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**Exploring Saudi EFL Teachers' and Learners'
Perceptions Regarding the Application of Communicative
Language Teaching (CLT) in the English Language
Classroom**

FATUMA AHMED ABDULKADER

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of the
Northumbria University at Newcastle
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

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ABSTRACT

Language teaching is a dynamic activity in the field of education in which great changes have been suggested and continuously implemented since communicative language teaching (CLT) was first proposed in the 1970s, now considered a major source of influence on language teaching practice (Richards, 2006; Tudor, 2001). The rationale for the study to evaluate CLT was based on the plan for English language teaching articulated by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Saudi Arabia in 2006, which argued that it should be based on an internationally based curriculum and stated that the goal is to develop learners' communicative competence (CC) in the four core language skills – speaking, listening, reading and writing – through collaborative class practices, focusing primarily on learners' fluency rather than accuracy.

Therefore, the overarching research purpose was to investigate English as a foreign language (EFL) students' and teachers' perspectives concerning CLT and the extent to which teaching practices were in line with the principles of the approach, particularly in the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP), an area in which there has been a gap in research. Three sources were used for data collection, classroom observation, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, enabling triangulation. A mixed-methods approach was employed, involving both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis. The data from the questionnaire were analysed statistically using appropriate methods. The participants included female EFL students (N = 175) and female EFL teachers (N = 47).

With regard to the main findings, analysis of the data indicated differences among the participants in relation to perceptions of EFL teachers and their classroom practices. The findings also showed that teachers focus on forms and use traditional methods (e.g. grammar translation, the audio-lingual method and techniques, a lecturing style). In addition, the results show that although Saudi EFL teachers have positive attitudes towards the CLT approach, the

English language programme as currently implemented is not in line with the principles of CLT. In terms of the wider pedagogical implications, the findings revealed that teachers in Saudi Arabia apply a combination of both traditional and communicative approaches in their classroom practices, with aspects of traditional teaching appearing more dominant (Batawi, 2006). Moreover, there are inconsistencies between teachers' perceptions and classroom practices. The findings concern EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia, but can potentially be extended to EFL teaching in other countries. In particular, discrepancies between teachers' perceptions and their actual classroom practices that prevent the effective use of CLT in many EFL settings such as Saudi Arabia must be identified and addressed to achieve the maximum benefits from the approach.

The findings also revealed that EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia encounter many problems in implementing CLT in their classrooms. Three sources of difficulty were consistently identified: problems faced by the teachers, those faced by the students and those related to the administrative system. Overall, the results indicated that although Saudi EFL teachers view the CLT approach in a positive light, the English language programme as currently implemented is not in line with CLT principles.

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DECLARATION

The opinions expressed in this dissertation are solely those of the author and acceptance of the dissertation as a contribution to the award of a degree cannot be regarded as constituting approval of all of its contents by the School of Arts, Design and Social Sciences. I certify that all material in this dissertation which is not my own work has been identified and properly attributed.

Name: Fatuma Abdulkader

Signature: _____

Date: 07/08/2019

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALM	Audio-lingual method
CBI	Content-based instruction
CC	Communicative competence
CLT	Communicative language teaching
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELI	English Language Institute
FLT	Foreign language teaching
GTM	Grammar-translation method
L1	First language
L2	Second language
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
SLA	Second language acquisition

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Language teaching is a dynamic activity in the field of education in which great changes have been suggested and continuously implemented since communicative language teaching (CLT) was first proposed in the 1970s, now considered a major source of influence on language teaching practice (Richards, 2006; Tudor, 2001). Many researchers in foreign language teaching have argued that the main objective of language learning is to communicate effectively using the target language and thus to develop learners' communicative competence (CC) through authentic language teaching, in other words to address the purpose of using language as a communicative tool in different contexts (Dornyei, 2005; Johnson, 1995; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Ying, 2010). Currently, CLT is encouraged as a theoretically effective approach for English language teaching, aiming to develop learners' communicative skills (Brown, 2014; Harmer, 2007; Littlewood, 2011, 2014; Nunan, 2003).

This has extended to include developing language learners' CC in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Indeed, several studies have shown the importance of implementing the CLT approach in an EFL context in terms of developing language competence, not only in listening and speaking, but also in reading and writing (e.g. Anderson, 1993; Ellis, 1996; Li, 1998; Littlewood, 2007; Savignon & Wang, 2003; Wang, 1990). Similarly, Richards and Rodgers (2014) indicate that the impetus for change in the language teaching approach has mainly been to improve the speaking skills of foreign language learners and develop new ways of teaching. Moreover, teachers in numerous EFL contexts are required to use the CLT approach in their English teaching classes due to the high demand for improvements in language learners' CC (Field, 2000; Richards, 2006). It has been argued that the language classroom is a central place that incorporates a variety of elements in terms of the methodologies used by teachers, teacher–student interaction in collaborative activities, the

ways in which teachers use different aids and how they are interpreted by learners and how lessons shift between teacher-fronted and group phases (Batstone, 2012: 459–460). These aspects in turn make a vital contribution to acquisition of the second language (L2) through selective attention and developing learners L2 processing capacity (Markee, 2019).

Teacher–student and student–student interaction is a key feature of CLT, engaging learners in enhancing their communicative capacities in various situations and constructing their identities through collaboration and negotiation (Brown, 2014; Hall, 2008). Ellis’s (1990: 12) view of interaction is that it is “meaning-focused and carried out to facilitate the exchange of information and prevent communication breakdowns”. The concept of language teaching and learning has shown considerable changes in the last 30 years and CLT is partly a response to these changes (Richards, 2006). For example, the kinds of classroom activities associated with CLT represent a movement away from traditional language teaching methods in which the focus was on mastering knowledge of specific grammatical rules through the systematic teaching of pre-selected structures and towards the use of pair and group activities.

The principles of CLT, highlighting effective use of the target language and authentic materials enhancing real-life communicative capacity, provide significant opportunities for language development in the EFL classroom (Ozverir & Herrington, 2011). However, researchers have also highlighted that the majority of EFL teachers do not consider classroom interaction to be an effective element of L2 learning due to certain perceived difficulties hampering the implementation of CLT in EFL contexts. These include the educational system, lack of teachers’ and learners’ English language proficiency, large classes and overly high teaching hours (Aleixo, 2003; Dailey, 2010; Li, 1998). In addition, there is often incompatibility between the principles of CLT on the one hand and embedded institutional practices on the other. The latter tend to be strongly aligned with traditional teaching approaches and have been found to be challenging in EFL contexts.

It can be argued that it is important for EFL teachers, particularly those at university level, to consider the importance of developing learners' implicit knowledge, underlying the ability to communicate fluently and confidently in L2. It is this type of knowledge that should be the ultimate goal of any instructional programme (Ellis, 2005) and the application of CLT principles can be considered a main source of language input resulting in classroom interaction, which enhances students' contributions to classroom dialogue (Ellis, 1990).

Investigations into teachers' and learners' perceptions of language teaching approaches and their contribution to learning emphasize the value of language teaching methods that facilitate a practical approach to L2 learning and in this regard teachers' beliefs, knowledge, assumptions and theories play a powerful role in their teaching behaviour (Borg, 2015; Ikpeze, 2015; Phipps & Borg, 2009). Therefore, this study investigates whether EFL teachers' teaching practices are in line with the principles of the CLT approach and the students' perceptions of the extent to which their EFL teachers' performance meets their expectations. The Saudi Arabia 2030 economic policy highlights the importance of transforming from an industrial economy largely dependent on oil to a powerful knowledge-based economy. This has led to a growth in the importance of English use in a variety of situations (AL-Zahrani, 2017). Therefore, the language teaching methodologies applied in Saudi higher education need to be reconsidered to boost CC in English among Saudi youth.

1.2 Motivation for the study

I was motivated to undertake the study: (i) to investigate PYP EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of CLT and whether teachers' actual teaching practice reflects the principles of the approach and (ii) to explore students' perceptions of the activities and materials used in the classroom and the extent to which they help or hinder development of the learners' communicative skills. It was hoped that the findings of this research might contribute to

exploring points of strength and weakness in language classes in Saudi universities and overcome the obstacles that prevent learners' involvement in the language learning process.

In Saudi Arabia, scholars have argued that English use is an obstacle for most students at university level due to many differences in the learning process at different levels of education (Alshehri, 2016). Specifically, students' previous language learning experiences at secondary school differ from those at university level in terms of teaching methods, the latter emphasizing the application of CLT, the use of L2 in classroom discourse and strategies that enhance the teaching and learning process (Alshehri, 2016; Al-Seghayer, 2011; Elyas & Al Grigri, 2014). Therefore, this study attempts to investigate the English language teaching methods currently used in the PYP as to the best of my knowledge there are no reports in the literature of investigations to determine teachers' and students' perceptions regarding the implementation of CLT in language teaching classrooms at this level. In addition, the findings of this study could be interesting and constructive in suggesting lines of enquiry for further studies of language teaching and learning approaches helpful in boosting Saudi (and perhaps other) EFL learners' CC.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Despite the efforts of the MOE to improve the quality of English language teaching/learning, Saudi EFL learners' language proficiency has been criticized for being below the standard required (Alhawsawi, 2013; Alrabai, 2014; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Elyas & Picard, 2010). EFL teachers in Saudi, as in other EFL contexts, are required to adopt the CLT approach. However, the teaching of English is often undertaken by means of conventional teaching methods, which tend to follow a heavily teacher-centred approach with the teacher dominating the English language learning setting (Al-Hazmi, 2003; Al-Johani, 2009; Alrabai, 2016; Khan, 2011; Rajab, 2013). This often leads to low motivation in English language learners and in turn to poor communicative performance when they use English in social and educational settings.

Ideally, as Nunan (1999) argued, “teachers should find out what their students think and feel about what they want to learn and how they want to learn” (p. 4). However, in educational settings such as that of the Saudi context, this may conflict with the institutional culture and the perceptions of teachers in terms of what an appropriate teaching approach is. Many studies have discussed the implementation of CLT, and various difficulties encountered (cf. 7.4) with the approach around the world (e.g. Canale & Swain, 1980; Littlewood, 2007; Raissi et al., 2013; Richards, 2006; Savignon, 1991; Savignon & Wang, 2003).

In addition, particularly in the Saudi language teaching context, Al-Abedalhaq and Samdi (1996) maintain that while Saudi students recognize the importance of English in the current era, their results in international examinations indicate poor performance (Cambridge Examination Centre, 2009; Educational Testing Services, 2003–2009). This has led to many questions concerning the teaching methodologies practised in universities (Farooq, 2015). It appears that there is a gap in the literature in relation to research that takes into consideration Saudi EFL teachers’ and learners’ perceptions regarding the appropriateness of the use of CLT in Saudi Arabia. However, some studies have considered the use of specific aspects of the application of CLT and of teaching English more broadly in Saudi Arabia. As Richards (2001: 54) stated, people learn better when what is being learned is perceived to be interesting and relevant to their needs and expectations.

Thus, bridging the gap in terms of identifying the EFL teachers’ perceptions and their actual classroom practices will help to meet the students’ English language communicative needs in a specific context. To the best of my knowledge, no investigation has been carried out to investigate the alignment of EFL teachers’ actual classroom practices with the principles of CLT in Saudi Arabia.

1.4 Aims of the study

With the globalization of trade and economics, English is increasingly important as a means of international communication in various fields and is the focus of teaching especially in countries in which it is a foreign language (Crystal, 2012). Although English courses have become popular in Saudi Arabia and some universities offer general English courses for their students, language instruction has been limited for years to specialized terminologies and sentence structures, employing a teaching methodology that basically ignores some of the students' language needs (i.e. CC). In response to these problems, this study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify EFL teachers' perceptions of CLT.
2. To investigate whether EFL teachers' actual teaching practice is in line with CLT principles.
3. To identify difficulties that teachers face in implementing CLT.
4. To identify students' perceptions of their EFL teachers' practice in their classroom.

1.5 Significance of the study

The main purpose of CLT is to enable learners to use the target language communicatively in various social and professional situations. Larsen-Freeman (2011) states that the characteristics of the approach are that "almost everything ... is done with a communicative intent" (p. 129). However, in Saudi Arabia, English language teaching and learning outcomes do not indicate that the students' needs for CC have been met. Therefore, this research aimed to examine the English language teaching approach used in the PYP in a Saudi university, more specifically to explore whether EFL teachers' current language teaching practices are in line with the principles of CLT. The study aimed to explore EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of the teaching methods used in the classroom and their effects on developing the learners' CC. For example, the study aimed to examine the extent to which group and pair work activities and

authentic materials were employed in the classroom as Rabab'ah (2005) states that the majority of Saudi students in the preparatory year show inadequate English communicative ability. Therefore, the investigation has the potential to help overcome the difficulties that Saudi EFL learners face in their preparatory year and make the classroom a more effective environment in enabling Saudi EFL students to develop their CC.

This study contributes to the debate concerning the Saudi English language teaching and learning context. It aims to add to the field of applied linguistics through the following steps: (i) identifying the main challenges that EFL teachers face in implementing CLT; (ii) identifying the gap between what takes place in the classroom and students' language needs; (iii) contributing and suggesting appropriate solutions to suit the Saudi educational sphere, aiming to develop learners' communicative competence; (iv) providing empirically based suggestions to bridge the gap between different aspects of language teaching methods and teachers' perceptions; (v) increasing teachers' awareness of CLT and thus ultimately improving learners' CC.

1.6 Research questions

The focus of this study is on investigating practices in EFL teachers' classes in Saudi Arabia as an initial step in determining how CLT is implemented in language teaching classrooms.

This study aimed to answer the following overarching question:

“To what extent are EFL teachers' teaching practices in line with the principles of the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach?”

The following sub-questions were used to address the main research question:

1. What are the EFL teachers' perceptions and knowledge of the CLT approach?
2. To what extent are the EFL teachers' instruction practices in line with CLT principles?

3. What are the difficulties of using the CLT approach in a Saudi PYP?
4. What are the students' perceptions of their EFL teachers' practices in their classroom?
5. What are the similarities and discrepancies between the teachers' perceptions and their actual classroom practices?

1.7 Organization of the thesis

The study consists of eight chapters: Chapter 1, as shown in the previous pages, deals with various components of the study, outlining the background, the motivation, the statement of the problem, the aims and objectives, the significance, the research questions and the research context. Chapter 2 provides a description of the research context (the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) with respect to the Islamic religion and culture, then moves to the historical development of Saudi education in general and English language teaching and learning in all educational phases. The chapter also highlights the English language teaching policy implemented under the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), as well as addressing the importance of English language teaching in Saudi Arabia, EFL teachers and learners, and language teaching methods and the curriculum in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Chapter 3 provides a review of the literature related to various language teaching methodologies: the grammar-translation method (GTM), the audio-lingual method (ALM) and the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach and its various principles, activities such as group and pair work and information gap activities, as well as language teaching materials. This chapter also discusses error correction in CLT, the role of the teacher and learners and alternative assessment. Within the discussion of CC as a theoretical framework, various components are highlighted, such as empirical studies in the implementation of CLT in various EFL contexts, the importance of in-service teacher training and the literature gap.

Chapter 4 is concerned with the methodology used in gathering the data for this study, discussing the research paradigm to provide a rationale for using the research methods. The chapter then highlights the types of research methods adopted (quantitative and qualitative), namely classroom observation, interviews and questionnaires, followed by discussing the approaches used to analyse the data. The chapter also discusses the reliability and validity of the study and also outlines ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 presents the results of analysis of the data collected from the classroom observations to answer the overarching research question. A close examination of the language teaching approach implemented in classrooms is provided. Chapter 6 provides analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data gathered from teachers' and students' questionnaires and interviews. Chapter 7 provides in-depth discussion of the key findings according to the research questions, employing relevant data regarding language teaching techniques used in classrooms by EFL teachers.

Chapter 8 presents a summary of the research and its implications from different perspectives concerning the teaching of English, i.e. those of teachers, students, and the institutional policy. To sum up, in this chapter, there is an attempt to explain as many issues as possible regarding the motivation of the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, the aims and the contributions of the study, and a brief description of the historical trends in the Saudi Arabian education system to contextualize the study.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

2.1 Introduction

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the largest country situated in the Arabian Peninsula and is at the strategic crossroads of three continents: Europe, Africa and Asia. The country is bounded by the Red Sea to the west and the Arabian Gulf, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Kingdom of Bahrain and Qatar in the east. To the north, it is bordered by Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait and to the south Yemen and Oman. It occupies approximately 2,149,790 km², which is almost 4/5 of the Arabian Peninsula (MoE, 2019). In 2006, according to the census, Saudi's population was 27,019,731 million (MoE, 2019). However, since then, according to the 2018 census, the population increased dramatically to 33,413,660 million, of which 20,768,627 million comprised Saudis and 12,645,033 were non-Saudi (General Authority for Statistics, 2019).¹ In addition, according to the World Bank, in 2019, the Saudi demographics stood at 34.14 million, which translates to a growth rate of 1.93% from 2018. Among the Saudi population, 43.31% are female and 56.69% male.²

In terms of the religious and cultural setting, Saudi Arabia is a country that derives its constitution from the Quran (Holy Book) and Sunnah (Islamic law) for the management of state affairs. In Saudi Arabia, the society is religious and conservative, its culture being associated with Islamic values and heritage. Since Islam was revealed through the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him), more than 1,440 years ago, the Islamic religion has been embedded in various aspects of life – individual and societal – and Saudi culture is primarily determined by Islamic precepts. For example, religious morals take precedence in the social life of Saudi society. These moral values range from personal relations to tribal and extended

¹ <https://www.stats.gov.sa/en>

² For further information, see <https://www.globalmediainsight.com/blog/saudi-arabia-population-statistics/>

family values, all of which are part of a complex web of interlocking commitments assigned to individuals within the Quran (Oyaid, 2009). Indeed, all aspects of social and cultural life in Saudi are centred on Islam and the Islamic identity: the religion of Islam covers all aspects of people's lives and places particular emphasis on education (Alzaidi, 2017). Islam has viewed learning as a legitimate right for males and females from the very beginning. This right is the cornerstone of education and the foundation upon which the state develops the education system; citizens are viewed as contributing to developing society based on this very foundation (Oyaid, 2009). As Al-Salloom (1989: 37) states, "the roots of education in Saudi Arabia therefore go deep into the Islamic education which started in the mosque and led to the establishment of schools and universities around their pillars". Islam accords education very high status and it is not isolated from the Islamic concept and individuals' daily behaviours and attitudes. In accordance with the practice of Islamic law, the education system in Saudi Arabia strictly imposes segregation between boys and girls at all levels of education. The education system and policy are discussed in the following section.

2.2 Historical development of education in Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was established by the King Abdulaziz Ibn Saud in 1932, the education system was transformed immensely in 1925, even before the unification of the whole country in 1932 (Alrashidi1 & Phan, 2015). The education system in Saudi Arabia is subject to the government and supervised throughout the main two educational agencies, the Ministry of education and the Ministry of higher education. Although, the two agencies have different operational roles, they complement each other to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the Saudi Arabian education system. (Alrashidi1 & Phan, 2015). Primarily, the education was limited, including religious schools, teaching Arabic literacy, reciting the holy Qur'an and Islamic law (Alrashidi1 & Phan, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2006). However, as noted by Wiseman et al. (2008), 90% of the Saudi population was illiterate in 1950 and as awareness of

this issue grew greater attention was paid to developing the country's literacy, particularly among the country's youth, to meet market requirements (Wiseman et al., 2008). Yet, the education was offered to boys only from the establishment of the educational system and was consisted of a few primary schools in some regions of the Kingdom (Albaiz, 2016). In the 1960s, the Saudi educational system officially allowed females to enrol in school (Albaiz, 2016; Alrashidi1 & Phan, 2015). However, girls' education confronted strong opposition by society, who believed that girls' education is worthless. However, this perception has been changed dramatically, and most of the population supported and encouraged girls' education (Alharbi, 2014; Almutairi, 2008).

The educational system is segregated according to gender and comprises six years of primary schooling and three years for both intermediate and secondary schooling respectively. Since then, the Saudi government has recognized the importance of innovation in education in general and more specifically in higher education with a view to achieving a world-class standard through various disciplines directly relevant to the future social and economic growth of the country (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). Therefore, the Saudi government has expanded educational institutes in the country and provides free education for boys and girls as Saudi citizens to meet the new evolution in political and economic levels since the discovery of oil (Alamri, 2011; Alseghayer, 2011). A new era of education in Saudi began when the MoE was established in 1953 and one of its responsibilities became to ensure educational efficiency to meet the religious, economic and social needs of the country (MoE, 2006). The government has supported students who enrol and attend school with free education and monthly allowances, in addition to books and transportation. The same advantages are provided to students studying at university level, for example through free education, living accommodation and allowances of around \$250 per month, to encourage the pursuit of higher education (Alamri, 2011; Wiseman et al., 2008). This indicates that decision-makers are aware

of the importance of education in the means of developing Saudi youth's knowledge which supports sustainable development and economic growth (Alrashidi1 & Phan, 2015). The Saudi educational system needs to represent the cultural values, beliefs and ideology of Saudi nationals based on the Islamic educational heritage (Wiseman et al., 2008). To meet the country's needs for educated youth, the educational system has been reorganized and according to Al-Baadi (1994, cited in Wiseman et al., 2008) aims to fulfil three main purposes:

- (1) To provide basic education for all Saudis.
- (2) To teach students basic Islamic principles.
- (3) To prepare students for work in different fields.

With this in mind, the MoE in Saudi Arabia implements five-year plans to improve and expand the scope of education throughout the country (i.e. building new schools and improving the existing schools). In 2013, the educational situation changed dramatically, expressly when the government increased the budget for education to 25% of the total budget (Ministry of Finance, 2013). Furthermore, priority has been given for education in the means of increasing the budget since 2000 comparing to other organization in the country (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). With its belief in investing in youth, the Saudi government established the King Abdullah scholarship in 2005 and the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) sent almost 70,000 Saudi students to developed countries around the world, (i.e. the United States [US], United Kingdom [UK], Australia and Canada; www.mohe.gov.sa) to attain baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral level qualifications in different disciplines. In 2013, the number of Saudi students studying abroad amounted to 148,000. The main goal of this programme was to enable those participating to address the shortfall in Saudi faculty members and meet the requirements of the labour markets in Saudi Arabia (Alamri, 2011; MoHE, 2013). In addition to overseas scholarships, the government also offered internal scholarships for Saudi students at private universities to

provide opportunities for those who could not afford the tuition fees of the local universities (Alamri, 2011). The following section will highlight on the role of the ministry of education and the ministry of higher education in the means of managing the education policy in Saudi education system.



Figure 1.1 Map of Saudi Arabia

2.2.1 Ministry of Education

The MoE was instituted in 1954, its main task being to direct the education system for boys and girls in relation to equipping schools, staff training and curriculum (MoE, 2005). Under the MoE, there are 42 educational districts throughout the country, each area supervised by a district office linked to the MoE and working to raise the quality of education at the level of public and private schools (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; MoE, 2013; Oyaid, 2009). Of the ministry's affairs as well adult education, junior colleges and special needs (Alquraini, 2010). In addition to the above duties, the MoE oversees the Curriculum Department, which formulates and implements the curriculum, creating a unified education system throughout all

the districts of Saudi Arabia (Ministry of Education, 2014). Department of Curricula in the MOE also is responsible for the preparation of textbooks based on different educational grade and level requirements, in both private and public schools in the means of textbook that must be used (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

2.2.2 Ministry of Higher Education

The MoHE is the other branch of educational agency, that supervises and manage higher education in Saudi Arabia (Alrashidi1 & Phan, 2015; urRahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). The MoHE was established in 1975 as a separate unit from the Ministry of Education, which initially managed tertiary schools and universities. This agency also supervises educational offices abroad, international academic relations, and scholarships. In addition, the MoHE governs the twenty-five governmental and eight privet universities in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Despite of the MoHE supervision of the public and private universities, but they are fully independent regarding both academic scope and administrative matter (i.e. each university drafts its own course plans and is responsible for employing its staff (Alrashidi1 & Phan, 2015; MoHE, 2014). Although the MoHE is quite young, but 65% of the government universities were established under the umbrella of the MoHE across the country, while in the past there was only a few universities on the head of that King Saud University in Riyadh, which was founded in 1957 and King Abdulaziz university was founded in 1967 in Jeddah (see Figure 1.1) (MoHE, 2014). English language teaching in Saudi Arabia is discussed in the following section.

2.3 English language in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia like other EFL settings, CLT has taken a range of controversy. Therefore, in this section different phases of English language teaching in general and the place of CLT and issues raised will be discussed.

2.3.1 The development of English language education in Saudi Arabia

According to Alseghayer (2014), English language has high status in Saudi education as a system and has been introduced in public schools at intermediate and secondary levels, in addition to all private school grades (Alseghayer, 2014). It is also used in various governmental institutes. In addition, English is used as a medium of instruction in most Saudi universities in most fields of study, such as science, engineering and medicine. Non-English major students are also required to take a course in English for the purpose of contributing to the message of Islam and serving humanity, in addition to communicating and understanding other cultures (Alseghayer, 2014, 2012). English has a long history in the Saudi education system and its development can be traced through different phases. It was first introduced in 1927 as a core subject at secondary level along with French, but with no clear learning objectives. Later, in 1984, English become an established subject with specific instructional objectives and syllabi (Alseghayer, 2014, 2012).

This in turn reflects that the educational policy in Saudi Arabia emphasizes the importance of English language teaching in Saudi schools and universities, viewing it as a global language. The main concept of educational policy in Saudi Arabia, as described by Al Hajailan (2003), lies in:

“Furnishing the students with at least one of the living languages, in addition to their original language, to enable them to acquire knowledge and sciences from other communities and to participate in the service of Islam and humanity.” (p. 23)

The aforementioned goals of educational policy in teaching English in Saudi schools and universities are to enhance students’ awareness of the significance of English as an international language, not only at the level of transferring and sharing scientific, technological and advancements globally. There are also benefits to be derived from the achievements of other cultures, as well as introducing their own culture and tradition to others (Liton, 2012).

There was debate concerning the introduction of English language teaching at the primary level. There were those who were opposed the idea of teaching English in primary school because of the belief that teaching English might affect the students' mother tongue. However, the majority of Saudi society agreed that more effort was needed to improve students' language competence as most high school and college graduates were considered to have low proficiency in communicating using the target language (Aljohani, 2016). Consequently, the MoE made many changes to improve the quality of English language teaching in Saudi schools. For example, English was first introduced for Year 6 students in public school in 2005 and then for Year 4 students in 2009. Later on, in 2011, the English language teaching policy was changed and the MoE decided to introduce English from Grade 4 in primary schools for both boys and girls, with a new curriculum based on the communicative approach (Aljohani, 2016; Elyas, 2008).

The new plan in teaching language depends on international based curriculum, the MoE (2006) illustrated that curriculum target is to develop learners' communicative competence in the four language skills speaking, listening, reading and writing in addition to linguistics aspects through collaborative class practices to measure learners' fluency rather than accuracy. In addition, the assessment procedures are to focus on communicative competence through classroom periods in non-threatening manner rather than restricted to grammar focus assessment. The subject of the coursebook used in teaching English integrate all the language skills reading, writing, listening and speaking in addition to functional grammar and vocabulary (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015). As cited in Alrashidi and Phan (2015: 37-38), the MoE classified some general objectives of teaching English in Saudi schools:

- (1) To acquire basic language skills (i.e., writing, reading, listening and speaking).
- (2) To achieve the important linguistic competence needed in different life situations.

- (3) To achieve the important linguistic competence needed in various professions.
- (4) To develop positive attitudes towards the learning of the English language.
- (5) To increase students' awareness about the religious, economic, cultural and social issues of their society and ready them to take part in their solutions.
- (6) To develop students' linguistic competence that enables them to benefit from nations with citizens that speak the English language.
- (7) To enable students to take part in transferring scientific and technological advances of other countries to Saudi Arabia.
- (8) To increase students' knowledge regarding the significance of English as a medium of international communication.
- (9) To develop students' linguistic competence that enables them to benefit from nations with citizens that speak the English language, which increases the idea of cooperation, respect and understanding of differences in cultures between the nations (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015: 37–38).

2.4 The importance of English in the Saudi context

There is considerable interest in the use of English in Saudi Arabia, despite its status as a foreign language, as it serves several functions and has outstanding status in the government and private sector, including social, industrial, diplomatic, tourist and commercial applications (Al-Seghayer, 2012; Linton, 2013). Recognizing the importance of English in the sphere of education as the language of science, technology and research, the number of English departments has increased in Saudi universities and colleges and there has been a proliferation of language institutions offering English-related courses (Al-Seghayer, 2012). For example, English is taught as an additional language in the preparatory year for non-English subject

students in the humanities and is essential for some scientific courses, such as medicine and engineering, as a medium of interaction. In addition, at the King Fahad Petroleum and Mineral University (KFPMU) in the Eastern region and the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) in the western region of Saudi Arabia (see Figure 1.1), associated with the largest oil company, English is the sole mode of teaching for all courses (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Elyas, 2014). In some major areas of the private sector, such as the ARAMCO and SABIC companies, English is a medium of interaction among employees (AlHarbi, 2017; Elyas, 2008). Furthermore, a number of technical and vocational institutes, as well as military academies, include English as a core subject in their curricula in recognition of its utility and importance. The demand for a command of English has increased in educational settings and careers due to globalization and the use of technology in all domains (AlHarbi, 2017; Elyas, 2008). Thus, the youth of Saudi Arabia has become increasingly keen on developing English language skills through studying at institutes to keep pace with the growth of technology globally and ensure career enhancement.

The same is true in various public and private organizations and establishments, which often set up training centres to teach English to their employees (Al-Seghayer, 2012). These include banks, airports and travel agencies, among other places in which English is used. Furthermore, the demand for recruiting and training additional Saudi EFL teachers, translators and better qualified graduates for various jobs that require English proficiency has grown significantly (Al-Seghayer, 2012). In addition, English has come to be used in the daily life of young Saudi people, in particular for social purposes and entertainment, such as video games and television (Al-Harbi, 2017; Elyas, 2008). Thus, it can be argued that English is an essential aspect of Saudi education and it is necessary to ensure that the teaching and learning attain adequate standards, helping Saudi youth to keep pace with the challenges and aid economic growth (Al-Hejailan, 2009).

2.5 English language in Saudi higher education

The era of oil exploration in Saudi Arabia has been considered a real milestone for the lifeblood of the Saudi economy and has become the focus of international companies (Mababaya, 2002). The trend towards oil production led to the growth of English language teaching and learning in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the subject has been included as one of the key languages in terms of educational planning; indeed, it is now a compulsory subject throughout the education system (AlHarbi, 2017; Farooq, 2015; Javid et al., 2012).

In the 1980s, a four-year English programme was assigned to the English language departments of Saudi universities. The programme includes courses in English literature, linguistics, translation, teaching methodology and English language skills. However, the English departments in some universities need to specify and clarify their pedagogical aims and objectives, in particular that due to the low proportion of courses on methodology, which “represent no more than 10% of the total courses offered by English departments in colleges and universities” (Al-Seghayer (2014: 144). English departments in colleges and universities need to provide intensive in-service training in teaching methods, materials preparation and classroom management. A number of studies have reported that departments providing preparation for English language teaching do not offer effective programmes with regard to pedagogical knowledge in terms of content and technological and disciplinary awareness (AlHarbi, 2017; Al-Seghayer, 2014; Javid et al., 2012; Khan, 2011).

2.5.1 Aims and objectives of the higher education programme

The (PYP) at Saudi universities is designed to narrow the gap between high school and tertiary education by improving students' level of English language proficiency, as well as enhancing their functional skills, moving into the university system (Al-Shehri, 2017). Therefore, Saudi universities attempt to achieve educational objectives that help students to meet their academic

and workplace language needs. In this study, the instructional objectives of the English PYP are listed below:

1. To promote language communication skills.
2. To help students become confident and competent in the use of spoken and written English.
3. To prepare students with a variety of common and high frequency vocabulary to practice reading for common, and information.
4. To introduce elementary, upper elementary, intermediate and advanced grammatical structure.
5. To help students to develop the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).
6. To prepare students for further studies in their specialised subject.

2.5.2 English language teaching materials and methods in Saudi Arabia

In recognition to the English status in Saudi education system, the government has reforms designed to raise the level English proficiency of Saudi learners. These reforms have involved increasing learners' exposure to English instruction by modernizing the English syllabus, the teaching methodology and the teaching/learning materials (Moskovsky & Picard, 2018). The adopted English language teaching syllabus in Saudi universities is developed based on western culture and with up-to-date methods of language learning and teaching method that encourages the use of communicative approach in language classes (AlHarbi, 2017; Elyas, 2008).

The teaching English material in EFL contexts depends on extensive use of commercial materials in the form printed materials such as books, workbooks, worksheets or non-print materials such as audio materials, videos or computer-based material (Richards, 2001). In

Saudi universities, English teaching materials has become more "progressive and uses the communicative approach in terms of L2 learning", however, the actual problem is in using the textbooks activities (Alharbi, 2017), as the syllabus is to link to the integrated classroom practice for example, the four language skills, grammar, and vocabulary.

