higher education.

Mitigation Strategy: Institutions should transition toward performance-based evaluations that measure actual pragmatic competence. Introducing task-based rubrics allows educators to grade conversational turn-taking, meaning negotiation, and task completion alongside standard written quizzes.

The Reality of Structural Constraints: It is important to note that a teacher working alone cannot entirely override structural limitations like rigid physical spaces, fixed state curricula, and mandatory grammar

exams. In these restricted spaces, localized classroom adaptations serve as functional, temporary compromises until broader institutional policy reforms take place.

The Ultimate Solution: The most critical intervention is the institutional implementation of regular training sessions and workshops. These programs ensure that educators remain deeply aware of the benefits of CLT and are fully equipped to deploy communicative approaches effectively for Cambodian university students.

5.3.3 Research Question 3: In what ways does the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework contribute to the advancement of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in Cambodian higher education?

Existing literature and study participants consistently identify instructional methodology as a critical determinant of successful English language outcomes in Cambodian HEIs. Stakeholders argue that CLT offers a viable framework to mitigate current systemic deficiencies in English education. Most teachers contend that language acquisition should ultimately facilitate authentic communication, thereby positioning interaction as the primary objective of English pedagogy. Consequently, there is an evident need to expand student opportunities for active language utilization, prioritize communicative competence, and transition from structural grammar instruction toward pragmatic, meaning-based learning. This pedagogical shift is further accelerated by Cambodia's strategic initiatives to integrate into the global community and cultivate global citizens capable of using English as a lingua franca. Driven by expanding economic, social, cultural, and diplomatic ties—particularly within the context of ASEAN economic integration—the domestic demand for fluent, competent English-speaking professionals is rising rapidly. According to Long (1996) as cited in Muho & Kurani (2011), interaction is the facilitator of language acquisition because it connects input (what learners hear and read); internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention; and output (what learners produce) in productive ways. It means that interaction provides learners with opportunities to receive comprehensible input and feedback as well as to make changes in their own linguistic output (Gass, 1997; Long, 1996; Pica, 1994; Swain 1995 quoted by Muho & Kurani, 2011). In this landscape, CLT serves as a pivotal methodology for developing highly proficient and articulate English speakers.

CLT represents a paradigm shift in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, moving away from rote grammar memorization toward authentic communication. Within Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), this methodology transitions classrooms from traditional, teacher-centered spaces into interactive environments, thereby fostering practical fluency, workforce readiness, and learner confidence within a globalized economy. The primary contributions of CLT to Cambodian higher education include the following:

- **Development of Interpersonal and Soft Skills:** By utilizing collaborative pairs and small-group activities, CLT naturally fosters essential competencies such as teamwork, strategic negotiation, and intercultural communication.
- **Advancement of Oral and Aural Proficiency:** Meaning-focused tasks—such as role-plays, information-gap exercises, and collaborative problem-solving—directly mitigate historical deficiencies in speaking and listening skills among Cambodian learners.
- **Socio-Economic and Regional Integration (ASEAN):** Given the critical role of English in Cambodia's economic expansion and regional diplomacy, CLT equips undergraduates with professional communicative competence, enhancing their employability in sectors like tourism, commerce, and international relations.

- **Synergy with Educational Technology:** Modern applications of CLT in Cambodia frequently interface with Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Blending interactive tasks with online platforms and flipped classroom models extends language production beyond traditional classroom constraints. Kugemann (2002) defines ICT as the certain areas that allow for the updating of information and communication. This paper defines ICT as the
- educational program used to upgrade students' performance, mainly in speaking English, through particular tools, resulting in score enhancement, better speaking skills and reducing learning difficulties.
- **Cultivation of Autonomy and Critical Thinking:** By requiring students to negotiate meaning and communicate authentically, CLT fosters self-directed learning habits, bolsters academic confidence, and encourages critical inquiry.

5.3.4 Research Question 4: What is the practical viability and adaptability of implementing communicative language teaching methodologies within the Cambodian higher education context?

