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DO HIGH SCHOOLS OR PRIVATE INSTITUTES PRACTICE COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING? A CASE STUDY OF SHIRAZ TEACHERS IN HIGH SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTES

Seyyed Ayatollah Razmjoo
Shiraz University

Abdol-Mehdi Riazi
Shiraz University

Abstract

The Communicative Approach in language teaching originates from a theory of language as communication. According to this approach, the main objective of language teaching is to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as communicative competence. The literature on language teaching suggests that EFL teachers' attitudes and practice toward Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) vary depending on how they conceptualize CLT. Thus, the purpose of this study is to first explore high school and institute teachers' attitudes toward CLT within the context of an expanding circle (Iran) where English is practiced as a foreign language. Secondly, the study aims at exploring the extent to which the teachers of these two contexts materialize and substantiate their attitudes. To fulfill the objectives, a questionnaire consisting of five main factors was administered to 100 male and female high school and institute teachers. Moreover, a classroom observation scheme, designed on the basis of literature on CLT, was used to monitor how well and to what extent teachers practice what they believe. Descriptive and inferential analysis of the data indicated that high school and institute teachers' attitudes toward CLT are positive, indicating a welcoming atmosphere toward the implementation of CLT. However, among the participants only the teachers of institutes practice a quasi-CLT type of approach in their classes.

Introduction

English assumes a pivotal role in the Iranian educational system. In recent years, an increasing demand for teaching and learning English as a foreign language has been witnessed in the society. It is now a recognized fact that English language and its influence are clearly visible. We can see its utility as a link-language, a library language and a medium of instruction in some private schools, colleges, and universities. In addition to a service language, it is the language for international trade, commerce and communication. In spite of such a pervasive use, it is unfortunate to note that the educational system of Iran has produced students, the majority of whom lack appreciable competence in communicating the language effectively. As a consequence, our students find themselves completely unsuited to the international competition forced by economic globalization (Yarmohammadi, 2000; see also Bagheri, 1994; Moradi, 1996; Rahimi, 1996; Rashidi, 1995; Saadat, 1995; Zanganeh, 1995).

In recent years, teachers of foreign languages in many countries, including Iran, have been encouraged to adopt an approach known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

This approach advocates the development of communicative competence as a primary goal via the extensive use of the foreign language as a means of communication during classroom sessions. Understandably, education authorities and teacher educators are keen to know what teachers' understanding of CLT is and how well they have incorporated this approach into their foreign language teaching.

Communicative Language Teaching: A Historical Perspective

The origins of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) date back to the late 1960s. Until then, Situational Language Teaching represented the major British approach to teaching English as a foreign language. In Situational Language Teaching, language was taught by practicing basic structures in meaningful situation-based activities. However, much like the linguistic theory underlying Audiolingualism was rejected in the United States in the mid-1960s, British applied linguists began to call into question the theoretical assumption underlying Situational Language Teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Many researchers have helped develop the theory and practice of the Communicative Language Teaching approach (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Canale, 1983; Howatt, 1984; Huang & Liu 2000; Littlewood, 1981; Nattinger, 1984; Nunan, 1987; Nunan, 1989; Savignon, 1983; White, 1989; Widdowson, 1990; Widdowson, 1996). Howatt (1984) distinguished between a 'strong' version and a 'weak' version of the CLT:

The "weak" version which has become more or less standard practice in the last ten years, stresses the importance 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... The "strong" version of communicative teaching, on the other hand, advances the claim that language is acquired through communication, so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of stimulating the development of the language system itself. If the former could be described as "learning to use" English, the latter entails "using English to learn it." (p. 279)

The concept of communicative competence was originally developed some decades ago by the sociolinguist Hymes (1972), as a response to perceived limitations in Chomsky's (1965) competence/performance model of language in which:

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 limitation, distractions, shifts of attention and interest and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. (p. 21)

The communicative approach could be said to be the product of educators and linguists who had grown dissatisfied with the audio-lingual and grammar-translation methods of foreign language instruction. They felt that students were not learning enough realistic, whole language. They did not know how to communicate using appropriate social language, gestures, or expressions; in brief, they were at a loss to communicate in the culture of the language studied. Interest in and development of communicative-style teaching mushroomed

in the 1970s. Authentic language use and classroom exchanges where students engaged in real communication with one another became quite popular (Hymes, 1972).

Communicative competence was then further developed in the early 1980s by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983). According to Canale (1983), communicative competence refers to “the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication” (p. 5). Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) proposed four components of communicative competence (see Table 1).

Table 1. Components of communicative competence

Component	Description of Component
Grammatical Competence	Producing a structured comprehensible utterance (including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling).
Sociolinguistic Competence	Using socially-determined cultural codes in meaningful ways, often termed ‘appropriacy’ (e.g. formal or informal ways of greeting).
Discourse Competence	Shaping language and communicating purposefully in different genres (text types), using cohesion (structural linking) and coherence (meaningful relationships in language).
Strategic Competence	Enhancing the effectiveness of communication (e.g. deliberate speech), and compensating for breakdowns in communication (e.g. comprehension checks, paraphrase, conversation fillers).

Statement of the Problem

In recent decades, teachers of foreign languages in many countries, including Iran, have been encouraged to use the approach known as CLT. This approach advocates the development of communicative competence as a primary goal via the extensive use of the foreign language as a means of communication during classroom lessons. CLT has been welcomed by English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum and syllabus designers of Iran. Moreover, English teachers and instructors have shown eagerness and enthusiasm to incorporate it in their classes. However, we do not know whether CLT is practiced at all, and if practiced how and to what extent. Understandably, education authorities and teacher educators are keen to know how teachers assimilate CLT and how well they incorporate this approach into their foreign language teaching.

