

A Case Study of Iranian EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Communicative Language Teaching Approach

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Abstract:

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is advocated by many applied linguists as one of the effective approaches to English Language Teaching. In recent years CLT has expanded beyond English as Second Language (ESL) contexts to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and EFL countries have shown an increasing interest in teaching of English by using of Western methodologies such as communicative language teaching (CLT) which represents a change of focus in language teaching from linguistic structure to learners' need for developing communication skills. While the principles and theories of CLT may be well documented, perceptions and attitudes about the theory are not consistent. Therefore, it was vital to survey the perceptions and expectations of teachers. This paper focuses on Iranian English teachers' perspectives on CLT—how they define it, whether or not they use it, and what they see as its strengths and weaknesses in regards to EFL in Iran. The participants in this study are 10 Iranian EFL teachers. The main instruments used to elicit data for the study was in depth interview. The results of this study indicated that Iranian EFL teachers hold favourable perceptions toward principles of CLT and are well aware of the basic principles of Communicative Language Teaching. The findings of this study are significantly different from previous related research where it was found that EFL teachers mainly pursued traditional practices and have unfavourable perceptions of Communicative Language Teaching approach.

Key words: Iranian teachers, perception, case study, EFL.

Introduction and background of the study

The current educational system of Iran involves 4 levels: primary school, junior high school, high school, and pre-university. In this framework, pupils attend to primary school at the age of seven for five years. The primary school program includes different subjects such as Persian language, elementary science and elementary social sciences but English is not taught in Iranian primary schools. After 5 years at primary level students proceed to junior high. In this level English is taught for three hours per week as one of the key subjects. Students proceed to high school for another three years after finishing junior high school and study English two hours a week. Reading comprehension is the most important part of high school textbooks (Birjandi et al. 2000, 2002a, 2002b). Studying in pre-university level takes one year and English is taught four hours a week. The pre-university English textbook is designed on the basis of meaning and structure while other levels focus on structure and form rather than meaning (Dahmardeh 2009).

Many researchers found (Dahmardeh 2006; Yarmohammadi 2000; Bagheri 1994; Moradi 1996; Rahimi 1996; Rashidi 1995; Saadat 1995; Zanganeh 1995) Communicative skills have been neglected in the educational system since in countries such as Iran the focus is on achievement and teachers have to prepare students for grammar based exams. Many factors affect the weaknesses in the use of English language even after studying 7 years at public school. Dahmardeh (2009) explains, source of weaknesses as follows:

(i)Language competence of Iranian language teachers: Unfortunately most Iranian teachers are not qualified enough to implement Communicative Language Teaching approach in their classes effectively. They need in service training sessions to adopt themselves to the requirements of the new curriculum.

(ii)The time available for language teaching within the

school year: Time limitation for the English subject at school is one of the most important constraints in designing the curriculum. Dahmardeh (2009) believes the available time for language teaching in Iran in comparison with other countries is very short.

(iii) Availability of resources: In most schools in Iran there are 30-35 students in each class and in this situation providing enough communicative materials in the classroom seems very difficult.

(iv) Lack of pupils' interest: one of the most popular reasons for lack of motivation in students is because the textbooks as well as the syllabus were both structure based, learners do not recognise the needs of language use outside the classroom. In addition, they look at language as an academic subject rather than as skills based and being helpful for their future. (Dahmardah 2009, 197).

All these difficulties in public schools lead language learners attend to the private institutes to improve their command of English proficiency (Riazi and Razmjoo 2006). The Iran-America society was the first formal English language institute which was established in 1925. (Farzin-nia 1964). After the Islamic Revolution of 1977 the name of the institute was changed to the Iran Language Institute (ILI) and it underwent some changes in terms of management, objectives, and curriculum. Gradually, due to the importance of foreign language instruction and deficiency of EFL instruction in Iranian public schools, many institutes were established all over the country which use different textbooks for different age groups. The most popular textbooks for teaching English for children are Tiny Talk, New Parade and Get Ready. On the other hand, "Let's Go" and "Chatterbox" are very common books for teenagers. Different institutes offer different courses for Adolescents and Adults such as Cutting edge, New Interchange, New Headways, American Headways, Spectrum, New American Streamline, IELTS textbooks and TOFEL Textbooks

(Riazi et al. 2006). Iranian private Institutes' instructions are based on 21 sessions lasting one and a half months. Language learners who are interested to improve their command of English efficiency in institute must sit for a placement test. Students are put into appropriate levels according to the results of the placement test and their achievement in class is evaluated based on midterm, final exam, and class activities. Thus, according to the principals in private institute Riazi et al (2006) found private institutes in Iran focus on CLT rather than public schools.