Over the years, EFL contexts have implemented numerous methods and approaches in teaching and learning English, but these, "each with its own understanding theoretical basis, have come and gone" (Griffiths & Parr, 2001: 274). In the Saudi EFL context, teacher-centred instruction (i.e. GTM) has been found to prevail, with teaching mainly undertaken through lectures, which results in a lack of communicative ability among students in the classroom (Ahmed, 2014; Al-Harbi, 2015; Al-Seghayer, 2007; Assalahi, 2013; Sofi, 2015). As pointed out by AlHarbi (2017), the GTM is centred around teaching rather than learning, which results in passive learners who mainly rely on their teachers. According to Moskovsky and Picard (2018: 20), this method of teaching "fostered teacher centeredness and lack of learner participation".

This approach was criticized for its failure to encourage communication among students in class (Nunan, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Scholars in second language teaching and learning point out the need to apply communicative activities to enhance learners' communicative competence (e.g. Ellis, 1994; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Littlewood, 1981). Although teaching materials can enhance the integration of language teaching through communicative activities, the CLT approach is rarely applied in the classroom (Abdulkader, 2016; AlHarbi, 2017; Al-Nofaie, 2010; Rabab'ah, 2005). In Saudi universities teachers apply different teaching methodologies according to their lesson objectives. However, these are mostly utilise traditional approaches, as discussed in Chapter 3 (cf. 3.4). While some teachers may believe in applying a CLT approach, they face certain problems in implementing it appropriately, for example low student proficiency in English, a lack of interest in learning English and overcrowded classes (Alosaimi, 2007; Khan, 2011). From this, we can infer that

implementing an unsystematic teaching approach may result in inadequate teaching outcomes. This issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 (also see section 8.2.5). In Saudi universities, the teaching is grounded in aspects of linguistics such as grammar and syntax, with little or no attention paid to developing learners' communication ability. However, this is no longer appropriate, as learners need to make a more active contribution in terms of communication in order to learn effectively in language classes, given the goals of language teaching and learning in the modern era (Alharbi, 2017).

Elyas (2014) emphasizes the importance of engaging students through intensive English language courses to develop their communicative competence. Furthermore, Al-Ghamdi (2015) argues that it is important for Saudi universities to develop English courses according to future work placement needs. He adds that to enhance students' language capacity, programmes need to make "some revisions to make better use of existing opportunities" and "many aspects in language teaching and learning need to be considered, for example evaluation of the programme, focus on needs analysis, language teaching methods and assessment producers" (Al-Ghamdi, 2015: 239). Al-Alhawsawi (2013: 36) states that "the increased demand for using English in many Saudi universities is because they are trying to provide their graduates with up-to-date knowledge and to improve the graduates' global employment opportunities". The King Abdullah Scholarship Programme reflects the Saudi government's attempts to develop English language teaching through sending large numbers of students abroad to undertake Bachelor's, Master's and PhD studies (AlHarbi, 2017).

The sections above have focused on education in general and English language teaching more specifically as paid great attention in the Saudi Arabian educational system. In addition, they have addressed the different phases of development of English language teaching in the country in terms of supporting and investing in youth through internal and external scholarships with a view to enhancing their contribution to various government and private disciplines. The

following section discusses the importance of training and more specifically in-service training for Saudi EFL teachers and also English language teacher preparation programmes in Saudi Arabia.

2.5.3 English language teachers in Saudi Arabia

The Saudi government has attempted to improve students' English language proficiency by adopting international curricula and employing highly experienced English language teachers from abroad. However, the current English language teaching methods have been criticized by many studies for being too rigid and not permitting teachers to use their own initiative (AlHarbi, 2017; Javid et al., 2012). The grounds for criticism lie in the inadequacy of the current programmes in preparing Saudi EFL teachers "with regard to disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and technological pedagogical knowledge" Al-Seghayer (2014: 146). Therefore, current Saudi EFL teachers' preparation programmes need to be revised, particularly with regard to teaching methods, as English major graduates from Saudi universities are not prepared to be English language teachers (Al-Hazmi, 2003; Javid et al., 2012; Khan, 2011).

A substantial number of Saudi EFL teachers who join the teaching field are professionally and linguistically incompetent and do not have a firm grasp of the various methods for teaching different language elements. For example, they are unable to apply adequate theoretical background knowledge pertaining to the main factors that affect second language learning, such as motivation, attitudes, aptitude and age (Seghayer, 2014), thus "strengthening the vicious circle of ineffective English teaching" (Javid et al., 2012: 58). In addition, Saudi English teachers have limited experience of the use of effective language teaching methods and language testing, as well as the strategies that can be applied to teach language elements (i.e. the four skills, grammar and vocabulary). Moreover, there are also issues with testing

techniques, materials design, evaluation, and the adaption and implementation of educational aids and technology in Saudi language classrooms.

Due to a shortage of English language teachers in Saudi universities, the education system allows the hiring of overseas non-native English-speaking (NNEST) teachers and native English-speaking (NEST) teachers. Frequently, these teachers do not meet the requirements for teaching at university level in terms of qualifications and pedagogical skills (Al-Harbi, 2017; Alosaimi, 2007). In recent years, the MoE has tried to improve the quality of English language teaching and has begun a cooperative training programme with overseas universities to enhance the quality of English teaching and help teachers gain adequate knowledge in L2 teaching methodologies (Al-Harbi, 2017).

2.5.4 English language students in Saudi Arabia

English is the only foreign language taught in Saudi education. However, after several years of learning English in schools, students' English proficiency tends to remain unsatisfactory and below expectations (AlHarbi, 2017; Al-Hazmi, 2003; Alraba, 2016; Syed, 2003). There are several factors which may result in low proficiency in English, for example ranging from learner-related variables, such as motivation and anxiety, to sociocultural variables, the influence of the mother tongue, culture and religion (Alraba, 2016).

Saudi students of course learn English formally at schools but gain minimal knowledge of the language in those valuable years. Thus, when they arrive at university, especially in the PYP, English becomes a serious problem for the majority of the students as it is a compulsory subject and they need to pass exams (Alraba, 2016). EFL instruction itself can be a factor resulting in students' low English performance; teacher behaviour, practices, the curriculum and teaching methods often have a conventional orientation, which relies heavily on a teacher-centred

approach, whereby the teacher dominates the English language-learning setting (Al-Hazmi, 2003; Al-Nasser, 2015; Syed, 2003).

In addition, the education system allows a large number of students in class and the lack of pre- and in-service teacher training adds to the problem (Alraba, 2016: 34). In the Saudi context, there is inadequate English input outside the classroom and there are rarely opportunities for interaction. Students attain less and their motivation is lower when what takes place in the classroom does not have a real-life objective. In spite of the government's efforts to enhance learners' language proficiency, English proficiency remains low; many scholars have argued that one of the main causes for the insufficiencies of ELT in Saudi universities is the lack of qualified EFL teachers able to implement effective language teaching methods. Therefore, it can be proposed that further steps need to be taken to ensure a better standard of ELT and generate effective language learning outcomes (Javid et al., 2012).

Having discussed the historical background and the development of English language education in Saudi Arabia, the following section highlights the importance of in-service teacher training as one of the means of improving teachers' practice.

2.6 Teacher training

It has been argued that teacher training and professional development are vital mechanisms to improving teachers' content knowledge and teaching skills to meet high standards in performance (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Richards and Farrell (2005) state that "training refers to activities directly focused on a teacher's present responsibilities and is typically aimed at short-term and immediate goals" (p. 3), whereas professional development is ongoing. Training thus concerns preparation of teacher in terms of demonstrating basic concepts and principles in classroom practice. According to Richards and Farrell (2005), the content of a training programme, for example, aims to achieve the following aspects:

- Learning how to use effective strategies to open a lesson
- Adapting the textbook to match the class
- Learning how to use group activities in a lesson
- Using effective questioning techniques
- Using classroom aids and resources (e.g. video)
- Techniques for giving learners feedback on performance.

In contrast, “professional development refers to general growth not only focused on a specific job. It serves a long-term goal and seeks to facilitate growth of teachers’ understanding of teaching and of themselves as teachers” (Richards & Farrell, 2005, p. 4) and aims to develop the following:

- Understanding how our roles change according to the kind of learners we are teaching
- Understanding the kinds of decision making that occur during lessons
- Reviewing theories and principles of language teaching
- Developing an understanding of different styles of teaching
- Determining learners’ perceptions of classroom activities

Within teachers’ professional development, Richards and Nunan (1990) make a distinction between pre-service education, which addresses the breadth and scope of the various disciplines, and in-service training, which tends to focus on developing specific theoretical knowledge and teaching skills. In addition, the other important distinction between “pre” and “in” service has to do with the timing of that training, with pre-service teachers not having actual teaching experience (or only minimal experience).

The following section discusses teachers' preparation programmes in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as one of the important factors that would enhance the English language teaching and learning process.

2.7 English language teacher preparation programmes in Saudi Arabia

The MoE in Saudi Arabia established a professional development programme for teachers in the early 1980s. At that time, the focus was predominantly on English literature and linguistics and English skills received little attention (Sheshsha, 1982). Since then, however, according to Al-Hajailan (1999), there has been a remarkable change in the direction of the pre-service course, with more credit hours given to language improvement and linguistics. The four-year programme, offered by English departments at various Saudi universities, colleges of education and colleges of arts, aims to prepare those who wish to become English language teachers (Al-Seghayer, 2014). The pre-service teachers' preparation course involves various aspects of knowledge of language and teaching, for example, linguistics, phonology, morphology, syntax, teaching methodology, English literature and education (Al-Seghayer, 2014).

Student teachers are required to undertake the following: (1) basic education courses to fulfil university or college requirements; (2) courses prescribed by the department of English, including skill-building courses, general linguistics courses, applied linguistics courses and English literature courses; (3) elective courses of their choice (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Methodology courses come under the category of applied linguistics and English language teaching methods are paid relatively little attention, comprising only 10% of the total course (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Table 2.1 summarizes the pre-service Saudi English language-teaching programme.

Table 2.1 Pre-service teaching training in Saudi Arabia

Level	Description
First & second years	<p>The course aims to develop candidate teachers' language skills, including listening, reading, writing and speaking, as well as language areas, such as grammar and vocabulary development.</p> <p>This assumes that aspiring teachers are not expected to have sufficient competency in English when they first enrol.</p> <p>These courses also contribute to future teachers' abilities to teach introductory courses on English literature and linguistics.</p>
Third & fourth years	<p>Candidate teachers undertake more advanced subject area courses together with methodology courses.</p> <p>Students are thereby exposed to English literature courses, including the history of English literature, poetry, novels, drama and literary criticism, as well as linguistics courses, such as semantics, syntax and phonology.</p> <p>They also take advanced courses in translation, advanced writing and grammar, along with courses in English teaching methods.</p> <p>The final semester of the preparation programme is designated as a practicum, in which prospective teachers are assigned to teach for one semester in an intermediate or secondary school under the supervision of one of their advisors.</p>

(Adapted from Al-Seghayer, 2014)

Despite the efforts of the MoE to develop pre-service teachers' knowledge of linguistics and give them a command of language skills, experts in teaching English in Saudi Arabia have argued that Saudi EFL teachers' teaching proficiency can be described as non-systematic and that the programme is inadequate for the preparation of prospective Saudi English teachers in terms of disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and technological pedagogical knowledge (Al-Hazmi, 2003; Al-Seghayer, 2014; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). Therefore, Saudi English language experts have suggested that to meet English language teaching requirements, Saudi EFL teachers should be enrolled in systematic and effective training programmes to overcome any difficulties they might face in teaching.

In addition, several studies on teachers' training needs (for example, Al-Harbi, 2006; Al-Shuaifan, 2009; Zohairy, 2012) have revealed that there is great demand for in-service training. Such training programmes are currently conducted on a limited scale via local education departments that are scattered all over Saudi Arabia and are handled in a poor manner. In other words, teachers training in the English Language Institute (ELI) is usually ignored and when it takes place for a few days for instance, there were not a follow up stage to determine whether teachers got benefit out of this training or not (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2014). In addition, it

appears that most Saudi English teachers do not receive any in-service teaching training despite teaching English for a long time.

2.7.1 English language activities

In the ELI, activities have been designed to be taught in a multinational setting. The book assumes that students have a background in and experience of the various types of exercises and the topics covered. Examples of topics discussed are travel, sports, music, international food and cross-cultural issues. However, due to their religion and living in a very traditional society, Saudi students lack knowledge of some of the topics covered in the course book, for example the topic “Do you like dance?” and discussing well-known world singers and actors. Furthermore, comparing communicative competence (CC) theory with the teaching and learning objectives of the ELI (i.e. classroom teaching methods, learning activities, textbook content and assessment procedures), it seems that CLT is not appropriately reflected in the current programme’s language teaching and learning practices.

In addition, in Saudi Arabia, it is argued that assessment aims to promote teachers’, students’ development, but teachers have limited involvement in the preparation of assessment, which is generally centralized, and thus only selected teachers are involved. Students are assessed through a restricted set of specific types of question, which limits their learning autonomy (Al-Albedaiwi, 2011). These issues will be further discussed throughout Chapter 6 (results) and Chapter 7 (discussion). It will become evident that much of the EFL teaching and learning process in the current programme is traditional rather than enhancing communicative-based teaching. Thus, I argue that the lack of learners’ adequate participation in the process of EFL instruction is one of the reasons contributing to their underachievement in CC. In this chapter, among other things, I have so far tried to elaborate on CC as the most appropriate learning theory underlying this thesis.

2.7.2 English language assessment procedures

Language assessment is considered the last part of the entire course. This covers the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) as well as aspects of grammar and vocabulary. According to the ELI (<https://eli.kau.edu.sa/>), student assessment should be conducted from a variety of perspectives in mid and final examinations for each module. The total grade is out of 100%: formative writing tasks (short paragraphs) (20%), grammar and vocabulary (10%), speaking (10%), a computer-based mid-module examination assessing students' reading comprehension, vocabulary and grammar use (20%) and a computer-based end-module examination focusing on reading and listening comprehension, vocabulary and grammar use (40%). Therefore, in the ELI it can be argued that the assessment procedures aim to promote students' development. However, teachers have limited involvement in the preparation of the assessments, which are centralised, and only selected teachers are involved. The specific types of assessment questions influence teaching and tend to limit students' learning autonomy (Al-Albedaiwi, 2011). The grammar-based assessment procedures and lack of teachers' involvement in the examination committee are discussed in greater detail in relation to research question three (see 7.4.3).

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the current research context in relation to education and more specifically teaching and learning of English due to its global status, and the kingdom of Saudi Arabia attempts to involve Saudi learners into various local and international markets. Therefore, the English language is taught to allow students to meet their academic and workplace needs. In addition, the Saudi institutional policies and practices enhance the use of English as a medium instruction through its EFL instructor recruitment and the use of up-to-date teaching methods and curriculum to address the government and learners' expectations (Alhawsawi, 2013; Moskovsky & Picard, 2018).

However, the teaching of the English language in Saudi Arabia is always criticised for being below the international standard due to the restricted policy (AlHarbi, 2017; Al-Seghayer, 2014; Al-Hazmi, 2003). Therefore, in this study the researcher attempts to present detailed explanations of the Saudi English language teaching historical background for a better understanding of issues that have rose from the outcomes of the English language teaching and learning process. The following chapter will present the literature review underpinning the current study.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the teachers' and students' perspectives to determine in which EFL teachers' teaching practices are in line with the principles of the CLT approach or not. Thus, this chapter aims to review the literature to understand the theoretical background of the concept of methods in English language teaching. The chapter then discusses (a) principles of teaching and learning; (b) the concept of methods in language teaching; (c) various language teaching approaches; (d) an in-depth focus on communicative language teaching (CLT); (e) considering definitions of the approach and the related concept of communicative competence; (f) the underlying principles; and (g) teachers' and learners' roles in the communicative language classroom and activities. The section concludes with a review of empirical studies of CLT in various EFL contexts.

3.2 Principles of teaching and learning: Rationale for choosing CLT

To understand the theoretical background to the methods used in the language teaching and learning process, four relevant language teaching methods are presented. These include: (a) the GTM, which is one of the main teaching methods applied in most Middle-Eastern language teaching institutes and is still used to some extent in more traditional language teaching contexts; (b) the ALM, developed in response to grammar translation's lack of focus on listening and speaking (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004); (c) the content-based approach, also discussed as providing assistance in understanding subject matter texts and students' future language needs when studying academic subjects in a non-native language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000); (d) CLT, which emphasizes the acquisition of communicative competence, the consideration of learner needs and the priority of fluency and communication rather than simple accuracy and grammatical competence. In terms of the teaching and learning approach underpinning CLT, the theory of communicative competence predominates (Richards &

Rodgers, 2001). In this chapter, I focus on four main foreign language (FL) teaching methods and their relationships with curriculum development and evaluation. Moreover, I argue that the CLT approach in particular does not seem to be reflected appropriately in current ELI in-class teaching and learning activities. The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate that these methods can also be linked to limitations in terms of the methodology, the use of materials and the assessment procedures of the current programme. However, before discussing the aforementioned methods, it is important to elaborate on certain terms – method, approach, design and procedures to avoid any misconceptions.

3.3 The concept of methods in language teaching

Anthony (1963) defined “method” as an overall plan for the systematic presentation of language materials based on an approach. Furthermore, Hall (2011, p. 77) summarizes the difference as follows: “*Method* [refers to] established methods constructed by experts in the field *Methodology* [is] what practising teachers do in the classroom to achieve their stated or unstated teaching objectives”. Moreover, Richards and Rodgers (2001, 2014) provide another analysis and elaborate on the elements and sub-elements that constitute this method and what they describe under the rubrics of approach, design and procedure, as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Components of the concept of method

No.	Element	Explanation
1	Method	A systematic way of teaching language based on an approach, design and procedures.
2	Approach	Refers to a theory of the nature of language: (a) an account of the nature of language proficiency; (b) an account of a basic unit of language structure; (c) theory of the nature of language learning.
3	Design	General and specific objectives of the method. A syllabus model: criteria for the selection and organization of linguistic and /or subject matter content. Types of learning and teaching activities, learner, teacher and instructional material roles.
4	Procedures	Constituted of classroom techniques, practices and the behaviours observed when this method is used.

Adopted from Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 33)

Having explained the concepts underlying this defined method, the following section (3.4) discusses three distinct methods of language teaching: the GTM, the ALM and content-based teaching (CBT). These have been selected because they seem to be relevant to specific methods applied to both teaching and learning of EFL in a Saudi undergraduate context. They can further be related to the methodological limitations of in-class teaching and learning activities, the needs and expectations of communicative competence (3.5) and CLT (3.6–3.7) and the institutional policy procedures of the current language teaching programme (3.8) which forms the case for this study.

3.4 Language teaching and learning methods

3.4.1 The grammar translation method (GTM)

In the 19th century the GTM was a widespread traditional language teaching method that dominated in European countries. It was influenced by formal teaching methods used for instruction in Latin, Greek, French and German (Elizabeth, 2010; Hawkey, 2005; Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Tetzner, 2006). The GTM was first used for ELT and still exists today in various modern language and EFL teaching contexts. It owes its popularity to the spread of British colonialism from the 17th to 20th centuries, which contributed to the expansion of the English language all over the world (Crystal, 2003; Hempel, 2010). Practitioners usually employed the GTM to teach students the rules behind the English language and its grammar.

Communication is not the intended goal of the GTM: its focus is on reading and understanding literature in a foreign language and benefiting from the mental discipline and intellectual development that results from foreign language study (Harmer, 2007; Howatt & Widdowson, 2004; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Rosenthal & Erlbaum, 2000).

This method teaches language through the analysis and memorization of grammatical patterns and applying prescriptive rules to understand and manipulate the morphology and syntax of the English language. Reading and writing are the major skills needed and no systematic attention is paid to speaking or listening (Fish, 2003; Hedge, 2000; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Rosenthal & Erlbaum, 2000; Warschauer & Kern, 2000). According to Lynch (1996) the principle behind this traditional method focuses on the learner understanding the structure of the foreign language rather than the ability to use the structure in meaningful communication; providing the learner with a structural basis is considered to enhance cognitive control over the structure of the language (p. 24).

Translation is a means of determining comprehension and can be the whole content and sole purpose of a textual lesson. This means that accuracy is emphasized over fluency and student competence is measured by achieving a high standard in translation. Students translate texts and sentences from the target language (L2) into their first language (L1) and from L1 to L2, meaning that the students' L1 is always the medium of instruction (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

As a result, translation exercises became the major means of implementing the language teaching syllabus in EFL schools and universities. These exercises are considered the mode of instruction, practice and assessment of L2, with ability in the language measured by the accuracy of lexical and grammatical equivalence attained in translation (Baker & Saldanha, 2009). A critical point of this method is that an excessive focus on accuracy can inhibit students,

leading them to remain silent rather than be proactive in terms of classroom interaction; this in turn has a negative impact on the language learning process and student usage of language in real-life situations (Hedge, 2000; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Moreover, students need a chance to learn from their mistakes to develop their language learning process. Littlewood (1981) pointed out that language learners need more than “a ‘fixed repertoire’ of linguistic forms corresponding to communicative functions” (p. 3). Therefore, it is not surprising to find students in an EFL context who have spent several years studying the language but have difficulty achieving a reasonable level of communicative competence.

Since the goal of applying this method is mastery of grammatical structures, this takes place without giving attention to the importance of interaction in the language classroom. This method has, therefore, been criticized for providing scant opportunities for students to get involved in the target language. Furthermore, any classroom interaction there is neglects student-to-student or teacher-to-student interaction, with the role of the students being reduced to the level of answering questions or working individually (Lindsay & Knight, 2006). As a result, the literature shows that language teaching using this method does not achieve the need for daily based communication (Nunan, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Tarone & Yule, 1989). Similarly, the use of grammar translation does not enhance the communicative skills of language learners in terms of expressing their own opinions or interacting with each other during classroom activities (Nunan, 1999).

Language teachers should, therefore, not only emphasize the importance of grammatical rules or accuracy, but also give priority to the development of communicative skills among learners. This classroom-based teaching approach using grammar and translation is primarily teacher-centred in terms of sources of knowledge and direction. This approach does not help students to express their own ideas or allow them to communicate with each other in the classroom (Nunan, 1999). The teacher is the only language instructor, controller and source of

information, with students required to listen and complete tasks according to the directions given by the teacher (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). As a result, communication between learners tends to be limited in the classroom, preventing them from offering or sharing their own opinions concerning the content of language learning. The method is further weakened by the fact that the focus is only on writing and reading, rather than oral communication. This, alongside the use of L1 in the classroom, prevents learners from gaining confidence in using the target language and they are therefore unable to free themselves from the clutches of their mother tongue (Saraswati, 2004). The use of L1 as well as its pros and cons are, however, fiercely contested issues. The following section briefly discusses the use of L1 in EFL classroom.

Research shows that the use of L1 in L2 classroom has a small but important role to play in communicating meaning and content (Nation, 2003). The question of using L1 in the L2 classroom by either, the teacher, the students, or both, hampers the learning of a second language can be discussed to see whether there is a justification for this claim or not. For instance, Cook (2001) pointed out that the use of L1 can be a useful element for both teachers and learners in many ways. He clarified that L1 can be used for instance, to explain some grammar rules, difficult words and managing classes by teachers. Learners can also use L1 when discussing tasks during their pair or group work activities, clarifying purposes of learning the new language. In addition, more reasons justifying learners' use of L1 have been discussed. (Nation, 2003: 6) mentions that learners tend to employ L1 either because they are not proficient or are shy or unmotivated to communicate in L2. Cameron (2001) also provides a similar perspective when mentioning that research shows that learners prefer using L1 when requesting support from their peers or teachers. However, this use of L1 by teachers or learners need to be for clarifying purposes and should not be the key method of communication in the L2 classroom (Cook, 2001: 56). On the other hand, there are many researchers who banned the

use of L1 completely in L2 classes (Haycraft, 1978; Hubbard et al, 1983; Harmer, 1997; Krashen, 1981). For example, Harmer (1997) argues that the use of L1 in English teaching classrooms started to be uncommunicative, uninteresting, pointless and irrelevant. Krashen (1981) also supports the idea of that maximizing the target language leads to language competence, rejecting the use of L1 in teaching a foreign language.

Furthermore, many teachers have seen that, in some contexts, particularly in Saudi EFL context based on my observation, if the learners' first language (Arabic) was used in class, then the learner became more resistant to using English generally and they tended to use their L1 more than perhaps teachers may wish (Hall, 2011: 72). The decision, therefore, about whether or how far the use of learners' first language is appropriate in the ELT classroom is complex (Hall, 2011: 73). Therefore, I would conclude this section with Nation's (2003) piece of advice that the "L1 needs to be seen as a useful tool that like other tools should be used where needed but should not be over-used" (p.5). Coming back to our central discussion of GTM, it is also important to examine how learners are assessed in such a classroom. It has been argued that most grammar tests tend not to provide reliable measures of the learner's implicit knowledge, for instance, Ellis (2001) shows that typical assessment procedures in the GTM focus primarily on examining the reproduction of what language learners have previously memorized instead of actual language use (Ellis, 2001, p. 25). According to Celce-Murcia (1991), the process of assessment in the GTM entails evaluating:

- the extent of equivalence of the students' vocabulary in L1 and L2, for instance using L1 as a tool for checking and validating understanding of word meaning in L2;
- the extent to which the syntactic transformation of L2 sentences has been memorized or understood, for instance changing active voice into passive voice;
- the ability to translate L2 sentences into L1 (and vice versa);
- the reading comprehension of L2 texts, tested through essay questions.

Thus, the type of assessment procedure used by the supporters of this method is usually in written mode, testing the syntactic knowledge and the reading and writing abilities of learners. Clearly, what is missing is consideration of the learners' communicative language skills and any assessment of oral skills. The significance of this review of the GTM is that based on my observations presented and elaborated on in Chapter 6, it appears to be the dominant methodology in the courses examined in the study. Due to the limitations of the GTM and because of growing emphasis on oral communication, some other EFL teaching methods developed are reviewed in the following sections.

3.4.2 The audio-lingual method (ALM)

The ALM grew mainly out of a reaction against the limitations of the GTM and specifically the urgent wartime demands for fluent speakers of languages such as German, Italian and Japanese. According to Richards and Rodgers (1986), after the war, the "Army Method", developed to produce military personnel with conversational proficiency in the target language, attracted the attention of linguists already looking for an alternative to the GTM and to avoid military connotations, it became known as the audio-lingual method. In addition, the ALM drew primarily on the work of structural linguistics and behavioural psychologists in the 1950s and 1960s, resulting in a highly influential language teaching technique; by the 1960s, the use of the ALM was widespread (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 1986, 2014). As pointed out by Kumaravadivelu (2006), the ALM concerns the application of a theory in which language learning is considered to involve the forming of habits and the assimilation of language in a hierarchical system. Specifically, language is viewed as a habitual verbal behaviour, acquired through oral practice; i.e. language teaching is a process of planning and presentation of a pattern by the teacher, practised through repetition and drilling by the

students, with the memorization of dialogue becoming a key process in language teaching (Nord, 1980).

In the ALM era, linguistic principles and phonological accuracy were of great importance (Brown, 2007; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Kumaravadivelu (2006) points out that according to structural linguists, language is viewed as a system that consists of different elements, e.g. phonemes, morphemes, phrases, clauses, and sentences each with their own internal structure. Moreover, structural linguistics view language as aural/oral, with speaking and listening emphasized as the basis of language learning, providing a foundation for reading and writing. A third tenet of the ALM is that “Every language [is] looked upon as unique, each having a finite number of structural patterns. Each structure can be analysed, described, systematized, and graded and by implication, can be learned and taught by taking a similar discrete path” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 99).

Behaviourist psychology states that learning takes place through a process of stimulus, response and reinforcement (Byram & Hu, 2013; Hinkel & Fotos, 2001; Skinner, 2014). Language learning also involves the formation of habits through practice of specific linguistic patterns, meaning that the goal of phonological accuracy is achieved by repetitive drills with audio feedback in L2 laboratories (McLaughlin, 2012). Repetition can therefore be considered a key tool in developing the ability to perform a linguistic pattern to enable effective speech habits and acquire general competence in the target language (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; McCarthy, 2001). A habit is formed through constant repetitive practice, one that is supported by positive enforcement of the audio-lingual technique, so drills are essential to enable learners to form correct analogies in audio-lingual language classrooms (Candlin & Mercer, 2001; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Lynch, 1996; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Listening, drilling, repeating and understanding structural patterns are part of the character of a language laboratory, with little attention paid to meaning or cognitive effort. Dialogues are key and performing patterns

correctly and minimizing mistakes are essential aspects of the learning process. The textbook is considered a model for language teaching providing samples of linguistic input and the teaching procedures rely on the manipulation of questions and commands to elicit the correct answers from learners (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Behavioural psychology contends that language is like all behaviour, namely it is a set of habits. Learners need to develop “good” habits. Thus, errors are considered inappropriate and need to be avoided, with student errors corrected explicitly (Brown, 2007; Schmidt, 1995).

The ALM has been criticized as a method for its lack of connection with the principles of language learning theory (Ellis & Shintan, 2014). Indeed, its theoretical foundations differ from those of traditional language learning theory. The development of the latter was influenced by the work of Chomsky (1959), who argued that language cannot be acquired through habit formation. Language learning takes place when students know and understand linguistic features and they must be able to transfer their linguistic knowledge to real communication outside the classroom (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; McLaughlin, 2012). The ALM is thus inappropriate as a learning method as it does not foster learner involvement or provide opportunities for language practice. In contrast, as noted by Richards (2006), a learner-centred approach provides learners with greater opportunities to develop communication skills than a language-centred approach in which the teacher is a controller focused on drilling. The focus on habit formation inevitably leads to limitations on learners’ participation and classroom interaction; learners will also have limited language input and little or no ability in terms of language knowledge output and expressing themselves in different social contexts (Ellis & Shintan, 2014; Hinkel & Fotos, 2001). For instance, the type of assessment applied by the followers of this method is discrete-point testing, which emphasizes objectivity in L2 testing through breaking the language into its components and sub-components and testing each item of the language at a time (Cummins, 2000, McNamara 2001). Black (2001) describes such

testing in the following way: “A test composed of many short, ‘atomised, out-of-context questions’ and ‘teaching to the test’, are both consistent with this approach” (p. 14). Thus, discrete-point language testing comprises tasks which “involve processing of contrived language in a contrived (test) context (e.g., standardised multiple-choice tests)” (Cummins, 2000, p. 122).

In sum, although the ALM might take the L2 learners to a level of automaticity in repeating certain sentences, it is unlikely to enable them to engage in resourceful communication in their target situations. The significance for this study is that the current programme’s assessment procedures, based on the analysis of the data in Chapter 6, seem to subscribe to this approach (i.e. the assessment procedures comprise a considerable number of standardized multiple-choice tests). Richards (2006) claims that communication-based learning provides the language learner with better opportunities to learn than a grammar-based approach. Moreover, language learning and teaching should not only rely on grammatical patterns, but also the norms of sociocultural knowledge that enhances learners’ participation using the target language to “express messages appropriately” in various social situations (Soler & Jorda, 2007. P. 46). See sections (3.5 & 3.6).

3.4.3 The content-based approach

Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011, p. 145) maintain that students generally need a great deal of assistance in understanding subject matter texts when they study academic subjects in a non-native language. Thus, both clear language objectives and content-learning objectives are essential in a content-based approach. The learning of language through or in conjunction with subject matter can be the focus of a language course. Such a course is content based because it integrates content with language teaching aims. Content-based courses are premised on the assumption that learners will learn language best when engaged in learning subject content. A content-based course may teach the subject matter directly or use subject matter as

the basis for language learning; this is typical of ESP courses. The target language can therefore be both a means and a by-product of learning the subject matter (Ellis, 2003; Graves, 1996).

The content-based method has come to represent the specific requirements of academic disciplines, such as medicine, engineering and business (Jordan, 2004); the content is taught in English (in the case of English Language Teaching) or any target language (Savignon, 1997, 2002). All decisions in terms of content and method are based on the learners' reasons for learning (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). This implies that any given course generally allows more specific work to be undertaken (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) and Jordan (2004) concur that specialized language courses have long included content relevant to a profession or academic discipline. For instance, the content of a language course for pharmacists is different from that for business administration.

The special contribution of content-based instruction is that it integrates the learning of language with the learning of some other content, often in the form of academic subject matter. According to Brindley (1989), "theories of adult learning indicated that adults learn better when programme content is geared to their immediate concerns, language teaching tended to concentrate on the end-product: the actual language which learners had to use" (p. 70). Therefore, I believe that learners will be motivated when they are learning about something related to their special field, rather than just studying the basic components of language over and over. However, the data of this study, discussed in detail in Chapter 6, indicate that the content of the current programme's textbook does not include any sort of various major topics which enhance the learner's immediate as well as future language needs. This issue will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 6.

CC and CLT are widely accepted as theoretical framework in second/ foreign language teaching and learning (Brown, 2001; Brumfit, 2013). The following section will discuss the two theories as defined by many linguists in second language teaching and learning.

3.5 Communicative competence

The term communicative competence (CC), coined by Hymes (1972), is one of the most significant concepts in L2 learning and teaching theory and one which has been discussed by many experts in various ways since the 1960s (Campbell & Wales, 1970; Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, & Thurrell, 1995; Hymes, 1972; Munby, 1978; Savignon, 1972, 1983; Stern, 1983; Taylor, 1988; Widdowson, 1983). Indeed, analysis of the work of linguists indicates that CC can be categorized as one of the key theoretical concepts underpinning CLT. Richards and Rodgers (2014) state that the main aim of CLT is to develop CC. Hymes (1972) adopted the idea of CC to distinguish between Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence and the communicative features of language.