The research indicates that while higher education instructors in Cambodia generally favor integrating CLT into their English curricula, systemic challenges hinder its practical execution. The consensus among most participants is that successfully implementing CLT in formal classrooms remains highly challenging under present conditions. This difficulty stems from five primary obstacles: the grammar-based examination system, excessive teacher workloads, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate pre-lesson planning, and a lack of professional development specifically tailored to CLT methodologies.

To successfully adopt CLT in Cambodian higher education, respondents emphasize that the aforementioned challenges must be strategically addressed through the following measures:

- **Assessment Reform:** Integrating CLT requires restructuring the examination system to properly value and assess students' communicative proficiency.
- **Workload Reduction:** The practical application of CLT is contingent upon reducing teachers' heavy workloads to give them adequate breathing room.
- **Class Size Optimization:** Managing large English class sizes is crucial to making communicative activities feasible.
- **Structured Lesson Planning:** Comprehensive and well-structured pre-lesson preparation is vital for enabling effective CLT instruction.
- **Robust Professional Development:** Finally, higher education English instructors must be provided with extensive training and workshops to equip them with the skills needed to successfully execute CLT methodologies.

Beyond the immediate survey responses, literature indicates that while CLT is moderately feasible in Cambodian higher education, its integration faces deep-seated structural and cultural hurdles. Although stakeholders widely support the approach, implementation is restricted by systemic resource gaps, entrenched rote-learning habits, and inadequate pedagogical training. These constraints manifest in three primary ways:

- **Material and Curricular Deficiencies:** A shortage of modernized curricula, contemporary teaching resources, and authentic English materials limits educators' ability to design interactive, real-world tasks.

- **Instructional Limitations:** Many tertiary instructors lack adequate training in modern pedagogical frameworks, such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which curtails their capacity to effectively facilitate student-centered communication.
- **Pedagogical Inertia:** Despite a theoretical preference for CLT, classrooms frequently default to traditional, teacher-centered "chalk and talk" methods. This is driven by deep-rooted cultural learning habits and a persistent institutional focus on grammar-based assessments.
- **Conversely,** several key opportunities enhance the feasibility of implementing CLT within Cambodian higher education institutions. Despite existing systemic barriers, favorable student dynamics and technological integration offer significant pathways for successful adoption:
- **Economic and Professional Incentives:** Cambodian students demonstrate exceptionally high motivation to acquire English proficiency, catalyzed by the demands of local and regional job markets.
- **Stakeholder Receptivity:** Empirical evidence indicates that both educators and learners hold highly favorable views of CLT methodologies, expressing a distinct preference for interactive pair and group-work dynamics.
- **Technological Integration:** The deployment of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) alongside flipped classroom models has emerged as a powerful mechanism for accelerating students' oral proficiency within tertiary contexts.

Chapter VI contains summary of all chapters, implications, suggestions for overcoming the reported challenges, as well as the limitations of the study. It, then, ends with recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter begins with the summary of the study and the implications which holds for English teaching, laying out suggestions for overcoming the challenges in the implementation of CLT in Cambodian HEIs. Then, it details the limitations of the study. Finally, the chapter is concluded with recommendations for further research.

6.1 Summary of the Study

6.1.1 Introduction

Despite the widespread popularity CLT has enjoyed over the past four decades, its logical appropriateness and practical feasibility in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings remain highly contested. Several scholars emphasize that language instruction must align with local needs and specific contextual realities, often highlighting the enduring benefits of traditional teaching methods (Bax, 2003; Harvey, 1985; Incecay & Incecay, 2009). Cambodia serves as a prime example of this dynamic, demonstrating how national language policies directly shape education, daily life, and future opportunities in a developing nation (Kosonen, 2019). Here, research underscores that English is primarily taught for pragmatic, socio-economic, and socio-cultural advancement.