Statement of the Problem

Dahmardah (2006) claims that Iranian ELT programme is based on reading, grammar and to some extent writing and vocabulary. So listening and speaking are neglected in Iranian ELT programme at school. He concluded that the ELT programme in Iran is teacher centred and students are quite passive in the learning process. Despite this, most Iranians are interested in learning English for a number of reasons. Firstly, the latest technological and scientific resources are mostly written in English. Secondly, use of internet makes learning English necessary. Thirdly, differences in cultural conventions can lead to difficulties in the communication among people with different cultural backgrounds. As differences can cause misunderstanding, unsatisfactory interaction and even unpleasant physical reactions (Zhang 2010), mastery of English is necessary for cultural exchange.

The introduction of a new approach such as CLT entails paradigm shift for all stakeholders especially teachers (Defeng 1998). In other words paradigm shifts means a change in perception. If teachers are interested in adopting an approach, they will support its implementation and if not, they will be resistant to the change in perception required to implement the approach (Careless 1999). In addition, some researchers (Van

der Walt 1990, Harmer 1995 and Holiday 1997) believe young teachers are better able to adjust their perceptions to make the paradigm shift while, teachers who are accustomed to traditional methods cannot adjust themselves easily as the Communicative Approach has changed teachers' role from being authoritarians to being facilitators. In this regards, young teachers in private institutes of Iran that apply communicative language teaching as the approach of teaching are more appropriate for this study in compare with the teachers of public schools that use traditional methods for teaching.

Up to now little research has been done on the impact of teachers' perceptions on the effective implementation of Communicative Approach in EFL setting such as Iran. This study specifically seeks to investigate the Iranian teachers' perceptions toward CLT.

Literature Review

In Asia many research has been conducted to review teachers' perceptions regarding CLT (Li 1998; Liao 2003, 2004; Nishino 2008, 2009; Hiep 2007; Ha 2004; Sakui 2004; Shaver 2010). One of the earlier studies on teachers' perceptions regarding CLT was carried out by Karavas-Doukas (1995, 1996). The results show that the teachers held favourable perceptions towards the approach. Richardson (1996) conducted a research on the relationship between Australian teachers' perceptions and their practice in the classroom and observed five aspects of CLT namely group work, error correction, role of grammar, teacher role, and learner role. He concluded that teachers in Australia had a positive perception towards these five factors relating to CLT. Similarly, Razmjoo and Riazi (2006) investigated high school teachers' perceptions of CLT in Iran. They found that most of Iranian teachers in high school had positive perceptions of CLT and its principles.

In Bangladesh, Karim's (2004) found the majority of university level teachers held positive perceptions of CLT and were aware of the principles of CLT. These teachers' perceptions towards CLT were reflected in their practice in the classroom (Karim 2004). Hawkey's (2006) research on Italian teachers' perceptions towards the advantages of the CLT shows that Italian teachers held strong positive perceptions of CLT. In addition, Italian teachers held positive strong perceptions towards pair-work activities to meet the learners' communicative needs (Hawkey 2006). In China, Liao (2003) probed teachers' perceptions toward CLT. The result showed that the majority of Chinese teachers were in favour of implementing CLT and had strong and positive perceptions toward CLT. This result is similar to the findings of studies conducted in Taiwan. In Taiwan, Chang (2009) studied high school teachers' perceptions of CLT and their practice in the classroom. He found Taiwanese teachers apply CLT with favour and had a tendency to use more communicative tasks in their classroom. In Japan Sakui (2004) and Nishino (2008) found that Japanese teachers had positive perceptions and were willing to incorporate and use CLT in their teaching practices, although both studies found some challenges in applied CLT due to the impact of grammar-based entrance examinations and large classes.