Chomsky (1965) considered the focus of linguistic theory to be characterizing the speakers' own abstract abilities, enabling them to produce grammatically correct sentences in a language based on a cognitive view of that language (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Thus, Chomsky (1965) argued that competence primarily refers to the ideal of a homogeneous speaker-listener applying their knowledge of language correctly and the ability of speakers to produce grammatically correct sentences in a language. Chomsky made a distinction between competence and performance in terms of weak and strong forms. Chomsky's view of competence in the strong form refers to an internalized linguistic system and the speaker-hearer's knowledge of language use, with a perspective on performance that refers to psychological factors the actual use of language in social context.

Hymes (1972) highlighted that Chomsky's strong version of competence did not emphasize the importance of sociocultural utterances used in a heterogeneous speech community. He further argued that Chomsky's theory of competence was unproductive and linguistic theory needed to be integrated with communication and culture as part of a more general theory (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Hymes (1972) therefore considered CC to be a combination of both linguistic knowledge and the ability to communicate effectively in a heterogeneous speech community. This means that such competence involves not only a knowledge of grammar, but also psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of language use. Therefore, individuals who acquire CC need to combine their linguistic knowledge with the ability to use grammatical knowledge appropriately in various communicative situations. Hymes (1972, p. 281) suggested that the term CC encompasses both knowledge and ability to use language with respect to the following:

(1) whether and to what degree something is formally possible; (2) whether and to what degree something is feasible in respect of the means of implementation available; (3) whether and to what degree something is appropriate, adequate and successful, in relation to the context in which language is used and evaluated; (4) whether and to what degree something is in fact done, actually performed and what doing it entails. In addition to Hymes, Halliday (1974) is another main proponent of CC. His view of CC is concerned with language functions, both textual and speech acts, that allow speakers to communicate properly and are distinct from making a differentiation between competence and performance.

Halliday (1974) considered that "linguistics is concerned with the description of speech acts or texts, since only through the study of language use are all the functions of language, and therefore all components of meaning, brought into focus" (cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 88). Halliday's theory of the functions of language, which complements that of Hymes, addresses CC. To clarify the concept of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) expanded

the term competence to be “the tacit knowledge from grammar to speaking as a whole”, which entails incorporating the notion of “ability” and a social dimension and lends a more general character to the speaking and hearing competence of individuals. This perspective includes grammatical and sociolinguistic competences and is more comprehensive than Chomsky’s interpretation, which refers to an internalized linguistics system and the speaker-hearer’s knowledge of language use only within a homogeneous speech community. Thus, the different points of view offered by Chomsky and Hymes regarding competence clarified (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Savignon, 1983; Brumfit, 1984). Furthermore, Savignon (1972) pointed out that applying the concept of an idealized, purely linguistic competence does not have theoretical power for language teaching, learning and testing. Thus, Hymes’ theory of competence is more realistic and able to be applied to language teaching and learning. Savignon (1983, p. 1) also defined the concept of CC in terms of the “expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning” and looked to both psycholinguistic and sociocultural perspectives in second language acquisition (SLA). Savignon’s (1972) work also addressed the concept of CC as “the ability to function in a truly communicative setting that is, in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to the total informational input, both linguistic competence and paralinguistic of one or more interlocutors” (p. 8). In addition, linguists in the field have highlighted that CC is a dynamic action that can be classified as interpersonal behaviour rather than intrapersonal and relative rather than absolute (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Canale & Swain 1980; Skehan, 1995).

Based on this, Savignon (1972, 1983) made a distinction between *competence and performance*, pointing to competence as “an underlying ability and to performance as an open manifestation of competence” (cited in Bagaric, 2007, p. 69). Savignon’s study of CLT, linguistic theory and classroom practice therefore highlighted that competence can be addressed and evaluated based on learner performance. However, Canale and Swain’s (1980)

framework was based on the Hymes' notion of CC, defining the communicative concept as "a synthesis of knowledge of basic grammatical principles, knowledge of how language is used in social settings to perform communicative functions, and knowledge of how utterances and communicative functions can be combined according to the principles of discourse" (p. 20). According to Canale and Swain (1980, 1983) attaining CC means gaining a level of competence in the following aspects: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic. A clear statement gathering these aspects together will lead to the creation of an effective L2 teaching environment and allow more valid and reliable measurement of L2 communication skills (Canale & Swain, 1983).

Grammatical competence: This refers to the acquisition of elements of the system phonological and morphological forms, syntactic patterns and lexical items (Canale & Swain, 1983, p. 2). In terms of the concept of grammatical competence, Canale and Swain highlight items which constitute what Chomsky (1965) called grammatical competence in a way that includes the ability to use grammar accurately. Canale and Swain are not, however, associated with any specific theory of grammar. In this situation, grammatical competence means the ability of the speaker to use the knowledge and skills needed to understand and express the correct meaning of utterances. Sociolinguistic competence: This contains two components sociocultural and discourse competence. Sociocultural competence refers to knowledge of the "extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on contextual factors such as status of participants purposes of the interaction, and norms or conventions of interaction" (Canale & Swain, 1983, p. 7).

This component addresses Hymes' (1967) proposal concerning the appropriateness of language use in different social contexts. Canale and Swain state that sociolinguistic competence emphasizes the use of appropriate language in terms of various aspects of sociolinguistics and sociocultural contexts. According to Richards and Rodgers (1986, p. 71), sociolinguistic

competence refers to “an understanding of social context in which communication takes place, including role relationships, the shared information of the participants, and the communicative purpose for their interaction”. Discourse competence: This involves certain aspects of language use to create a combination of grammatical forms and meanings to achieve meaningful spoken and written language for different purposes. For Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000), discourse competence forms what they consider “the core” framework of Canale and Swain, because it:

...is where everything else comes together: it is in discourse and through discourse that all of the other competencies are realized. And it is in discourse and through discourse that the manifestation of the other competencies can best be observed, researched, and assessed. (p. 16)

Canale and Swain’s (1980) understanding of CC therefore reflects the importance of discourse and sociolinguistic competence respectively in meaningful interaction. Strategic competence: This refers to knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies which enhance the ability of the L2 learner to tackle difficulties they face in communication due to insufficient competence in actual communicative situations. Knowledge of such strategies also enables learners in the early stage of learning an L2 and helps maintain the flow of communication effectively (Canale & Swain, 1980, pp. 30–31). Richards and Rodgers (1986) added that strategic competence refers to “the coping strategies that communication employs to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair, and redirect communication” (p. 71). Savignon (1983) noted that this component consists of different strategies, such as “paraphrase, circumlocution, repetition, hesitation, avoidance, and guessing, as well as shifts in register and style” (p. 40-41). The model presented in Figure 3.1 summarizes Canale and Swain’s (1980) and Canale’s (1983) frameworks, with the added component of discourse competence.

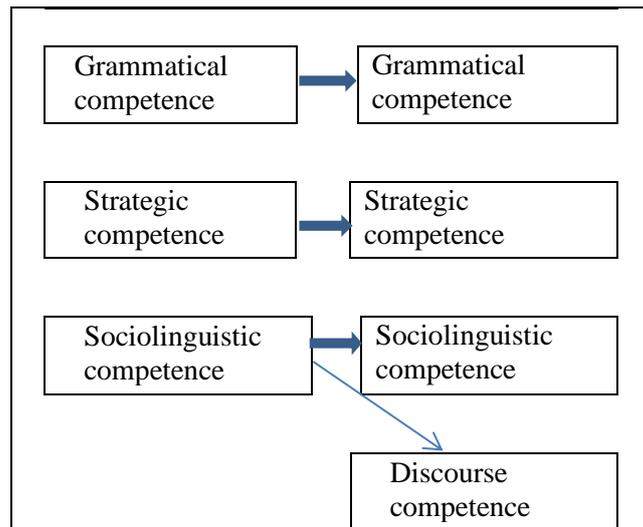


Figure 3.1 Communicative competence (adapted from Canale & Swain, 1980, 1983)

In the mid-1990s, Bachman and Palmer, taking into consideration various theories in CC research (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972; Savignon, 1983), proposed a new model of CC, more specifically a model of “communicative language ability” (CLA). Bachman’s (1990) theoretical framework of CLA was described as consisting of both knowledge and the capacity for applying it in appropriate contextualized communicative language use. The components involved are language competence, strategic competence and psycho-physiological mechanisms. Further development of the CC model by Bachman and Palmer (1996) created a model of language knowledge divided into two main components: organizational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge (see Figure 3.2).

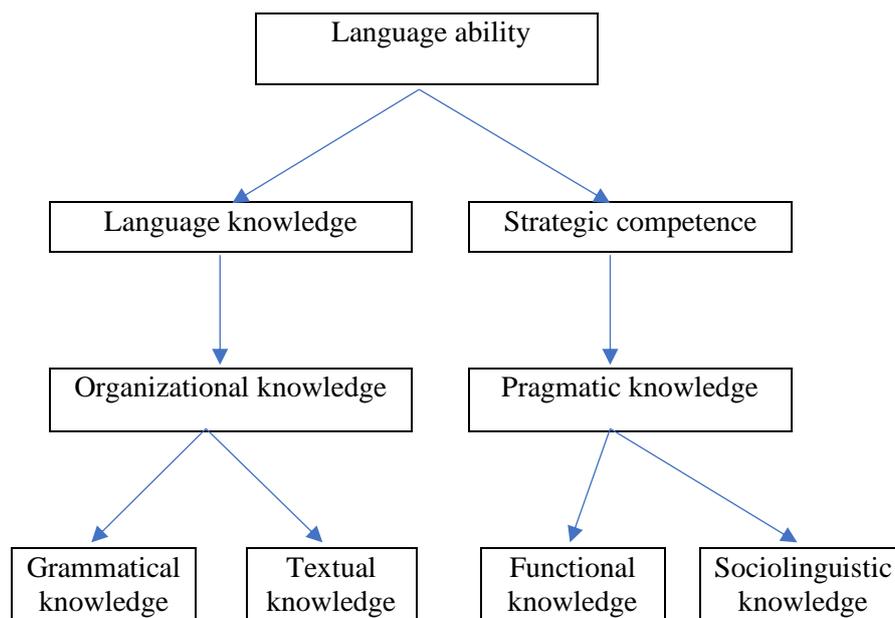


Figure 3.2 Model of communicative competence (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 107)

According to Bachman and Palmer (1996), the components of the CC model and the organizational knowledge involved in controlling the formal structure of language are necessary for producing grammatical and textual knowledge correctly. Grammatical knowledge includes a few relatively independent competencies that can be employed in language usage, such as knowledge of vocabulary, morphology, syntax, phonology and graphology, all of which allow the acknowledgment and production of grammatically correct sentences in various contexts. Textual competence involves knowledge of joining utterances to form appropriate texts in written and spoken language that are structured according to knowledge of cohesion in terms of rhetorical organization, explicitly making semantic relationships among two or more sentences in a written text or utterances in a conversation. The conventions of rhetorical organization are considered a common means of developing narration, description, comparison, classification and process analysis (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Conversely, pragmatic competence comprises both functional and sociolinguistic competence. The former refers to the ability to create and interpret discourse, including knowledge of pragmatic conventions for performing acceptable language functions and for

interpreting the illocutionary force of utterances. Functional knowledge is employed alongside knowledge of sociolinguistic conventions for performing language utterances appropriately in a social context. According to Bachman and Palmer (1996), strategic competence is defined as set of “metacognitive components” enabling language learner involvement in goal setting and assessment to create and interpret discourse appropriately in different contexts. Canale and Swain's (1980) model of CC has dominated the field of SLA and learning for more than a decade based on its flexibility and it being considered a comprehensive model by many L2 researchers.

The following sections focus on CLT in greater depth, beginning with an overview of how different scholars in the applied linguistics field have defined it. A variety of scholars (see, e.g., Cook, 1991; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Howatt, 1984; Hymes, 1972; Lee & Van Patten, 1995; Littlewood, 1981, 2007; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Savignon, 1997; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992) have produced a considerable body of literature defining CLT and its principles.

3.6 Definition and principles of CLT

In the literature, CLT is defined in variety of ways (e.g. Howatt, 1984; Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). For example, Larsen-Freeman (2000) states that CLT aims “to apply the theoretical perspective of the communicative approach by making communicative competence the goal of language teaching and by acknowledging the interdependence of language and communication” (p. 121). In addition, Savignon (2002) highlights that CLT refers to the processes and goals of learning in the language classroom, adding that the vital theoretical concept behind CLT is CC.

CLT was introduced into the literature of language use and FL learning in the early 1970s. CLT is categorized as an approach, since the aim of language teaching is to develop CC in the four

language skills via a syllabus and teaching procedures to achieve the purpose of communicating using the target language (Brown, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). According to Brown (2001), CLT therefore represents a theoretical position on the nature and the process of language teaching and learning. Richards and Rodgers (2001) indicate that CLT comprises a wide range of methods and techniques, so there is no single model or authority for the approach. It is flexible in its use of materials and employs methods that are universally accepted as authoritative and appropriate for the context of teaching and learning.

The comprehensive nature of CLT makes it somewhat different in scope and status from any other approach (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Furthermore, the issue of why CLT is chosen over other traditional approaches to teaching English relates to the context of this research. The answer is, as Doughty and Long (2003) put it, that CLT takes a pragmatic or performance-based approach to learning and “its goal is to promote the development of real-life language skills by engaging the learner in contextualized, meaningful, and communicative-oriented learning tasks” (p. 22).

The claims made for CLT differ: for some it means little more than an integration of grammatical and functional teaching; for others, however, such as Littlewood (1981), one of the most characteristic features of CLT “is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language” (p. 1), as discussed further with regard to strong and weak CLT (cf. 3.6.2). In addition, Richards et al. (1992) state that CLT is “an approach to foreign or second language teaching which emphasises that the goal of language learning is communicative competence” (p. 65). As such, CLT reflects a certain model or research paradigm, or even a theory (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Above all, CLT helps enhance CC among learners by enabling them to use the knowledge they have learned to engage in real-life communication in various situations (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Hymes, 1972; Littlewood, 1981).

3.6.1 Principles of CLT

The literature in the field of applied linguistics characterizes CLT and its principles differently (Brown, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Littlewood, 1981; Richards, 2006; Savignon, 1991).

Larsen-Freeman (2000) states that the most obvious feature of CLT is that “almost everything is done with a communicative intent” (p. 129). Given the nature of a CLT syllabus, Brown (2007, p. 43) points to six consistent characteristic principles, which are highly focused on real-life communicative activities:

1. Classroom goals are focused on all the components of CC: grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic and strategic. Goals must therefore intertwine the organizational aspects of language with the pragmatic aspect.
2. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in pragmatic, authentic and functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus, but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish particular purposes.
3. Fluency and accuracy are complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times, fluency may take on greater importance than accuracy to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.
4. Students in communicative classes ultimately must use the language productively and receptively in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom. Classroom tasks must therefore equip students with the skills necessary for communication in such contexts.
5. Students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an understanding of their own style of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning.

6. The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide, not an all-knowing best owner of knowledge. Students are therefore encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with others.

Canale and Swain (1980: 2) also advocated CLT as “a functional/notional” approach, which uses the basis of communicative functions, such as *apologizing*, *describing*, *inventing* and *promising*, to focus on a learner’s or group of learners’ “need to know” and on how to use grammatical forms to express these functions appropriately. In a similar vein, Savignon (1997: 4) considered that CLT derives from a “multidisciplinary perspective”, which allows learners to be involved in various communicative situations, such as in the fields of linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology and education. Thus, the focus of CLT is to elaborate and implement the development of functional language capability through learner involvement in communicative events. Integrating the principles of CLT in the language teaching process will support learners in developing not only their knowledge of linguistic forms but also the meaning and functions of the language.

In addition, CLT involves integrating different skills – speaking, listening, reading and writing – since these skills usually occur together in real-world communication (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Littlewood, 1981; Richards, 2006, Richards & Rodgers, 2014). According to Littlewood (1981), the main feature of the CLT approach is that it “pays attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language” (p. 1). Therefore, teachers who combine and present the functional and structural rules of the target language and provide opportunities for learners to interact in the classroom can help learners to develop their CC.

Above all, CLT is about communication, as language learning will take place when learners are involved in a real process of communication. This primarily entails information exchange and negotiation of meaning, incorporating authentic materials into pedagogical practice and working in pairs and small groups (Berns, 1990; Lantolf, 2000; Larsen-Freeman, 2000;

Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Savignon, 1997). Similarly, Nunan (1991, p. 279) outlines five fundamental principles common to the CLT approach:

- An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
- The introduction of authentic texts in the learning situation.
- The provision of opportunities for learners to focus not only on language, but also on the learning management process itself.
- Enhancement of the learners' own personal experience as important elements contributing to classroom learning.
- Attempts to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

Having discussed numerous CLT principles propounded by different scholars, Brown (2007), for example, points to six consistent characteristic CLT principles, which are highly focused on real-life communicative activities. In addition, five fundamental principles are common to the CLT approach as summarized by Nunan (1991). In this research, Brown's (2007) set of principles were used as a systematic approach to data analysis in terms of comparing and analysing language teacher's classroom practices (see 5.5).

3.6.2 Strong and weak versions of CLT

Howatt (1984) identified CLT as consisting of "strong" and "weak" versions and this has been discussed in much of the L2 literature (e.g. Ellis, 2003, 2012; Ellis & Shintani, 2013, 2014; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). As a result, there is no mass or uniform approach to language teaching through CLT (Ellis, 2003). The notion of the strong version of CLT is that language is acquired solely through a communicative approach (Howatt, 1984). Learners do not learn the language through structural systems; rather, they learn the language first and then how to use structural patterns in communication. To a certain extent, they discover the system itself in the process of learning and how to communicate using the language. In this version, it is

proposed that learners are given plenty of opportunities to express how language is used in various actual communication situations (Howatt, 1984). In this regard, Richards and Rodgers (2014) state that the CLT approach arose as a result of the questioning of assumptions and practices associated with traditional teaching methods. CLT reflects a certain model or theory which emphasizes that the main purpose of language use is to employ it in real-life situations that require communication (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Hymes, 1972; Littlewood, 1981). Furthermore, Savignon (2004, cited in Hall, 2011, p. 94) indicates:

...that CLT in its strong form cannot be followed to via a single textbook, implicitly suggesting that ELT materials that are termed “communicative” must be adhering to the weaker form. Indeed, it is perhaps the potential eclecticism of weak forms of CLT, mixing a planned and explicit focus on language and practice with communicative activities that has paved the way for eclecticism.

On the other hand, the weak version of CLT assumes that the components of CC can be identified and systematically taught (Ellis, 2003). Within this perspective, CLT can be understood as an approach that is both leading and analytic, meaning that CLT does not comprise a fundamental traditional “method”. However, the weak version of CLT also highlights the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use the target language for communicative purposes. Usually a syllabus employing the weak version of CLT attempts to provide activities that enhance communicative ability using the target language (Howatt, 1984). Such types of activity in the weak vision of CLT are demonstrated in syllabi based on a national and functional perspective (e.g. inventing and apologizing), as proposed by Wilkins (1976) and Van Ek (1976).

In summary and in line with Richards and Rodgers (2014), CLT reflects an approach highlighting that the main purpose of language is to make use of it in real-life situations that require communication.

3.6.3 Learning and teaching activities in CLT

A wide range of activities is used within the CLT approach to address the purpose of language as a communication tool in different contexts. Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 161) highlight three key principles of CLT related to the theory of language learning: (i) the principle that it includes real communication activities to promote learning; (ii) it uses meaningful task activities to promote learning; (iii) it involves meaningful tasks and authentic materials which support the learning process. Activities in a CLT classroom are therefore selected based on how learners can be engaged in meaningful and authentic language use rather than practising grammatical patterns. In Littlewood's (1981) methodological framework, activities are divided into pre-communicative and communicative activities. Pre-communicative activities are a form of part-skills training, in which teachers focus on presenting a specific element of knowledge such as structural activities and quasi-communicative activities (e.g. explanations, repetition, and drills).

Littlewood (1981) pointed out that learners are provided with opportunities to practise and enhance their communicative ability. This includes most of learning activities incorporating different types of drill and question and answer to provide language learners with a fluent command of the linguistic system and enable them to attain sufficient, accurate and appropriate language. While this looks very traditional, Littlewood (1981) also states that communicative activities should include both functional communication and social interaction activities. Furthermore, Richards (2006) explained that, functional communicative activities enable learners to expose to the target language to overcome an information gap and solve a problem. In addition, social interactional activities encourage learners to pay attention to the context and the roles of the people involved and to attend such things as formal versus informal language. Thus, learners can be more creative when they are exposed to such situation and use the language to solve a problem or exchange information.

Furthermore, Ellis (2015) described two approaches to language teaching, which are called ‘focus-on-forms’ and ‘focus-on-form’ (Long, 1991). Focus on form is defined as overtly attract students’ attention to linguistic elements as they increase incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication (Long, 1991: 45-46). Whereas, “focus on forms” refers to the traditional approach in which only linguistic forms are taught clearly without communication and meaningful input. In this approach, the grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods are included (Yu, 2013). In addition, Ellis (2015) suggest that these two approaches “focus-on-forms” and ‘focus-on form’ should be complementary rather than oppositional approaches to teaching (p. 1).

Information gap is an important aspect of CLT activities; this refers to the means of a certain real communication when learners attempt to produce information using their vocabulary, grammar knowledge and communication strategies (Richards, 2006 & Nunan, 2004). In relation to this, Richards (2006) classified information gap tasks according to the types of interaction that learners need to achieve as follows:

- Jigsaw activities: is the activity that provides students an opportunity to work on different pieces of information or story and combine them in one meaningful task.
- Task-completion activities: for example, puzzles, games, map-reading, and other kinds of classroom tasks in which the focus is on using one’s language resources to complete a task.
- Information-gathering activities: Information-gathering activities: encourages students to make a direct communication to conduct-surveys, interviews, and searches in the way that are required to use their linguistic knowledge to collect information.
- Opinion-sharing activities: learners sharing ideas, opinions, and beliefs.

- Information-transfer activities: These require learners to take information that is presented in one form and represent it in a different form.
- Reasoning-gap activities: These involve deriving some new information from given information through the process of inference, practical reasoning.

These activities help learners to be more active and able to integrate their pre-communicative knowledge into an effective system, communicating meanings through methods such as sharing information, identifying pictures and role plays. These in turn would enhance the learners' capacity for acquiring language through communication rather than mastering language forms (Littlewood, 1984). In addition, it should be noted that activities in CLT are unlimited, they comprise various practices which enable learners to achieve the objectives of language learning, developing knowledge of linguistic components and the meanings and functions of language to use the target language communicatively (Cook, 2001; Lantolf, 2000, Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Moreover, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) state that an obvious characteristic of the approach is that “almost everything ... is done with a communicative intent” (p. 129). Thus, learners can obtain various aspects of a functional and structural setting and be able to choose appropriate vocabulary by understanding the use in specific situations (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011; Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 2006). In the CLT approach fluency is emphasized, with learners being encouraged to use the target language without worrying about errors and focusing instead on the content of communication. Errors are not neglected, but they are not given priority in terms of language production (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Whong, 2011).

3.6.4 Pair- and group-based activities in CLT

Classroom interaction is a core issue in language classrooms as language teaching has shifted from mastering linguistic patterns. The communicative approach highlights the role of

collaborative activities for better language input and language production. As Hall and Walsh (2002, p. 187) state, “classroom interaction takes on an especially significant role in that it is both the medium through which learning is realized and an object of pedagogical attention”. Thus, teacher and student interactions reflect the norm of harmony in generating intellectual and practical activities that enhance the development of the target language in terms of both aspects, form and content. CLT also helps to recognize individual’s roles in the processes of learning through such norms, as well as assessing students’ achievement (Hall & Verplaetse, 2000; Hall & Walsh, 2002).

Furthermore, Richards (2014) states that by rethinking classroom teaching techniques, learners can learn better through the process of communicating. Classroom interaction enhances students’ on-going language input through the various activities in which they engage as they listen to or read authentic language or use language in classroom dialogues, sharing ideas or undertaking problem-solving activities in the classroom and in real life communication (Choudhury, 2005). In research concerning CLT, to avoid judging teachers’ practices it is vital to have close discussions with the teachers observed regarding classroom interactions, examining the various methods and techniques employed to facilitate the process of language teaching and learning, such as group work, the norms of questioning and the materials used to meet students’ needs.

Nowadays, activities in language classrooms comprise more than transferring sets of information, vocabulary or knowledge of grammar to students. Instead, they constitute cooperative-based learning processes in which language learning is associated with allowing students to work together and create meaningful interaction (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). As McCafferty et al. (2006, p. 3) note, this entails grouping students to engage in a set of classroom activities associated with the theory of SLA and emphasizing the notions of “input, interaction,

output and learning autonomy, as well as ... sociocultural theories of learning through collaborative and dialogic interaction”.

3.6.5 Types of activities in the ELI

In the ELI, activities have been designed to be taught in a multinational setting. The book assumes that students have a background in and experience of the various types of exercises and the topics covered. Examples of topics discussed are travel, sports, music, international food and cross-cultural issues. However, due to their religion and living in a very traditional society, Saudi students will lack knowledge of some of the topics covered in the course book, for example the topic “Do you like dance?” and discussing well-known world singers and actors. Furthermore, comparing CC theory with the teaching and learning objectives of the ELI (i.e. classroom teaching methods, learning activities, textbook content and assessment procedures), it seems that CLT is not appropriately reflected in the current programme’s language teaching and learning practices.

In addition, in Saudi Arabia, it is argued that assessment aims to promote teachers’, students’ development, but teachers have limited involvement in the preparation of assessment, which is generally centralized, and thus only selected teachers are involved. Students are assessed through a restricted set of specific types of question, which limits their learning autonomy (Al-Albedaiwi, 2011). These issues will be further discussed throughout Chapter 6 (results) and Chapter 7 (discussion). It will become evident that much of the EFL teaching and learning process in the current programme is traditional rather than enhancing communicative-based teaching. Thus, I argue that the lack of learners’ adequate participation in the process of EFL instruction is one of the reasons contributing to their underachievement in CC. In this chapter, among other things, I have so far tried to elaborate on CC as the most appropriate learning theory underlying this thesis.

3.6.6 Syllabus and materials in a CLT approach

Since CLT has expanded globally, the nature of the syllabus has become a key consideration in the movement towards implementation to ensure the needs in terms of the communicative value of such content are met. Early syllabi included Wilkin's (1976) notional and functional model. However, while considered appropriate for certain purposes, such models have since been superseded. In particular, the Council of Europe aimed to develop and expand a CLT syllabus with the intention of developing language courses for European adults to be used for different purposes (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The Council of Europe syllabus was developed by Van Ek and Alexander (1980) and had a great influence on the design of CLT programmes in Europe. Furthermore, the adoption of CLT can be considered the beginning of a major paradigm shift in the process of language teaching, with the principles of CLT becoming widely accepted as an effective approach (McDonough, Shaw & Masuhara 2013).

Consequently, this indicates that the principles of CLT have been realized as materials, methods and classroom procedures that emphasize the importance of interpreting and applying such principles in different dimensions of the teaching and learning process. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), the development of CLT curricula has gone through different phases. The first was the primary concern to develop a syllabus that was compatible with the notion of CC. This led to proposing of a notional and functional syllabus, rather than one focused solely on grammatical structure (Wilkins, 1976). A notional and functional syllabus views language learning and teaching in light of the norm of language used for real communication in different situations. For example, the syllabus designed in CLT enables learners to acquire more functional competence using the target language (e.g., request, give direction, apologizing, etc.).

As Wilkins (1979: 83) states:

Language always occurs in a social context, which suggests that it is possible for people to concentrate learning upon the forms of language that are most appropriate to their needs. This creates the possibility of a learner-based syllabus to replace the subject based grammatical syllabus.

In the second phase, CLT focused on procedures for identifying learner needs and this resulted in proposals to make needs analysis an essential component of communicative methodology (Munby, 1978). Furthermore, this component intended to provide communicative abilities to learners according to individual needs. The third phase focused on the kinds of classroom activities that might be used as the basis for a communicative methodology, such as group work, tasks and information gap activities (Prabhu, 1987). Additionally, instructional materials play a significant role in the CLT classroom, promoting language teaching processes. A variety of classroom activities are advocated to enhance the purposes of CLT, for example games, role plays, simulations and task-based communication activities.

In addition, the use of authentic real-life materials is essential, including songs, magazine and newspaper articles, advertisements and graphic and visual sources. Moreover, it is also possible to present materials which enhance communicative goals with a view to practising the target language rather than structural patterns; examples include maps, pictures, symbols, graphs and charts (Richards, 1990; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Presenting a variety of communicative materials will enable learners to incorporate their knowledge and help them act as communicators. In doing so, they will not only make gains in terms of their knowledge and abilities, but they will also be able to express their expectations about learning language in areas such as what the teaching curriculum seeks to achieve regarding any specific purposes (Breen & Candlin, 1980). Furthermore, the use of authentic materials is vital in the CLT approach as it provides learners with opportunities to practise the target language and link classroom language learning to real-life communication, emphasizing communication through

interaction (Lantolf, 2000; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Learners will be fully engaged in pairs or small group activities in learning processes, including information sharing, negotiation of meaning and interaction (Cook, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

3.6.7 Error correction in CLT

Ellis (2009) mentioned that error correction is overall useful and can be helpful in learning process. The type of corrective feedback (CF) that is widely encouraged and accepted in CLT is implicit and does not interfere with communication. For example, a feedback, which is called recast, has been observed to occur frequently in CLT classrooms (Wu, 2008). A recast is the teacher's reformulation of a learner's incorrect utterance while preserving a focus on meaning: for instance, the corrector incorporates the content words of the immediately preceding incorrect utterance, changes, and corrects the utterance in some way (e.g., phonological, syntactic, morphological or lexical) (Ellis, 2009: 9). In addition, regarding to the types of error correction, the current literature review shows that there are two techniques for oral error correction; these are covert and overt corrections. Overt correction techniques for instance, contain straight correction of a language learner's error, which is considered as clear negative feedback, which was criticised because of the wrong practise of this technique (Larsen-Freeman, 2003). Covert, this is the other error correction technique, meaning the way of correcting is cast indirectly (Carrion, 2016). Ellis, (2009: 9) in Table (3.2) below shows some examples of these types of error correction techniques.

Table 3.2 Corrective feedback strategies

Corrective feedback strategy	Definition	Example
Recast	The corrector incorporates the content words of the immediately preceding incorrect utterance and changes and corrects the utterance in some way (e.g., phonological, syntactic, morphological or lexical).	L: I went there two times. T: You've been. You've been there twice as a group?
Repetition	The corrector repeats the learner utterance highlighting the error by means of emphatic stress.	L: I will <i>showed</i> you. T: I will SHOWED you. L: I'll show you.
Clarification request	The corrector indicates that he/she has not understood what the learner said.	L: What do you spend with your wife? T: What?
Explicit correction	The corrector indicates an error has been committed, identifies the error and provides the correction.	L: On May. T: Not on May, In May. We say, "It will start in May."
Elicitation	The corrector repeats part of the learner utterance but not the erroneous part and uses rising intonation to signal the learner should complete it.	L: I'll come if it will not rain. T: I'll come if it.....?

(Ellis, 2009: 9)

3.6.8 The role of the teacher in CLT

The role of teachers shifts in CLT from that of the traditional approach. Breen and Candlin (1980, p. 99) consider that the language teacher plays at least three key roles in CLT: the first can be labelled "facilitator of the communication process", helping learners to become engaged in the communication process through involvement in various activities in the classroom; the second is to act as an "interdependent participant within the learning-teaching group"; the third is that the teacher is more autonomous in CLT classroom practices in organizing and guiding the teaching processes. These three teachers' roles do not operate separately in shaping teachers' use of CLT; rather, they work dynamically to form teachers' CLT classroom practices (Liao & Zhao, 2012).

Teachers usually communicate with learners in ways that reflect actual interaction outside the classroom through the types of question raised. According to Hall and Walsh (2002), classroom interaction takes on an especially significant role in that it is both the medium through which learning is realized and an object of pedagogical attention. In addition, Hall and Walsh (2002)

suggest that teachers' and students' interactions reflect the norm of maintaining harmony in creating intellectual and practical activities that enhance the development of the target language in term of both form and content. Teachers' roles include recognizing the parts played by individuals in the processes of learning through such norms, as well as assessing students' achievement (Hall & Verplaetse, 2000; Hall & Walsh, 2002). A further role can also be added for teachers using CLT that of "needs analysts". Teachers are required to analyse the language needs of their learners because awareness of these can help them to develop high-quality language teaching in the various types of educational institution (Candlin & Mercer, 2001).