Since the concept of CLT originated in the West, seemingly it is ill-suited to other contexts and because of immense misunderstanding surrounding the theory and practice of CLT (Savignon, 2002), this exploratory study seeks to investigate the practicality of CLT in two educational domains of Iran as an expanding circle (where English is practiced as a foreign language), namely, public and private institutes. Moreover, due to the fact that EFL instructors and teachers claim that they apply the CLT in their classes, this study, also, probes the extent to which the teachers in these two domains tend to follow the CLT principles.

Significance of the Study

Because English language teaching is a major part of educational curriculum in Iran and special attention is given to it in the society, the findings of the present study can be both theoretically and practically significant. Such a study provides information to be taken into consideration by policy makers, language-planners, curriculum designers, textbook developers, language instructors, teachers, and also learners and their parents. In other words, the issue addressed in this study might be of use to two groups of people. At the macro level,

the issue may be useful to the policy makers, language planners, curriculum designers, textbook developers and test constructors who are concerned with the following questions: why do we learn and teach English (aims and objectives), what do we learn and teach (content), how do we learn and teach English (methods, learning activities), with what resources do we learn and teach (books, materials), and how well do we learn and teach (assessment, evaluation)? At the micro level, the issue may be useful to the instructors, the learners, and their families as three major commonplaces of curriculum especially the instructors who are concerned with selecting the most useful techniques and principles and designing a more effective course of study by drawing from available approaches, syllabus types and existing research findings.

Research Background

This section reviews the related literature on English Language Teaching (ELT) in general, and the studies done on CLT in particular.

An Overview of Language Teaching Methodologies in Iran

Teaching English as a foreign language is a challenging task in developing countries in general, but particularly in Iran. English has been included in the educational curriculum of Iran and special attention has been given to it in the society for a number of reasons. First of all, the use of the latest technological and scientific resources mainly written in English calls for some knowledge of the language. Second, the era of information explosion and the efficient use of the Internet makes learning English a necessity. Third, mastery of English facilitates cultural exchange. Moreover, to materialize the dialog among civilizations, as proposed by M. Khatami, the ex-president of Iran, we need to learn and use English to bring this idea into reality. As such, in addition to teaching English in public schools, a large number of institutes take the responsibility of TEFL in the country. What follows is a review of the general trends in these two domains.

Teaching English in Public Institutes

Since the establishment of “Dar Ul Fonun” (The House of Techniques), in which the foreign language instruction was started, the Iranian educational system has been changed based on the trends of the time. The present educational system of Iran includes the following levels: primary school, junior high school, high school, and pre-university.

From the age of seven, pupils attend primary school. In the primary school, students study a variety of subjects including Persian Language, elementary science, and elementary social sciences. Excluding some private institutes, English is not taught in Iranian primary schools. After five years, students proceed to junior high school for three years. English is one of the key subjects taught for three hours a week at this level. Dialogs, pattern practice and words are the major components of the textbooks designed for this level (Birjandi & Soheili, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c).

After junior high school, students proceed to high school for another three years and study English for two hours per week. Reading comprehension is the major part of the textbooks at this level (Birjandi, Soheili, Nowroozi, & Mahmoodi, 2000; Birjandi, Nowroozi, & Mahmoodi, 2002a, 2002b).

After high school, students start the pre-university level for one year, based on a credit-semester system in which English is taught four hours a week. The pre-university English textbook has been developed on the basis of the Reading Method. On the whole, the

adoption of such a methodology, though not specifically in line with the recent practices of teaching methods throughout the world, seems to be fairly successful in serving the purpose of foreign language teaching in Iran (see Table 2).

Table 2. EFL Instruction in Public Schools in Iran

Age	Levels	Amount of instruction
7-11	Primary School	Optional
12-14	Junior High School	Grade 1 = 2 hours a week Grades 2 & 3 = 3 hours a week
15-17	High School	Grade 1 = 3 hours a week Grades 2 & 3 = 2 hours a week
18	Pre-university	4 hours a week

English is taught as an obligatory subject in grade one of junior high school and onward. The textbooks taught are designed and prepared by the Ministry of Education. Based on the textbook content, the students are evaluated formatively and summatively.

Teaching English in Private Institutes

As Farzin-nia (1964) reported, the first formal English language institute established in Iran in 1925 was Iran-America society. After the Islamic Revolution in 1977, this institute underwent some modifications. For instance, the name of the institute was changed to Iran Language Institute (ILI). In addition, it underwent radical changes in terms of management, objectives, and curriculum. Little by little due to the shortcomings of EFL instruction in Iranian schools on the one hand and the importance of foreign language instruction on the other, different institutes under different titles were established all over the country. Today, there are more than 80 institutes for males and females in the four educational districts of Shiraz city alone. These institutes offer different courses for different age groups (see Table 3).

Table 3. EFL Instruction in Private Institutes in Shiraz

Age	Textbooks	Amount of instruction ¹
Kids	Tiny Talk New Parade Get Ready	4 hours a week
Teenagers	Let's Go Chatterbox	4 hours a week
Adolescents & Adults	New Interchange New Headways American Headways Spectrum New American Streamline IELTS Textbooks TOEFL Textbooks	4 hours a week ²

¹ The total amount of instruction is 20 sessions lasting two and a half months

² Intensive courses are held 6 to 8 hours a week.

Language learners attend the institutes to improve their command of English proficiency. First, they sit for a placement test. Based on the results of the placement test, they are put into appropriate levels. Student achievement in class is evaluated based on a mid-term, a final exam, and class activities.

Features and Principles of Communicative Language Teaching

The word ‘communicative’ shares the fate of words like ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom.’ Through overuse, they have come to mean whatever the user wants them to mean, usually to refer to something generally deemed to be a good thing (Johnson, 2004). Therefore, anyone referring to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) needs to clarify which sense is meant. As such, Johnson (2004) considered three characteristics relevant to CLT:

1. CLT places greater importance on the role of message-focus in language practice;
2. It uses such techniques as *information transfer* and *information gap*;
3. It is part of a learning model, as opposed to an acquisition model.