These studies show that Asian teachers were generally positive about the implementation of CLT and it appears that Asian teachers are motivated to apply CLT in the classrooms. In the review of related research, it is also seen that the perceptions of teachers shape teachers' instructional practice. In other words, Borg (2003) believes that teachers' perceptions provide a basis for action. Before the 1980s, many studies indicated that student learning is shaped by teachers' instructional practice (Fang 1996; Eick and Reed 2001). Many researchers have investigated teachers' perceptions towards teaching and learning (Goodman 1988; Pajares 1992; Fang

1996; Richardson 1996; Cooney et al. 1998; Eick and Reed 2001; Hart, 2002; Wilson and Cooney 2002; Agee 2004; Rex and Nelson 2004; Lasky 2005; Enyedy et al. 2006). It was found by the researchers that the instructional practice of teachers can be predictable because there was consistency between perceptions and instructional practice.

Richardson (1996, 1994) observed that "perceptions influence teaching practice more directly than knowledge and in order to understand how teachers make sense of teaching and learning, one should focus on teachers' perceptions and practices" (496). Burns (1992) found that the teachers' perception about school programs, language, learners, learning, specific tasks and materials shape their practices. He concluded that the unconscious and implicit perceptions are foundational in classroom practices. In his view, perceptions "activate and shape the patterns of classroom interaction, roles and relationship and, therefore, to create for learners particular kinds of opportunities for learning" (175). Woods (1996) also deduced that the teachers' perceptions of teaching and learning exerted influence on their behaviors, strategies and decisions. Smith (1996) also revealed an internal consistency between perceptions and practices.

There is substantial evidence that show teachers' decisions are influenced by their perceptions (Deemer 2004; Fang 1996; Farrell and Lim 2005). In this regard, some have been conducted studies on the relationship between pre-service teachers' perceptions, their instructional practice and whether a teacher education program is able to change the perceptions of pre-service teachers for the better (Eisenhart et al. 1988; Calderhead and Robson 1991; Bednar 1993; Cooney et al. 1998; Skamp and Mueller 2001; Bryan 2003). For instance, Levin and He (2008) found that 35% of teachers' perceptions are caused by their family background and their learning experience while 65% of their perceptions are caused by their education program. Similarly, Horwitz (1985) also argued that

during methodology courses pre-service teachers may develop some of their perceptions. In addition, Farrell (2009) found that the teacher-education program had some impact on participants' perceptions towards teaching. Tanase and Wang (2010) discovered that it is possible to change the perceptions of pre-service teachers in a relatively short period of methodology courses before graduating. Inconsistent with Tanase and Wang (2010), Okazaki (1996) also identified changes in pre-service teachers Japanese teachers' perceptions of CLT after taking the methodology courses for a year. Hence, many researchers recommend that Pre-service teachers training programs should be designed in a way that develop teachers' positive perceptions about the use of innovative methods and help them improve their actual use in the classroom (Abrami et al. 2004; Chen and Squires 2007; Kennedy 1996; Li 1998; Sugiyama 2003).

Research Methodology

Since the aim of the study is to assess teachers' understandings of the Communicative Language Teaching, the qualitative methodology examines the case of ten Iranian teachers' perceptions of CLT and their challenges with the help of in depth interview which took approximately half an hour.

Case Study

According to Cresswell (1998) one of the most important types of ethnography is case study. From the perspective of Zainal (2007) case studies have different preferences for example they present data of real-life situations and they provide better insights into the detailed behaviours of the subjects of interest. A case study is particularly good for examining "why" as well as "how" and "what" questions (among question series: "who", "what", "where", "how" and "why"), which are enquiries about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control (Yin 2003, Saunders et al. 2007). Especially,

the “how” question is suitable for a case study because this question deals with operational links needed to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence (Yin 2003). Looking back at the Research Questions in this study, “how” and “what” questions dominant. Questions are appropriate to the case study. Based on the research questions, the study adopted a Descriptive Case Study. A descriptive case study can illuminate “an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred” (Yin 2003). For this study, through participants’ experiences, the researcher gained insights into the implementation of Communication Language Teaching in the EFL environment. Therefore, a case study provides a descriptive approach so the researcher gains in-depth understanding of implementing CLT in the EFL context. Since a case study allows for a detailed examination of the teachers’ perceptions towards CLT through their interviews, ethnography case study is used to address the Research Questions. In this study, ethnographic researcher through discourse analysis looks for Iranian EFL teachers perceptions of CLT.