3.6.9 The role of the learner in CLT

In terms of language teaching theory, CLT is a learner-centred and experience-based approach, which primarily focuses on processes of communication rather than mastery of language forms. Learners are the centre of the CLT approach and are expected to interact effectively within groups, exploiting the materials (Candlin & Mercer, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This shifts the role of the learner in the classroom, fostering high levels of motivation and encouraging them as communicators. There tends to be a greater focus on fluency than accuracy in developing language for communication in various situations (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In CLT, the extent of the learner's role can vary, and learners can manage their own learning and interaction, rather than reacting within roles assigned by teachers. Thus, learner independence is enhanced within CLT (Hedge, 2000; Nunan, 1989).

In addition, learners are actively engaged in meaning negotiation and hence take on an active role in the learning process, initiating and interacting rather than being passive in class (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Maley, 1986). Breen and Candlin (1980) also highlighted the learner's role within a CLT approach, stating: The role of learner as negotiator between the self, the learning process, and the object of learning emerges from and interacts with the role of joint negotiator within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities which the group

undertakes. The implication for the learner is that he should contribute as much as he gains, and thereby learning takes place in an interdependent way (p. 100). In addition, CLT gives learners the opportunity to contribute and take greater responsibility in designing activities for successful learning and to use their knowledge in a social context.

As already noted, the teaching and learning activities in CLT are learner centred, underpinning learners' needs and interests and differing from traditional teacher-fronted methods by developing cooperation through group work, games and pair work. These activities include problem-solving and information-gap activities, such as three-step interviews, roundtable, think-pair-share, solve-pair-share and numbered heads (Olsen & Kagan 1992). In these activities, the learner acts as a member of a group, working in partnership with other members to perform the activities. In other words, learners need to participate actively and directly and be involved in learning the language. As pointed out in the previous sub-section, the role of the teacher is to provide structured support for the learners and to foster an atmosphere of cooperation through arranging various classroom activities (Richards, 2001, p. 52).

This contrasts with the traditional approach with its highly controlled structural elements and emphasis on accuracy rather than fluency (Brumfit, 1984; Hedge, 2000). A CLT learner-centred approach allows learners to identify independent strategies and develop personal motivations. These are effective factors in language learning and designing activities. Furthermore, they can also work on developing independent approaches. Learners can plan, initiate and organize their own activities (Hedge, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The resulting commitment enhances individual contributions, interpretations, expressions and efforts to negotiate among learners, which are recognized as both valid and valuable in learning (Breen & Candlin, 1980; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

In addition, in language classroom, teachers' and students' 'verbal participation or engagement' is considered as a key component in the classrooms (Soo & Goh, 2013). This claim is harmonious with the conceptualization of the CLT principles in language teaching and learning process, in the means of language is learnt, taught, and used in a systematic way of expressing ideas (Davis, 2002 & Nunan, 1999). It is believed that students' engagements in doing such open discussion with their teachers or in groups, primarily students are compelled to be involved in the 'negotiation of meaning'. This ideally helps them express, and clarify thoughts and opinions (Farr, 2015; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Soo & Goh, 2013). By doing so students can develop their communicative competence. Thus, students' contribution in classroom discourse has a significant role to play in terms of evaluating their language capacity and learning outcomes (Warayet, 2011).

In spite of the encouragement and opportunities that CLT offers EFL teachers in using methods and techniques that allows learners to exposure to the target language, teachers in EFL classes still face student's reticence and silence classroom behaviour. Silence is also commonplace in UK and China University settings (Wei, 2018). Thus, it is important for teachers to provide suitable teaching strategies, which boosts students' contribution in class activities. In this regard, Shamim & Kuchah, (2016) stated that dealing with classroom challenges such as individual differences, student reticence, assessment and large classes with minimal resources may oppose the use of CLT. As Shamim & Kuchah, (2016) mentioned some key solutions to overcome these challenges which involved the use of "variety of activities, appropriate pacing of content, developing collaborative learning, personalisation of content and the establishment of classroom routines" (p. 530).

To summarize, CLT is one of the relatively recent methods in EFL teaching which enable learners to move from marginal participation in EFL classrooms to full participation through

communication and the process of negotiation to enhance their CC in academic and professional settings.

3.6.10 Alternative assessment in CLT

Assessment is an essential component of any educational setting, used to examine teaching and learning outcomes in terms of the objectives of instruction and the language programme (Cummins & Davison, 2007). Furthermore, according to Cummins and Davison (2007), assessment is associated with claims for the validity of instruction in relation to both curricula and instructional relevance, as well as authenticity in terms of classroom activities and processes (p. 505). Similarly, Alotabi (2014) points to assessment as central aspects that links students' classroom practices, teachers' overall development, content and teaching and learning activities. Harmer (2007) notes that students are subject to different types of assessment: formative and summative. The former refers to teacher's daily routines in assessing students' performance and providing feedback, prompting students to improve their performance in classroom practice. The latter refers to the kind of measurement typically used at the end of a course to evaluate students' performance.

The use of appropriate assessment procedures helps teachers not only to assess language teaching classroom practices and students' progress and further learning needs, but also to reflect on the quality of the curriculum and the programme itself. Jacobs and Farrell (2003, cited in Richards, 2006) argue that in CLT new forms of assessment procedures are needed to replace traditional multiple-choice and other methods that test lower-order skills. Numerous forms of assessment (e.g. observation, interviews, journals, portfolios) can be used to build a comprehensive picture of what students can do in L2 and foreign language learning. The issue of assessment is returned to later with reference to the types of assessment used in the programme provided by the ELI.

3.6.11. Assessment procedures in the ELI

Language assessment is considered the last part of the entire course. This covers the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) as well as aspects of grammar and vocabulary. According to the ELI (<https://eli.kau.edu.sa/>), student assessment should be conducted from a variety of perspectives in mid and final examinations for each module. The total grade is out of 100%: formative writing tasks (short paragraphs) (20%), grammar and vocabulary (10%), speaking (10%), a computer-based mid-module examination assessing students' reading comprehension, vocabulary and grammar use (20%) and a computer-based end-module examination focusing on reading and listening comprehension, vocabulary and grammar use (40%). Therefore, in the ELI it can be argued that the assessment procedures aim to promote students' development. However, teachers have limited involvement in the preparation of the assessments, which are centralised, and only selected teachers are involved. The specific types of assessment questions influence teaching and tend to limit students' learning autonomy (Albedaiwi, 2011). The grammar-based assessment procedures and lack of teachers' involvement in the examination committee are discussed in greater detail in relation to research question three (see 8.2.6.3).

Having explained the theoretical and epistemological underpinning of this research the following section (3.7) presents reviews of studies carried out in various educational institutions, within the field of English Language teaching and learning in EFL settings. The key themes in this review include; EFL teachers' and students' beliefs and perceptions of CLT, difficulties in adopting the CLT approach; misconception of CLT; communicative and non-communicative activities; students' conceptions towards CLT implementation; and teachers' practices in relation to pair and group-based activities.

3.7 Empirical studies of CLT

CLT has gained acceptance as a theoretical model of English language learning and is considered an approach by many applied linguists and EFL teachers around the world (see e.g. Brandl, 2008; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011; Nunan, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Tarone & Yule, 1989). Literature on language teaching has discussed the effectiveness of the CLT approach and its contribution to learning, particularly regarding the components of CC (see Howatt, 1984; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Savignon, 2000; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). Equally, however, misconceptions of CLT have also been well documented, it has been argued that EFL teachers' beliefs and perceptions are among the factors giving rise to them (Ellis, 1994; Farrell & Levs, 2015; Li, 1998; Thompson, 1996).

Misconceptions of CLT tend to be allied with the cultural values and practices of EFL contexts. Indeed, individuals' educational values and practices are the main cause of difficulties in applying CLT in classroom practice (Lewis & McCook, 2002; Li, 1998). A study by Li (1998) in South Korea found two misconceptions of CLT, namely that it does not entail teaching grammar but rather only speaking and that teachers believe it conflicts with the examination procedure and is therefore not considered appropriate. This is broadly in line with Thompson's (1996, pp. 10–13) finding that there are four misconceptions regarding CLT: (a) CLT means no teaching of grammar; (b) CLT means only teaching speaking; (c) CLT entails pair work, which means role play; (d) CLT expects too much from the teacher. Furthermore, teachers' beliefs appear to apply a stronger effect on affective and evaluative components than knowledge concerning CLT. Thus, they operate independently of the cognition associated with knowledge (Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999, p. 309). Richardson (1996) seemingly agreed with this view when he stated that "beliefs influence teaching practice more directly than knowledge" and that the "relationship between beliefs and actions is interactive" (cited in Sato &

Kleinsasser, 1999, p. 496). In addition to teachers' beliefs and practices, Ellis (1994) showed that class size, grammar-based examinations and lack of exposure to authentic language are key factors that teachers struggle with in applying CLT.

Many researchers have demonstrated that exploring teachers' and students' existing perceptions and knowledge with respect to the principles of CLT should be the starting point for professional development programmes. The existing knowledge of teachers affects the way in which they perceive and value a teaching method. It also affects the actions teachers take in using the ideas of such a method (Brown, 2007; Loucks-Horsely et al., 2010). It is also important to understand teachers' perceptions to identify areas of focus in pre-service and in-service teachers' professional development programmes for the proper implementation of the desired teaching methods (Putnam & Borko, 1997).

Despite the adoption of CLT globally as a language teaching approach, many questions have been raised regarding the appropriateness of CLT in EFL contexts. Thus, in this review some studies are discussed that have investigated the appropriateness of CLT for EFL teaching and learning settings and the challenges that EFL teachers face in adopting CLT in their classrooms (Asassfeh et al., 2012; Ellis, 1994; Li, 1998; Savignon, 2002).

3.7.1 Studies of CLT implementation in EFL contexts

Li (1998) conducted a study in South Korea concerning a group of English teachers' difficulties in adopting the CLT approach. A questionnaire was distributed to 18 South Korean secondary school English teachers who were studying in the Korean Teacher Education Program (KTEP) at a Canadian university and 10 interviews were also conducted. She categorized the difficulties and reported them in relation to the teachers, the students, the educational system and the CLT approach itself. The most frequent difficulties associated with teachers include teachers' deficiencies in spoken English, deficiencies in strategic and sociolinguistic competence, lack

of training in CLT, lack of opportunities for re-training, misconceptions of CLT, and inadequate time and expertise for developing communicative materials. Difficulties concerning students included the students' low oral communication proficiency, lack of motivation for communicative competence, and resistance to participating in class. The educational system itself is found to be one source of difficulties as well, for example, large classes, a grammar-based examination, an inadequate account of EFL teaching using the CLT approach and the lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments in CLT.

Hassan (2013) also undertook a study to identify teachers' and students' perceived difficulties in implementing CLT in Bangladeshi secondary schools. Multiple methods such as classroom observation and interviews were used to examine the extent to which various factors contributed to such perceived difficulties. The data revealed that teachers in Bangladesh apply the CLT principles minimally in their teaching. During the teachers' interviews pedagogical difficulties, environmental and personal difficulties were identified as the key barriers to implementing CLT in the classroom. The findings also showed that pedagogical difficulties include insufficient training for pre-service and in-service teachers, low English proficiency, inconsistency between the CLT approach and the national examination system, teachers' orientation to traditional methods, the role of private tuition, isolated grammar practice, separation of female and male students in the school and teachers' lack of familiarity with general teaching techniques. Moreover, environmental and personal difficulties appeared to inhibit CLT classroom instruction. These findings are reflected in RQ1 in this study.

Another study conducted by Xue (2009) investigated the extent to which CLT was adopted and adapted by 23 Chinese tertiary teachers of English with experience of teacher education overseas from four institutions. The study used classroom observation, semi-structured interviews and questionnaire instruments for data collection purposes. Although constraints on CLT implementation were both mentioned and observed, "communicative ideas" were also

found to be reflected widely in the teaching performance of the participants. The findings were presented from two perspectives: perceptions of CLT and contributions. The study showed that great attention was paid to learner involvement in the different teaching stages: pre-teaching, while teaching and post teaching.

Xue (2009) notes, however, a tendency towards eclecticism in the teaching practices of many informants and the phenomenon of what is termed a “seeming-communicative” approach, reflected in some participant teaching methods due to their belief in the fundamental importance of learning the skills of recitation and memorization. Regarding the findings of the experience of teacher education overseas, Xue added that intercultural competence and critical thinking need to be considered as essential prerequisites for CLT implementation and seeking appropriate methodology. In addition, in relation to the appropriateness of CLT in China, the findings highlight three major issues: essentialism, overgeneralization and labelling. Xue elaborated these issues, for instance, there is a tendency in the perceptions of CLT held by some Chinese EFL philosophers and practitioners, to overlook the flexible nature of CLT which allows the approach to be adapted and customized to be used to the needs of learners in a given context (Savignon, 2008). In addition, the author also identified what overgeneralization means stating that some researchers’ argument on the suitability of CLT in the Chinese EFL context is based on stereotyped rather than facts pertaining to Chinese learning culture and Chinese learners, as these researchers neglected the contextual factors and cultural diversity both at the general cultural context and the regional and classroom culture. Furthermore, Xue concludes that these problems appear to have caused by the blind application of CLT in China (Xue, 2009). Thus, it is important to understand CLT and its appropriateness in different cultural contexts from an anti-essentialist perspective.

Another study by Rao (2000) aimed to examine Chinese students’ perceptions of communicative and non-communicative activities in EFL classroom. The students were asked

to respond to the following questions. For instance, (a) whether the students enjoy activities involving communication and real use of language; (b) are they interested in the teaching practices that may be new to them; (c) to what extent do students prefer real-language activities highlighting language content that are more active than non-communicative activities that stress formal correction and; (d) do students believe that such activities are helpful to them as language learners. The study focused on answering the above stated questions using multi method, qualitative research procedures. Rao discovered that teachers were amazed by the students' perceptions in realizing that their perceived difficulties caused by Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) had their source in the differences between the fundamental educational theories of China and those of Western countries.

The findings of the study suggested that, to renovate English language teaching approaches, China and many other countries where EFL is used need to update, as Rao stated, “not westernize, English teaching; that is, to combine the “new” with the “old” to align the communicative approach with traditional teaching structures” (2002:1) (cf.3.6.2). In addition, the author concludes that only by integrating communicative activities with non-communicative activities in English classrooms students in non-English speaking countries can earn more benefit from CLT.

Rahman, Singh, and Pandian, (2018) conducted a case study that investigated and compared the stated beliefs and observed classroom practices relating to CLT of two ESL teachers. The key findings of this study show that by articulating and reflecting on beliefs, one teacher became more aware of the meaning and impact of these beliefs on his classroom practices. Some implications for future studies were also discussed. In addition, the findings revealed that both the teachers who participated in this study held similar complex beliefs that mostly contradicted the philosophy of CLT. However, their classroom practices were not in line with either their stated beliefs or CLT principles. The findings also indicated that the teachers did

indeed possess a set of complex beliefs not always realized in their classroom practices for a variety of potential reasons: some of these might directly be related to the context of teaching. These findings are reflected in RQ2 in this study.

To explore EFL teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of CLT in Taiwanese higher education, Chang and Goswami (2011) conducted a study using two research methods surveys and interviews. The study highlighted teachers' attitudes as a significant factor in implementing and understanding the role of CLT in the Taiwanese educational context. The research took place at colleges and universities in southern Taiwan that integrated CLT into their curricula and some 55 teachers from these colleges were surveyed randomly. One teacher did not return the questionnaire, leaving a total of 54, 8 of whom were selected for the interviews. The study addressed two research questions: the first focused on overall attitudes towards CLT and the second concerned identifying the reasons underlying those attitudes. The authors employed five aspects to investigate the attitudes of teachers towards CLT: (a) place or importance of grammar; (b) group /pair work; (c) quality and quantity of error correction; (d) the role of the teacher in the classroom; (e) the role and contribution of learners to the learning process.

The findings revealed that the participants as a group agreed with the principles underpinning CLT and during interviews teachers were able to provide a number of reasons for their positive attitudes towards CLT: (a) teachers supported CLT because it pays attention to both form and function; (b) teachers were in favour of CLT because it focuses on the development of the ability of students to use the target language; (c) CLT takes into account effective factors in language learning; (d) CLT develops learner autonomy in the learning process (Chang & Goswami, 2011). Analysis of the interviews also showed that the Taiwanese teachers were highly supportive of CLT and believed it helpful in developing CC as well as linguistic knowledge. They also verified that the use of CLT did not reject teaching grammar, because learners need to practise both linguistic form and communicative function to develop their

target language. To sum up, the study concluded that Taiwanese teachers are aware of the effectiveness of CLT in developing students' language skills, as well as the cognitive aspects of the L2 learning process. In terms of teaching approach, teachers revealed that they preferred CLT over traditional teaching methods for various reasons, namely: (a) CLT enabled them to create a secure and effective learning environment; (b) CLT helped them to enhance the English proficiency of learners; (c) CLT enabled learners to become autonomous so that they took charge of their own learning.

In another study, Incecay and Incecay (2009) investigated the perceptions of 30 Turkish university level students concerning the appropriateness of CLT and non-CLT activities in an EFL context. Data were collected using a mixed method approach by means of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The results showed that participants supported both communicative activities (whole-class discussion, pair work and group work) and non-communicative activities (error correction and audio-lingual drills). The researchers recommended that teachers align both activity types in their classroom teaching. The researchers also ascribed participants' preference for non-CLT activities to the norms and traditions characteristic of the teaching methods students are used to.

In another study, Lashgari, Jamali, and Yousofi (2014) explored the attitudes of 30 EFL teachers' attitudes towards CLT in Kermanshah. The study primarily aimed to investigate EFL teachers' attitudes towards CLT, explore teachers' underlying reasons for their attitudes and investigate any discrepancies between teachers' beliefs concerning CLT and their practice in the classroom. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The results of the study indicated that generally EFL teachers held favourable attitudes towards the principles of CLT and displayed the characteristics of CLT in their beliefs and practices. No great gap was observed between the teachers' beliefs concerning CLT and their practices as realized in the classroom. In addition, the study provided some valuable suggestions for further research

concerning various aspects of the implementation of CLT in EFL contexts. For instance, the study suggested that further research could be conducted to determine if demographic data (i.e. age, gender and years of experience) might have an influence on EFL teachers' beliefs and research might be conducted that includes learners' views and perspectives. In particular, research with teachers in other contexts would be desirable and enhance the results of this study.

Raissi et al. (2013) investigated how CLT is implemented in ELT classrooms in Malaysia from the students' point of view. Quantitative and semi-structured interview methods were used, and three aspects were employed to investigate students' attitudes towards CLT: (a) ideas and perceptions about the implementation of CLT and the amount of interaction among teacher and students; (b) the quality of the Malaysian curriculum and whether teachers use authentic tasks in classes; (c) improvement in different skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening), error correction and teacher feedback. Analysis of the interviews revealed that the participants had positive attitudes towards the quality of English textbooks and considered they paid useful attention with respect to the four main skills of the target language. The negative points that they raised were that some sub-skills, such as grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary, were not appropriate to meet the students' needs.

Regarding the principles of CLT, participants showed a positive attitude towards authentic materials, classroom interaction and group-work activities. Key aspects of dissatisfaction concerned deficiencies in terms of school facilities, such as language laboratories and technologies videos, projectors and CD players necessary to support classroom activities. Overall, the results of the study showed that students in Malaysian secondary schools have positive attitudes concerning CLT because they believe that the approach helps them to develop their communicative ability compared with other language approaches, such as the GTM or ALM. Although implementing CLT was viewed as improving their receptive skills (listening

and reading), their productive skills (writing and speaking) were not developed as they should be and were still insufficient for their level. Indeed, participants indicated that during the language learning process, most teachers focused only on receptive skills, neglecting the importance of productive skills. A lack of speaking skills among the students, in terms of expressing themselves or having a good communicative level in English, was commonly observed.

Criado and Sanchez (2009) conducted an evaluation study of EFL textbooks used in Spain in order to investigate the extent to which the ELT course books in Spanish educational settings fulfilled the official regulations, which fully advocated using CLT. Seven representative course books were analysed. The books target different educational levels of studies and age including students in secondary studies, upper secondary, teenagers and adults. The analysis was based on the concept of the communicative potential of the activities measured on a scale from 0 to 10 and the communicative nature of the methodological strategies implemented measured on a dichotomous scale (yes/no). The findings pointed out that more than 50% of the language teaching materials used per educational levels adhered to communicative teaching principles. On the other hand, the remaining non-communicative activities focused on the meaning or form features of the language such as grammar rules and vocabulary. The study concluded that although these results indicate a certain degree of separation between official regulations and what is really found in teaching materials, it may still be considered positive in the sense that the inclusion of both communicative and non-communicative materials allows learners as well as teachers who might prefer different things and have different learning styles to benefit from the classroom.

Sarfraz, Mansoor & Tariq (2015) conducted a study regarding teachers' and students' perceptions of the communicative language teaching methodology in the Computer Assisted Language Learning environment in Pakistan. The data was collected based on the students'

feedback on communicative based activities. Questionnaires were distributed to fifty students who were registered in the English language course of Computer Science Degree Program at FAST National University at the end of the semester. In addition, to the questionnaire, teachers' classroom observation on students' performance was used for subsequent evaluations.

The results of the study illustrated that teachers and students held positive attitudes towards the communicative language teaching approach. However, the findings of the study suggested that there is some discrepancy in terms of students' and teachers' perceptions regarding to the appropriateness of the approach. The researcher concluded that the integration of CALL in the communicative framework emphasises the role of students with freedom over their learning and encouraged them a high sense of responsibility which made their learning process more effective and meaningful. The variation in the perceptions of the teachers and students in terms of the activities confirmed the usefulness of this study. Discrepancies of views and expectations incidentally are also one of the themes that the current PhD will explore (cf. 7.5.4).

Table 3.3 Summary of the literature reviewed

CLT in the Asian context				
Researcher(s)	Context	Method	Study focus	Sample of the study
Li (1998)	South Korea/ secondary school	Interviews	Difficulties in adopting the CLT approach	South Korea concerning a group of English teachers'
Chang and Goswami (2011)	Taiwanese educational context	Surveys and interviews	Teacher attitudes as a significant factor in implementing and understanding the role of CLT in the Taiwanese educational context	EFL teachers
Xue (2009)	Chinese/ tertiary level	Classroom observation, semi-structured interviews and questionnaire	Investigated the extent to which CLT was adopted and adapted	Chinese tertiary teachers of English
Raissi, et.al (2013)	Malaysia	questionnaire and semi-structured interview	Investigated the point of view of the students to understand how CLT is implemented in English language teaching classrooms	Teachers
Incecay and Incecay (2009)	A private university in Istanbul, Turkey	Questionnaire and semi-structured interview	The appropriateness of communicative and non-communicative activities and the difficulties that students perceive because of CLT implementation	Student
Hassan (2013)	Bangladeshi secondary schools	classroom observation and interview	A study to identify teachers' and students' perceived difficulties	Teachers and students
Rahman, Singh and Pandian (2018)	Bangladesh, two schools in Dhaka	classroom observation and interview	Exploring ESL teacher beliefs and classroom practices of CLT	Teachers
Rao (2002)	Chinese university	Interview	Students in their second and third year of the course to investigate perceptions of communicative and non-communicative activities	Chinese students
Criado and Sanchez (2009)	Spain	Document analysis	ELT textbooks used in Spanish educational settings fulfilled the official regulations prescribed, ones which fully advocate CLT	Various types of textbooks
Sarfraz, Mansoor and Tariq (2015)	Pakistan	Questionnaire and classroom observation	Teachers' and students' perceptions of the communicative language teaching methodology	Teachers and students

Regarding the communicative language teaching, all of the above-mentioned studies examined aspects of CLT in EFL contexts. It appears that most of these studies focused on the difficulties they face in implementing CLT. Moreover, the findings of these studies suggest that it is essential for educational pedagogic to focus on developing teachers in the form of in-service

training to bridge the gap between language theories and teacher's knowledge of CLT. Although there appears to be a wide range of research undertaken in the appropriateness and difficulties in using CLT in EFL contexts, little attention was given to see to what extent CLT principles and teachers' classroom practices have been implemented in the Arab world generally and more specifically in Saudi Arabian EFL contexts. Some studies regarding the implementation of CLT within the Arab educational context the following are discussed below.

3.7.2 Studies of CLT implementation in Arab contexts

Fareh (2010) investigated the challenges of teaching English in Arab countries, particularly focusing on why EFL programmes delivered in language teaching classes do not deliver the expected results. Fareh noted that although incredible efforts have been made to improve the teaching–learning process of English in the Arab world, EFL programmes still fail to deliver as expected. Thus, the EFL learners' language proficiency remains insufficient and below the expectations. The study attempted to answer two questions: (1) what are the challenges that Arab countries face in teaching EFL? (2) How can they meet these challenges? The study used surveys on hundreds of English language teachers; classroom observation was also conducted on different Arab countries including Jordan, the West Bank, Syria, Sudan, Yemen, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. In addition, English language teachers were interviewed during training workshops. The findings of the study showed that the insufficient preparation of teachers, lack of motivation on the part of the learners, teacher-centred methods and insufficient assessment techniques are among the major problems that render EFL programmes unable to deliver as expected. These findings are reflected in RQ3 in this study.

Al-Nouh (2008) investigated whether EFL primary teachers implemented a CLT-based method in their classrooms in Kuwait or not. Qualitative data were collected using classroom observation and interviews and 23 females Kuwaiti EFL primary teachers participated in the study. The study aimed to examine the curriculum documents, textbook/materials, assessment

and teacher training programmes to explore how these aspects were employed to develop learners' CC in using English language. The outcomes of the data analysis indicated that Kuwait teachers do not apply a CLT-based approach because of form-focused assessment and textbooks. Regarding teacher training, the interview data and examination of the training programme in Kuwait indicated that teachers were fully trained and well prepared in communicative teaching. However, the findings of the study concluded that teachers use language-centred teaching, focusing on grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, spending more time on accuracy than other aspects of communication.

Another study by Al-Rabadi (2012) investigated whether Jordanian university instructors' practices were in line with their attitudes towards pair/group work, the role of the teacher, error correction and use of L1 and the challenges that they faced in applying CLT principles in their context. The study followed the practices of two instructors in the English department in terms of implementing CLT. The qualitative study used classroom observation (3 x 60 min) and semi-structured interviews. The findings indicated a relative difference between the instructors' attitudes and their classroom practices, despite some natural embracing of certain CLT features. The major challenges comprised lack of CLT training, huge class sizes, limited exposure to English, a structurally oriented syllabus and shortage of time.

At a Higher Education Institution in the Sultanate of Oman, McLean (2011) investigated awareness and use of CLT methodology in a foundation programme. In this study, the qualitative research methodology involved a core of five EFL teachers and the use of three data-gathering instruments questionnaires, classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. The findings of this study revealed that most teachers had inadequate knowledge of the CLT approach and did not use it in their classroom teaching. Furthermore, the findings from the interviews and classroom observation revealed that a substantial number of the research participants did not have an adequate or clear knowledge of the meaning of the term

“approach” as it relates to the area of language teaching. The only obvious reason for this is that these teachers had not encountered the term in its usage in language teaching context of applied linguistics or during formal pre- or in-service training. McLean recommended that an adapted version of CLT, including local contextual and sociocultural conditions, may be pedagogically feasible. In other words, the process of English language learning and teaching process would be much better by drawing on such as local knowledge, experience and which is in harmony with local cultural sensitivities and informed by local realities.

Batawi (2006) investigated teachers’ perceptions regarding the use of CLT as an innovation in the Saudi context. In all, 100 female EFL teachers were surveyed and 12 of these teachers also participated in the second phase of the study, which constituted three focus group discussions. The focus groups mainly discussed the teachers’ command of CLT and what problems they might face during their implementation of CLT in the EFL classroom. The findings indicated that teachers employed a range of practices that reflected a combination of methods when teaching. In other words, Saudi teachers intended to use aspects of both traditional and communicative approaches in their teaching, preferring traditional methods over CLT.

The source of difficulties included problems caused by the teachers themselves due to lack of training, many students in one classroom and instructional policies related to a centralized educational system. The researcher identified three areas to which decision makers need to pay attention for successful use of CLT: (a) the value of training; (b) reorientation of society in general; (c) adapting rather than adopting CLT. The study concluded by emphasizing that in the long term, Saudi teachers should establish their own research to develop appropriate language teaching methods that are appropriate to the Saudi context.

Another important study within the same area was conducted by Alhawsawi (2013) which explored the journey of Saudi student learning experiences in an EFL programme at the

University for Health and Science (QU-HS) from three perspectives: (1) the institutional influence of the QU-HS on student learning experiences based on the characteristics of instructional theory; (2) family educational background, using the notion of cultural capital; (3) student interaction with the teaching approaches used in the university's EFL programme. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and related documents. Analysing the university's implemented policies, the results revealed that three aspects had a negative impact on the EFL programme, and this affected the learning experience.

These aspects were: (a) use of English language as the medium of instruction and communication; (b) different provisions in the EFL programme; (c) the process of recruitment for EFL instructors. The researcher considered the lack of a family educational background as the second key finding of the study, claiming that the student's family educational background significantly influences the way students approach their learning. This is in addition to appropriate teaching approaches which help to shape the learning experience. The results of the study showed that during classroom observation, the CLT approach encouraged active engagement and more independent learning practices, whilst the GTM created a more passive and teacher-dependent nature in the way students learn.

In a study addressing the types of communicative and non-communicative activities that can generate student anxiety in EFL classrooms, Algonhaim (2014) conducted a mixed qualitative and quantitative study. Data were collected by means of a questionnaire (52 participants) and semi-structured interviews. The findings of the study revealed that in Saudi Arabia the language teaching system is highly in need of development and modernization regarding language teaching approaches. To this end, applying a CLT approach will be of advantage to EFL students in developing their communicative ability. The findings also showed that there is a great advantage in combining communicative and non-communicative activities in the

language classroom. Algonhaim (2014) suggested that oral activities which require the use of the target language in the classroom led to the most anxiety among students, whereas activities that were “group-oriented” produced less anxiety.

Another study by Abdullah (2015) investigated students’ perceptions of the importance of CLT at a Kurdish university. The sample of the study was chosen based on their CLT knowledge and the students had been taught using the CLT approach for almost three years. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through a set of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews respectively. The study aimed to find the answers to three research questions: (a) what are students’ attitudes towards CLT? (b) Do students think that authentic materials should be used by teachers in English classes? (c) What are the challenges that Kurdish students face when they are taught through the CLT method? The findings of the study indicated that the participants held positive attitudes towards the practice of CLT. In addition, the students were in favour of the use of the authentic materials because these are more interesting than others. However, teachers and students experienced a few challenges when implementing CLT: lack of teachers’ knowledge, grammar-based exams, and lack of authentic materials and students’ proficiency level. These findings are reflected in RQ1 in this study.

In another study focused on an EFL setting, Abdulkader (2013) explored the perceptions of thirty-five Saudi EFL teachers regarding the appropriateness of the CLT approach in a Saudi undergraduate context; the project also discussed attitudes towards CLT and the difficulties that teachers face in implementing this approach in their classrooms. Two main instruments were used a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The results revealed that Saudi EFL teachers have positive attitudes towards the CLT approach, as well as perceiving many difficulties in implementing it in their classrooms. Three sources of difficulty were consistently identified: difficulties faced by students, difficulties faced by teachers and the local educational

system. These issues were the most salient results in relation to implementing CLT in the Saudi context from EFL teachers' perspectives.

Table 3.4 Summary of the studies reviewed above in Arab EFL contexts.

CLT in the Arab world				
Researcher	Context	Method	Study focus	Sample of the study
Algonhaim (2014)	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Questionnaire and semi-structured interview	Saudi university students' attitudes towards communicative and non-communicative activities and their relationship to foreign language learning anxiety	English language major students
Al-Rabadi (2012)	Jordanian University	Classroom observation and semi-structured interviews	Instructors' practices parallel to their attitudes, towards pair/group work, role of teacher, error correction and use of L1, and challenges to apply CLT	English language Instructors
Alhawsawi (2013)	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, University of Health and Science	Semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and related documents	Saudi student language learning experiences in English on an EFL programme at the University for Health and Science programme	Health and Science students
Batawi (2006)	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Questionnaire and focus-group interview	Investigated teachers' knowledge of CLT and what types of problems they might face during their implementation of CLT in the EFL classroom	English language Teachers
Abdulkader (2013)	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Questionnaire and semi-structured interview	Saudi EFL teachers regarding the appropriateness of the CLT approach in a Saudi undergraduate context	Saudi English language teachers
Abdullah (2015)	Kurdish/ university level	Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews	students' perceptions towards communicative language teaching	Students
Al-Nouh (2008)	Kuwait/primary schools	Observation and interviews	Investigating whether EFL teachers implement a CLT based method in their classrooms or not	Primary level English language teachers
McLean (2011)	College of Higher Education in Sultanate of Oman	Questionnaires, classroom observation and semi-structured interviews	Awareness and use of CLT methodology in a foundation programme at a higher education institution in the Sultanate of Oman	EFL Teachers
Fareh (2010)	Arab countries	Quantitative and qualitative methods	Challenges of teaching English in Arab countries	

3.8 Literature gap

As discussed above, there have been numerous studies and articles that discussed the implementation of CLT and various difficulties encountered with the approach around the world (e.g. Canale & Swain, 1980; Littlewood, 2007; Raissi et al., 2013; Richards, 2006; Savignon, 1991; Savignon & Wang, 2003). Particularly in a Saudi language teaching context, Al-Abedalhaq and Samdi (1996) maintain that Saudi students recognize the importance of English in the current era but results in international examinations indicate poor performance (Cambridge Examination Centre, 2009; Educational Testing Services, 2003–2009). This leads to many questions about teaching methodologies practised in universities (Farooq, 2015). It appears that there is a gap in the literature in terms of research that takes into consideration Saudi EFL teachers' and students' perceptions regarding the appropriateness of the use of CLT in Saudi Arabia. However, some studies have considered the use of specific aspects of the application of CLT and of teaching English more broadly in Saudi Arabia. For example, as discussed above, Alhawsawi (2013) focused on three important aspects relating to student learning experiences, Batawi (2006) investigated only the understandings and views of teachers regarding the use of CLT innovation in a Saudi context and Abdulkader (2013) explored the perceptions of 35 Saudi EFL teachers concerning the appropriateness of the CLT approach in a Saudi undergraduate context.