Mangubhai, Marland, Dashwood, and Son (2004) stated that CLT is not a rigidly circumscribed method of foreign language teaching but rather an approach, based on an amalgam of affiliated strategies that seeks to develop communicative competence in students and requires a commitment to using the foreign language as a medium for classroom communication as much as possible. CLT classrooms are also usually characterized by a number of features that are commonly listed in the literature on CLT (Brown, 2000; Brown, 2001; Chastain, 1988; Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Mangubhai, Howard, & Dashwood, 1999; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Ur, 1996; Williams, 1995). These features include:

1. An emphasis on language use rather than language knowledge;
2. Greater emphasis on fluency and appropriateness in the use of the target language rather than on structural correctness;
3. Minimal focus on form with corresponding low emphasis on error correction and explicit instruction on language rules or grammar;
4. Classroom tasks and exercises that depend on spontaneity and student trial-and-error as well as negotiation of meaning among students and between students and teachers; use of authentic materials;
5. An environment that is interactive, not excessively formal which encourages risk-taking and promotes student autonomy;
6. Teachers serving more as facilitators and participants rather than taking the traditional didactic role; and
7. Students being actively involved in interpretation, expression and negotiation of meaning.

In short, the approach “puts the focus on the learner” (Savignon, 2002, p. 4). Berns (as cited in Savignon, 2002), provided a useful summary of eight principles of CLT:

1. Language teaching is based on a view of language as communication. That is, language is seen as a social tool which speakers use to make meaning; speakers communicate about something to someone for some purpose, either orally or in writing.
2. Diversity is recognized and accepted as part of language development and use in second language learners and users as it is with first language users.
3. A learner's competence is considered in relative, not absolute, terms of correctness.
4. More than one variety of a language is recognized as a model for learning and teaching.
5. Culture is seen to play an instrumental role in shaping speakers' communicative competence, both in their first and subsequent languages.
6. No single methodology or fixed set of techniques is prescribed.
7. Language use is recognized as serving the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual functions and is related to the development of learners' competence in each.
8. It is essential that learners be engaged in doing things with language; that is, they should use language for a variety of purposes in all phases of learning. Learner expectations and attitudes have increasingly come to be recognized for their role in advancing or impeding curricular change. (p. 6)

Larsen-Freeman (2000) mentioned two characteristics for CLT. The most obvious characteristic of CLT is that “almost everything is done with a communicative intent” (p. 129). The other characteristic of CLT is that “activities in the communicative approach are often carried out by students in small groups” (p. 129).

Studies Conducted on CLT

Few studies of how well teachers understand and use CLT approaches appear to have been undertaken (Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Savignon & Wang, 2003). Moreover, these studies tend to be small-scale and have been scattered across a number of different contexts. In what follows, the studies done on CLT are reviewed.

Shaw (1992) noted that both non-native and native speakers of a language vary in their knowledge and control of the elements of communicative competence. Some of these elements themselves are universal and available to all speakers of all languages, while others are universal in the sense that they can be used in any language the speaker knows, but are not equally available to all speakers. Other elements are language-specific and have to be learnt anew whenever a new language is acquired, while others again are culture-specific and belong to groups within or across language communities.

A two-phase project undertaken by Mangubhai, Dashwood, Berthold, Flores and Dale (1998) in Australia sought to identify understandings and beliefs about CLT of some 39 language other than English (LOTE) teachers. In the first phase of the study, teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire, an adaptation of one developed by Karavas-Doukas (1996). In the second phase, follow-up interviews were conducted with six of the phase-one respondents to probe further their beliefs about CLT. A conclusion of this research was that

teachers' understandings and beliefs about some key characteristics of CLT differed from those appearing in the literature on CLT.

Li (1998) examined South Korean teachers' perceptions of the implementation of CLT. Eighteen South Korean secondary school English teachers who were studying in the Korean Teacher Education Program at a Canadian university participated in the study. Results revealed that the teachers reported that some of their own problems had stopped them using CLT, that the students caused difficulties, that the educational system in South Korea caused problems, and that CLT itself caused problems.

Lewis and McCook (2002) conducted a study based on which they recorded teachers' attempts to implement CLT in one region of Vietnam. The diary entries were written during an in-service workshop period. The results suggest that teachers were applying to what they had been introduced. The diary entries reveal that teachers do implement new ideas at the same time as incorporating the traditional features valued in their educational systems. They concluded the study utilizing Hird's (1995) summary of "oppositions" between traditional and CLT to summarize the emphases mentioned by the teachers in their study (see Table 4).

Table 4. Vietnamese Teachers' Emphasis on CLT and Traditional Approaches

CLT Approach	Traditional Approach
Fluency	Accuracy
Contextualized language use	Knowledge about language
Oral language	Written language
Understanding	Memorizing
Students active and happy	Students working hard
Pair work and cooperation	Exercises
Student initiative	Teacher control

Chen (2003) examined English as a second language (ESL) undergraduate students' experiences with CLT, supported by in-class tasks and after-class newsgroup discussion. The study presented the students' perceptions of and their feelings about their learning experiences with this teaching approach, as well as the frames of reference within which they performed in an ESL class. With a focus on the students' experiences with socialization in their respective home countries and adjustment to student life at a major Midwestern university in the United States, the research investigated the students' participation over time with respect to class communication. Adopting a naturalist approach, this study captured the communication-related events that are significant to the students and presented these insiders' perspectives. In-depth interviews were employed to explore the students' history in order to obtain a holistic understanding of cultural and personal aspects of their experiences that are related to class communication. The findings reveal the students' communicative styles and further address their coping with second-language acquisition and academic adaptation.

Gatbonton (2005) stated that although most teachers claim to practice CLT, many do not genuinely do so. He examined some of the reasons for teachers' resistance to use CLT. Moreover, a theoretical analysis is also provided that focuses on one of the greatest challenges facing CLT methodology; that is, how to promote automatic fluency within this framework. As such, a CLT methodology designed to meet specific criteria that will enhance learners' fluency, while addressing teachers' commonly held reservations about CLT is proposed. The assumptions and design criteria of the methodology presented can be operationalized for research purposes, allowing CLT to be evaluated in systematic outcome testing.