Semi-structured Interview

In ethnography, interviews tend to be relatively long (around one hour) to delve deeply into issues as they arise (Denscombe 2007) also the researcher and the subject are fully interactive (Mishra, 2005). This kind of interview allows the researcher to guide the subject in moving towards non- theoretical descriptions that reflect the experience (Polkinghorne 1989). An in depth interview usually starts with a social conversation to make the atmosphere relaxing and trusting (Moustakas 1994) and comprises a list of semi-structured and pre-formulated questions, on the other side, answers are open-ended, expansive and enhanced by probes (Smith et al. 2009).

Using interview approach has got different preferences. Firstly, it has a long and successful tradition in teacher

thinking during two decades (Connelly and Clandinin 1988; Elbaz 1983). The interview in this study provides the opportunities and time for teachers to explain the bases for their teaching approaches in detail. In addition, there are no constraints of a set schedule for invariant questions. The voice of teachers in this approach is rather than researchers. (Elbaz 1991). Since interview allows for adaptability in questioning, it is a very personal way of gathering information. So, the interview data were useful in gaining deeper insights regarding the use of CLT in the Iranian context.

The participants at times volunteered more information than they were asked. In some cases, the participants were asked questions to clarify what they said. Clarification stopped when the participants replied affirmatively confirming that I understood what they had said. I manually transcribed the tapes produced by these sessions. Pseudonyms were chosen by a few of the participants to protect their identities.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a complicated process used to try and make sense of the data. It involves “consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read” (Merriam 1998). Bogdan and Biklen (1982) defined data analysis as the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others. Analysis involves working with data, organizing them, breaking them into meaningful units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others. (145). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) pointed out that “data analysis is the process of organizing and sorting data in light of increasingly sophisticated judgments and

interpretations” (130). The purpose of data analysis is to locate crucial meanings, patterns, and themes within what the researcher has heard and observed. Discourse analysis has been chosen for analysis the interview transcription.

When quotes from the participants were used, they were presented as given except that a hesitation in speech like “umm,” was removed for the sake of readability. In some cases, changes in verb tense were made and some appropriate noun subjects were inserted in correct places if the quote was started in mid sentence and the subject was already mentioned. All of the quotes were checked with the participants and approved by them prior to being included in next section to ensure their accuracy.

Findings of the Study

When interview responded were asked about their perceptions towards CLT, all of them expressed that they had a positive perceptions towards CLT in general. The major themes of the interview are shown in table 1. The theme of “negative perception” is underlined and ‘**positive perception**’ is in bold letters.

Case study 1: (HKH)

SN: What is your attitude towards CLT?

*HKH: you know CLT is **one of the easiest methods**, one of the easiest methods that let the students to decide easier it helps the students to provide a better situation, it helps the students to communicate, it helps the students to define themselves easier*

SN: what about teachers is it an easier method about teachers too?

HKH: I actually haven't had the experiences of the other methods. I myself have started by CLT and have continued it. so I can not tell you which method is easier for me but this is the

*method **which I really love which I really am recommend of it is really simple for me to apply.***

HKH has a positive perception towards CLT. He describes his perceptions towards CLT as “one of the easiest methods”, “I really love it”, “I really am recommended of it” and “it is really simple for me to apply”. He also believes that students like CLT very much as he stated “it is the easiest methods that let the students decide easier”, “helps the students to provide a better situation” “it helps the students to communicate” and “helps the students to define themselves easier”. Moreover, he expresses the reasons why students prefer CLT in comparison with other methods. Here I asked HKH how students like CLT activities. In the following extract the reasons that state students’ positive perceptions towards CLT are in bold letters and underlined.