The emergence of student-centered and CLT modalities at the collegiate level features a new challenge for both English classroom learning and teaching practices given that the whole context of learning and teaching in most programs and at all levels has been predominantly influenced by a long-lasting practice of Grammar-Translation Methodology and, if any, a so-called practice of CLT as in the case of the K-12 education (Neau, 2003). This mismatch has, in particular, had significant impacts on the current situation of student learning at college and has, thus, given rise to the quest among scholars to understand the

emerging nature of student learning (see, for example, Keuk, 2008, 2009; Keuk & Tith, 2006; Khan, 2008; Ly et al., 2007). Unfortunately, none of these studies have extensively examined student learning beyond the classroom context. This practice, as implicitly challenged by Kuh et al. (1997), Kuh et al. (2007), Pascarella et al. (2008) and Terenzini et al. (1996), merely limits learning within the classroom context. Little is known about intact students' college experiences as viewed through their involvement both on and off campus. The paucity of empirical research as such is surprising given the growing demands from the public to account for the quality of student learning. Understanding the current trends and patterns in Cambodian student learning is vital for educators aiming to design curricula that effectively address and balance instructional gaps. Despite the theoretical benefits of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), a persistent question remains: why do instructors in Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) rarely, if ever, integrate CLT methodologies into their everyday practice? Identifying the specific systemic and practical obstacles blocking CLT from entering these EFL classrooms is critical. Investigating how Cambodian HEI teachers conceptualize English instruction—particularly the unique difficulties and challenges they face when trying to implement communicative activities—can offer invaluable insights. Such an exploration provides a practical roadmap for introducing CLT into EFL environments more effectively and efficiently. Ultimately, this study is essential for driving positive pedagogical reforms and offering tangible, evidence-based support to EFL practitioners across Cambodian higher education. This study addressed the problem statement with the following research questions (RQ) and research objectives (RO):

RQ1: What systemic and pedagogical challenges exist within English language instruction in Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)?

RO1: To investigate the systemic and pedagogical challenges underlying English language instruction within Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

RQ2: Through what mechanisms and to what degree can these institutional and educational barriers be mitigated?

RO2: To explore viable strategies and the potential extent to which these educational barriers can be mitigated

RQ3: In what ways does the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework contribute to the advancement of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in Cambodian higher education?

RO3: To evaluate the specific pedagogical contributions of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework to the Cambodian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context

RQ4: What is the practical viability and adaptability of implementing communicative language teaching methodologies within the Cambodian higher education context?

RO4: To assess the practical viability and structural feasibility of implementing CLT methodologies in Cambodian universities

6.1.2 Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives, and significance of the study. CLT in the Asian Context: Despite its global success, CLT remains in its nascent stages across many Asian nations, particularly in Cambodia, where it was first introduced in the late 1990s (Yusra & Lestari, 2020). Within Cambodian education, the methodology continues to drive student-centered learning by fostering active participation through collaborative classroom activities (Nhem, 2019; Bon et al., 2022). In the statement of the problem, existing literature indicates that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors within Cambodian Higher Education

Institutions (HEIs) encounter significant pedagogical and systemic challenges when attempting to implement Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). These persistent instructional barriers directly hinder the communicative development and linguistic competence of tertiary language learners. In Cambodia, English Language Teaching (ELT) has traditionally been dominated by the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), which emphasizes memorizing grammatical rules and translating sentences, reflecting a historical focus on structural competence rather than communicative proficiency (Akramy et al., 2022; Chan, 2015; Ellis et al., 2010). Finally, this research significantly holds practical value for institutional development and student engagement. By identifying the specific contributions of CLT to Cambodian higher education, this study champions the advancement of quality language instruction, foster higher student satisfaction, and promote active learning. Ultimately, by evaluating the operational feasibility of this approach, this study establishes a practical framework that can be adapted by other universities and language centers looking to optimize their communicative curricula. Chapter 1 concluded with scope and delimitation of the study and definition of terms for this study.