Contribution of Related Literature to the Present Study

Based on the vast literature review done on the topic, it can be concluded that the little evidence available points to teachers having incomplete and imprecise notions of what Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) entails and to substantial differences within teachers' understandings of CLT and between teachers and researchers. In a similar vein, Karavas-Doukas (1996) concluded the following:

The few small-scale classroom studies that have been carried out seem to suggest that communicative classrooms are rare. While most teachers profess to be following a communicative approach, in practice they are following more traditional approaches. (p.187)

Other researchers came to the same understanding. Thompson (1996) stated that although CLT is accepted by many applied linguistics and teachers as the most effective approach among those in general use, there are still a number of misconceptions about what it involves. This fact was also approved by Savignon (2002) who stated that there are a lot of misunderstandings surrounding the theory and practice of CLT. In another study, Savignon and Wang (2003) stated that there is a mismatch between learner needs and preferences and their reported experience of classroom instruction. Moreover, according to Mangubhai, Marland, Dashwood, and Son (2004) and Mangubhai, Dashwood, Berthold, Flores, and Dale (1998), the evidence is not regarded as substantial enough to allow clear-cut answers to questions about how well teachers' understand and use CLT. Mangubhai, Marland, Dashwood, and Son (2005) claimed that there are many individual variations concerning internalization of the elements of communicative approaches. Finally, Gatbonton (2005) stated that although most teachers claim to practice CLT, many do not genuinely do so. Regarding the studies mentioned above, a comprehensive study is still urgently needed to allow a subsequent assessment of the practicality and effectiveness of CLT principles in the Iranian educational system.

Given the two parts reviewed in the background to the study, and the crucial role teachers may assume in adopting a certain method, the present study set off to find out to what extent Iranian English language teachers are ready to use CLT in their classes and to what extent they practice CLT.

Objectives of the Study

This study investigates the extent to which CLT and its main principles are welcomed by the teachers of high schools and private institutes and the amount they materialize the principles in real practice. The aim of the present study is two-fold. First, it investigates the overall attitude of high school and institute teachers toward the CLT principles. Second, it examines the amount these teachers practice the CLT principles in their classes. Finally, some suggestions are offered on the basis of the findings of the study.

Research Questions

Regarding the purpose of the study and the studies reviewed, the following research questions are posed:

1. What is the overall attitude of public school teachers with respect to the concept of CLT and its principles?

2. What is the overall attitude of private institute teachers with respect to the concept of CLT and its principles?
3. To what extent, are the CLT principles practiced in public institutes?
4. To what extent, are the CLT principles practiced in private institutes?

Method

*Participants*³

The participants of the study were initially 100 English teachers from high schools and institutes located in the Educational District Two in Shiraz on the basis of their availability. The high school teachers (26 males + 24 females) ranged in age from 34 to 53 years with a mean age of 41. Their teaching experience ranged from 11 to 28 years with an average of 17 years. Thirty-eight of them held a B.A. degree and 12 participants held a M.A. in Linguistics, Teaching English, and English Literature. The institute teachers (24 males + 26 females) ranged in age from 24 to 40 years with a mean age of 31. Their teaching experience ranged from 5 to 15 years with an average of 10 years. Twenty of them held a B.A. degree and 30 had a M.A. in Linguistics, Teaching English, and English Literature. Due to practicality factors, from within the 100 participants, only 60 teachers were observed.

Instruments: Questionnaire

A questionnaire including the major principles of communicative language teaching, namely group work, quality and quantity of error correction, the place and importance of grammar, the role and contribution of the learners, and the role of the teacher, served as the instrument of the study. This questionnaire, which was originally developed by Karavas-Doukas (1996), consisted of 24 statements (12 favorable and 12 unfavorable) which followed the Likert scale.

According to Karavas-Doukas (1996), the maximum score that can be obtained in the attitude scale and the one indicative of the most favorable attitude toward the CLT is 120, whereas the minimum score and the one indicating the least favorable attitude is 24. As such, the participants' responses would fall within the range of 24 to 120, the neutral point of the continuum being 72.

³ A special thank you goes to the anonymous participants who willingly cooperated in various stages of this study.

Validity of the Questionnaire

In order to determine the validity of the instrument, in a pilot study, the researchers randomized the 24 items of the questionnaire and distributed them among 104 teachers of high schools and institutes. Having collected the data, the researchers conducted the data analysis to calculate the validity coefficients in terms of factor analysis (see Table 5).

Table 5. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Questionnaire

1	Quality and quantity of error correction (4 statements)
2	Group work/pair work (5 statements)
3	Place/importance of grammar (5 statements)
4	The role of the teacher in the classroom (4 statements)
5	The role and contribution of learners in the learning process (6 statements)

Reliability of the Questionnaire

The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated by Karavas-Doukas (1996) utilizing the split-half method. The correlated split-half reliability coefficient was .81 which is a relatively high and acceptable index. Based on the data gathered for the study, the overall internal consistency of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach alpha (CA). It turned out to be 0.7924 pointed.

Classroom Observation Scheme

After studying several developed observation schemes (Allwright & Baily, 1991; Riazi, Lesourd-Clouston, & Cumming, 1995) and observing a large number of classes, a classroom observation scheme, designed on the basis of literature on CLT, was used to monitor how well teachers practice what they theorize. Following several pilot studies, the major features of CLT made up the observation scheme.