To the best of my knowledge, none of these studies have investigated precisely the actual implementation of CLT in EFL classrooms by means of observation. In addition, previous studies have relied on “self-reported” data. This study will therefore explore the characteristics of CLT implementation in a Saudi language teaching context through an array of research methods (see Ch 4), focusing on four aspects: (a) the relationship between teachers' perceptions of CLT and their classroom practices; (b) EFL teachers' and students' perceptions and knowledge of CLT; (c) the difficulties of using CLT methods in the PYP and; (d) exploring

students' perceptions of EFL teachers' teaching practices. The overall aim is to enhance knowledge regarding issues concerning CLT in the EFL context and contribute to the study of CLT in general. An additional aim is to improve the practice of ELT in Saudi Arabia.

3.9 Summary

This chapter has discussed the main language teaching and learning method broadly e.g. Grammar Translation Method, Audio Lingual Method, and broader literature investigating the appropriateness and challenges of CLT in EFL context. Thus, this literature review contributes to the study in terms of providing theoretical foundations. In particular, four different aspects were addressed: EFL teachers' perceptions of and attitudes towards CLT, EFL teachers' actual practices and use of teaching approaches in their classrooms, challenges EFL teachers face during their implementation of CLT and finally the perceptions of the students concerning their teachers' classroom practice and the teaching approaches used. This discussion has provided an understanding of the various aspects of English language teaching and learning using an organized approach rather than studying each part in isolation.

The review of the literature started by exploring existing findings concerning teachers' perceptions and knowledge with respect to the principles of CLT, which should be the starting point of professional development programmes. The existing knowledge of teachers affects the way in which they perceive and value a teaching method. It also affects the actions teachers take specifically to use the ideas of such a method (Brown, 1993; Loucks-Horsely et al., 2010). It is also important to understand teachers' perceptions to identify areas of focus in pre-service and in-service teachers' professional development programmes with a view to ensuring the proper implementation of the desired teaching methods (Putnam & Borko, 1997). The second aspect of the literature review focused on the classroom, in which most of the teaching and learning practices in relation to EFL settings take place. Teachers' experiences related to the teaching philosophies that EFL teachers implement in their teaching classes were discussed.

The literature on EFL teaching approaches focused first on the GTM and ALM, linking these to the study and their applicability in the ELI, before turning to CLT. The extant literature was used to highlight the influence of these teaching approaches and methods on teachers' teaching experiences on the one hand and to investigate the link between EFL teachers' stated beliefs and their observed classroom practices relating to CLT on the other. In addition, the review of the literature helped explore teachers' underlying reasons for their attitudes and study any differences between teachers' beliefs regarding CLT and their practice in classroom. The third section of literature review focused on identifying teachers' and students' perceived difficulties in implementing CLT and the findings were then related to the ELI. In addition, the reviewed literature helped to understand the challenges of teaching English in Arab World countries and why EFL programmes cannot be delivered in language teaching classes as expected. Furthermore, the literature helped to identify that most of the challenges faced in implementing CLT are as follows: difficulties on the part of the teachers, difficulties on the part of the students, the educational system and the CLT approach itself. The most frequent difficulties identified were teachers' deficiency in spoken English, deficiency in strategic and sociolinguistic competence, lack of training in CLT and students' low proficiency in English.

In addition, there were difficulties related to the educational system in terms of large class sizes and grammar-based examinations and finally an inadequate account of EFL teaching using the CLT approach. The fourth section of the literature reviewed focused on investigating the students' perceptions of their teachers' classroom practices in relation to the importance of CLT. This literature helped to explore, for instance, ideas and perceptions about the implementation of CLT and the amount of interaction among teacher and students, the quality of the assigned curriculum and whether it uses authentic tasks in classes, as well as the extent to which teachers contribute to improvement in different skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) error correction and teacher feedback.

In general, it is important to note that this study uses the CC theoretical framework to help answer the overarching research question (cf.4.2) based on the rationale that it constitutes the most appropriate teaching and learning theory underlying this thesis (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In addition, despite the difficulties found regarding the adoption of the CLT approach in most of the reviewed studies, it has the potential to be adopted successfully in EFL contexts (Halliday, 1994). However, as indicated by Ellis (1996, p. 213), for the communicative approach to be made suitable for the EFL context, “it needs to be both culturally attuned and culturally accepted” and this essentially depends on classroom teachers to filter the method, ensuring it is appropriate to the local cultural norms and re-defining the teacher–student relationship. Moreover, based on some of obstacles to the adoption of CLT in EFL contexts highlighted in much of the literature, it can be concluded that more efforts need to be made in teacher training to address CLT practice. Finally, while most of the studies in the review examined the appropriateness of CLT through exploring teachers’ perceptions and attitudes regarding actual classroom practice, few conducted classroom observation. Therefore, it is essential to conduct classroom observation to ensure more robust outcomes. In the following chapter, details of the participants in the study will be provided. The tools to be used in the study, the procedure for collecting the data and the data analysis strategy will also be defined. The suitability of the methodology in terms of the theoretical model and criteria proposed for the study will also be discussed.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research methods employed in the study to investigate the teaching techniques used by Saudi EFL teachers in implementing CLT in classrooms to enhance language learner ability (Savignon & Wang, 2003). Walliman (2005, p. 247) states that: "The researcher doing qualitative research will attempt to obtain an inside view of the phenomenon, getting as close as possible to the subject of the research to collect resonant, productive data to enable the development of a social construct through the dynamic process of research. The quantitative researcher; on the other hand, chooses to remain distant as an outsider, collecting hard and reliable data, as reality is exoteric and static". In this study, a mixed methods approach was employed to add strengths that offset the weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative research methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The selected research questions, research paradigm, research design, research participants, data collection and data analysis procedures, tools used, and the development of these instruments are all described according to the CLT principles discussed in the previous chapter.

4.2 Research questions

The focus of this study is on investigating practice among EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia as an initial step in determining how CLT is implemented in language teaching classrooms. This study aims to answer the following overarching question:

“To what extent are EFL teachers’ teaching practices in line with the principles of the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach?”

The following sub-questions were used to address the main research question:

1. What are the EFL teachers’ perceptions and knowledge of the CLT approach?
2. To what extent are the EFL teachers’ instruction practices in line with CLT principles?

3. What are the difficulties of using the CLT approach in a Saudi preparatory year programme?
4. What are the students' perceptions of their EFL teachers' practices in their classroom?
5. What are the similarities and discrepancies between the teachers' perceptions and their actual classroom practices?

Table 4.1 illustrates the scope of the study and the data required to address the four research questions.

Table 4.1 Presentation of research objectives and data sources

Research Questions	Objectives	Data Sources
RQ1. What are the EFL teachers' perceptions and knowledge of the CLT approach?	The aim was to clarify the participants' perceptions of the importance of CLT.	Interviews Questionnaire
RQ2. To what extent are the EFL teachers' instruction practices in line with CLT principles?	The aim was to examine the EFL teachers' actual teaching practices and the extent to which they are in line with CLT principles.	Classroom observation
RQ3. What are the difficulties of using the CLT approach in a Saudi preparatory year programme?	The purpose of this was to identify and articulate the difficulties of using CLT methods in the preparatory year programme.	Interviews Questionnaire
RQ4. What are the students' perceptions of their EFL teachers' practices in their classroom?	The aim was to identify the EFL teachers' teaching practices based on the students' perceptions.	Interviews Questionnaire
RQ5. What are the similarities and discrepancies between the teachers' perceptions and their actual classroom practices?	The aim was to identify the similarities and discrepancies among the teachers.	Observation, interview and questionnaire

4.3 Research paradigm

Understanding the philosophical background and considering the paradigm of research at the beginning of the process can have a positive effect on research quality (McCallin, 2003). Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 105) state that paradigms are “the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways”. Schwandt (2001, p. 117) holds the opinion that “ontology is concerned with the form and nature of reality, a theory of what exists and how it

exists, whereas epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge and considers the relationship between the person (or persons) who knows and what can be known". Clough and Nutbrown (2002, p. 31) further suggest that methodology involves uncovering and justifying research assumptions as far as feasibly possible and in doing so, locating the claims which the study makes within the traditions of enquiry used.

An overall definition of the research paradigm needs to reflect an ontological, epistemological and methodological stance. Selecting a philosophical position for a new researcher can, however, be problematic as much of the literature focuses on the difference between two paradigms (i.e. positivism and interpretivism). Essentially, positivism is concerned with explaining human behaviour, whereas interpretivism places emphasises on understanding it. An earlier work (Dainty, 2007) shows these two paradigms to have been at the heart of a long-standing debate in science. A number of writers align positivism with quantitative research and interpretivism with qualitative research (Dainty, 2007, p. 47). Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 105), however, show that this position is rather misleading as "both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used appropriately with any research paradigm". Furthermore, it is argued that these two different approaches can be viewed as complementary rather than two opposite extremes (Amaratunga & Baldry, 2001, p. 96). Selecting a research methodology is therefore not determined exclusively by the position of the researcher in terms of one specific research paradigm. The nature of the research topic and research questions will influence this choice (Dornyei, 2007; Seliger & Shohamy, 1989; Silverman, 2001). As noted by Dornyei (2007, p. 307), research is "not a philosophical exercise but an attempt to find answers to questions". As a result, the dynamics of the research problem must lead to the correct choice being made regarding the use of quantitative or qualitative methods and which method of data collection is to be used (Bryman, 2004, p. 75).

Creswell (2009) and Croker (2009) note that in social research studies this is considered “pragmatism”. A pragmatic approach highlights the research problem and allows the application of multiple methods. It is possible to incorporate different points of view and different assumptions, as well as utilise different data collection and analysis methods (Creswell, 2009, p. 10). Dornyei (2007: 307) supports researchers who use a pragmatic approach so that they can select the appropriate research method(s) they believe will work best for their study. Furthermore, in the process of gathering information on language teaching and learning, a range of methods should be considered. The scope and demand in terms of the information needed frequently depends on the types of method selected. The use of only one type of collection instrument is likely to result in incomplete or deficient data, so collecting information using two or more procedures, namely a triangulated approach, will produce better quality information (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Long, 2005). Consequently, for this study the aim was to apply both quantitative and qualitative methods and it is noted that the application of such methodological triangulation is strongly recommended by many authors (e.g. Gilabert, 2005; Jasso-Aguilar, 2005; Kim, 2006; Kinzley, 2006; Robson, 1993; West, 1994; Witkin & Asltschuld, 1995).

The aim of this study was to investigate teacher’s and learner’s perceptions regarding the application of CLT in Saudi EFL classrooms, with a view to drawing conclusions concerning the value of classroom practices for several educational stakeholders. These include EFL teachers and language learners (Stake, 2000). The study employed questionnaires (a quantitative method), semi-structured interviews and classroom observation (qualitative methods) to improve the reliability and validity of the findings.

4.4 Research design

This study employed a mixed methods research design. Mixed methods research refers to the use of qualitative and quantitative data in a single research study. According to Johnson and

Christensen (2004, p. 76), such research involves a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and moves beyond the division of quantitative versus qualitative, allowing the researcher to draw upon the strengths of both approaches and minimize the weaknesses which arise from a single methodological approach. Indeed, Johnson and Turner (2003, p. 45) state that the fundamental principle behind mixed methods research is the process of mixing and combining strategies, approaches and methods through understanding their complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses.

Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007, p. 65) defined mixed methods research as follows: “Mixed methods research is an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research. It is the third methodological or research paradigm along with qualitative and quantitative research”. It recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research, but also offers a powerful third paradigmatic choice that often provides the most informative, complete, balanced and useful research results (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 129).

A mixed methods approach allows the use of multifaceted methods to address the research or evaluation questions (Johnson & Turner, 2003). Creswell (2014) delineates a set of core characteristics that describe the mixed methods approach: (a) it involves the collection of both qualitative (open-ended) and quantitative (close-ended) data in response to research questions or hypotheses; (b) it includes analysis of both data sets; (c) the procedures for both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis need to be conducted rigorously through adequate sampling, suitable sources of information and data analysis; (d) the two forms of data need to be integrated within the design of analysis through merging, connecting or embedding the data; (e) procedures must be incorporated in a distinct mixed methods design that also includes the timing of the data collection (concurrent or sequential) as well as an emphasis (equal or unequal) on each database (p. 217). Furthermore, this application of a mixed-method research

design is known as ‘methodological triangulation’ (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2009). As Patton (2002, p. 187) stated that triangulation is “an important way to strengthen a study design through the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena”. Moreover, Dornyei (2007, p. 145) highlighted that “the type of information sought in a particular project guides the application of appropriate research techniques”. This research study used both qualitative and quantitative data sources to address the research questions (see 4.2).

4.5 Research participants

The target sample of this study was Saudi female (n=47) EFL teachers and preparatory year programme (PYP) (n=175) students at the English Language Institute (ELI) at King Abdul-Aziz University, located in Jeddah in the Western region of Saudi Arabia (see figure 2.1). This context was one of the initiators and motives for this study, especially because of my experience as an EFL student and then as an English language teacher at ELI. Furthermore, upon completion of this research, hopefully, I will return to teaching at ELI, hence carrying out a study there has given me visions into the students and the classroom discourse in this EFL context which hopefully will be helpful in my future career. Furthermore, As Stake (1995, p. 4) suggested that “if we can, we need to pick cases which are easy to get to and hospitable to our inquiry”. Moreover, to the above, my awareness to the research context enabled me to work as a researcher, allowing me, for instance, to find a suitable place to carry out the interview sessions, for both teachers and students, find participants, gain classroom access, and obtain permission to use the classes.

For this study a mixed method approach, which takes a systematic sample of a small number of participants from a much larger target population, was employed (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p. 90). Classroom observation is a primary tool for the study, with six different English language teaching classes observed in addition to the questionnaire and interview techniques being employed. Participants in the study were female Saudi English language teachers and English

language students enrolled as full-time students at university. In addition, teachers (N=47) and English language student (N=175) were involved in the questionnaires. To obtain more depth and additional data, interviews was conducted with the English language teachers (N=6), (see section Table 4.2 for classroom observations and participants backgrounds) observed during the teaching sessions in order to gain information on language teaching approach and need for training if required.

4.6 Ethical concerns

In research, ethics has been proposed as ‘a matter of principled sensitivity to the right of others (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017, p. 51). It emphasises the 'trustworthiness' of the quality of research (Bryman, 2016). According to Wiles (2012, p. 4) ethical frameworks provide a means of thinking about "ethical dilemmas or moral behaviour. They provide some criteria against which researchers can consider what is right or wrong to do when presented with an ethical dilemma". Therefore, key elements need to be considered in any research such as voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, harm, communicating the results, and more specific ethical issues. (Miller et al, 2012). In addition, Christians in Denzin and Lincoln (2011) identified several ethics guidelines which constituted; first, the informant consent, non-deception; second, privacy and confidentiality, and a commitment for data collection and presenting reliable and valid data; third, institutional review boards that informed consent is always obtained in human subject research.

In this study consent was obtained at different levels. First, ethics was approved to the research proposal by Northumbria University; second, consent was obtained from a Saudi University and the higher education male department was aware of the purpose of the study and research participants also informed (See Appendix, 12). Another consent also was obtained to female

campus which the study was taking place and this process was vital to have a full access to the campus and teaching classes (See Appendix, 13).

This study addressed several ethical issues identified by McDonough and McDonough (2014) and (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Regarding the security of the participants providing the data, all those taking part were guaranteed anonymity. The research strictly followed the ethical guidelines of Northumbria University and has been cleared by the Ethics approval committee. Participants were told that they can withdraw from anytime. This was explained on the first page of the questionnaire and discussed with participants during the data collection process and prior to the interviews process. Information was also provided in advance of the study and all participants were given a detailed explanation of the nature of the study. In the case of the interviews, they were advised what kinds of questions would be asked. The validity of the data collected was established by recording the interviews and asking the interviewees if they wished to check the transcript of the interview before it was included in the study.

In the case of the questionnaire, this was piloted and the data in the final versions were analysed numerically and anonymously. All participants were allowed to verify the data they provided upon request, whether derived from transcripts of interviews or the final statistical analysis of the questionnaire. Furthermore, all participants were assured that they could have free access to the results. Finally, the findings of the study will be available on request to aid understanding or obtain further information regarding the perceptions of Saudi EFL teachers and learners concerning the implementation of CLT in the Saudi context. Furthermore, for confidentiality and anonymity, the participants' names and personal details were not breached, and individual privacy also was not harmed. When the data were analysed, participants were named through a code for example, T1, T2, T4, T5 and T6 and similarly the students also were named by code such as S1, S2, and S3 so on.

With regard to the consent letter, consent is a mechanism by which participants determine whether to take part or not (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011), and it is one of the ethical issues that needs to be considered. Because, the right and values of participants are treated by the research process. Therefore, aims of the study were explained to the respondents to convey the value of their contribution in this study. In addition, the questionnaire also emphasises on the importance of providing truthful response. Participants' contribution is acknowledged at the end of the consent letter (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Lin, 2014).

4.7 Classroom observation participants

The main research question of this study focuses on understanding whether the EFL teachers' actual classroom teaching is in line with CLT principles or not from the teachers' and students' perspectives. In this study, a systematic sampling was employed, basic mixed methods sampling approach which takes a small number of participants from a much larger target population (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p. 90). In this case, the sample was drawn from an English Language Institute (ELI) in the context of Saudi Arabia.

Systematic classroom observation, including the taking of field notes, was undertaken with 16 EFL teachers to investigate classroom teaching practices. However, for the purposes of this study, only the classroom observation and interviews for 6 teachers were selected for analysis based on their educational background and language teaching experience and the sample included multinational English language speakers (see Table 4.2). In addition, a questionnaire was distributed to female teachers (N = 47).

Table 4.2 EFL teachers' sample for classroom observation and interviews

Teacher Participant	Nationality	Teaching Experience	Education
T4	Saudi	13 years	MA
T5	Canadian	11 years	PhD
T3	Indian	9 years	MA
T1	Jordanian	8 years	MA
T6	US	15 years	PhD

T2	Saudi	6 years	MA
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4.7.1 The student sample

The student sample was chosen to balance and reflect the views of both students and English language teachers. Students who voluntarily agreed to participate in this research were drawn from different levels of language course (101, 102, 103, I104), as shown in Table 4.3. I purposely selected students to represent diverse levels of the programme, but the students were asked to participate according to their actual level of study and thus the participation of the students was a systematic sampling approach (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p. 90). The questionnaire was also distributed to female EFL students (N = 175). Four focus group interviews were arranged for the students, with seven students in each group (N = 28).

Table 4.3 Students' questionnaire sample according to age and language level

Age	Language level code	Total number of students
19	Beginner 101	44
20	Elementary 102	44
21	Pre-Intermediate 103	44
22	Intermediate 104	43

4.8 Research context

The study was conducted on the female campus of an English Language Institute (ELI) at a Saudi university. Initially the ELI was established in 1975 by the British Council to provide English courses for almost 500 male students in the Colleges of Engineering and Medicine and 100 female students in Medicine. Five years later, the programme provided over 30 courses in English for Specific Proposes (ESP). At that time, it was known as the English Language Centre (ELC), supervised by the College of Arts and Humanities at King Abdulaziz University (KAU). In 2006, the English language Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) provided general English courses for all newly enrolled full-time students in the university and students had to complete 6 credit units before starting their major studies. The ELI has now become recognized

as independent and provides general English courses for over 13,000 students, with the number of students increasing every year (<https://eli.kau.edu.sa/>).

The English language programme for the preparatory year is an intensive four-level modular programme (i.e. level 1, level 2, level 3 and level 4). Two modules are taught in each semester through an integrated course using an internationally oriented curriculum to enhance students' language skills and help them meet academic requirements. The total course of eight weeks includes a week of examinations. At the end of each module, students are assessed and must successfully complete the module and pass the assessment to progress to the next level (<https://eli.kau.edu.sa/>). A brief description of the educational system in general and English language teaching trends in Saudi Arabia is presented (cf.2.2 & 2.3.1).

4.9 Data collection instruments

The main research question in this study concerns the investigation of what is happening in language classrooms between teachers and students. For this reason, classroom observation was employed as a main research method to collect data from the actual context and obtain insights into actual classroom practice, followed by interview and questionnaire methods with a sample of EFL teachers and students in Saudi Arabia (cf. 4.5).

4.9.1 Classroom observation

Classroom observation has become an essential research method in applied linguistics and social science research (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2012; Dornyei, 2007). The observation method uses the classroom as the main research site, especially when the ultimate aims of the study are to examine linguistic teaching practices and classroom interaction in an actual teaching and learning setting (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2012; Dornyei, 2007; Duff, 2008). Researchers such as Duff (2008) and O'Leary (2013) have claimed that observation can help assess and measure the quality of activities taking place in the classroom and "to understand

the physical, social/cultural, and linguistic contexts in which language is used, and collect relevant linguistic and interactional data for later analysis” (Duff, 2008, p. 138). Johnson and Christensen (2013, p. 236) highlight that observation is “the watching of behavioural patterns of people in certain situations to obtain information about the phenomenon of interest”. Observation is considered an accurate systematic tool to observe people, events, behaviour, settings and objects when the observer needs to capture a broad picture of a lesson rather than focusing on a particular aspect (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Richards and Nunan, 1990). Patton (2002, p. 262) states that observation is “formed to be a qualitative research analysis as in the circumstances of being in, or around an on-going social setting for the purpose of making a qualitative analysis of that setting”. Observation is therefore best described as a powerful, flexible and real data collection procedure which can be used to derive explicit evidence through direct observation, rather than depending on the personal views of respondents. The observer will be able to understand and capture what is taking place in the classroom, obtaining less predictable information than available through other means (Briggs and Coleman, 2007; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Mackey and Gass, 2012; Nunan, 1992; Patton, 2002; Waxman, Tharp & Hilberg, 2004).

The use of immediate awareness or direct cognition as the principal mode of research can obtain more valid and authentic data than otherwise possible. Classrooms are exceptionally busy places in which a variety of events and actions occur between a teacher and students. Activities include asking questions, eliciting answers and explaining new concepts. For studies focusing on classroom interaction, whether teacher–student or student–student, the classroom is an invaluable source of information (Wragg, 2012, p. 2). Briggs and Coleman (2007, p. 239) highlight some useful features of observation:

- It provides direct access and insight into complex social interactions and physical settings.

- It affords permanent and systematic records of interactions and settings.
- It yields context-sensitive and ecologically valid data.
- It enriches, and supplements data gathered by other techniques by allowing triangulation and increasing reliability.
- It utilises varied techniques, yielding different types of data, with the potential to be widely applied in different contexts and to be used to address a variety of types of research question.

In this study, the classroom observation schedule was implemented to provide answers to the following questions:

1. How effectively do English language teachers use CLT methods in the preparatory year?
2. What teaching methods do English language teachers actually employ in their classrooms?
3. What are the students' perceptions of their teachers' teaching methods in the classroom?

This study intended to focus on what teachers claim to be doing and what they really do, reflecting not only their misunderstandings of CLT, but also demonstrating the various challenges confronting them in adopting CLT in their English classes (Savignon, 2008). The data obtained from classroom observation was intended to provide the opportunity for triangulation. It was also precisely proposed that the data from the observations should be compared with those relating to the practices of teachers and the learners' preferences for English language teaching techniques in the classroom collected from the questionnaires and the interviews. The purpose of this study is to enhance teaching performance by focusing on

and analysing day-to-day teaching approaches and practices. The following section discussed the classroom observation process with the COLT scheme.

4.10 The COLT observation scheme

The Communication Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) classroom observation schedule was designed to collect data regarding the implementation of the principles of CLT approach in the ELI and to observe teachers and students' behaviours in terms of actual teaching practices in the language classroom. It was also used to assess the validity of the other data collection instruments, i.e. questionnaires and interviews, as a form of triangulation. The COLT scheme (see Appendix 11) is divided into two parts, A and B: Part A, which contains categories derived primarily from instructional issues in the CLT literature, describes classroom activities in organizational and pedagogical terms; Part B contains categories which reflect issues in first and second language acquisition research and describes aspects of the verbal interactions that take place between teachers and students within activities (Frohlich, Spada & Allen, 1985 cited in Allen et al., 1984).

Part A contains five main categories: Activity, Participant Organization, Content, Student Modality and Materials (see Appendix 11). These main and sub-categories were designed to assess the extent to which classroom interaction is in line with the communicative approach, for instance student-focused classroom organization, the use of authentic materials emphasizing meaning-based learning and practices that enable the classroom dialogue to be more communicatively oriented than the teacher-centred approach based on a pedagogic curriculum that mainly focuses on linguistic features (Richards & Nunan, 1990). Part B contains seven communicative features, and analyses classroom activity at the level of verbal interaction (see Appendix 11). This section measures seven communicative features, for example the extent to which learners are given opportunities to use the target language and

exchange information and the extent of teacher talk, how teachers ask questions and how they respond to students' utterances (Richards & Nunan, 1990).

4.10.1 Rationale for classroom observation

The purpose of this section is to present the principles and strategies behind the classroom observation, employed in the study to collect data with reference to the classroom practices of English language teachers and students' perceptions of classroom teaching. The reasoning behind this was that the interview and questionnaire data needed to be enhanced by data collected with classroom observation to increase reliability through triangulation. For this study, the observation procedure focused on taking notes to capture meaningful classroom activities. An example is the exact teaching methods employed in actual English language classes by teachers. To this end, COLT was selected as an effective data collection tool. It is divided into two parts, as described in Appendix A. Part (A) examines classroom events at the level of incident and activity and covers what teachers and students do in the classroom. Part (B) analyses the communicative features of verbal exchanges between teachers and students or among students themselves as they occur within each activity (Gaynor, Dunn & Terdal, 1997). In addition, within COLT there are different categories focusing on aspects of the main principles of the communicative approach.

As far as qualitative methods are concerned, this study focused on identifying the kinds of language teaching techniques teachers' use in their classrooms. As already pointed out, Dornyei (2007, p. 27) states that classroom observation has become an essential research method in applied linguistics and social science research. The observation method uses the classroom as the main research site, especially when the aim of the study is to examine linguistics, teaching practices and classroom interaction in the actual teaching and learning environment (Dornyei, 2007; Duff, 2008).

Researchers such as Duff (2008) and O'Leary (2013) explain that observation can help assess and measure the quality of activities taking place in the classroom and “to understand the physical, social/cultural, and linguistic contexts in which language is used, and collect relevant linguistic and interactional data for later analysis” (Duff, 2008, p. 138). Johnson and Christensen (2013, p. 236) consider that observation is “the watching of behavioural patterns of people in certain situations to obtain information about the phenomenon of interest”. Researchers also highlight that classroom observation is considered an accurate systematic tool to observe people, events, behaviour, settings and objects when the observer needs to capture a broad picture of lessons rather than focusing on a specific aspect (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Richards & Nunan, 1990). It is a powerful and flexible and data collection procedure that can be used to examine explicit evidence through direct observation, rather than depending solely on the personal views of respondents.

4.10.2 Approaches to classroom observation

Several social science researchers have developed a range of classroom observation schedules (McDonough & Shaw, 2012). Most of these schedules share various aspects, for instance “they involve the presence of an observer in the classroom, the recording of events in a systematic manner as they happen and the coding of the interactions in such a way as to make possible a subsequent analysis of teacher and student performance” (McDonough & Shaw, 2012, p. 35). For studies which focus on classroom interaction, whether between teacher and student or student to student, classroom observation is an invaluable source of information (Wragg, 2012, p. 2) and in this regard, observation schedules are useful for researchers. Briggs and Coleman (2007: 239) highlight some features of classroom observation:

- It provides direct access and insight into complex social interaction and physical settings.
- It yields permanent and systematic records of interactions and settings.

- It is context-sensitive and ecologically valid.
- It enriches, and supplements data gathered by other techniques, allowing triangulation and increased reliability.
- It utilises a variety of techniques, yielding different types of data with the potential to be widely applied in different contexts and that can be used to address various types of research question.

The following schedule follows McDonough and Shaw (2012, p. 278) in utilizing the form of a general observation task sheet, which can be used as a prompt for making notes during an observation session:

1) Focus on the learners:

- (a) Group dynamic: How well do they work together as a whole group, in a small group or in pairs?
- (b) Do some prefer to work individually?
- (c) How well do they appear to relate to and interact with the teacher?

2) Focus on the teacher:

- (a) Context of teaching: How is a context for the lesson established?
- (b) Teacher's role: What are the different roles assumed by the teacher during the class?
- (c) Clarity: Are the explanations given readily understood by the students?
- (d) Emotional support: How much encouragement and care is offered to learners and how is that undertaken?
- (e) Use of materials: If materials are used, what is their purpose in the lesson? How effective are the materials in amplifying the teaching points made?

- (f) Activity: What activities are students asked to perform? Do they seem to be useful in realizing the objectives of the lesson?
- (g) Classroom management: Are activities smooth and effectively managed? Do students seem to be clear about what they should be doing?
- (h) Correction/Feedback: How does the teacher give feedback to students at various stages of the activities?

Examples include positive encouragement, supportive reformulation of student utterances, expansion of student utterances and offering responsive and supporting attitudes to students' questions. Section 4.11.1 discusses classroom observation procedures.

4.10.3 Pilot study for classroom observation

A pilot study is a preliminary undertaking which enables a researcher to test and refine data collection and analysis methods and procedures (Heigham & Croker, 2009). The reason for conducting any pilot study is to avoid problems or risks that might occur in the main study and to test the reliability of the instruments (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Yin, 2015). In addition, it helps the researcher practise the research process in terms of learning about the field time needed to cover certain procedures and the more substantive issues that occur in refining research questions (Yin, 2015). Furthermore, it allows the researcher to experience the attitude of participants being observed and become more conversant with the processes. Qualitative research aims to provide an in-depth understanding that is intricate and detailed in terms of meaning, actions, attitudes and behaviours. This is carried out by observing phenomena through forms of naturalistic enquiry in a natural setting as context is heavily implicated in meaning (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011, p. 220) emphasize that research needs to be invested through the eyes of the participants in ethnographic study aimed at generating rather than testing a hypothesis. The aim of the pilot

study here was therefore to identify how English language was taught and to what extent actual classroom practices of EFL teachers are in line with the principles of the CLT approach.

To sum up, the purpose of the study was to enhance teaching practices among teachers, focusing on and analysing their day-to-day teaching approach and wider teaching performance. Therefore, field notes were the main method of observation used in the study. Field notes and observations are the most important data collection methods in qualitative research. According to Schwandt (2015), field notes are “real data in the form of written notes”, recorded by the researcher in the actual research context. In addition, according to Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (2011), field notes are considered a good technique in qualitative studies, able to be used independently of other qualitative methods or integrated with other data (e.g. semi-structured interviews and focus group research). In this study, field notes were used to record classroom events taking place between teachers and students and the sequence of the teaching processes. Thus, it helps to achieve data triangulation with interview and questionnaire data, field-notes were used with the six observed teachers. Although taking note while observing is not an easy process, but it enables the exploration of the potential discrepancies between classes and provides a fairer snapshot of what actually had taken place in the research setting. Therefore, as a researcher my position was as Patton (2002, p. 71) stated the researcher’s role as an “onlooker” observing events unfold. The following table will explain the techniques used and researcher’s position during the observation period:

Researcher's position during the classroom observation process

Context	Observation technique	Researcher's position	Description
Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observing the class while teacher conducts lessons 	Sitting in the back of the class and observing as well as taking notes of an existed phenomenon and ongoing behaviour from teacher and students under the study in the naturalist context.	In each class teacher and students considered me as a researcher and observer the lessons for research purpose.
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write fieldnotes while teacher conducts lessons 		
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal dialogue with teachers at the end of the lesson about the methods they used in teaching English 		
Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting a dialogue with students during break time Identifying themes using the checklist following the observation 		

4.11 Data collection procedures

After receiving approval for the data collection process, the next stage was to communicate with EFL teachers. Three teachers were selected to participate in the pilot study, all teaching at different levels. Although there was no face-to-face meeting with any of these teachers, they were very supportive and ready to participate in the study. The next step was to visit the programme leader in the ELI, who offered an introduction to the teacher coordinator and access to the teaching timetable to select suitable classes for observation. There was an interest in being observed, but the teachers refused to be recorded using either video or audio due to university regulations. The study commenced in September 2016 with the observation of three English language classes at different levels 101, 102, and 103. These classes were observed for the pilot and each teacher was observed twice and each class lasted 55 minutes, giving a total of 330 minutes. This pilot observation offered a broader understanding of how the English language programme at the Saudi university operated and how teachers carried out EFL language teaching in practice. The main purpose of the pilot study was to gain familiarity with the context, as well as some experience of classroom observation prior to the main study. The pilot study helped to emphasize the importance of taking detailed field notes and not miss any

important information, as both audio and video recording were prohibited. In addition, it became clearer how teachers used teaching methods in the classroom. There was evidence of the extent to which they implemented either a grammar-based approach or a CLT approach and how these interacted with students in class. These components are all core aspects of the main classroom observation study, so the pilot provided useful additional insights. Once the pilot observations were completed, the field notes were consulted and used to create an observation scheme, designed and modified according to the research questions. Table 4.4 below shows the adapted COLT scheme.