SN; *In your opinion how do students like CLT activities?*

HKH; *actually the students **like it** very much as you know the reason that the students like it very much is they cannot express their own idea they can express their own idea they can express their feeling they can communicate easier that the other methods as you know in the other methods they just repeat one special forms and this remains in their mind but in the CLT they have the method they have the communication skills so they can apply for themselves easier.*

From the perspective of HKH, students like CLT because of different preferences such as expressing their ideas and feelings and communicating much better than the other methods because in the other methods students have to repeat, repeat and repeat. In addition, since most of the students in Iran want to migrate to other countries to continue their education, they need a kind of language learning method which helps them to improve their communicative skills.

In addition according to his answer to the open ended questions where I had asked him to explain his most important beliefs about CLT and language teaching and learning that guides him in his day to day teaching, he explained his responses as follows:

“CLT is definitely very useful and in my opinion fluency plays a more important role than accuracy so I try to get more fluency through my approaches. I don't teach grammar mechanically”. (HKH, July 11, 2011).

The quote above shows that Hamed is completely aware of the aims and features of CLT as he states “fluency plays a more important role than accuracy’ and “I don't teach grammar mechanically”. Though, he tries to use these principles in his classes. Since, one of the most important factors that teachers should take into account in implementing CLT is teaching grammar inductively, I asked Hamed to explain how he teaches grammar in his classes. Below are extracts from Hamed's grammar teaching that exemplify the inductive method of teaching grammar.

Case Study 2: (NZ)

SN:*What is your attitude towards CLT?*

NZ:***Till now it has been the best method for teaching English***

SN:*If you have tried CLT, how did you like using it in your classroom?*

NZ:***Every part of CLT is useful** games, crosswords, reading and so on*

NZ: as the second case study describes a positive perception towards CLT as “Till now CLT has been the best methods for teaching English” and “Every parts of CLT is useful”. She also feels that Iranian' students like CLT and benefit from it.

SN:*In your opinion how do students like CLT activities?*

NZ: *According to my experience nowadays its better and **they like** it more in compare with past because in past if you asked students to play a game in the class they consider they are wasting their time and adults couldn't accept it but now it is better and they like it more.*

SN: *Do you feel that students in Iran would benefit from CLT?*

NZ: *yes, according to their improvement from basic levels to advance levels we can say **they benefit from CLT***

The above extract shows students in past were not familiar with communicative classes because they had experienced ALM and GTM at schools and the CLT activities such as playing games were strange for them and they could not accept to play game in the class but gradually became aware of CLT and it's advantages. In addition, Nasrin's transcript of her interview shows that she utilises CLT principles even in teaching grammatical structure in her classes. She encourages students to discover grammatical rules themselves instead of teaching rules directly because in her views if students discover the structure, they will not forget it easily. Below are Extracts from Nasrin's lessons that exemplify the inductive method of teaching grammar in her classes.

Case Study 3: (HM)

SN: *Please state what you know about CLT? and what is your attitude towards CLT?*

HM: ***I think it's good method for teaching** English because it tries to teach a learner to communicate in real situation it tries to create a real situation for the learners.*

HM expresses her perceptions towards CLT as "I think it's good method for teaching" (HM, line 82). The quote illustrates HM's satisfaction about using CLT as the method of teaching in her classes because it is based on communication in real situation.

She added that this method is interesting, enjoyable and beneficial for students.

SN: *and in your opinion how do students like CLT activities?*

HM: *I think **students enjoy it**, students enjoy it because when for example they play game aha they forget that they learning English so they think that they play game, so they forget learning and this causes ok **they become relaxed they forget their shyness***

SN; *Ehm exactly?*

HM: *They forget their shyness and because of this they motivated **they become motivated and they learn better** they learn better*

SN; *Do you feel that students in Iran would benefit from CLT?*

HM: *yes of course of course*

HM feels CLT activities such as games are very enjoyable for students and when students learn English by games, they forget their shyness and became active and motivated. Thus, they learn better in this situation. From another point of view as many linguists and language teachers believe that pedagogic grammar is an important aspect of second language acquisition (SLA) I was interested in enquiring whether HM teaches grammar directly or indirectly. Extract HB5 shows how she teaches grammar in the classroom.

Case Study 4: (SF)

N: *What is your attitude towards CLT?*

SF: *I think **it is the best methods of ever**, actually I experienced, **it's much better than the old methods**, the old I don't know activities the books downs now the audio-lingual things **now I feel well when I am working on this method.***

The above extract illustrates has a positive attitude towards using CLT as the method of teaching. She expresses her perceptions towards CLT as “it is the best methods of ever”, “it’s much better than the old methods” and “now I feel well when I am working on this method. In Extract SF4 she reveals her feeling about students’ perceptions towards CLT.