Reliability of observation scheme

To get the reliability of the observation scheme, it was tried to gain both intra-coder and inter-coder reliability for the scheme. For intra-coder reliability, the researchers observed and tape-recorded the same classes with time interval twice and the correlation between the observations and the recordings were computed. To gain inter-coder reliability, then two independent encoders who are sufficiently trained, skilled and familiar with the task accompanied the researchers. The classes were observed by the team of observers independently at the same time and the correlation of marking the activities done in those classes represented the inter-coder reliability. The intra-coder and inter-coder reliability turned out to be .97 and .93 respectively.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection sessions were arranged at times suggested by the high schools and institutes' permission, usually over a nine-month period, beginning with administering the questionnaire followed by the classroom observation of two 90-minute lessons. All participants were encouraged to ask questions so that they did not have any problems with respect to the content and language of the questionnaire. Moreover, the observed principles were discussed with the teachers observed.

The data collected through language teachers' questionnaire were subjected to descriptive statistics utilizing minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation. They were, also, subjected to the independent t-test and One-Way ANOVA as the representation of inferential statistics.

The data gathered by means of observation scheme were analyzed descriptively determining the amount of importance placed on to each principle of the communicative language teaching. A visual representation of the data was displayed through bar graphs. Moreover, the data were analyzed inferentially.

Results and Discussion

In this part the results of the study are presented and discussed. The items of the teachers' questionnaires in the two domains were examined in terms of their percentage so as to see what their general attitude is toward the factors representing the communicative language teaching (CLT) features. To better illustrate the pattern of the respondents' answers to the questionnaires, the first two alternatives (strongly agree and agree) and the last two (disagree and strongly disagree) were combined (see Table 6).

The majority of the public school teachers agree with and appreciate the principles of CLT such as "group work activities are essential" (Item 9), "grammar is as a means not an end" (Item 3), "training learners to take responsibility for their own learning" (Item 5), "the teacher's feedback must be focused on the appropriateness" (Item 10), "the learner-centered approach to language teaching encourages learning" (Item 8) and "errors are a natural part of learning language" (Item 14). However, the majority of the teachers stated that in practice the CLT principles in large classes are impractical if not impossible (Item 11). Overall, regarding the 24 items of the questionnaire, the public school teachers expressed positive attitudes toward the CLT principles with a mean of 81.86 and a standard deviation of 6.74. Since the overall mean is almost one standard deviation and a half above the neutral point (72), it can be concluded that public school teachers have a positive attitude toward CLT. To present a clearer picture of the teacher attitude findings, the items of the questionnaire are categorized and summarized under the 5 principles of CLT (see Table 7).

Table 7 presents the point that the five principles of CLT are appreciated by the teachers of public institutes, a point also seen in Table 6. Table 8 depicts the findings of private institute teacher attitude.

The private institute teachers' viewpoints with respect to the CLT principles were in line with the public school teachers' ideas. The teachers of this domain also favored the five principles of CLT and their subcategories; that is, they welcomed the ideas that "errors are a natural part of language learning," "group work activities are essential and practical," "grammar should be considered as a means not an end," "the teacher should function as a facilitator," and "the learner-centered approach fulfills students' needs."

Since the overall mean is almost one standard deviation and a half above the neutral point (72), it can be concluded that the private institute teachers have a positive attitude

toward CLT with a mean of 82.5 and a standard deviation of 7.15 as well. Table 9 summarizes the items of the questionnaire under the five principles of CLT.

Table 9 shows that the private institute teachers favored the five principles of CLT under the titles of “grammar is a means to language proficiency,” “group work activities are essential,” “errors are natural the same as first language acquisition,” “learners are able to suggest tasks and activities and determine the content,” and “teachers are facilitators.” This information is also shown in the form of a bar graph (see Figure 1).

Table 6. Public School Teacher Attitude in Terms of Frequency (F) and Percentage (P)

Items	SA+A		U		D+SD	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
1. Grammatical correctness is one of the criteria to judge the learner's performance.	18	36%	9	18%	23	46%
2. Group work activities are essential	40	80%	10	10%	-	-
3. Grammar is as a means not an end	47	94%	1	2%	2	4%
4. Learners can suggest the content of the lesson	14	28%	11	22%	25	50%
5. Training learners to take responsibility for their own learning	32	64%	6	12%	12	24%
6. The teachers' feedback must be focused on the appropriateness	31	62%	8	16%	11	22%
7. The teacher is no longer an “authority” and “instructor”	23	46%	15	30%	12	24%
8. The learner-centered approach to LT encourages responsibility	44	88%	2	4%	4	8%
9. Group work allows students to explore problems	30	60%	11	22%	9	18%
10. Errors are a natural part of learning language	28	56%	9	18%	13	26%
11. Organizing the teaching so as to suit the needs of all is impossible in a large class	13	26%	3	6%	34	68%
12. Knowledge of the rules of a language is not sufficient.	38	76%	4	8%	8	16%
13. Group work activities are practical	21	42%	14	28%	15	30%
14. Much correction is wasteful of time	33	66%	4	8%	13	26%
15. CLT learners are fluent and accurate	18	36%	15	30%	17	34%
16. The teacher has many different roles while teaching	36	72%	8	16%	6	12%
17. Mastering the rules of grammar is not enough	38	76%	5	10%	7	14%
18. Language is effective as a vehicle for doing something	38	76%	10	20%	2	4%
19. Activities such as explanations, writing and examples are not the only role of the teachers	21	42%	11	22%	18	36%
20. Tasks and activities should be based on the students' needs	46	92%	2	4%	2	4%
21. Small group work can replace whole class and formal instruction	11	22%	18	36%	21	42%
22. Through group work the teacher can monitor the students' performance	19	38%	13	26%	18	36%
23. To communicate effectively, direct instruction in the rules and terminology of grammar is NOT essential	22	44%	12	24%	16	32%

Items	SA+A		U		D+SD	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
24. The teacher must supplement the textbook with other materials and tasks	42	84%	4	8%	4	8%

Table 7. Public School Teacher Attitude Regarding the Five Principles of CLT

Principles	SA+A		U		D+SD	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
1. Grammar role (Items 1, 3, 12, 17 & 23)	42	84%	8	16%	-	-
2. Group work task and activities (Items 2,9, 13, 21 & 22)	35	70%	13	26%	2	4%
3. Error correction (Items 6,10, 14 & 15)	32	64%	18	36%	-	-
4. Learner role (Items 4, 5, 8, 11, 18 & 20)	33	68%	16	32%	-	-
5. Teacher role (Items 7, 16, 19 & 24)	39	78%	10	20%	1	2%