The pilot study highlighted the need for further investigation of teachers' practices and the methods used in the classroom. Analysis of the observations began by highlighting in-class activities and processes in the field notes. Note was made of actions which accorded or were not in harmony with the course objectives, as well as other layers of class discourse, such as tutor–student and student–student relationships. In the pilot, the focus was on what teachers did and said in the classroom. It became clear that there were both similarities and differences in teaching practice in terms of classroom activities and materials used. The following subsection sets out the observation procedure.

4.11.1 Classroom observation procedure

A review of the literature relating to schedules of classroom observation and their application allows an understanding of the ways in which these schedules have been used to observe classroom activities (see Chapter 5). It is often beneficial to borrow from the strengths of such schedules to create a best-fit model for specific classroom observation. Numerous key questions were also used to develop the concept of classroom observation, for example concerning whether the activities that the students were asked to perform were appropriate and at the right level. It is important to ask if they are useful in terms of realizing the objectives of the lesson, are sufficiently interesting and enable students to learn a sufficient amount (Graves,

2001, p. 214). In line with this, the observer can understand and capture what is taking place in the classroom, often obtaining more unpredictable information than afforded by other means (Briggs & Coleman, 2007; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Mackey & Gass, 2012; Nunan, 1992; Patton, 2002; Waxman et al., 2004).

To report the observation results, an observation schedule was adapted from content taken from the COLT categories (see 4.10) and the principles of CLT, as discussed extensively in the literature review (see 3.6-3.6.1). During the observation, detailed notes were taken of steps in the lesson as followed by the teacher, with an emphasis on the methods used. The observation schedule was filled in immediately after the observation to ensure nothing was missed. The items in the observation schedule were grouped into seven main categories and forty-four subcategories, corresponding to the practices of teachers and students related to the principles of CLT. Table 4.4 presents a modified classroom observation schedule in the form of a checklist the purpose of which was to categorize field notes taken during the classroom observation.

Table 4.4 Aspects of the modified observation schedule

Classroom events	1) Greeting and welcoming students 2) Revising previous lessons 3) Providing students with a new lesson 4) Providing feedback on student homework 5) Introducing the purposes of the lesson; 6) Student error correction
Participant organization	7) Using one central activity for the whole class 8) Teacher interacts with individual students 9) Teacher lets students work in pairs 10) Teacher lets students work in groups 11) Teacher dominates classroom activities 12) Teacher applies the same task to all groups 13) Teacher answers student questions using L1 14) Teacher knows individual students' learning needs
Classroom activities	15) Extended discussion activity; 16) Allowing students to work on different tasks 17) Using drilling and repetition of sentences 18) Focus on grammar-based teaching 19) Teacher dominates classroom activities 20) Teacher applies the same task to all groups 21) Teacher answers student questions using L1 22) Teacher knows individual students' learning needs
Functional activities	23) Making polite requests 24) Asking open questions 25) Asking closed questions 26) Use of elicitation 27) Social interaction activities 28) Teachers provide clarifications 29) Using L2 for interaction
Language skills	30) Speaking skills 31) Listening skills 32) Writing skills 33) Reading skills
Teaching materials	34) Teacher uses a textbook 35) Teacher reflects the reality of using a textbook 36) Teacher uses authentic materials
Student modality	37) Using L1 for answering teacher's questions 38) Using L2 for classroom interaction 39) Asking teacher for clarifications 40) Listening to each other carefully during the group discussion 41) Listening passively to the teacher 42) Working alone and compare with each other 43) Doing silent reading; 44) Doing loud reading

In analysing the classroom observation, the data were coded, and categories and meanings emerged. It is worth mentioning here that the idea behind the design of the classroom observation schedule was to answer one overarching research question: "To what extent are

EFL teachers' teaching practices in line with the principles of the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach?"

4.11.2 Interviews

As highlighted by Richards (2003), interviews are a good way of obtaining in-depth data concerning teachers' beliefs, feelings and attitudes. Furthermore, Richards (2003) and Dornyei (2007) argue that the interview is a natural and socially acceptable method of exploring experiences and opinions. Interviews are therefore considered an effective method for collecting qualitative information from a selected number of participants and improving the interpretation of qualitative results (Pring, 2000). In qualitative studies, interviews can be used as either the primary strategy for data collection, or in conjunction with other techniques (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). For this study, the interviews were intended to play a crucial role in checking, expanding and triangulating the data gathered using the questionnaire approach. Seidman (2006, p. 10) states that use of interviews "provides access to the context of people's behaviour and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of the behaviour". Using additional sources improves triangulation and as a result the overall findings of the study will be strengthened (Ozsevik, 2010). In this study, semi-structured interviews were employed with the English language teachers to gain in-depth and detailed information regarding the implementation of CLT in the Saudi language teaching context.

As Ahmed et al. (2016) state, interviews, unlike questionnaires, are powerful in discovering new knowledge and capturing interviewees' accounts in a more open, reliable and systematic manner. Interviews take various forms and Dornyei (2007, p. 134–136) categorizes face-to-face interviews according to the degree of structure in the process:

1. *Single or multiple sessions*: Researchers can conduct single or multiple interviews with the same participants to obtain sufficient depth and breadth of information. For example,

in a sequence of three interviews, the first might aim to present a brief and quick idea of the research and enable the interviewer to prepare a more made-to-measure interview guide for the second interview. As a result, the second interview can be more focused on the study. The third interview then allows the interviewer to ask any follow-up questions to complete and clarify the account.

2. *Structured interviews*: In a structured interview, the researcher follows a pre-prepared, elaborated interview schedule which contains a list of questions to be covered closely with every interviewee in the same way.
3. *Unstructured interviews*: The unstructured interview allows researchers to adopt a flexible approach and follow the interviewee in unpredictable directions, with only minimal interference from the research agenda.
4. *Semi-structured interviews*: In this form, the researcher provides guidance and direction in the form of open-ended conversation. The interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on the issue raised in an exploratory manner.

This study applied semi-structured interviews, viewed as a suitable method for case study research in which the researcher has a sufficient overview of the topic in question and is able to develop broad questions addressing the topic and avoid using read-made response categories which limit the depth and breadth of the respondent's story (Dornyei, 2007).

4.11.2.1 Rationale for using semi-structured interviews

After the observation data had been gathered, semi-structured interviews were conducted using almost entirely open-ended questions to avoid any personal researcher input (Bryman, 2016). This does not only give an opportunity to explore the interviewees' responses to questions, but also to uncover unexpected new data. Furthermore, this format allowed participants to extend their responses, as well as the reforming and explanation of questions to make them clear and

avoid any misunderstanding (Creswell, 2012; Walsh & Wiggins, 2003). In addition, a revision of various EFL researches that conducted interviews in their studies (e.g. Li, 1998; Chang and Goswami, 2011; Xue, 2009; Raissi, et.al. 2013; Incecay and Incecay, 2009; Hassan, 2013, Rahman, et.al., 2018; Rao, 2002; Algonhaim, 2014; Al-Rabadi, 2012; Alhawsawi, 2013; Batawi, 2006; Abdulkader, 2013; Al-Nouh, 2008; McLean, 2011) guided the researcher of this study to develop the interview questions to address the undertaken main research question, focusing on the implementation of CLT principles in classroom practices.

The teachers' and students' interviews themes were designed based on the observation of the actual lesson activities used in classroom. Furthermore, questions were based on the main research questions regarding the implementation of CLT in Saudi language teaching classes, namely: What are EFL teachers' perceptions and knowledge of the CLT approach?; To what extent are the EFL teachers' actual teaching practices in line with CLT principles? ; What are the difficulties in using the CLT approach in a Saudi preparatory year programme (PYP)?; What are the students' perceptions of their EFL teachers' practices in their classrooms?; What are the teaching methods used in a Saudi preparatory year classes?; What are the similarities and discrepancies between the teachers' perceptions and their actual classroom practices? Each of these questions was addressed by focusing on specific homogeneous groups of questions, enabling in-depth exploration of participants' knowledge, opinions and experiences of the research topic. For example, I highlighted a lesson and any positive behaviour within the principles of CLT, examining what they did and why they did it. Using this kind of stimulated recall, teachers were able to remember specific episodes and provide elaboration. In addition to this, I also used pre-designed interview questions for the difficulties and pre-service training categories. Fourteen questions were designed (cf. 4.11.2.5) and were categorized in the means of wide range of communicative language teaching and the grammar translation method to fulfil the objective of this study such as memorizing grammar rules, drilling language aspects

and repeating sentences, error correction and L1 use. In addition to pair/ group work, functional activities, the use of extended dialogue or information gap activities and the use of authentic material. The rationale for investigating language teaching activities in classroom practice is that EFL teachers in Saudi tend to use grammar-based teaching activities and CLT was not much emphasised in classroom practice. The focus of this study is on investigating practice among EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia as an initial step in determining how CLT is implemented in language teaching classrooms.

The validity of interview recognised in the means of the things applying the concept and phenomenon under investigation and to the extent that the data collection procedure tends to measure (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004; Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). Therefore, the validity of the interview questions in this study is carried out the underpinning the issues investigating in the research question, whether EFL teachers in Saudi classroom practice reflects the principles of CLT if yes how they do it, and if not, what types of difficulties they face in order to implement CLT based classroom practice, and how in-service training is important for teachers in the research context. To present a clear and reliable content, questions were very focused and simple to the participants. Reliability of the interview is achieved through the fourteen developed questions to answer issues arose in the research question. According to Seliger & Shohamy (1989, p. 185), the norm of the reliability provides information when “the data collection procedure is consistent and accurate”. In addition, triangulation of the data established through the different source data gathered from classroom observation and questionnaire, which enable the researcher to see how elements are harmonized to achieve the reliability and validity of the study.

4.11.2.2 Interview sample

In this study, the six classes observed teachers were interviewed for more consistency. Since observation entails the gathering of impressions of particular aspects in a systematic way, and

interview helps to obtain more about specific phenomenon (Gitsaki & Coombe, 2016). Therefore, teachers were chosen systematically according to their educational background and language teaching experience (see table 4.2). The teachers were asked to elaborate more about their various teaching techniques used or justified why certain techniques were not applied. Therefore, it was necessary to get in-depth information through the face to face interview as the observation does not directly provide data for teachers' internal thinking while they are conducting their lessons.

4.11.2.3 Teachers' interview procedures

Interviews are important research method that allowed the gathering of in-depth information in a flexible manner by conducting face-to-face conversations. Qualitative interviews have been considered and discussed by many scholars (Allwright, Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Creswell, 2014; Croker, 2009; Dornyei, 2007; Wright, 2013). In this study, interviews were conducted with six teachers whose classes had been observed. Semi-structured questions were used to enhance the triangulation of data collected through classroom observations and questionnaires. During the interviews, related processes were considered in terms of the instructions given, the questions and the method for the interview (tape recorded). The interviews were conducted as soon as the observation data had been collected and consent was obtained from the teachers to be interviewed. Individual teachers were interviewed separately at different times in their offices. Teachers were asked to indicate whether they preferred to be interviewed in Arabic or English: two out of the six preferred to speak Arabic in the interview. The total duration of interviews was 180 minutes. I started the interview by thanking them for taking part and I explained the length of the interview and considerations related to ethical issues. Teachers were informed that the interview would be recorded and how the data obtained would be used. I tried to make the questions comprehensible and avoid any subjectivity in terms of inserting my own experience or

perspectives. The interviews were friendly and any positive behaviour on the part of the teacher was emphasised.

At the beginning of each interview, the researcher clarified some key points that need to be highlighted in the interview, because the post observation interview aimed to shed light on some teachers' and students' behaviour in classroom practice in relation to language teaching methods and materials used. Then the researcher started the interview using some demographic questions for beginning the interview (i.e. name, qualifications, and teaching experience), this helps to develop a good relationship between the interviewees and researcher (Bailey, 2006 & Berg, 2009). These are then followed by important questions in relation to research questions of this project. I used my field notes for each class to remind myself about some positive or negative classroom aspects observed, they in turn elaborate more on such behaviour occurred in classroom.

4.11.2.4 Teachers' interview questions

The interview questions were designed to address the main research question, focusing on the implementation of CLT principles in classroom practices. These questions comprised 14 questions related to the research questions and covered communicative based activities such as functional aspects of language use (such as requests), role play, group-based activities, the use of extended dialogue or information gap activities, the use of authentic materials, the use of L1 and the use of drilling and repetition. The questions were categorized based on the COLT scheme and included language teaching methods, the materials used participant organization and students' mobility. The observational data confirmed that teachers in Saudi EFL classes tend to use activities with weak communicative potential, focusing on knowledge of linguistic structures rather than use of the language. Hall (2011), states that weak CLT involves organized syllabuses and using more controlled language-focused activities prior to real communication.

4.11.2.5 Teachers' interview schedule

Teachers' interview questions contain fourteen questions. Most of the questions were developed based on my observation note and were ready for formal interview. I used my note for each teacher to capture additional aspects, and teachers in turn reflect on certain classroom practices. The themes were modified based on COLT the classroom observation schema.

Teaching grammar

1. I have observed that “focus on forms” teaching was emphasised in class. To what extent do you comment on your performance? Why?

Pair and group activities

2. I observed that you engaged students in pair/group activities. It is your regular practice? How is it important to use pair and group work in your teaching practice?
3. Some teachers use pair and group work, how often do you apply this method in your class?

The use of L1

4. I noticed that students use Arabic during group/pair work, also while answering your question. What do you think of that?
5. I saw that some teachers use L1 to translate language items and grammar rules. How often do you use it, why?

Individual activity

6. I observed that students work individually, to what extent do you use it and how does it help in language practice?

Authentic materials

7. I observed most teachers do not use authentic materials, whilst, the course book is the main source used in teaching language skills. Could you explain why?

Functional activities

8. I have noticed that you encourage the students' participation through role-play, games, functional activities ... how is it important for language teacher to use different techniques in classroom? How often do you use these techniques in your teaching?

Error correction

9. I observed some teachers scope on students' errors. To what extent do you correct students' errors?

Knowledge of CLT

10. What do you know about CLT (Communicative Language Teaching Approach)?

Difficulties in using CLT

11. In your opinion what are the most difficulties that teachers face to use CLT in Saudi language classrooms?

In-service training needs

12. In your opinion, to what extent in-service training enhanced teachers' teaching classroom performance?

Language skills

13. I have observed that speaking and writing skills were less practised in classroom? Could you explain why?

14. I have observed that reading and listening skills were more practised in classroom? Could you explain why?

4.11.2.6 Piloting the interview schedule

Piloting can help enhance (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). It is important for researchers to trial the developed instrument to identify potential issues with the general wording and sequencing of questions. According to Berg (2009, p. 119), there are two ways of piloting an interview schedule: First, the schedule should be critically examined by people familiar with the undertaken study. This facilitates the identification of poorly worded questions or questions that might be offensive. Second, practice how to present the instrument for a real study and how effectively the interview will work. Furthermore, Chadwick, Bahr, and Albrecht (1984, cited in Berg, 2009: p.119) suggests five questions for assessing an instrument:

1. Has the researcher included all the questions necessary to test the research hypothesis?
2. Do the questions elicit the type of response that were anticipated?
3. Is the language of the research instrument meaningful to the respondents?
4. Is there other problem with the questions, such as double meaning, or multiple issues embedded in a single question?

5. Finally, does the interview guide, as developed, help to motivate respondents to participate in the study?

To achieve the reliability of this study pre-testing process was followed. The schedule was developed based on post observation, then critically was examined by Saudi English language teachers for wording so as to avoid any misunderstanding before the main interviews were conducted.

4.11.2.7 Students' interviews

Focus group interviews were conducted with students from different classes (i.e. four groups). Students were asked to participate voluntarily in the interviews, each group involved seven students and the interviews lasted a total of 120 minutes. The selection of students was random. The purpose of the group interviews with students was to interpret the classroom observations and garner their perceptions and opinions of their teachers' classroom practice with regard to group activities, role play, drilling and repetition. I interviewed each group immediately after the observation of their class. Prior to conducting the interviews, I gave them a brief idea about myself and the study, aiming to give them more confidence in speaking out. The questions proposed for the students focused on the extent to which they were satisfied with their teacher's practices in the classroom, particularly concerning group and pair-work activities, the teaching materials and the teaching techniques used. I also asked whether they preferred Saudi or native-speaker English teachers and why. Here I realized the importance of conducting the students' interview in Arabic to make it easy for participants to respond and to obtain quality data. The students' responses were written down during the interview as they refused to be recorded due to the university's regulation.

4.11.2.8 Students' interview schedule

The students' interview questions were designed to investigate students' perceptions toward teachers' actual teaching practice and various aspects of language teaching methods used in their actual language learning classes. The interview was conducted in Arabic and the 13 interview questions were categorized in the same structure as the interview questions for teachers.

1. I observed that you work alone most of the activities, do you think it is a good way to learn English? Why?
2. I observed that teachers highly focus on teaching grammar rules. To what extent it is important to you?
3. Some teachers use pair and group activities, while, some use individual work and which one you mostly like. Why?
4. I observed that some students were use Arabic to answer teacher's question. Why?
5. I observed some teachers often use Arabic to translate vocabularies, while others use some other techniques such as gestures, giving examples, showing pictures. Which technique do you like more? Why?
6. Some classes, teachers used only English. Do you understand what your teacher saying?
7. To what extent it helps to improve your speaking skills?
8. What technique do teachers use in teaching language skills?
9. I observed some teachers use authentic material and course book, while some of them use only course book. Which one is used by your teacher? Which one do you like more?
10. I realized that writing skills was not practice. What do you think? How teacher assess your progression in writing?
11. I saw some teachers use a lot of memorizing sentences and grammar rules. What do you think of this type of technique uses in English class?
12. What barriers do you face in learning English? What do you want from your teachers to overcome any language difficulties?
13. I observed that speaking and writing skills were less emphasized in classroom practice?

4.11.2.9 Rationale for using focus group interviews with students

Focus group interviews are considered a research technique that allows the researcher to collect data through group interaction on the topic determined by the researcher (Morgan, 1997). The reason for choosing a group interview is that this is more dynamic than individual interviews in terms of stimulating discussion, gaining insights and generating ideas to examine a topic in depth (Klenke, 2008, p. 132). In addition, Dornyei (2007, p. 144) highlights that focus group interviews enhance the opportunities for participants to think together, inspire and challenge each other and react to emerging issue and points. Indeed, “within group interaction can yield high quality data as it can create a synergistic environment that results in a deep and insightful dissection”. Similarly, Morgan (1997) emphasizes that focus group interviews enable the researcher to manage a large amount of interaction within a limited time.

4.11.3 Questionnaire

4.11.3.1 Advantages of questionnaires

Questionnaires are the most popular instrument used in social science research studies. As Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011, p. 27) note, questionnaires are very useful for collecting information such as numerical data, they can be administered without the presence of the researcher and they are comparatively straightforward to analyse. Brown (2001, p. 6) describes questionnaires as “any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers”. Thus, researchers view questionnaire as a suitable way of investigating a wide variety of research questions entailing the analysis of large-scale data related to different aspects of language teaching and learning.

The aspects considered include language teaching and learning needs, communication difficulties, preferred learning styles and classroom activities and eliciting attitudes, beliefs and opinions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Dornyei & Taguchi, 2009; Nunan, 1992;

Oppenheim, 2000; Riazi, 2016; Richards, 2001; Robson, 2002). As Dornyei (2014, p. 6) states, “the main attraction of questionnaire is their unprecedented efficiency in terms of research time, research effort, and, financial resources”. This means that by administering a questionnaire to a group of people, a huge amount of information can be gathered within a short period of time. Dornyei (2014) adds that a well-structured questionnaire can be processed rapidly and relatively straightforwardly, especially with the use of modern computer software. Furthermore, a major advantage of using questionnaires is that anonymity can be assured, so this is the optimal way of handling sensitive information and obtaining the respondents’ confidential views on issues (Brown, 2001; Downs & Adrian, 2012).

4.11.3.2 Disadvantages of questionnaires

Although Brown (2001) highlights some of the chief advantages of questionnaires, namely that they are relatively cheap, quick and efficient, he also mentions some of the disadvantages (p. 77):

- There is often a very low return rate.
- Respondents may skip many of the questions or only partially answer some.
- Questionnaires usually have little control over the environment in which the questionnaire will be filled out and the order in which the respondents will answer the questions.
- Questionnaires are also relatively mechanical, artificial and impersonal in comparison to interviews.
- Questionnaire data are also somewhat restricted in that they include only written behaviours.

Moreover, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) note that when questionnaires are used in a study, the researcher is using a strategy in which participants use self-reporting to express views in areas such as attitudes, beliefs and feelings towards the topic of interest; such self-report data are potentially subject to bias. In this regard, as Dornyei (2007) states, there is the potential for “social desirability bias”, with participants not giving their own views concerning a statement, which those they consider would be acceptable to others. According to Bryman (2016), there are several possible reasons for this, among which is the fact that questionnaire items are often “transparent” and participants can make a good guess regarding the desirable answer; some of them will provide this answer even if it does not accord with their own views (Dornyei, 2007). Nonetheless, Falissard (2011) considers that although questionnaire data are often subjective, statistical analysis can help interpret this material. Accordingly, a sensible interpretation of questionnaire data will emerge in relation to the researcher’s knowledge of the topic. In this study, I did my best to minimize the possibility of “social desirability bias” by triangulating the data gathered from the respondents through interviews with data from other instruments, namely classroom observations and interviews.

4.11.3.3 Rationale for the design of the questionnaire

This study made use of teachers’ and students’ questionnaires to collect qualitative and quantitative data to answer the overarching research questions, as well as the sub-questions (cf. 4.2). Classroom observational data needs to be enhanced by data collected by interview and questionnaires to increase reliability through triangulation. Furthermore, not all pertinent aspects can be observed: researchers cannot observe feelings, views, or purposes and nor can they observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time. Therefore, I had to ask participants questions about these aspects. In other words, there is a need to use both instruments (interviews and questionnaires) (Patton, 2002, p. 341).

4.11.3.4 Types of questionnaire

Questionnaire can include open-ended and close-ended items (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Dornyei, 2007; Mackey & Gass, 2005). A close-ended item is a question that requires respondents to choose an answer from a set of predetermined responses, whereas open-ended questions enable respondents to express their own thoughts and ideas freely (Johnson & Christensen, 2013; Mackey & Gass, 2005). One of the advantages of using mixed items is that open-ended questions can provide extra information that cannot be obtained only using close-ended questions (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

4.11.3.4.1 Open-ended and Close-ended questionnaire

The debate about survey methodology that should be proposed in which tackle the process of the data collection, to choose an open-ended or close-ended questionnaire form (Roberts et al., 2014). Both methodology have a contribution according to the nature of the study and how much information needs to be gathered (Hartung, Knapp & Sinha, 2008). For example, on the open-ended question is a very attractive tool for smaller scale and respondents can produce more deep information or different views of the benefits and limitations of the subject in the given free space, thus, this new information has significant implications on the data that might not be find in close-ended question (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Thus, open-ended questions are that contains the ‘gems’ of information that cannot be obtained in the form of close-ended questions, in the means of explicit view that can open a window of opportunity for respondent to highlight on an issue and thus, the researcher can provide more comments and suggestions on the study than close-ended items, which are emphasises specific response (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017). Whereas, close-ended questions in general produce higher percentages of responses, and useful for testing specific hypothesis than open-ended questions for answers that are equal in both question forms (Oppenheim, 2000). Furthermore, Aghtaie and Gangoli (2015, p. 68) state that “designing and

conducting survey involve careful decision making and warrants extra attention”, because any ambiguity in the wording of question reduce data quality and undermines validity’. Hence, this study’s questionnaires have been piloted before being implemented for the main study (cf. 4.11.7.3). Furthermore, in use of a combination of open-ended and close-ended question emphasises the value of the study (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000; Dornyei, 2007), on the other hand, each methodology has its own advantages and limitations, therefore, many researchers indicated that the integration of both types of questions can be considered as a complementary process to each other (Oppenheim, 2000; Lynch, 1996; Dornyei, 2007; Riazi, 2016). Therefore, in the notion of the designed questionnaire was adopted from the reading various literature regarding to CLT approach and its principles (i.e. Savignon, 1997, 2002; Canale and Swain, 1980; Canal, 1983; Brown, 2007; Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

In addition to these I have looked at various studies to find out about EFL teachers’ knowledge and perceptions of CLT, to what extent its principles are implemented, and what difficulties teachers face in implementing the CLT approach (i.e. Abdulkader, 2013; Al-Nouh 2008; Li, 1998; Hossen, 2008). The adapted questionnaire was modified according to the nature of the study. In addition, the content of the questionnaire was contingent on the Communicative Orientation of Language teaching Observation Scheme (COLT) (i.e. classroom organization, teaching methods, activities, materials used....) as discussed by Allwright, Allwright, Bailey (1991). In order to suit the needs for examine teachers’ and students’ perception both questionnaires were modified. The above-mentioned sources primarily helped me to understanding of the process for constructing the questionnaires. For structure of the questionnaire (see Table 4.5). Furthermore, open and close-ended questions can form differently, and the questionnaires used in this study are modified and presented using Likert-scale follows:

4.11.4 Likert scales

Likert-scale is one of the popular approaches used form of attitudes measurement in survey research to scale close-ended questionnaire data. According to Dornyei (2007) sees that “the most famous type of closed ended item is undoubtedly the Likert scale” (p.105). Holtz, Springer, Boden McGill (2014) stated that a Likert scale is a calculation of positive and negative responses which can be mainly informative in terms of degree with no middle response. Four Likert-scale of 1 “strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree”. The scale 3 and 4 response positive attitudes and 1 and 2 held negative responses. Responses gathered in standardised way and can be easy compared with one another and analysed (Ghuman, 2010). In this study, Likert-scale was used because I believed that it helps to answer different types questions used to examine perceptions towards various aspects of CLT approach and to what extent the current language class practice meets the students’ language needs. Hence, in the two questionnaires, for example, participants are asked to select one of the rating for their best answer. Due to Likert-scale measurement value strong points, it widely used in social sciences research to measure variables related to organizational structure and perceptual performance (Gill & Johnson, 2002).

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In this study, a Likert scale was used because I believed that it helps to answer different types questions used to examine perceptions towards various aspects of communicative teaching and to what extent the current language class practice meets the students' language needs. Hence, in the two questionnaires, for example, participants are asked to select one of the rating for their best answer. It appears that due to Likert-scale measurement value strong points, it is widely used in social sciences research to measure variables related to organizational structure and perceptual performance (Gill and Johnson, 2002; Monette, Sullivan, and DeJong, 2013). A sample of Likert scales question used below:

Please tick (✓) the appropriate box for each statement:

Q11. To what extent do you think the following statements are affected the implementation of CLT in your classroom?

- 1) Strongly agree
- 2) Agree
- 3) Disagree
- 4) Strongly disagree

4.11.5 Multiple choice

Multiple-choice question most widely used in research and provides the respondents to select one of the best possible answer (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017; Anderson, 1998; Patten, 1998). The format question is that options categorizes column using, then the respondent one of the boxes. For example, this study used a multiple-choice question which includes a particular option chosen for multiple choice questions.

Q. 6 How many hours do you spend weekly preparing teaching lessons (on average)?

- | | | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| (1) 1-2 hours | <input type="checkbox"/> | (2) 3-4 hours | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (3) 5-6 hours | <input type="checkbox"/> | (4) 7-8 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

4.11.6 Structure of the study questionnaire

The organization of a questionnaire should be modelled on satisfactory guidelines regarding the optimal way of place questioning within a framework. The significance of this is that the success of a questionnaire mostly depends on the motivation of the respondents to read, complete and return it (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Dornyei, 2007). This suggests that a successful questionnaire is one in which the components have been carefully adjusted, not only to the needs of the research aims and objectives, but also to the characteristics of the respondents. Therefore, one must consider how understandable the questionnaire will be to the respondents (Bryman, 2008) and at the same time ensure that it has a logical progression, lacks distortions and problems and fulfils ethical requirements.

4.11.7 Developing the questionnaires

4.11.7.1 Teachers' questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire was designed to collect data concerning teachers' perceptions of the application of the CLT approach in the language teaching and learning process in the Saudi context (see Appendix 3). The questionnaire was accompanied by a letter of consent, which explained the goal of the study. Section one in the questionnaire covered background, in addition to individual background information, it comprised seven sections, as shown in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5 Summary of the structure of the teachers' questionnaire

Section	Questions
1	Items 1–7 Personal information: name, age, qualifications, years of teaching experience, teaching hours, and time spent on preparing lessons, level of study of the students.
2	Items (8-9) Professional development
3	Item 10 (11 categories) Teachers' perceptions of classroom events as implemented in classroom practices: What is your perception of the following statements?
4	Item 11 (4 categories) Developing language skills: Which of the following language teaching skills are more emphasized in your classroom using CLT?
5	Item 12 (14 categories) teachers' perceptions towards various language teaching techniques. Language activities in practice: To what extent do you apply the following classroom activities in your teaching practice?
6	Item 13 (11 categories) Difficulties in implementing CLT: To what extent do you think that the following statements affect the implementation of CLT in the classroom?
7	Item 14 (9 categories) Teachers understanding of CLT: To what extent do the following statements describe your best understanding of CLT?

In addition, at the end of the questionnaire space was given for further comments if necessary. The participants responses for each item indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement of the questionnaire. Questionnaires were escorted by a consent letter, which give a brief explanation of the study more specific perceptions towards communicative approach (see appendix 2). Two group of participants are used in this study teachers and students. Samples are from the ELI 101, ELI 102, ELI 103, and ELI 104 of the preparatory year (cf. 4.5). The designed questionnaires for teachers and students were structured approximately the same content related to perceptions of classroom activities and English language skills. While teachers' questionnaire includes more questions regarding to difficulties in using CLT in their teaching and teachers' knowledge of CLT (see Appendix 3). Bothe questionnaires used four rating Likert-scale for close statements, and participants were asked to choose one of the scale for each statement (see Appendices 3 & 5).

4.11.7.2 Students' questionnaire

The students' questionnaire was designed to tackle perceptions of the issues underlying the English language teachers' practices, specifically whether the teaching methods and materials used met their expectations. Therefore, the students' questionnaire was designed similar to the teachers' questionnaire. In addition, to understand students' perceptions of teachers' classroom practices, the same constructions were used and comprised a combination of open and close-ended questions. Table (4.6) presents the student questionnaire, which included 20 items related to communicative and traditional language teaching approaches and the emphasis on language skills in classroom practice (see Appendix 5).

Table 4.6 Summary of the structure of the students' questionnaire

Section	Questions
1	Items 1–4 personal information: name, age, gender, level of study (i.e. name and age items are optional)
2	Q. Students' perceptions towards English language activities 5. Classroom activities focus on memorizing grammar rules 6. The teacher uses of Arabic (L1) to translate vocabulary and grammar rules 7. The teacher corrects errors immediately 8. Pair/group activities are used in classroom 9. The teacher frequently uses different aids, such as tasks, maps, games and videos 10. The teacher mostly focuses on communication, with grammar rules when necessary 11. The teacher frequently encourages individual work in the classroom 12. The teacher dominates the classroom interaction through lecturing only 13. Students are given more talking time than the teacher 14. The course book is the only source that the teacher uses in the classroom. 15. The teacher uses drilling and repeating sentences a lot.
3	Q. Which of the following the English language skills are more emphasises by your teacher? (16) Reading; (17) Writing; (18) Listening; (19) Speaking (20) If you have any comments, please write them down.....

4.11.7.3 Piloting the questionnaires

The benefits derived from questionnaires depend on the wording of items and a little change can make a considerable difference in the integral questionnaire construction. Thus, the piloting process helps to collect feedback on how the instrument works (Dornyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 53). The teacher questionnaire designed for this research was drafted many times to ensure that

the information was coherent and readable and then my two supervisors were consulted for their valuable feedback. The teacher questionnaire was also sent to three PhD students in Applied Linguistics who were Saudi English language teachers for revision and to establish if any additional amendments were needed before producing the final version. The piloting process was done via email and the respondents were willing to share their experiences, in particular commenting on some unclear statements. This helped reword the items in the questionnaire and ensure it addressed the research needs.

I followed the same process for the student questionnaire in terms of drafting and considering supervisor feedback. The piloting process for the student questionnaire took place in the actual research context. First, it was written in English because my expectation was that the university students would have a good understanding of English. However, during the piloting of the questionnaire I observed that most of the students raised questions that indicated their lack of sufficient English language proficiency to respond to the items. Therefore, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic to avoid any potential difficulties concerning understanding of the statements (see Appendix 7). Here I realized the importance of translating the questionnaire into Arabic to make it easy for participants to respond and to obtain quality data. Some themes from the teacher questionnaire were not included in the students' questionnaire (i.e. difficulties in implementing CLT and understanding of CLT).