SN: *In your opinion how do students like CLT activities?*

SF: *Actually it’s now much better than the past, nowadays because **students are educated so they try to cooperate with** you in the class so they want you bring the games they **don’t make fun of the games they don’t make fun of the activities you are giving them** but in the past it was not like that I remember I myself had a student I brought them a game they had to go out of the class I don’t know they had to do some activities and my students actually stuck on the chairs and said, I don’t come I am not a child to play a game, they are still some students who think they’re games and they’re funny but now **students are much better now they’re getting to know that what you are doing is helping them to learn English better.***

SN: *generally you think they like it or no?*

SF: *yes, **generally they like it** the only old people who they get used to old methods they maybe a little you know oppose the feel but they may like it after try.*

The themes show that SF has a positive perception towards using CLT as the method of teaching. She expresses her perceptions towards CLT as “it is the best methods of ever”, “it’s much better than the old methods” and “now I feel well when I am working on this method. In Extract SF4 she reveals her feeling about students’ perceptions towards CLT activities.

The example stated by SF reveals that students’ negative perceptions towards CLT activities such as games in the past as “I am not a child to play game” and “they are funny” but in her opinion, nowadays students like CLT activities and

they are aware of the advantages of CLT activities as SF expressed “students are much better now they’re getting to know that what you are doing is helping them to learn English better” (SF 4). In Extract SF5, she explained more about her perceptions towards CLT and the responsibilities that teachers have in implementing CLT.

Case study 5: (MK)

SN: *What is your attitude towards CLT?*

MK: *I think it's **really useful** actually its **proved that its better than the other methods** and **so students will learn with this method better than the other***

MK looks on CLT in a positive way as “it’s really useful”, “proved that it’s better than the other methods” and “so students will learn with this method better than the other”. I then asked her about students’ perceptions towards CLT. She claims that:

SN: *In your opinion how do students like CLT activities, pair works, group works, role play, you think students like these?*

MK: *Yes I think students **prefer to work in the group rather than individual** but although some students somehow they shy and they prefer to be reserved they prefer to work themselves rather than group work and pair works. They prefer to work themselves rather than group work and team work but that was **more useful. Not all the time but most of the time.***

SN: *So you feel that students in Iran would benefit from CLT?*

MK: ***yes, for sure***

In MK’s view, although some students are shy and they prefer to be reserved, most students like CLT and prefer to work in the group rather than individual so she believes Iranian students benefit from CLT. As the way of teaching grammar

plays an important role in CLT, I was interested in finding the way of teaching grammar in Mina's classes. This extract illustrates the inductive method of teaching grammar in her classes.

Case Study 6: (SN)

SN: *What is your attitude towards CLT?*

SM: ***in some constant it worth***

SN: *I mean do you like ?*

SM: ***yes, I like it***

SN: *In your opinion how do students like CLT activities?*

SM: *If we create the situation they like the activities*

SN: *Do you feel that students in Iran would benefit from CLT?*

SM: *yes, yes*

SN noted in her interview that Iranian students like CLT and see its advantages. From the perspective of Ellis (2006), grammar is central in teaching and learning of English. It is also one of the difficult aspects of English to teach well.

Case study 7: (MM)

SN: *What is your attitude towards CLT?*

MM: ***I think teacher in Iran can apply this method on their class and our English teaching will be changed if it is possible***

... SN: *aha why do you think it's not possible to use CLT?*

MM: ***because some students are not so motivate to communicate with students and so it's not possible to use communicative activities we just force them to do...***

SN: ... *So In your opinion how do students like CLT activities?*

MM: ***As I told you before when they are successful in making sentences in target language I see that they are really happy and they want to use the target language***

and I think it's enough to motivate them.