Table 8. Private Institute Teacher Attitude in Terms F and P

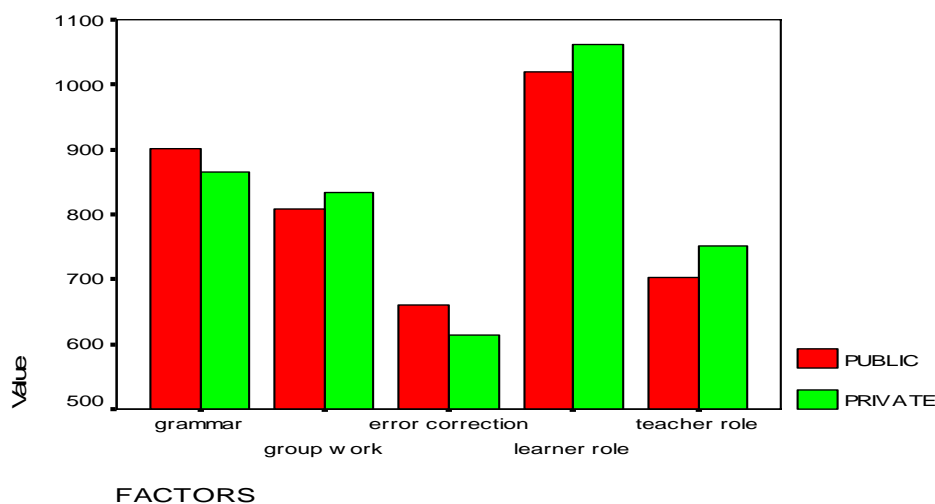
Items	SA+A		U		D+SD	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
1. Grammatical correctness is one of the criteria to judge the learner's performance.	34	68%	3	6%	13	26%
2. Group work activities are essential	48	96%	2	4%	-	-
3. Grammar is as a means not an end	49	98%	1	2%	-	-
4. Learners can suggest the content of the lesson	28	56%	8	16%	14	28%
5. Training learners to take responsibility for their own learning	23	46%	1	2%	26	52%
6. The teachers' feedback must be focused on the appropriateness	34	68%	7	14%	9	18%
7. The teacher is no longer an "authority" and "instructor"	42	84%	1	2%	7	14%
8. The learner-centered approach to LT encourages responsibility	47	94%	1	2%	2	4%
9. Group work allows students to explore problems	36	72%	6	12%	8	16%
10. Errors are a natural part of learning language	20	40%	2	4%	28	56%
11. Organizing the teaching so as to suit the needs of all is impossible in a large class	16	32%	9	18%	25	50%
12. Knowledge of the rules of a language is not sufficient.	49	98%	-	-	1	2%
13. Group work activities are practical	22	44%	5	10%	23	46%
14. Much correction is wasteful of time	34	68%	5	10%	11	22%
15. CLT learners are fluent and accurate	14	28%	17	34%	19	38%
16. The teacher has many different roles while teaching	44	88%	6	12%	-	-
17. Mastering the rules of grammar is not enough	19	38%	2	4%	29	58%
18. Language is effective as a vehicle for doing something	39	78%	10	20%	1	2%
19. Activities such as explanations, writing and examples are not the only role of the teachers	18	36%	5	10%	27	54%
20. Tasks and activities should be based on the students' needs	46	92%	2	4%	2	4%
21. Small group work can replace formal instruction	26	52%	8	16%	16	32%
22. Through group work the teacher can monitor the students' performance	25	50%	5	10%	20	40%
23. To communicate effectively, direct instruction in the rules and terminology of grammar is NOT essential	21	42%	12	24%	17	34%

Items	SA+A		U		D+SD	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
24. The teacher must supplement the textbook with other materials and tasks	49	98%	-	-	1	2%

Table 9. Private Institute Teacher Attitude Regarding the Five Principles of CLT

Principles	SA+A		U		D+SD	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
1. Grammar role (Items 1, 3, 12, 17 & 23)	38	76%	12	24%	-	-
2. Group work task and activities (Items 2, 9, 13, 21 & 22)	33	66%	17	34%	-	-
3. Error correction (items 6,10, 14 & 15)	26	52%	24	48%	-	-
4. Learner role (items 4, 5, 8, 11, 18 & 20)	40	80%	10	20%	-	-
5. Teacher role (items 7, 16, 19 & 24)	42	84%	8	16%	-	-

Figure 1. Public and Private Teacher Attitudes⁴



As the figure presents, the public school and private institute teacher attitudes toward the five factors representing the CLT principles are similar, if not identical. Therefore, they do not vary significantly. To find out whether the difference between the two domains in terms of teacher attitude is significant or not an independent t-test was run. The results showed that this difference is not statistically significant (see Table 10).

Therefore, it can be concluded that regarding teacher attitude toward CLT, teachers in both domains had a positive attitude toward its principles. In order to find out whether the differences among the means of the five factors of the questionnaire for the participants of each domain are significant or not, a one-way ANOVA was run (see Table 11). Wherever the differences were significant, a Scheffé test was used to show where the differences were. Table 11 demonstrates that there are significant differences among the means of factors for the public school teachers. The Scheffé' test shows where the differences are (Table 12). Similar results were obtained for the private institute teachers (see Table 13). As Table 12

⁴ Factors represent the five factors of the questionnaire and value indicates the amount each factor is practiced

indicates, there is a significant difference among the five principles of CLT regarding the teachers' attitudes. The Scheffe' test shows the exact differences (Table 14).