Critique of choice of data collection methods

This section provides a critique of the various data collection sources employed to implement investigation of the application of CLT principles in various EFL contexts. This analysis can be used to understand the methodological gap identified in the studies reviewed and in turn to justify the choice of data collection methods used to explore English teachers' difficulties in adopting the CLT approach.

In South Korea, Li (1998), for instance, distributed a questionnaire to 18 South Korean secondary school English teachers who were studying in the Korean Teacher Education Program (KTEP) at a Canadian university and then also conducted 10 interviews with selected participants. The findings revealed that the most frequent difficulties associated included teachers' deficiencies in spoken English, deficiencies in strategic and sociolinguistic competence, lack of training in CLT, lack of opportunities for re-training, misconceptions of CLT and inadequate time and expertise for developing communicative materials.

In another study, Rao (2000) examined Chinese students' perceptions with regard to communicative and non-communicative activities in the EFL classroom. Using only a qualitative research procedure (questionnaire) the findings of the study determined that by integrating communicative activities with non-communicative activities in English classrooms, students in non-English speaking countries could derive more benefit from CLT. The author also emphasized that China and many other countries where EFL is used need to update "not westernize, English teaching; that is, to combine the 'new' with the 'old' to align the communicative approach with traditional teaching structures" (p. 1).

In another study, using a mixed method approach by means of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, Incecay and Incecay (2009) investigated the perceptions of 30 Turkish university-level students concerning the appropriateness of CLT and non-CLT activities in an EFL context. The results showed that participants supported both communicative activities (whole-class discussion, pair work and group work) and non-communicative activities (error correction and audio-lingual drills). The researchers recommended that teachers align both activity types in their classroom teaching.

Reviewing the various sources of data collection methods used in the above studies, it appears that they employed either one or a combination of only two data collection sources. Thus, this

study is distinct from most of the studies cited in this research (e.g. Incecay & Incecay, 2009; Li, 1998; Rao, 2000), as none have used all the instruments used in this research. The systematic mixed approach employed here contributes methodologically and provides future researchers interested in investigating similar topics an easy means of implementing these tools. Furthermore, the methodological triangulation strengthens the findings of the study through the combination of research tools.

Through observing teachers' classroom practice, it was possible to distinguish between their theoretical beliefs and practice. The results of this study indicate that although Saudi EFL teachers have positive attitudes towards the CLT approach, the English language programme as currently implemented is not in line with the principles of CLT. Through semi-structured interviews, aspects of the teachers and students' perceptions were explored. It was also possible to gain some elaboration explaining the teachers' classroom practices that might not have been revealed from classroom observation even with the use of field notes. Moreover, by distributing questionnaires, it was possible to establish students' perceptions and preferences for practice regarding teachers' instructional performance.

4.12 Data analysis

Crowther and Lancaster (2012, p. 176) state that data analysis is "the process of turning data into information that in turn can serve to develop concepts, theories, explanations, or understanding". Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2015, p. 202) point out that data analysis is the process of making sense of data, which "involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen, and read it is the process of making meaning". It can therefore be said that data analysis enables the researcher to identify and ultimately employ the most applicable techniques of data analysis to interpret the data (Burns, 2000; Crowther & Lancaster, 2012). Similarly, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) stated that data analysis involves "interpretation of the meanings, functions, and consequences of human

activities and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in local, and perhaps also wider contexts. What are produced, for the most part, are verbal descriptions, and theories: quantification and statistical analysis play a subordinate role at most” (p. 3). Keeping in mind that the study used qualitative and quantitative research methodology (classroom observation, interview and questionnaire), details of the analysis discussed as follow.

4.12.1 Quantitative data analysis

The questionnaires employed in this study comprised close-ended questions so that participants’ responses to each item could be measured using scales that met the aims of the study, as well as open-ended items enabling expansion. The close-ended responses were analysed statistically using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), commonly used in applied linguistics and educational research (Dornyei, 2007). A variety of coded responses were used for the questionnaire data, including yes/no and four-point Likert-type scales, anchored at “to a great extent” and “not at all”. Responses to each set of scaled items were selected to match the specific items.

4.12.2 Qualitative data analysis

As Robson (2002) suggested, an analytical framework was used to classify and group the data according to issues raised in response to the research questions. The semi-structured interview data were analysed in accordance with themes identified inductively during the data analysis process. To maintain anonymity, participants are referred to by a number (e.g. T1, T2, T3, T4, etc., for teachers). The designed classroom observation schedule as discussed in Section 4.11.1 was used to count the frequency of various teachers’ and students’ classroom events. The classroom events as presented in (see Appendix 1) was used to supplement the quantitative data. Bearing in mind of the overarching research questions (see Section 4.2), seven themes were presented (i.e. classroom events, participate organization, classroom activities, functional activities, language skills, teaching material and student’s modality (see Table 4.4) for

analysing the observation data according to the COLT scheme as discussed in methodology chapter (see section 4.10). Furthermore, the data from classroom observation was presented to determine the frequency and percentage of lessons which were observed during teachers' classroom practices (see Appendix 11). Thus, classroom observation, interviews, and questionnaire were used to enable the researcher to make possible judgements based on the results of the instruments obtained from both teachers and students' data.

4.13 Validity and reliability of the data collection procedures

Nunan (1992, p. 14) considers that validity can be defined as “the extent to which a piece of research actually investigates what the research purports to investigate” and reliability is “the consistency and explicability of research”. Regarding interviews, Gay (1996, p. 217) states that reliability and validity conditions are met when “the interviewers accurately reflect the feelings, opinions, and so forth, of those interviewed and consequently permit appropriate interpretation of narrative data”. For this study, several procedures were designed to ensure reliability and validity. As Oppenheim (2000) states, every aspect of research needs to have been measured previously to ensure that it works as intended. A pilot study was undertaken to determine the validity and reliability of the research instruments. The use of piloting in the case of a questionnaire is necessary to establish whether it is too long or too short, if the wording is ambiguous, whether the type of questions and general format are easy to comprehend, if the questionnaire is visually adequate, that the questions are not redundant and that the directions are easy to follow (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). For this study, a first draft of the questionnaire was given to a sample consisting of four experienced English language teachers. Based on their feedback, several questions were reworded. The interview protocols also needed to be piloted, so the questions were first tried out with five postgraduate TESOL students and considered to be applicable as discussed above.

4.14 Measurement scales

Three types of scale were used in this study to measure the responses of EFL teachers, as follows: (a) Nominal scale: (Yes/No questions) used to obtain speedy and appropriate answers for the purposes of clarity to factual questions related to gender and concerns such as whether teachers have access to authentic English language teaching sources; (b) Ordinal scales: the variables measured are given a ranking, but there is no actual score; these were only being used for participant age, qualifications and teaching experience; (c) Interval scales: used to provide information on the ranking of scores and to indicate the distance between the scores. Interval scores are used to develop a better understanding of teachers' views, for example in relation to the extent to which EFL teachers implement CLT in their classrooms.

4.15 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has presented the research design and methodology used in this study and has provided explanations for the use of the research methodology and tools. The participants and context of the study have been described and the justification for the selection of the various response codes, scales and items presented. Triangulation allows the use of complementary research tools in terms of quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews and classroom observation to guarantee a stronger research design, valid and reliable findings and a balance between an empirical and reflective methodology. The data collected for the study were divided into several different sets to address the research questions. The quantitative and qualitative instruments used in the study were designed to cover several different areas to answer the research questions. Finally, a discussion of ethical issues was explored within the context of this research.

CHAPTER 5: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the classroom observation data are interpreted to answer the overarching research question: “To what extent are EFL teachers’ teaching practices in line with the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT)?” The observations were undertaken to focus on the issue of potential differences between what language teachers say and what they actual do in the EFL classroom. Many aspects of the classroom observation are considered, including the participants, context, profiles and data obtained from teachers’ actual practices.

5.2 Aspects of classroom observation

For this study, the key focus of the classroom observation was to investigate actual teaching and learning processes and assess the extent to which teaching practices are in line with the principles of the CLT approach. This involves areas such as classroom events, activity types, methods used, materials and student modality. In addition, the data analysis process was assisted by what was observed around the university and what was already known about CLT and EFL teaching in a Saudi university. A brief informal meeting with teachers and students after each classroom observation was a key component in gaining an understanding of what had been observed in the EFL classrooms. This involved looking at teaching methods and techniques, classroom conditions, the teaching environment, student activities and their opinion of them, learning priorities and style and the teacher–student relationship. Once the data were ready for analysis, it was important to review all the observation notes for each teacher to avoid missing any important data.

5.3 Classroom observation participants

The study was carried out to investigate sociocultural processes in the language learning setting and to capture actions taking place between teacher and students. As a non-participant observer,

I sat at the back of the classroom taking field-notes. The aim was to explore types of classroom events and interactions between the teacher and students. A further intention was to collect a rich data set by observing the same classes frequently to gain as much information as possible and achieve reliability in the data gathered (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Over 12 weeks of data collection, 16 English language teachers participated. The duration of each class observation was 55 minutes, generating some 1,980 minutes of data in total. A time sampling technique was implemented to observe the types of activity that teachers and students undertook at selected points. Due to the segregation of education in Saudi Arabia, only female teachers were involved in the observation procedure. Of the (16) teachers whose classes were observed, 6 (T1–T6) were selected for detailed comparison and analysis (see Table 5.1). Several principles were applied to select these six teachers: native (NES) and non-native English speakers (NNES), various nationalities, educational qualifications and years of teaching experience. In addition, these six teachers stated in the interviews that they had been teaching using the same course books and attempted to use the CLT approach. This allowed analysis of how teachers managed the teaching process and enhanced awareness of individual teaching practices. Table 5.1 presents a summary of classroom observations and participant backgrounds for the 36 lessons observed.

Table 5.1 Classroom observation and participants' background information

Teacher participant	Nationality	Age	Teaching experience	Education	Total classes observed	Total duration of classes
T1	Jordanian	42	8 years	MA	6	6*55 = 330
T2	Saudi	32	6 years	MA	6	6*55 = 330
T3	Indian	45	9 years	MA	6	6*55 = 330
T4	Saudi	52	13 years	MA	6	6*55 = 330
T5	Canadian	43	11 years	PhD	6	6*55 = 330
T6	US	58	15 years	PhD	6	6*55 = 330
					Total classes =	Total = 1980
					36	minutes

5.4 Classroom observation context

The classroom observation was conducted in the female section of the English Language Institute (ELI) at King Abdul-Aziz University, from September to December 2016. The ELI was founded to meet the English language requirements of the university in the preparatory year and provides a General English Language Programme (GELP) for all new entry students. The curriculum offers integrated skills practice, using a series of commercially available course books (www.kau.edu.sa/eli). The classes observed were supplied with essential teaching aids, such as an overhead projector, computer and whiteboard. Prior to the data collection stage, it was necessary to obtain a letter of permission from the Dean of the Graduate School in the male section and contact was made with a female coordinator to arrange observation of the English language instructors. The classroom observation timetable was subject to negotiations with the subject coordinator to facilitate the observation schedule. There was a general willingness to participate in the study. Teachers in the ELI have a full-time teaching schedule of 18 hours per week. Classes run the morning from 9-12am and from 1:00-3:45pm in the afternoon there is an hour break for lunch and prayer. The average number of students in each class was 35-40.

5.4.1 Language instructors' recruitment policy

The ELI teachers are of different nationalities, hold a variety of qualifications and come from different teaching backgrounds. The course is very intensive: it is based on an integrated skills programme and comprises four levels (ELI 101 beginners, ELI 102 elementary, ELI 103 pre-intermediate and ELI 104 intermediate). There are four modules, each a full independent course. The time devoted to each module is seven weeks, including a mid and final examination period. The ELI in this study accepts application for male and female English language instructors based on the following recruitment policy. The candidate must have one of the

following qualifications: MA in TESL, TEFL, Applied Linguistics, or any related equivalent field from an accredited university; alternatively, a BA in English plus a Certificate/Diploma in English language teaching and minimum experience of three years in teaching English; ability to communicate accurately and fluently with full operational command of English. Applications will be considered if the candidates meet the above requirements and can provide documentation of their qualifications and evidence of previous employment. Having completed the paperwork and the face-to-face or Skype interview, candidates will be asked to prepare a short demonstration teaching presentation of 15–20 minutes (how to teach grammar, how to control a classroom, how to teach writing, etc.) to exhibit their language teaching performance, followed by a questions and answer session.

In terms of external factors, the post-observation interviews showed that the majority of teachers were aware of the importance of developing their language teaching practices in line with CLT principles. However, there were several external factors preventing them from implementing CLT in Saudi English language classrooms. Among these were two major factors: examination procedures and institutional policy. In terms of the institutional factors, certain aspects of the system which affect the teaching and learning experience, for example extensive teaching hours and large numbers of students in class, prevent teachers from making effective use of CLT in their classes. In addition, classroom instruction is usually focused on traditional teaching methods in which grammar is prioritized over other important skills, such as listening and speaking.

Another important finding from the post-observation interviews was that the teachers were under pressure to prepare students for examinations, both from the administration and from the students themselves. In particular, the teachers criticized the examination committee specifically on the grounds that the mid and final examination questions are not aligned with the students' language level. The teachers in the ELI did not have any input in the design of

the assessments. They also highlighted a substantial discrepancy between the express objectives of the course and the content of the assessment procedures, which affected the language teaching and learning process in classrooms.

5.5 Presentation of the classroom observation

This section outlines the observed teachers' profiles and classroom practices who are identified by means of numbers teacher 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 in order to maintain their anonymity. Individual teachers background information was taken from the questionnaire such as name, nationality, qualification, teaching experience and time spend to prepare lesson. While details of teachers' classroom practices data, I used my Filed notes to present accurate information as observed.

Teacher 1

Teacher 1 was an English language teacher from Jordan who obtained her first degree in linguistics and an MA in TESOL. She had been teaching for eight years and had not attended any training programmes on CLT techniques or how to apply them to classroom practice. She was well organized in terms of attending class, greeting students and waiting for the class to settle for five minutes before starting the lesson. The lesson began by revisiting the previous lesson and asking students to answer questions in their textbook. The teaching process mainly focused on grammar-based activities. The students were seated in rows, so there was insufficient space for the teacher to move around the classroom properly. This teacher usually gave a short presentation on a new topic, followed by writing examples on the board. She then directed students to complete an activity using their textbooks. On completion, the students shared their answers with the class individually or in a group. It was also observed that group work and other techniques, such as role-play, information gap activities and exchanges of information, were not exploited in the classroom. Student interactions were observed to be limited to answering grammar-based questions and comparing answers with others using single-word answers. In this class, throughout the six lessons observed, it was noted that the

four English language skills were not practised fully. In terms of reading skills, for example, the teacher asked students to undertake silent reading and answer questions in their book. On completion, some students were selected to read clearly and respond individually. Students experienced the same process for listening, listening to a recorded conversation once and completing exercises such as filling in gaps with appropriate words using their course book. Speaking skills were not taught as CLT requires as most of the time the only interaction was on a one-to-one basis between the teacher and student. The teacher asked a question and students answered, without engaging in extended or descriptive interaction, mainly Arabic used to answer questions. This was also the case when it came to writing skills. Students were not encouraged to produce a piece of free writing applying the necessary strategies for English language writing skills, such as developing an introduction, main body and conclusion. Again, students were engaged only in writing answers to given questions. Overall, it was noted that this teacher needed to employ different teaching techniques, use authentic materials to motivate students and provide more communication activities. She also tended to use Arabic when students failed to use the target language properly. Although there was some knowledge of the communicative approach, it was not applied in actual teaching practice. There was no attempt to apply even some of the principles of the communicative approach, meaning that in actual teaching practice a traditional teaching style was dominant rather than CLT.

Teacher 2

Teacher 2 was a Saudi English language teacher with a master's degree in Applied Linguistics and TESOL and six years of teaching experiences at the ELI. She had a good relationship with her students and colleagues and showed good classroom skills, such as giving instructions and asking students to set up groups and open the book using L2. She was also well organized in terms of preparing materials needed for the lesson and monitoring and facilitating classroom activities. It was observed that the teacher started by greeting the students, recapping the

previous lesson and asking if there were any questions before introducing a new topic. When grammatical or pronunciation errors occurred, the teacher corrected them immediately by writing the correct versions on the board. Classroom interaction mainly took the form of balance between teacher and student-centred approach. There were attempts to engage students through pair and group activities, using various techniques and aids such as pictures, cards and functional activities. During group activities, the teacher facilitated understanding and moved around to make sure students achieved the objectives of the lesson. She provided positive feedback, which enhanced student articulation, while emphasizing the memorization of grammatical patterns through verbal questions and writing grammar rules and relevant sentences on the board. The lesson also featured some drilling, repeating of sentences and correction of student errors. The teacher was clearly aware of the importance of merging communicative and traditional teaching methods in her teaching. This is vital to meet students' language needs and assessment requirements through practising grammatical patterns.

Teacher 3

Teacher 3 was an EFL teacher from India with an MA in Applied Linguistics and TESOL and nine years of teaching experience. A full-time teacher, she taught 18 hours of classes a week. She usually attended class on time and always wrote the topic, date and teaching instructions on the whiteboard. She told students to ignore their phones and pay attention before taking an attendance register. The classroom setting was in old-style rows and the observation revealed a typical teacher-centred teaching method. This involved lecturing for most of the class time, with students listening passively to the teacher. The teacher told the class that she used an integrated teaching approach, yet classroom activities were heavily focused on transferring knowledge of grammatical pattern and usage. This strategy relates to preparing students for exams rather than employing classroom time to provide students with valuable skills and information and use English effectively. It was also observed that reading skills were taught by

asking students to read aloud, repeat sentences and memorize grammatical patterns. Pair and group work activities were not practised in this class. In terms of teaching problems, weak students were one issue that the teacher faced. As a non-Arab teacher, she was only able to use English to explain difficult words or grammatical rules. Students were engaged in close-ended activities, mostly dependent on giving a short answer (such as filling in gaps with one-word answers). At the end of the observation, the teacher highlighted the need for professional development for all educators at the ELI to improve their classroom teaching and develop student proficiency.

Teacher 4

Teacher 4 was a Saudi EFL teacher with a BA in linguistics and an MA in TESOL, undertaken through distance learning. She had been teaching in the ELI for 13 years. She was one of the teachers highlighted for observation by the coordinator as a successful teacher in the ELI. She always greeted the students and appeared to have a good relationship with her students and colleagues. A first observation in this class was that the teacher did not give any instructions to the students on what they were going to study in that period or what they were to do in class. Students appeared used to the daily routine of her teaching style. During the observations, there was no use of group or pair-work activities, either in terms of role play or extended discussion in the classroom. The teaching style was mostly based on a teacher-centred approach, giving students only limited interaction in terms of class activities. They answered questions using a single word or fill-the-gap activities. The reading class, however, started with warm-up questions, such as asking students for information about countries around the world. Some students were active, while others rarely participated unless they were selected to answer a question. Listening was taught like the other classes – the students listened to a recording and worked on course book exercises individually. Writing skills were not practised at all. Grammar translation was emphasized over a communicative approach and the teacher

translated grammar rules into Arabic. During an informal meeting, she stated her belief that students must understand grammatical rules to communicate in English. To that end, grammatical rules were explained first in English and if the students did not respond, the rules were then explained in Arabic. To sum up, in this class, preparing to pass the exams was given priority over learning English language skills. The teacher dominated the class, being the only person who spoke and drove activities. Students with low proficiency were found to be struggling to understand the topic or follow what the teacher was asking.

Teacher 5

Teacher 5 was from Canada and had a PhD in language teaching methodology and 11 years of teaching experience. She was well prepared in each lesson observed in terms of classroom organization, materials and activities used and the way in which she interacted with the students. For example, the class was organized so that students could engage in the learning process immediately. The classroom arrangement was in a horseshoe, with the teacher standing in the middle of the class to facilitate activities. Speaking and reading lessons were observed and the teacher was well prepared, employing different techniques and items, such as a projector, mobile phone, pictures and cards, during activities. Students were motivated using various techniques, such as individual and collaborative working methods, in pair and small group activities, as well as creating an adequate language learning environment. During one listening activity, students listened to a recording of a conversation between two people booking a hotel room over the phone and completed a fill-the-gap activity. While the students were working, the teacher moved around and facilitated their work. As they were working individually, the teacher asked them to compare their answers with other students. The teacher also used a pair speaking activity, describing an image of a hotel for two minutes and each group performed a role-play activity in front of the class. In the reading class, the topic of culture, costumes and people were introduced using a world map. Students were asked to do

silent reading and answer questions in their book. The teacher then gave each group sample objects from different countries, such as currency and flags. Students were asked to find information on these countries, including location and population, using their mobile phones. The information was written on a sheet of paper attached to the wall and each group presented the information they found to the whole class.

Teacher 6

Teacher 6 was an American teacher with a PhD in Psycholinguistics (Cognition and Communication) and 15 years of teaching experience. During the observations, she was well prepared and used some good strategies in terms of engaging learners in pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes that enable learners to fulfil those purposes (Brown, 2007, p. 43). The classroom interaction was in L2, so weak communicative ability in English among the students meant that the teacher encountered difficulties in terms of explaining grammatical and linguistic rules. In the classes observed, she talked extensively in English, which the students failed to comprehend due to their low level of English. This led to an attempt at different techniques to help students understand concepts, such as using gestures and examples, as well as asking students with stronger English to translate into L1. Some communication activities were managed through grouping students and giving them sufficient time to practise the language. The teacher also provided additional materials alongside the course book used, such as handouts, cards, maps and pictures. In teaching English language skills, the teacher mainly used guidelines from the course book and students worked on exercises in groups or pairs. Reading aloud, repeating sentences and memorizing grammar patterns were also observed. The teacher also highlighted that teaching grammatical rules plays a role for students in developing language knowledge. It was observed, however, that grammar rules were taught in combination with other activities using various materials and situations. It appeared that the teacher was consciously trying to achieve a balance between students' need

for language knowledge in terms of assessment requirements and broader language skills for communication purposes.

5.5.1 Comparison of teachers' classroom performance

This section was added as a result of the data driven findings that the research found it valuable to focus upon some of the similarities and more discrepancies that the EFL teachers were shared on. For instance, during the classroom observation process, it was realised that all teachers whom participated in this study were qualified to some extent and had been involved in language teaching for several years. However, key findings from the observations showed that the language instructors had different perceptions in terms of language teaching methods as well their actual practices. This finding is valuable in that it demonstrates that some teachers for instance, were able to teach communicatively, whereas others still had misconceptions of CLT, assuming that communicative-based activities cannot be merged with grammar teaching (cf. 7.2.3). Yet, at the end of the observations, it became clear that teachers' classroom practices were highly influenced by their educational background, teaching perceptions and years of experiences rather than individual nationalities. Table 5.2 lists below the similarities and differences between teachers' classroom practices.

Table 5.2 Teachers' classroom teaching similarities and discrepancies

Teacher	Types of communicative activities	Lesson preparation	Interaction between T and S	Interaction between S and S	Teachers' role	Teaching grammar
T1	Minimizing the classroom activity only to use pair work activity rather than group work activity	Well planned in terms of delivering what is supposed to be taught on that day	On a one-to-one basis between the teacher and student	Students not allowed to engage in extended discussion	Teacher-centred approach Students under tight control	Mainly focused on grammatical rules
T2	Pair and group work activities highly encouraged	Well prepared with the materials needed for the lesson	Good relationship with the students	Allowed students for further and extended discussion	Facilitator and made sure that students understood the lesson	Grammatical errors corrected immediately
T3	Students mostly engaged in a closed ended activity (providing short answers)	Always writes the topic and teaching instructions on the whiteboard	On a one-to-one basis between the teacher and student	Students not allowed to engage in extended discussion	A typical teacher-centred approach	Heavily focused on grammatical patterns
T4	Very limited individual work activities and very frequent group work activities	Never came to class prepared, but students seemed used to the daily routine of the teaching style	Very good relationship with the students and interaction between T and S	Students allowed further and extended discussion based on pair or group work activity	Teacher-centred approach, believing that students must listen to the teacher during class time	Grammar emphasized over communicative activities and the teacher translated grammar rules into Arabic
T5	Students motivated using various techniques, such as individual and collaborative working methods, in pair and small group activities.	Very well prepared in terms of additional materials and various activities	Very good relationship with the students, as well as creating a positive language learning environment	Students allowed further and extended discussion mostly based on a paired speaking activities	Mostly a student-centred approach; the teacher moved around and facilitated their work	Teaching grammar indirectly, focusing on real-life activity
T6	Communicative activities managed through grouping students and giving them sufficient time to practise the language	Always provided additional materials alongside the coursebook, such as handouts, cards, maps and pictures	Very good relationship with the students as well as creating space for further discussion	Students allowed further and extended discussion based on pair or group work activity	Mostly a student-centred approach; the teacher moved around and facilitated their work	Grammatical rules taught in combination with other activities using various materials and situations

5.5.2 Critical commentary on teachers' performance

Discrepancies

As shown above, the discrepancies between the teachers observed concerned the implementation of communicative activities. For example, the students in T1's class were not given opportunities to engage in group-work activities. During the post-observation interviews, the teacher explained that if students worked on a task in groups, they often switched into informal discussion in Arabic. Moreover, passive learners tended to depend on other students when they were asked questions. Therefore, she would use pair-work activities to get students' attention, as well as to control the flow of the lesson within the given period (cf. 5.6). Although the other classes had the same number of students, in T5's class the students were motivated using various techniques, such as individual and collaborative working methods and pair- and small-group activities. In addition, it was noted that in T6's classes, communicative activities were managed through grouping students and giving them sufficient time to practise the language.

These discrepancies between the teachers' instructional practices were clear for a certain reason. Both T5 and T6 showed a common pattern in the way in which they engaged their students in classroom activities. This in turn can be attributed to their educational background, as well as qualifications and years of experience, as both teachers were NES teachers. In contrast, T1, a NNES teacher, was less experienced and had a different educational background.

Therefore, the teachers differed in terms of their individual perceptions of language teaching. Borg (2003, p. 88) stated that "teachers' prior language learning experiences establish understandings about learning and language learning which form the basis of their initial conceptualizations of L2 teaching during teacher education, and which may continue to be influential throughout their professional lives".

Similarities

As shown in Table 5.2, the similarities and differences between the teachers mainly concerned one aspect: focusing on grammatical rules. However, not only were they similar/dissimilar in teaching grammar in every class, but also in the ways in which they interacted with their students. For instance, T5 and T6, NES teachers, both engaged their students in communicative activities when teaching grammar, which had a considerable effect on the students' participation in class.

The teachers also developed friendship-based relationships with their students, rather than maintaining a typical student–teacher relationship. These two teachers consistently gave their students opportunities to engage in extended discussion based on their current understanding and interests. In contrast, the NNES teachers greatly emphasized the importance of addressing grammatical rules over communicative aspects. Also, due to the students' weak language proficiency, some of the teachers translated grammatical rules into Arabic. In terms of the interaction between NNES teachers and the students, it was mainly based on a one-to-one basis and did not progress further than answering the students' short questions to discussion. In this regard, there were similarities between the NNES teachers.

In general, no interaction took place between the teacher and students or between the students themselves. This would have a negative impact on the language learning process and students' usage of language in real-life situations (Hedge, 2000; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). In other words, when teachers' perceptions of language teaching differed, this was reflected in various types of discrepancy in their practice; most teachers taught grammar explicitly and the excessive focus on accuracy inhibited students, leading them to remain silent rather than be proactive in terms of classroom interaction. Therefore, the students argued that grammar-focused language learning should be reconsidered at the university stage, rather basing the students' language learning on real-life communication. These findings are

discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 (section 6.3.1). The following section provides analysis of the classroom observation data.

5.6 Classroom observation data

The results of classroom observation are reported in the order in which they were coded according to the modified COLT scheme (see Appendix 1). This section looks at the methods used to collect classroom observation data and how the data were analysed. Regarding the research questions related to the use of CLT and traditional methods, as seen in the literature review, 7 completed observation schedules were collected covering 44 items (see Table 4.4.). The classroom practices of teachers and students were grouped into eight main categories: classroom instruction; participant organization; activity type; content; materials used; teaching methods; classroom interaction; student modality. Field notes were selected on the basis that they represented a pattern of classroom practice related to both teachers and students. For this study, the results are presented in terms of the number of classes in which specific teaching methods were observed and transcribed in the field notes; this number will also be expressed as a percentage of the total number of observation hours (36).

5.6.1 Classroom events

Classroom events are important in providing information concerning student attention and motivation for whole-class activities and classroom management. This introduction gives a clear idea of the classroom teaching experiences observed. Table 5.3 shows the number of lessons and percentages of teaching for which teachers were observed to use individual classroom events.

Table 5.3 Teachers' use of classroom events

No	Items	Number of classes observed (N = 36)	%
1	Greeting and welcoming students	36	100
2	Review previous lessons	24	66.6
3	Introduce students to new lesson	18	50
4	Provide feedback on homework	12	33.3
5	Introduce purpose of the lesson	24	66.6
6	Student error correction	24	66.6

Table 5.3 shows that teachers greeted students in every class, both morning and afternoon. They also asked general questions about their weekend, health and studies as an introduction to the lesson. In 66.6% of the classes observed, teachers made adequate time to ask about previous lessons and review any difficulties students faced, aiming to improve learning for the benefit of the students. One of the important pedagogical classroom management techniques is introducing students to a new lesson by writing the topic. This strategy helps students to understand what they are going to study and comprehend effectively. Teachers only used this strategy in half of the classes. In the language teaching and learning process, introducing the purpose of the lesson to the students has an important impact upon students. In 66.6% of classes, the teachers introduced and clarified the purpose of the lesson they were about to teach. This meant that in 33.3% of classes, teachers started teaching without introducing the subject or preparing students to understand the lesson.

Giving feedback on student classwork, homework or assignments and asking students to offer opinions, ideas and explanations are central to the role of language teaching and the learning process. Teachers need to practise checking that students fully understand what they are learning. In the classes observed, teachers did not put much effort into providing feedback on classroom activities, homework or assignments. Indeed, Table 5.3 shows that only in 33.3% of the classes did teachers offer feedback regarding previous assignments or on exercises that students had worked on. In 66.6% of classes teachers did not ask students to discuss their homework or previous assignments.

Another key component in the language teaching and learning field is correcting student errors, which are direct proof of what students know and do not know. However, in 66.6% of the classes the teachers did not correct any student error. Those who stated that they preferred correcting the students' errors, believed that students can learn from their errors if they notice them, and if not, errors could transfer among students if they are not corrected immediately (Batawi, 2006). Whereas the teachers who did not correct any students' error believed that consistent correction of students' oral errors could prevent students and discourage them from speaking. A possible explanation of this discrepancy regarding students' errors correction policy can be traced back to teachers' lack of sufficient knowledge of errors correction techniques. As discussed in Chapter 3 (cf. 3.6.7) there are two techniques for oral error correction, these are covert and overt corrections (Long, 1991). Therefore, EFL teachers must consider several factors influencing error correction process and decide on what type of errors to correct, what technique to use for correcting, when to correct and who should correct the error (Ellis, 2009).

To sum up, regarding classroom observation there was one problematic issue that I faced at the first few days of the data collection process. For instance, the act of observation itself, in terms of when a class is being observed, both teacher and students were aware of the observer at the beginning of the first few days and this may result in what is known as "the observer's paradox" (Labov, 1972, Cukor, 2000). However, from the second classroom observation session, both teachers and students got used to my presence. As a result, their behaviour in class was more consistent throughout the observation sessions. This would further have indicated that my presence did not affect the teachers' and students' learning and practices which in turn enhanced the validity of this study. In addition, until teachers came to their classes, I had opportunities in terms of informal corridor discussions with the students. Most of the discussions with

students were useful in enriching the findings of this study. For more students' findings discussion see section, (6.4.1).

5.6.2 Classroom activities

Participant organization comprises basic patterns that reflect the quality of classroom interaction. This category focuses on how interaction takes place between teachers and students or student–student in class, whether it is whole-class interaction or features individual students (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). At the level of participant organization, it is important to highlight if the classroom activity is led by the teacher or the students in pairs or small groups. Referencing the adapted observation scheme, this section highlights three basic patterns of organization concerning classroom interaction. Examples are whether the teacher works with the whole class or not and if students are divided into groups or engaged in individual seat work. If they are engaged in group work, it is important to look at how it is organized. Table 5.4 summarizes the types of organization observed.

Table 5.4 Teacher-participant organization

No	Items	Number of classes observed (N = 36)	%
1	Using one central activity for the whole class	30	83.3
2	Teacher interacts with individual students	6	16.6
3	Teacher lets students work in pairs	12	33.3
4	Teacher lets students work in groups	24	66.6

The observation scheme shows that interacting with the whole class is a common classroom practice in which the central activity is led by the teacher. The teachers predominantly interact with the whole class or with individual students. Of the 36 classes observed, 83.3% entailed whole-class instruction, providing students with one central activity and asking for low-level responses, such as asking students to provide a single word or number as an answer. In 16.6% of the classes new vocabulary items were presented and a variety of techniques were also used.