SN: *If not what do you do?...*

MM: *... I should force them to do the activity to do more activity in the class*

SN: *Do you feel that students in Iran would benefit from CLT?*

MM: ***if they want of course they can but I told you some students do not want to use target language***

SN: *you mean that the previous methods audio lingual and GTM were more useful for them?*

MM: *Yes because this some methods also some of the students are from high schools and in schools our teacher fossilized GTM method its means translation, it means students just sitting, it means teachers just speaking, and so they want to continue this method.*

From MM's perspective, the use of her learning experiences at university has not had any impact on the classroom practices because she studied some theoretical courses which were not related to reality of teaching. But where I asked her about the methods that the teachers did when she was a student, her answers appear this fact that she tries to avoid following traditional methods such as GTM. She believes if students be able to communicate, they will get happy and motivate to learn more.

MMh indicates some conflicts between her perceptions and actual practices. She claims that she provides her students with communicative practices and students become happy while she states that some students are not so motivated to communicate and they prefer to continue the methods of teaching which they had experienced at school based on translation and teacher centre. MM also thinks the responsibility of teachers is decreased in this method of teaching. She defined responsibility of teachers in teaching grammar in CLT classes as provider of "some heads for grammar and after that just help students". She also added

this method is student centre and teachers don't have any authority. She mentioned the most important principles of CLT. She has a positive perception in applying CLT in Iran.

Case Study 8: (MR)

SN: *so your attitude towards CLT is ...?*

ME: *Its positive ya I mean I like it*

She has a positive perception towards CLT and she really likes it. In her opinion, teaching through CLT is easier in comparison with other methods because of different preferences such as “teachers do not need to give rules” and “teachers do not need to speak a lot” which are indicated in bold in the above table. MR reveals that although some students have negative perceptions towards CLT, most of them like it since CLT provides students with different games in which students have fun and learn English unconsciously.

SN: *In your opinion how do students like CLT activities?*

ME: *You know first able they don't know it **some of them, they ve got negative attitude toward it but some of them really enjoyed its specially when you got games so when you got games they want to play and they have fun and unconsciously they learn the language***

SN: *so generally?*

ME: ***They like it***

SN: *Do you feel that students in Iran would benefit from CLT?*

ME: *I'm not sure about that they take it for granted they just do it because it's the method that we've got in the most institutes so they don't know it but they follow it so I think they can they would*

The above extract reveals that although some students have negative attitudes towards CLT, most of them like it since CLT provides students with different games in which students have

fun and learn English unconsciously.

Case Study 9: (AB)

SN: *What is your attitude towards CLT?*

AB: *it's **a good methods for learners**. It's **powerful**. It's basically on speaking. **I love it** and I'm teaching CLT now in our classes.*

The phrases “a good method for learners”, “its powerful” and “I love it” signals AB’s positive perceptions towards CLT. She also feels students like CLT and benefit from it (See Extract AB 4).

SN: *In your opinion how do students like CLT activities?*

AB: *In my opinion, **students like CLT activities** more. CLT activities are **so useful than mechanical exercises**, its fun when we put them in a real situation and get familiar with different cultures, customs and opinions*

SN: *Do you feel that students in Iran would benefit from CLT?*

AB: *Yes, of course, **they feel satisfactory** from basic to advance. In low levels they can't show themselves more, I mean they can't take part in all parts but after 2 or 3 terms they become better than before*

From the perspective of AB “students like CLT activities”, “CLT activities are so useful than mechanical exercises”, “its fun” and “students feel satisfactory”. In addition she thinks it will be more useful for learners to learn English by CLT. It is easy to see that AB has a positive perception towards CLT.

Case Study 10: (ACH)

SN: *What is your attitude towards CLT do you like this method or you preferred the method that you experienced when you were at school?*

ACH: *No no, not at all actually I can **say I admire the CLT** because as I mentioned again because I have learned English in CLT method and I am teaching in CLT way **so I love it** actually because **it is somehow useful** and it is somehow **powerful** but however for example even we have learned it . it has some problem but it answer somehow for Iranian students and for the learners that we have and we had.*

ACH admires CLT because he has learned English based on CLT method and the method of teaching in Qeshm Language Institute is also according to CLT. The phrases “I admire the CLT”, “I love it”, “it is somehow useful” and “it is somehow powerful” show his positive perceptions towards CLT obviously.