Table 10. Independent T-Test for the Domain Variable

Domain	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Public	50	66	94	81.86	6.740	.460	.646
Private	50	66	99	82.50	7.157		

Table 11. One-Way ANOVA for the Public School Teacher Attitude

Source of Variance	D. F.	SS	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4	1727.184	431.796	62.85	.000*
Within Groups	245	1683.220	6.870		
Total	249	3410.404			

* $p < .05$

Table 12. Scheffé Test for Table 11

Principles	GR	GW	EC	LR	TR
GR		*	*	*	*
GW	*		*	*	*
EC	*	*		*	*
LR	*	*	*		*
TR	*	*	*	*	

Table 13. One-Way ANOVA for the Private Institute Teacher Attitude

Source of Variance	D. F.	SS	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4	2138.720	534.680	91.11	.000*
Within Groups	245	1437.780	5.868		
Total	249	3576.500			

* $p < .05$

Table 14. Scheffé Test for Table 13

Principles	GR	GW	EC	LR	TR
GR			*	*	*
GW			*	*	*
EC	*	*		*	*
LR	*	*	*		*
TR	*	*	*	*	

Findings of the Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were first subjected to descriptive statistics utilizing frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Second, a visual representation of the data is presented through the bar graph. Moreover, the results were analyzed inferentially using an independent t-test. To better illustrate the pattern of the different principles in observed domains, the first two alternatives (very much and much) and the last two (a little and very little) were combined. Table 15 presents the amount of importance attached to the features of CLT in public domain. Expressed differently, Table 15 presents the fact that in real practice, the public domain teachers attached the least amount of importance to the representative tenets of CLT; that is, “the target language is not used as the medium of communication,” “error correction is done directly and on the spot,” “the use of idioms, authentic sources and oral skills is the least,” and “grammar is taught systematically and in details.” This result is in total contrast with the public domain teachers’ ideas regarding the CLT principles. There might be two possibilities for such contradictory results. Either the teachers do not practice what they claim or they have some limitations to substantiate their viewpoints in real practice. Table 16 shows to what extent the CLT features are practiced by the teachers in the private domain.

Private domain teachers materialize a large number of CLT factors namely Items 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 10, 13, and 15 to a great extent. Except for the last factor (components of CC), the teachers apply the rest of the factors moderately. This indicates that there is a moderate harmony between what private institute teachers claim and what they really practice. In other words, the results of the observation present that private domain teachers try to substantiate their attitudes (see Table 17).

Table 15. Descriptive Statistics for the Observation of Public schools

Items	VM+M		A		AI+L	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
1. Focus on language as a medium of communication	-	-	-	-	30	100%-
2. Classroom activities maximizing communication opportunities	-	-	-	-	30	100%-
3. More pupil-oriented	-	-	1	3.3%	29	96.7%
4. Tolerating error correction	-	-	-	-	30	100%-
5. Rehearsal of real-life situations and for real-life communication	-	-	-	-	30	100%-
6. More emphasis pair-work and group-work.	-	-	3	10%	27	90%
7. Emphasis on both oral skills & written skills	-	-	2	6.7%	28	93.3%
8. Teaching grammar but less systematically	-	-	-	-	30	100%-
9. Use of idiomatic/everyday language	-	-	-	-	30	100%-
10. Use of authentic resources	-	-	-	-	30	100%-
11. Emphasis on Inferential questions	-	-	1	3.3%	29	96.7%
12. Emphasis on meaning	-	-	-	-	30	100%-
13. Use of variety of language structure	-	-	-	-	30	100%-
14. Emphasis on both fluency and accuracy	-	-	2	6.7%	28	93.3%
15. The teacher as the facilitator	-	-	4	13.3%	26	86.7%
16. Focus on all the components of CC (G, D, S, S)	-	-	-	-	30	100%-

Table 16. Descriptive Statistics for the Observation of Private Institutes

Items	VM+M		A		AI+L	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
1. Focus on language as a medium of communication	29	96.7%	1	3.3%	-	-
2. Classroom activities maximizing communication opportunities	28	93.3%	1	3.3%	1	3.3%
3. More pupil-oriented	29	96.7%	-	-	1	3.3%
4. Tolerating error correction	10	33.3%	19	63.3%	1	3.3%
5. Rehearsal of real-life situations and for real-life communication	28	93.3%	2	6.7%	-	-
6. More emphasis pair-work and group-work.	10	33.3%	15	50%	5	16.7%
7. Emphasis on both oral skills & written skills	28	93.3%	2	6.7%	-	-
8. Teaching grammar but less systematically	7	23.3	21	70%	2	6.7%
9. Use of idiomatic/everyday language	10	33.3%	18	60%	2	6.7%
10. Use of authentic resources	30	100%	-	-	-	-
11. Emphasis on Inferential questions	10	33.3%	17	56.7%	3	10%
12. Emphasis on meaning	12	40%	17	56.7%	1	3.3%
13. Use of variety of language structure	24	80%	3	10%	3	3%
14. Emphasis on both fluency and accuracy	28	93.3%	1	3.3%	1	3.3%
15. The teacher as the facilitator	20	66.7%	9	30%	1	3.3%
16. Focus on all the components of CC ⁵ (G, D, S, S)	-	-	2	6.7%	28	93.3%

Table 17. Basic Descriptive Statistics for the Observation of CLT Principles in Public Schools and Private Institutes

Domain	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Public	30	23	44	34.23	5.02
Private	30	41	65	58.26	4.448

Since the overall mean of observing the CLT principles in public schools is 2.75 standard deviations below the neutral point (48), it can be concluded that the teachers do not practice CLT in this domain. However, since the overall mean of the observation is 2.30 standard deviations above the neutral point (48), it can be concluded that the private school teachers practice CLT to a great extent. To show whether the difference between the two domains is significant, inferential statistics was run. Table 18 contrasts the results of the two domains inferentially utilizing an independent t-test.