Chapter 2 consists of the literature review. This chapter reviews the theoretical literature and previous research establishing the foundation for this study. The first section examines the historical development, definition, and underlying principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), emphasizing communicative competence, the roles of classroom participants, and the utility of teaching materials. Additionally, it addresses how teacher beliefs, teacher attitudes, and student motivation influence instructional outcomes. The second half of the chapter contextualizes the study globally and locally by exploring English as a international lingua franca, language policy in Cambodia, and the broader implementation levels and barriers to CLT in Asian EFL environments. To contextualize these developments, the text reviews alternative teaching paradigms—including Grammar-Translation, the Direct Method, Audio-Lingualism, the Silent Way, the Natural Approach, and Total Physical Response. The chapter concludes with a targeted analysis of current communicative language teaching practices and challenges unique to the Cambodian context.

Chapter 3 is comprised of the methodology used in this study and details the systematic procedures employed in the study. Specifically, it delineates the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, the research design, and the selection and description of the participants. Additionally, it provides a comprehensive overview of the data collection instruments, the statistical treatments and analysis techniques utilized, and the organizational structure of the study. To adequately address research questions that comprise both qualitative and quantitative dimensions, this study adopted a mixed-methods approach, utilizing data collection and analysis techniques from both paradigms. Creswell et al. (2003) define mixed-methods research as the gathering or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data within a single study. In this design, data are collected either concurrently or sequentially, prioritized according to the study's objectives, and integrated at one or more stages of the research process (p. 212). A mixed-methods framework allows researchers to leverage a full range of analytical possibilities (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) and offers a more comprehensive perspective, as qualitative insights can capture nuances that quantitative data might overlook (Creswell, 2003). By combining these two data forms, researchers can simultaneously generalize findings from a sample to a broader population while cultivating a profound, context-rich understanding of the central phenomenon. The chapter concludes with respondents of the study and research instruments.

Chapter 4 presents the questionnaire results, analyzing both closed-ended and open-ended responses. The findings are organized into four primary thematic categories: teacher attitudes toward English and the ELT

profession; concerns regarding the systemic problems in Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs); a expressed desire for instructional reforms; and an exploration of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), focusing on both its potential and the challenges of its implementation. It also provides summary tables and figures of the research results and qualitives of the respondents.

Chapter 5 concludes with discussion. This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first discusses the respondents' feedback, followed by an analysis of how these results align with existing literature. The final section concludes by revisiting the study's primary research questions.

Final chapter holds the summary of the study and the implications that lay out suggestions for overcoming the challenges in the implementation of CLT in Cambodian HEIs. Then, it details the limitations of the study. Finally, the chapter is concluded with recommendations for further research.

6.2 Implications of the Study

As demonstrated in this study, numerous institutional constraints impede the integration of CLT within Cambodian HEIs. Chief among these is that excessive workloads leave teachers with insufficient time and energy to design communicative materials and interactive activities. Consequently, the primary implication of these findings is the urgent need to reduce faculty workloads and improve overall working conditions. The findings indicate that EFL educators in Cambodian HEIs face excessive instructional hours, leaving virtually no opportunity to design authentic, communicative classroom materials.

This systemic exhaustion is highlighted by a case of an instructor managing 10 separate classes spanning all university levels, totaling 36 instructional hours weekly. Such an extensive teaching load severely restricts the time required to design genuine communicative classroom activities, evaluate written assignments, grade examinations, and maintain a functional work-life balance (Razity, 2023).

This challenge is compounded by the fact that academic salaries and teaching rates remain uncompetitive compared to equivalent professions. Burdened by financial insecurity, faculty members are forced to seek supplemental income to improve their living standards. For instance, many instructors moonlight across multiple universities to ensure financial survival. This exhausting schedule leaves them with neither the bandwidth nor the motivation to develop target-language materials, particularly those required for CLT. Ultimately, these systemic pressures erode professional investment in instructional quality. It is therefore critical that institutions address these interconnected issues of workload and compensation to unlock faculty potential. Because resolving broader pedagogical challenges is inherently contingent upon the equitable treatment of educators, the optimization of teacher working and living conditions must be prioritized in university-wide policy-making.