SN: *your opinion how do students like CLT activities?*

ACH: *Somehow it can be **fun** for them because in CLT we use some games , some board games even about the different situation that we make for them in classes so they are **encouraged** because they **enjoy from that** but in some different method actually they don't answer in Iran and the students do not enjoy them because they are somehow mechanical and they are not useful because for different purpose we cannot use them but in CLT we have different aspect of usage and it is somehow the developed area that **they can use it***

SN: *They can use it so in your opinion students like CLT and you feel that students in Iran would benefit from CLT?*

ACH: ***they benefit from CLT***

SN: *you mean that the activities and practices are useful for them ?*

ACH: ***useful** , **tangible** and some how useful in different situation for example in one lesson you have at least I don't know 10 to 15 students in each session the one student I think they can make profit about the lesson that you have taught because for example one student want to go abroad and want to go shopping. shopping in one lesson during the term definitely I*

am going to talk about shopping so that can be useful for that even for example game, board game anything that you have taught it.

ACH states that students like CLT because of different preferences such as being fun, enjoyable, useful, tangible and beneficial. Due to the complexity of grammar and the difficulty in approaching it during language teaching and learning, questions number 5 and 6 were designed to explore how ACH teaches grammar by applying CLT in his classes.

Generally, through analysis of the data from the interview, I discovered two main themes reflecting participants' perceptions about CLT. The first major theme is very good understands of general principles of CLT in using authentic materials and focusing on speaking. The second major theme is teachers' great satisfaction in implementing CLT as the method of teaching because in their view applying CLT was easy for teachers in comparison with the other methods of teaching. They also recognized that students like CLT and benefit from it. Overall they all expressed that they have really positive perceptions towards teaching by CLT approach. The major themes are organized in the following table.

Case Study 1	one of the easiest methods/I really love it/ I really am recommend of it/ really simple to apply Students like it/Students can express their own idea and communicate easier
Case Study 2	Till now it has been the best methods for teaching English/ every parts of CLT is useful Students like it and benefit from CLT
Case Study 3	I think it is a good method for teaching Interesting and beneficial for students/ Students become relaxed and forget their shyness/ motivated and learn better
Case Study 4	It is the best methods of ever/ Much better than old methods/ I am feeling well when I apply it/ student center class is enjoyable/you can see students improvement

	Students Generally like it/ nowadays try to cooperate and don't make fun the games
Case Study 5	Its really useful / Its better than other methods/ Students learn better by CLT/ Prefer to work in group / Benefit this method
Case Study 6	In some constant it worths / I like it Students like it/ benefit from it
Case Study 7	Iranian teachers can apply this method/teacher responsibility decreased Mostly students are motivated to communicate and benefit from it but a few of them <u>resistance</u> in participating and want to continue GTM
Case Study 8	I have positive attitude to CLT/ I like it/ Teachers don't have many responsibilities A few students have <u>negative attitude</u> but mostly really like it because of having fun and games and learning unconsciously
Case Study 9	It's a good method for learners/ powerful / I love it Students like CLT activities and /feel satisfied / activities are so useful
Case Study 10	I admire CLT/I love it/ its useful and powerful Students benefit from CLT/ enjoy games and have fun / activities are useful and tangible

Conclusion

The findings from the interviews reveal that Iranian EFL teachers have very good understanding of the communicative activities and the general principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and they practice the major communicative activities in their classes. They all were satisfied with implementing CLT because from their perspectives CLT activates learners' needs and interests.

It can be concluded that the findings of this study are significantly different from previous related research where it was found that EFL teachers mainly pursued traditional

practices in classes (Sato and Kleinsasser 1999) and showed unwillingness to use communicative activities (Gamal and Debra 2001), favoured more traditional way of teaching (Gorsuch 2000), and found it difficult to change the classical traditional approach of language teaching and implement modern approach (Penner 1995). Whereas findings from previous studies show that EFL teachers in most cases only follow or try to hold on only traditional grammar practices, Iranian EFL teachers in private institute of Iran practice communicative activities and hold a favourable perceptions of applying CLT in the classroom. So findings from the present study do not conform to Lewis and McCook's (2000) and Karavas-Doukas's (1996) studies, which revealed that Vietnamese and Greek EFL teachers were following both traditional and communicative methods in their practices mainly due to misconceptions about CLT.

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