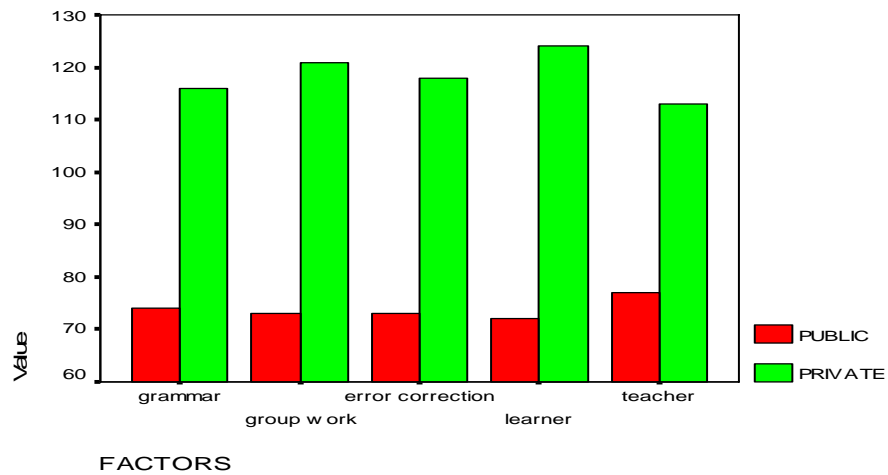
Table 18. Independent T-Test for the Observation of the Domains

Domain	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Public	30	34.23	5.028	19.58	.000
Private	30	58.26	4.448		

As displayed in Table 18, the significance computed is 0.000 which is much smaller than 0.05 (the significance level). There is a statistically significant and meaningful difference between the two groups regarding the observed principles of CLT. Figure 2 also indicates the same findings.

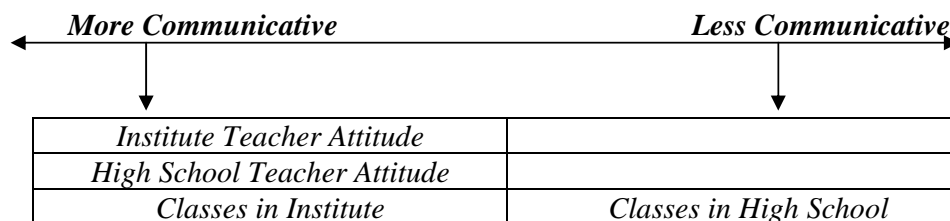
⁵ (CC: Communicative competence); (G: Grammatical); (D: Discourse); (S: sociolinguistic); (S: Strategic)

Figure 2. Public and Private Teacher Observation



As the chart depicts, there is little emphasis on the CLT principles, whereas the teachers in the private domain materialize the CLT tenets to a great extent. The same as the teachers' questionnaire, the principles included in the classroom observation were evaluated to determine the extent to which they are favorable. The overall findings indicate that Iranian English teachers have a positive attitude toward CLT. As such, it seems that the teachers strongly favor the use of CLT principles in their classes. However, only the institutes' teachers partially apply the CLT principles. Moreover, the findings of some studies done in Iran are in line with the results of the present research (Bagheri, 1994; Moradi, 1996; Rahimi, 1996; Rashidi, 1995; Saadat, 1995; Yarmohammadi, 2000; Zanganeh, 1995); that is, the teachers in Iran do believe that classroom practices are not necessarily a reflection of teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. Theory and practice are often at odds for a number of reasons (Savignon, 2002). Teachers may encounter resistance on the part of their students, school principals and the educational system. Therefore, the Iranian teachers need to modernize, not Westernize, English teaching. The results and findings of this section can be summed up in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The Amount of Representing Communicative Principles in High Schools and Institutes



Conclusion

The present study intended to investigate what the English teachers' attitudes toward Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are and to what extent the teachers implement CLT in a prominent province of Iran, i.e., Fars province.

Based on the results of the present study, it can be concluded that the public school teachers have a positive attitude toward CLT. These results are not consistent with the common sense view that the public school teachers might not view CLT positively in EFL contexts, including Iran. The private institute teachers' viewpoints with respect to the CLT principles are in line with the public school teachers' ideas; that is, the teachers of this domain also favor and welcome the five principles of CLT and their subcategories. The results of the study indicate the fact that in real practice, the public domain teachers attach the least amount of importance to the tenets representing CLT; that is, "the target language is not used as the medium of communication," "error correction is done directly and on the spot," "the use of idioms, authentic sources and oral skills is the least," and "grammar is taught systematically and in details." This result is in total contrast with the public domain teachers' ideas regarding the CLT principles. Moreover, the teachers provide a number of justifications for not practicing CLT principles in their classes despite the fact that they do believe in the principles. Private domain teachers materialize a large number of CLT principles to a great extent. This is an indicator that there is a moderate harmony between what private institute teachers claim and what they really practice. In other words, the results of the observation show that the private domain teachers try to substantiate their attitudes while teaching English in their classes.

While the present study focused on English teachers in Iran, a prototype example of the expanding circle, much of what the Iranian teachers said about communicative and non-communicative activities in the Iranian classrooms and about their difficulties in using communicative activities is common to many parts of the world. EFL teachers and students in these countries share much of the same perception with regard to their classroom teaching activities. In addition, information from this kind of study is also crucial for teachers to develop their teaching methods based on their students needs.

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Seyyed Ayatollah Razmjoo is Assistant Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics at Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran. He received his BA, MA and PhD from Shiraz University under the supervision of Professor A. Mehdi Riazi. In 2005, he was selected as the best student of Shiraz University by faculty members. His areas of interest are Testing, Research, and Teaching Methodology. He has taught courses related to the same fields to English students.

Email: arazmj@rose.shirazu.ac.ir

Abdol-Mehdi Riazi received his Ph.D. in TESL from OISE/University of Toronto in 1995. Currently he is Associate Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics of Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran, where he teaches courses at BA, MA, and PhD levels. His areas of interest include Testing, Research Methods, Teaching Methodology, Writing, Translation and Text analysis. He is a writer and translator.

Email: ariazi@shirazu.ac.ir