Another key implication of this study is the urgent need for strategic planning and structural reform within Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs). While English is recognized as a core academic discipline, low tuition fees serve as a root cause for the prevalence of overcrowded classrooms. Compounded by a shortage of qualified English language educators, universities are financially pressured to maximize class sizes to achieve economic break-even points and generate net profits. Consequently, instructional delivery remains largely confined to traditional, large-group lectures that heavily prioritize grammar at the expense of vital oral skills, such as listening and speaking. This structural limitation explains why many students, despite years of formal English education, struggle to communicate effectively with English speakers. To address these systemic challenges, HEIs should reconsider their pricing structures to facilitate manageable class sizes. Furthermore, it is critical to aggressively recruit and retain qualified EFL faculty, allowing instructors to focus intensively on developing learners' communicative competence.

The findings underscore the critical need for Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to reassess their language teaching policies. In an era where English serves as the global lingua franca, Cambodia's integration into regional and global networks relies heavily on a workforce capable of effective English communication. At present, when English in its role of the global language as a new phenomenon is becoming one of the major components of globalization (Gural, & Smokotin, 2014), there are numerous attempts in the research community to determine its place among different linguistic variants and varieties as well as to single out its characteristic peculiarities making it the universally accepted means of worldwide communication (Seidlhofer, 2001). Consequently, achieving this global integration requires a substantial cohort of civil servants and professionals possessing strong communicative proficiency. To facilitate this, reducing current class sizes is imperative; language acquisition fundamentally relies on immersive, interactive engagement. Overcrowded classrooms inherently restrict individual speaking practice, delay formative feedback, and constrain the implementation of student-centered communicative tasks, ultimately fostering passive learning environments that diminish student proficiency.

Another change needed in HEIs in Cambodia is a reform on the current examination system. As revealed by this study, previous research and forums, there is too much reliance on grammar-based examinations in HEIs in Cambodia, and thus English teaching practices are shaped according to the skills tested in these exams, which are mainly grammar, vocabulary knowledge, translation, and reading skills. Attention should be shifted towards other language skills such as listening and speaking. For that purpose, more research should be conducted on how to assess learners' listening and speaking skills in the context in HEIs in Cambodia. It might be worthwhile to consider that large-scale summative examinations should not be relied too much as the sheer criterion in the selection and placement of students for future education. Rather, formative examinations should be incorporated into English education in HEIs in Cambodia. From this perspective, students' communicative abilities can be more effectively represented in the selection and placement instruments. Similarly, such a reform would result in positive changes in both teachers' and students' motivation towards teaching and learning English through CLT.

Furthermore, in the process of effective integration of CLT into English teaching in HEIs in Cambodia, special attention should be paid to teacher training. Markee (2001) puts forward that teachers can more easily change their values and help bring about deeper changes if they understand why there is the need to change. Therefore, the most imperative and effective way to implement CLT is to provide in-service teachers with opportunities to retrain themselves in CLT. When the teachers better understand the principles of CLT, as well as explore how it works in English language classrooms, they can meet the demands of CLT more effectively and feel motivated to overcome the potential constraints in the use of CLT. Within this framework, it is crucial that teachers not be lectured about CLT in teacher training programs. Rather, they should be demonstrated how CLT actually works. Moreover, in these programs, teachers should be provided with opportunities to gain some hands-on experience, along with confidence in using CLT. As a final note, it might be advisable to include a language improvement component in teacher training programs. The present study confirmed that EFL teachers in HEIs in Cambodia are weak at speaking and listening skills. Thus, a special emphasis on these skills would be valuable for the teachers. Finally, to better understand and enlighten the study, it is suggested to go through and read thoroughly and carefully the answers of the all research questions in Chapter 4 since they stated clearly the difficulties and challenges and feasibilities of overcoming of using CLT as an efficient and effective approach or methodology in teaching english language to Cambodian students in HEIs to be able to authentically communicate the target language.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

Several limitations must be acknowledged in this study, primary among which is the sample size. Because the participant cohort is relatively constrained, the findings cannot be used to draw broadly generalizable conclusions. Instead, the themes and patterns that emerged during this research should be interpreted as foundational hypotheses to be rigorously tested in future studies utilizing larger, more representative samples.

Another limitation pertains to the data collection scope. While the present study relies primarily on teacher-centric data, incorporating a mixed-methods approach—such as student questionnaires, classroom observations, and follow-up interviews with observed instructors—may have enhanced data reliability. Because students were neither surveyed nor interviewed, the scope of the analysis remains somewhat constrained. Accessing learners' perceptions of and reactions to interactive classroom activities would have provided a more comprehensive understanding of how teachers' perceptions about CLT utilization into practice. Ultimately, integrating data from these diverse stakeholder perspectives would have permitted methodological triangulation, thereby increasing the overall validity and depth of the study's findings.

A further limitation stems from the inherent subjectivity of self-reported data. Because the findings rely on the teachers' individual perspectives, their actual classroom practices may diverge from the pedagogical principles they reported in the questionnaire. Furthermore, as the principal investigator, my own interpretations during data collection and analysis—specifically during the prompting, note-taking, translation, categorization, and coding phases—may introduce an interpretive bias that differs slightly from the respondents' intended meanings. Addressing these methodological limitations in future research would facilitate the design of a more rigorous, larger-scale study.

6.4. Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of this study confirm that EFL educators perceive a distinct gap in the existing literature regarding their specific classroom concerns, pedagogical challenges, and contextual realities. Participants explicitly highlighted the structural disadvantages inherent to teaching English as a foreign language in this environment. Consequently, future scholarship must dedicate greater attention to empirical research that directly addresses the unique characteristics and localized nuances of EFL instruction.

As this investigation progressed, several critical queries emerged that warrant further empirical attention. The following questions are proposed as directions for future research:

RQ1: What are the prominent characteristics and learning styles of Cambodian tertiary students acquiring English within local higher education institutions (HEIs)?

RO1: To elicit the prominent characteristics and learning styles of Cambodian tertiary students acquiring English within local higher education institutions (HEIs)

RQ2: What are the defining characteristics and instructional methodologies of educators teaching within Cambodian HEIs?

RO: A deeper understanding of these pedagogical and behavioral dimensions will facilitate the development of targeted EFL methodologies that directly accommodate contextual classroom constraints and align with local educational realities.

RQ3: What are tertiary students' perceptions regarding communicative versus non-communicative activities within Cambodian EFL classrooms?

RO: Investigating these learner attitudes provides critical empirical data for educators and curriculum designers, illuminating student needs and preferences to guide evidence-based decisions when implementing communicative approaches.

RQ4: What are the perceptions of administrative leaders regarding the instructional methodologies employed in tertiary EFL classrooms in Cambodia?

RO: Investigating this dimension provides a critical overview of the strategic institutional expectations and pedagogical frameworks valued by those responsible for governing language centers.

RQ5: How can tertiary EFL educators in Cambodia effectively balance grammatical instruction with communicative competence in the classroom?

RO: Addressing this query is vital for offering practical, actionable pedagogical support, given that local instructors heavily emphasize grammar but lack concrete strategies for integrating communicative workflows alongside traditional instruction.

RQ6: What alternative assessment methodologies could substitute for traditional written exams in selection and placement frameworks, and how can current grammar-centric evaluations be restructured to accurately measure communicative proficiency?

RO: Exploring these alternatives is imperative to counter the negative washback effect of existing examinations, which over-prioritize grammatical memorization at the expense of students' practical language acquisition.

RQ7: What are the comparative perceptions of faculty and students toward the implementation of CLT at the tertiary level?

RO: This line of inquiry enriches the existing literature on communicative approaches in foreign-language settings and provides a foundation for comparative analyses between higher education practices and secondary or primary EFL instruction.

RQ8: To what extent do institutional environments and demographic variables—such as age, gender, and teaching experience—influence educators' perceptions and execution of CLT?

RO: As the present study did not isolate these specific variables, analyzing these correlations will yield a more nuanced understanding of how demographic and contextual differences shape pedagogical delivery in Cambodian higher education.

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