In addition, the teachers interacted with individual students, asking about the task and making sure that students understood the lesson. The distinction between teachers goes back to their educational background and teaching experience and will be discussed in a later chapter. The idea of group-work activity is that it provides students with an opportunity to work together. Teachers need to increase interaction in the English language classroom, particularly in the Saudi language learning context, in which English oral communication opportunities are rarely found outside the classroom. Table 5.4 shows, however, that this was the activity least practised, found in only 33.3% of the classes. In 66.6% of the classes observed, teachers used a pair activity, such as asking students to compare their answers.

5.6.3 Activity type

This section explains and analyses coded categories of classroom activities. Table 5.5 describes the frequency and percentage of activities the teachers used in the classes observed.

Table 5.5 Types of activities teachers use in the classroom

No	Item	Number of classes observed (N = 36)	%
1	Extended discussion activity	24	66.6
2	Allowing students to work on different tasks	12	33.3
3	Using drilling and repetition of sentences	30	83.3
4	Focus on grammar-based teaching	36	100
5	Teacher-dominated classroom activities	30	83.3
6	Applying same task to all groups	30	83.3
7	Answering student questions using L1	18	50
8	Knowing individual students' learning needs	24	66.6
9	Pair-work activity	24	66.6
10	Group-work activity	12	33.3

Activities which focus on encouraging students to engage in extended discussion usually aim to produce a lot of language from students with minimum effort on the part of the teacher. Teachers can design such activities for example to encourage students to use various forms of sentences in discussion. Table 5.5 shows, however, that the types of activities practised in 66.6% of the classes were not based on extended or even short conversations between teacher

and students. This result shows that activities in the Saudi EFL classroom are typically teacher- rather than student-centred. Letting students work on different tasks was observed in 33.3% of the classes, whereas drilling and repetition of sentences was used in 83.3% of classes observed. Table 5.5 shows that teachers in every class practised grammar-based activities.

In 83.3% of the classes, moreover, teachers dominated most classroom time and neglected the importance of student participation. There was not much variation in terms of classroom activity. Teachers in 83.3% of classes used the same task for all groups and only in 16.6% of classes did teachers use different types of activities, such as cards, maps, pictures and posters. Throughout the observations, there was no instance of a teacher who initiated or asked students' questions using L1. In 50% of classes, however, teachers used L1 for specific purposes, such as explaining difficult points, words or phrases during lessons. In 66.6% of classes teachers failed to meet individual student needs in terms of letting them participate in their favoured activities. There was a focus on a minority of students who dominated the conversation and the teacher's attention. In 66.6% of classes teachers applied pair-work activities, but group-work activities were observed on in 33.3% of classes.

These observed practices are in contrast of what one would expect from a communicative classroom needed. For example, the communicative approach highlights the role of collaborative activities for better language input and language production. In this regard, Hall and Walsh (2002, p. 187) stated that "classroom interaction takes on an especially significant role in that it is both the medium through which learning is realized and an object of pedagogical attention". Thus, teacher and student interactions reflect the norm of harmony in generating intellectual and practical activities that enhance the development of the target language in terms of aspects, form and content. Therefore, there is a need for appropriate communication styles in classroom teaching, as well as the provision of opportunities to use English in and out of the classroom to reduce the difficulties students encounter when they

learn English, and this would enhance their language development. In addition, teachers need to constitute cooperative-based learning processes in which language learning is associated with allowing students to work together and create meaningful interaction (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

5.6.4 Content

This section describes the functions of activities used by teachers. Table 5.6 presents the frequency and percentage of functions observed in all classes.

Table 5.6 Types of functional activities used in classroom

No	Items	Number of classes observed (N = 36)	%
1	Making polite requests	12	33.3
2	Asking closed questions	24	66.6
3	Asking open questions	12	33.3
4	How to use elicitation	12	33.3
5	Social interaction activities	18	50.0
6	Teacher provides clarification	12	33.3
7	Using L2 for interaction	18	50.0

Functional activities are among the most common in language classrooms. An example of such activities is making a polite request using the modals “could” and “would”, for example “Could you do me a favour?” or “Would you pass the salt?” In 33.3% of classes teachers spent substantial time practising functional activities, such as showing students how to order in restaurants or ask other people for help. In the rest of the classes, teachers used the modals “could” and “would” to complete daily routine exercises, such as a filling a gap, without explaining the importance of such functions in language learning situations. Teachers during the post-observation interviews declared that they do not have sufficient time to elaborate such activity in detail as they need to cover all the assigned units of the textbook before the end of the module. Types of teachers’ difficulties in implementing CLT are discussed in Ch7 (cf. 7.4). Asking questions can check students’ understanding of lessons. Teachers can ask students “open” questions, requiring a descriptive answer, or “closed” questions that need a short,

correct answer. Table 5.6 shows that in 66.6% of the sessions, teachers asked closed questions to check understanding. Only in 33.3% were open questions asked to draw out responses which required a range of answers. In addition, elicitation techniques are used by teachers to involve students in verbal communication as part of classroom practice to demonstrate student understanding. Table 5.6 shows teachers using this technique in only 33.3% of classes. They also provided clarification to students' questions in 33.3% of classes.

In this section, a possible explanation of the dominance of "close ended" questions suggest that the response and contribution from students is actually minimal, that is to say the classes failed to engage them in meaningful communications that's supposed to help develop communicative competence or fluency. However, teachers did practise social interaction activities such as role-play and imitation with a view to familiarize students with a variety of social contexts. This could include buying food in a restaurant or talking to a friend about weekend plans. These activities inspire students to practise language skills in the wider social context, either in or outside the classroom. Teachers used such activities in only 50% of the classes observed. Although the students' L2 ability was not sufficient for continued or extended classroom interaction, in 50% of the classes, teachers used the target language appropriately for interaction in line with CLT principles.

5.6.5 Receptive and productive skills

Receptive and productive skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing are the most important aspects teachers need to teach in any language learning environment. Learners need to develop receptive and productive skills to communicate in English. In receptive skills, namely listening and reading, learners need comprehension. In the productive skills of writing and speaking, learners use the language they have learned and produce a message they wish others to understand through speech or written text. Table 5.7 presents the frequencies and percentages relating to how these skills were taught in the classes observed.

Table 5.7 The four English language skills

No	Items	Number of classes observed (N = 36)	%
1	Speaking skills	24	66.6
2	Listening skills	6	16.6
3	Writing skills	30	83.3
4	Reading skills	24	66.6

Teaching speaking skills enables the learner to use language as a tool for various purposes. Learners use the target language to communicate with others and convey their messages. In this case, teachers play a significant role in terms of developing speaking skills. Teachers should allow learners to speak in the classroom, creating opportunities and providing time to practise various activities. In 66.6% of the classes the teachers spent most of their time working on text-based activities, going through the text using the traditional sentence-by-sentence method and in meticulous detail. Students were barely involved in speaking activities. Listening skills are also a vital part of effective communication. Although the importance of listening was recognized by the teachers, it was not practised often in the lessons observed. The key activity observed was listening to the teacher give lesson instructions and presentations. Audio-visual aids were not used to enhance the listening ability of students, so they were scarcely involved in organized listening activities. Table 5.7 shows that students practised listening in just 16.6% of the classes observed.

Writing is one of the core skills frequently practised, but in 83.3% of these classes writing was limited to “write the following down” exercises in textbooks. Writing skills were not taught properly (in CLT terms). From the CLT perspective the teacher is no longer the dominant character however, a facilitator and guide. Therefore, teachers should prepare writing activities and encourage students to learn how to communicate in writing to develop academic writing skills (Philip, 2016). In the classes observed, students regularly copied the answers in the textbooks rather than practicing writing skills. Reading activities were also limited to reading

textbook passages. In 66.6% of the classes, reading passages were used to ask students direct, non-inferential questions while their textbooks were open to look at the passages. In addition, the reading passages were barely used to scaffold listening activities in any of the classes. Rather, in most classes substantial time was spent reading aloud from textbooks.

5.6.6 Teaching materials used

All required textbooks and additional materials for each course are made available to lecturers at the start of each semester. Currently teachers use the Cambridge University Press English Unlimited Special Edition as the core teaching material. The textbook aims to improve social language and communicative skills and deals with different English topics. Table 5.8 details the frequency and percentage of teaching materials used in the classroom.

Table 5.8 Teachers use of materials

No	Items	Number of classes observed (N = 36)	%
1	Teacher uses the textbook	36	100
2	Teacher reflects reality using the textbook	12	33.3
3	Teacher uses authentic materials	6	16.6

The purpose of the course book is to provide students with a real-life context to guide them through the English language learning process. In all the classes observed the teachers 100% used Cambridge University Press English Unlimited Special Edition textbook for assigned courses. Only in 33.3% of classes did teachers reflect reality using the textbook, despite there being many opportunities for conversation and discussion. In the rest of the classes, much of the textbook activity was structural with grammar learning as the target. During the observations, it became clear that teachers rarely used authentic materials in class. Only in 16.6% of the classes did teachers use items such as advertising, a menu or any other authentic materials. However, during the classroom observation the teaching process was more a directly

teacher-centered approach, which is an obvious instruction of a traditionally organized classroom that lacked any form of activities in which students' communicative competence can be developed. Therefore, it was hard to see any sort of agreement between teacher's theoretical knowledge of CLT and their classroom practices.

5.6.7 Student modality

It is important to focus on students' behaviours in classroom and how the learning processes is taking place. The way they interact with teacher or students–student reflects the quality of language input and language productions. How teachers produce the language and how students spent their times in classroom to do so. In all classes observed students in general showed their effort to interact in English with their teachers. However, most activities did not encourage students to communicate in L2. Table 5.9 details the frequency and percentage of students' modality used in the classroom.

Table 5.9 Students' modality

No	Items	Number of classes observed (N=36)	%
1	Student use L2 for interaction	12	33.3
2	Using L1 for answering teacher's questions	18	50
3	Asking teacher for clarifications question and information	12	33.3
4	Listening to each other carefully during the group discussion	18	50
5	Working alone and comparing with each other	12	33.3
6	Silent reading	6	16.6
7	Reading aloud	30	83.3

Students only used L2 in a limited extent namely, to answer a particular question on their textbook (33.3%) as opposed to having an extended classroom-based conversation which would encourage the development of CC or at least confidence/ willingness to speak. Furthermore, due to the lack of vocabulary and expression competency, in 50% of classes students used L1 in answering teacher's questions. Moreover, when it comes to asking teachers for further clarification as they clarified through their interviews most of the students suffered

from having an anxiety or lack of confidence to speak in English. Student were able to use the L2 in asking teachers for further clarification in only 33.3% of the classes observed.

Another important aspect within students' modality is that having the skill of listening to each other carefully during the group discussion. In all observed classes (50%) of the actual classroom activity was mostly based on L1 and social interaction because the types of activities given in class did not encourage students to have deep content-based discussions. This might be due to the students' language barriers where most students have adequate knowledge about what needs to be done (providing short answers) however if a teacher asked for more elaboration L1 is mostly preferred. During the classroom activity most teachers asked students to work individually instead of sharing their answers within a pair or among a group. Only in 33.3% of classes did students practise comparing their answers with each other. This method was observed with teachers who are native speakers of English than non-native speakers, which I will explain in more details when we come to analysing teacher interview data in the following chapter. Also, regarding the silent reading strategy, the majority of classes did not apply this strategy at all, of the observed classes only 16.6% practised the silent reading strategy whereas in the rest of classes students were asked to read a short passage from their textbook aloud (83.3%). When I asked teachers, they informed me that students at this stage need to hear their voice in order to improve not only reading but reading comprehension and speaking. All the above-mentioned issues will be explained in more details within the students' interviews section in the following chapter.

5.7 Summary

In this chapter, the data collected have been described based on the classroom observation schedule (cf. 4.1). This was important in terms of establishing the goals of the observation, which intended to generate discussion regarding language teaching methods and create shared considerations among the teachers involved in this study. The classroom observation procedure

attempted to identify classroom practices among teachers, reflecting their own beliefs about the CLT approach. This chapter has covered several areas: (i) identifying classroom events; (ii) identifying the types of activities teachers use in the classroom; (iii) examining the importance of participant organization; (iv) identifying the types of functional activities employed.

In addition, the observations were undertaken to focus on the issue of potential differences between what language teachers say and what they actual do in the EFL classroom. For instance, this involves areas such as classroom events, activity types, methods used, materials and student modality. Therefore, the data interpretation process was assisted by what was observed around the university and what was already known about CLT and EFL teaching in a Saudi university. In this chapter, it was also seen that teachers' perceptions of language teaching differed, and this in turn meant that, various types of potential discrepancy were observed. For instance, most of the teachers taught grammar explicitly and a critical point of this was that excessive focus on accuracy inhibited students, leading them to remain silent rather than be proactive in terms of classroom interaction. This has a negative impact on the language learning process and student usage of language in real-life situations (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Hedge, 2000; Richards and Rodgers, 1986).

A possible explanation of that, as teachers reported during the post-observation interviews that focusing on grammar would help their students to pass their exams. Therefore, much of the textbook activities were focused on grammar learning than other skills. In addition, during the observations, it became clear that teachers rarely used authentic materials in class. For example, only in 16.6% of the classes did teachers use items such as advertising, a menu or any other authentic materials which allowed students to participate. However, the teaching process in general was more a directly teacher-centred approach, which is an obvious instruction of a traditionally organized classroom that lacked any form of activities in which students'

communicative competence can be developed. Therefore, it was hard to see any sort of agreement between teacher's theoretical knowledge of CLT and their classroom practices.

The chapter also discussed the lack of engagement in speaking activities which found that in 66.6% of the classes the teachers spent most of their time working on text-based activities, going through the text using the traditional sentence-by-sentence method and in meticulous detail. Therefore, it was observed that students were barely involved in speaking activities. Moreover, though writing is considered as one of the core skills frequently practised, in majority of classes, but it was limited to "write the following down" exercises in textbooks. In the classes observed, students regularly copied the answers in the textbooks rather than practicing writing skills. Thus, writing skills were not taught properly. Therefore, from the CLT perspective the teacher is no longer the dominant character however, a facilitator and guide. In addition, teachers should prepare writing activities and encourage students to learn how to communicate in writing to develop academic writing skills (Philip, 2016). The reading passages in turn, were barely used to scaffold listening activities in any of the classes. Rather, in most classes substantial time was spent reading aloud from textbooks.

Moreover, regarding the activity type, most of the observed practices are in contrast of what one would expect from a communicative classroom needed. This required activities which focus on encouraging students to engage in extended discussion usually aim to produce a lot of language from students with minimum effort on the part of the teacher. Teachers can also design such activities to encourage students to use various forms of sentences in discussion. However, the types of activities practised in most of the observed classes were not based on extended or even short conversations between teacher and students. This result shows that activities in the Saudi EFL classroom are typically teacher- rather than student-centred.

Nonetheless, the communicative approach highlights the role of collaborative activities for better language input and language production. Thus, with regard to the student's modality, this chapter discussed the importance of focusing on students' behaviours in classroom and how the learning processes is taking place. The way students interact with teacher or student–student reflects the quality of language input and language productions. Also, how teachers produce the language and how students spent their times in classroom to do so. In all classes observed students in general showed their effort to interact in English with their teachers. However, most activities did not encourage students to communicate in L2. As a result, a possible explanation of the dominance of “close ended” questions suggest that the response and contribution from students is actually minimal, that is to say teachers in most of the observed classes failed to engage their students in meaningful communications that's supposed to help develop communicative competence or fluency.

Consequently, teacher and student interactions should mirror the norm of harmony in generating intellectual and practical activities that enhance the development of the target language in terms of aspects, form and content. Therefore, there is a need for appropriate communication styles in classroom teaching, as well as the provision of opportunities to use English in and out of the classroom to reduce the difficulties students encounter when they learn English, and this would enhance their language development. In addition, teachers need to constitute cooperative-based learning processes in which language learning is associated with allowing students to work together and create meaningful interaction (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

CHAPTER 6: DESCRIPTIVE AND INFERENCE STATISTICS

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, both descriptive and inferential statistics are used to analyse the data. An integrated approach is implemented in the presentation of the qualitative and quantitative findings in relation to the teachers' and students' questionnaires and interviews. The study thus attempts to address the following overarching thesis question:

“To what extent are EFL teachers' teaching practices in line with the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT)?”

In addition, the interview and classroom observation data are gathered together to explore teachers' views and suggestions on improving the use of CLT in the Saudi context. The observation data detected an overlap between the teachers' conceptions of CLT and their actual classroom practices. The data analysis procedure primarily focused on several practices concerning the use of CLT in language classes, EFL teachers' perceptions regarding their teaching methodology, their classroom practice with regard to English language skills, their responses towards their own language teaching practice and the implementation of communicative-based activities in classrooms and use of materials in teaching language.

The data were analysed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine whether years of teaching experience would have any effect on classroom practice. The statements were divided into five sections.

Section One: The aspects in this section concern the effect of teaching experience on the four language skills and teaching grammar explicitly. The ANOVA results for these by teaching experience in years are shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Summary of the effect of teaching experience on the four language skills and teaching grammar explicitly

Variables	Teaching experience in years	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	F statistic	P value	Pairwise comparison
Reading	1–5	1.00	0.00	1	70.67	0.001	(1–5 v 6–10: p = 0.001); (1–5 v 11–15: p = 0.001); (6–10 v 11–15: p = 0.006)
	6–10	1.93	0.26	2			
	11–15	2.41	0.51	2			
Writing	1–5	1.67	0.49	2	72.23	0.001	(1–5 v 6–10: p = 0.001); (1–5 v 11–15: p = 0.001); (6–10 v 11–15: p = 0.335)
	6–10	2.87	0.35	3			
	11–15	3.00	0.00	3			
Listening	1–5	1.33	0.49	1	115.35	0.001	(1–5 v 6–10: p = 0.001); (1–5 v 11–15: p = 0.001); (6–10 v 11–15: p = 0.001)
	6–10	2.07	0.26	2			
	11–15	3.00	0.00	3			
Speaking	1–5	1.20	0.41	1	107.02	0.001	(1–5 v 6–10: p = 0.001); (1–5 v 11–15: p = 0.001); (6–10 v 11–15: p = 0.001)
	6–10	2.27	0.46	2			
	11–15	3.00	0.00	3			
Teaching grammar explicitly	1–5	1.00	0.00	1	103.1	0.001	(1–5 v 6–10: p = 0.009); (1–5 v 11–15: p = 0.001); (6–10 v 11–15: p = 0.001)
	6–10	1.47	0.52	1			
	11–15	2.82	0.39	3			

As Table 6.1 indicates, years of teaching experience have an effect on all five elements. For example, teachers with fewer years of experience report using *reading* to a greater extent (M = 1) compared to teachers with 6–10 years (M = 1.93) or 11–15 years (M = 2.41). The application of *reading* is significantly different for the three categories of teachers at the 5% level [F=70.67, p=0.001 (<0.05)]. Post-hoc pairwise comparison further reveals differences between the groups based on years of teaching experience (e.g. 1–5 vs 6–10, p = 0.001; 1–5 vs 11–15, p = 0.001; 6–10 vs 11–15, p = 0.001). Thus, teachers with fewer years of teaching experience reported using *reading* more than teachers with greater years of teaching experience.

Moreover, interpreting these results in light of teachers' perceptions regarding classroom practices, teachers were asked to what extent they focused on the four language skills during their teaching. The findings showed that teachers' actual teaching practice often did not highlight the use of the main language skills. Teachers mostly focused on grammar rather than the four language skills. For example, 63.8% of the teachers indicated that writing was only

practised to a limited extent. Similarly, listening was only undertaken by 61.6% of the teachers, while speaking skills were mainly neglected and only practised by roughly 55.2% of teachers, with 44.6% reporting that they did so to a limited extent. Regarding teachers' responses concerning English language skills, the findings, particularly for speaking skills, do not correspond to the teachers' actual classroom practice as reported in Chapter 4. For instance, I found that in the majority (66.6%) of the classes, students engaged in scarcely any speaking activities. Teachers spent most of their time working on text-based activities, going through the text using the traditional sentence-by-sentence method and in meticulous detail (cf. 5.6.5).

6.2 Analysis of teacher interviews

6.2.1 Speaking and writing

Analysis of the interviews revealed that teachers considered reading and writing essential areas and those they could reinforce the other skills by adopting various effective language teaching methods. During the interviews, teachers emphasized their focus on reading due to its importance in the mid and final exams and the students' difficulty in tackling reading in these exams. However, teachers agreed that language teaching should integrate the four main language skills when implemented properly within a CLT approach. Teachers were asked to clarify their views during the interviews. In response to Q13 I have observed that reading and listening skills were practised more often in classroom? Could you explain why?

One of the teachers stated:

“Usually I focus on reading more than writing because it highlights the acquisition process and students can gain more vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, in my teaching I concentrate on explaining the meaning of difficult words, vocabulary and accurate reading.” (Teacher 3)

However, writing is also a crucial language skill. According to the teachers' questionnaire data, writing is not taught properly in Saudi EFL classrooms. The classroom observation data also

evidenced this (cf. 5.6.5). Furthermore, (Table 6.1) indicated that writing was less emphasized or was neglected in teachers with greater years of teaching experience classes. Analysis of the interviews revealed that the students' engagement and connection with writing only entails doing course book exercises and copying what teachers write on the board. Indeed, this point was highlighted during the interviews, the reason given being how this aspect is assessed in the final examination. Most of the teachers mentioned that due to the intensity of the course, writing skills were not taught frequently during classroom time.

Teachers were asked to provide more information about teaching skills and how do they respond to the students' constant request to develop their writing skills. i.e. Q14. "I have observed that speaking and writing skills were practised less often in classroom? Could you explain why?"

Teacher (5) one of the teachers who mostly put extra efforts regarding the students' either grammatical or communicative needs (cf.5.5) said the following:

"During the writing class, I encourage my students to write about one of the topics covered during the lesson and bring the first draft to the class in order to give them written feedback on sentence structure, word order, verbs, tenses or spelling..."
(Teacher 5)

During my corridor discussion with students, they talked about the difficulties they faced during the final writing exam. For example, teaching of writing skills did not start from the beginning of the course, but in the last two weeks of the course including the exams week. However, two out of the six observed teachers encouraged their students to write about the topics discussed during the lesson. Students were also asked to bring the first draft to the class to get written feedback on their writing. In addition, students are given a formatively assessed writing grade which constitutes 20% of the grade total per level (cf. 3.6.11).

However, most of the teachers provided students with a number of topics during the session to memorise as one of the topics will be selected for final exam. Therefore, I was eager to know how they prepare students for final exam. One of the teachers commented on this by saying:

“Usually, teachers provide students with selected topics from the lessons in class for final exam preparation.” (Teacher 1).

6.2.2 Listening and reading

Some teachers also reported focusing on reading skills over writing skills due to their importance in the final exam. The statistics analysis in table 6.1 shows oral skills (listening and speaking) were less focused by limited and middling years of experienced teachers. These data seem to support the observation data, which indicated that oral skills were not practised fully in EFL classes. Teachers were also asked about their perceptions of the current language teaching method in terms of developing students’ listening skills. Most of the observed teachers agreed in the questionnaire that some skills, mostly listening, were not sufficiently practised; listening and speaking were just practised to a limited extent and students were not fully involved in developing their speaking skills in class. One of the teachers stated:

“I do not think that listening skills are practised properly because there is a lack of freedom to provide language teaching aids and materials to motivate students in class. Thus, the interaction between me and my students is limited to answering questions related to the textbook exercises.” (Teacher 3)

In addition, another teacher noted that reading skills were only practised through the course book activities and students only had the opportunity to read short passages in the textbook. In other words, additional reading passages to develop students’ reading comprehension were not provided due to the main obstacles discussed in the Chapter 7 (cf.7.4). For example, one of the teachers noted that due to the limited time they have in class, she tended to focus on the available CD for listening activities, reporting:

“What I used to do was ask students to read and answer the questions in the listening section, so students follow the listening activities through collaborative discussion. However, due to the limited time in class, students practise reading skills only to some extent.” (Teacher 4)

6.2.3 Teaching grammar explicitly

The statistical data in Table 6.1 revealed that limited and middling years of experienced teachers reported using grammar explicitly to a great or some extent. This was upheld in the interviews with the six observed teachers, five of whom focused on grammar teaching for various reasons. Indeed, Teacher 4 reported using the following process:

“I start the lesson by revising the previous lesson first, to make sure that the students understand before we move to a new topic, mainly regarding grammar rules and the meanings of words. Then I explain the new topic in detail, followed by questions, then I ask the students to do the exercise in their book.” (Teacher 4)

Among the reasons given for the emphasis on grammar teaching, one teacher stated:

“My teaching approach mostly depends on the traditional teaching methods because I believe it helps students to grasp what they need to pass the module. Therefore, I tend to use what is a possible method such as memorizing and drilling grammar rules.” (Teacher 3)

She also commented that as English is a compulsory module for students in their preparatory year and individual students have different language needs:

“I think it is important to teach grammar in context to develop students’ linguistic knowledge first and I believe that students can recognize meaningful sentences when they fully understand the language structures, then use them for communication purposes as well as in writing.” (Teacher 1)

The teachers believed most of their students had difficulty understanding grammar, even though they had studied it for many years. Therefore, one noted:

“I tried to use various methods and techniques that facilitate students’ learning and understanding such as deductive and inductive ways, but it was not easy for students. Therefore, I tend to explain grammar rules in a direct manner through memorizing, drilling and translation to simplify the learning process, specifically when students are very concerned about the exams.” (Teacher 2)

Research suggests that teachers devote their efforts in language teaching to meeting the requirements of exams and move away from the main goals of language teaching and learning as outlined by CLT principles. Indeed, one interviewee pointed out:

“...I believe it is important to offer the opportunity for language discourse and to develop students’ language skills, but [teachers] are restricted to following the content of the course book because mid and final exams totally depend on the content of the course book, which has been designed based on the grammar-based approach.” (Teacher 5)

Therefore, the data suggest that the norm in classroom interaction is a teacher-centred approach and this is highlighted in the teachers’ reported classroom practices. These teachers stated that they dominated the classroom interaction mainly to transfer content knowledge, rather than offering the opportunity to negotiate and develop students’ conversational skills. Such teaching methods do not help students adopt an active language-learning attitude; rather, they remain passive in language learning classes. However, the data also suggest that some of the teachers observed made efforts to offer students the opportunity to lead the classroom discourse. These teachers were asked to express their preferred language teaching techniques. As one of them illustrated:

“I believe that grammar is very important to students and teachers in the Saudi EFL context. They consider that grammar is very important to pass final exams. I personally tend to involve my students in real language communication and do so whenever we have a grammar and vocabulary lesson, I try to combine the unit with ‘genuine’ activities by applying various tasks, games or role play to motivate the students’ to participate in class discourse.” (Teacher 6)

In addition, some interviewees also indicated that the limitations in teaching listening and reading skills were due to many reasons (the large number of students in class, mid and final examination procedures and lack of authentic materials). These issues are addressed in greater detail in the discussion Chapter 7 (cf. 7.4).

Section Two: There are three statements under this section namely pair work, group work and role-play activities. The output from the analysis is summarised in Figure 6.1.

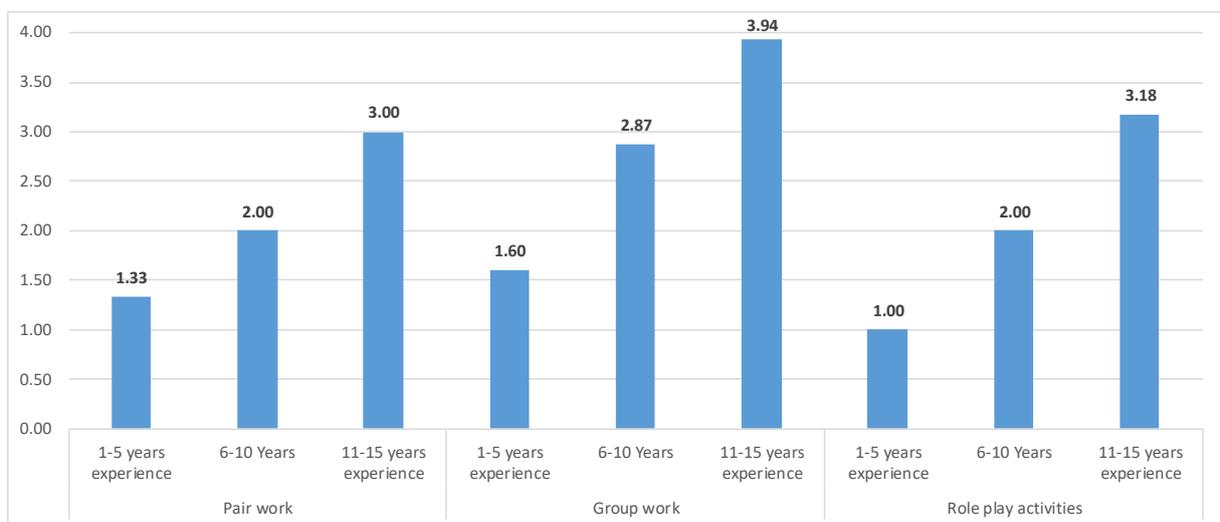


Figure 6.1 Summary of the effect of teaching experience on the classroom activities

As Figure 6.1 indicates, teaching experience in years has an effect on all three aspects. For example, teachers with fewer years of experience apply *pair work* to greater extent ($M = 1.33$) than teachers with 6–10 years of experience ($M = 2.00$) or 11–15 years of experience ($M = 3.00$). The application of *pair work* is significantly different for the three categories of teachers at the 5% level [$F = 149.32, p = 0.001 (< 0.05)$]. Post-hoc pairwise comparison further revealed differences between the groups (e.g. 1–5 vs 6–10, $p = 0.001$; 1–5 vs 11–15, $p = 0.001$; 6–10 vs 11–15, $p = 0.001$). All these indicate that teachers with fewer years of teaching experience reported using pair work more than teachers with more years of teaching experience. In addition, interpreting these results in light of teachers’ perceptions regarding classroom

activities, they were asked to what extent they applied both pair- and group-work activities in their classes.

6.2.4 Pair-work, group-work and role-play activities

Figure 6.1 presents various aspects of activities that teachers reported implementing during their language teaching classes. These include role play, undertaken through pair and group work. Analysis of the questionnaire data reveals that some of these were used to various degrees by most of the teachers. Furthermore, teachers were asked in the interviews to what extent they applied both pair- and group-work activities in their classes. Analysis of the interviews reveals that EFL teachers noted that the language teaching curriculum adopted was based on pair- and-group work activities. However, while most of the teachers considered that the use of various activities can encourage students to engage in the language learning process and can facilitate language production with a view to addressing communicative goals, they preferred to use mainly pair activities than group-based activities based on the notion that these types of activity enhanced students' contribution to the learning process. It appears that teaching grammar rules explicitly, rather than focusing on the four language skills, was a central barrier that hindered the implementation of CLT activities in their classes. As one of the teachers pointed out:

“I believe that students’ classroom participation through group- or pair-work activities using various techniques and materials would enhance their speaking as well as other main language skills, therefore time to time I ask the students to work in pairs.”
(Teacher 3)

Another teacher remarked:

“I encourage my students to interact through group and pair activities in speaking classes. I also try to use some interesting role play or game-based activities. However, these activities are limited to the content of the course book. I believe CLT activities would be more effective using authentic materials.” (Teacher 2)

Furthermore, analysis of the interviews indicated that teachers wanted to use information gap, problem-solving and functional activities to promote students' communication ability. One of the teachers stated:

“Sometimes, group-work activities may cause problems for the students due to their lack of speaking skills, although most in my class have a good knowledge of language. However, they have difficulty expressing their feelings and views or asking questions in English. Thus, teachers need to help students to develop their language proficiency and adopt a positive attitude towards language learning activities prior to the implementation of CLT.” (Teacher 6)

Analysis of the interviews revealed that most of the teachers tended to use pair rather than group activities, which correlates with the results in Figure 6.1. Most of the teachers indicated that pair work was more suitable and allowed teachers to adjust and control the students' classroom behaviour, more so than group-based activities. One of the teachers stated:

“When students work on a task in groups, they often change the learning context into informal Arabic discussion. Moreover, passive learners mostly depend on other students when they are asked questions. Therefore, I tend to use pair-work activities to get students' attention, as well as to control the flow of the lesson within the given period.” (Teacher 1)

Another issue that teachers raised during the interviews was the large number of students in class, which prevented them from using pair- or group-based activities. In the current situation, there are no fewer than 35 students in one teaching class. One of the teachers noted:

“In my class there are 40 students and it's difficult for every student to work in groups. There are also low-level students who are mostly dependent on other students or remain passive in class.” (Teacher 4)

Additional issue related to teachers' error correction methods and various perceptions two teachers expressed that:

“Language teachers need to correct students’ error immediately so students can learn and make progress.” (T1, 3)

On the other hand, there are teachers who do believe that correcting students’ error consistently could prevent students and discourage them from oral participation. In this regard one of the teachers said that:

“We need to make a balance between a consistent error correction and students’ self-correction to avoid discouraging students from a classroom participation.” (T3)

Section Three: There are four statements under this section namely use of authentic materials, correcting students’ errors immediately, using Arabic in classroom and students working alone then comparing with others. The output from the analysis is summarised in Figure 6.2.

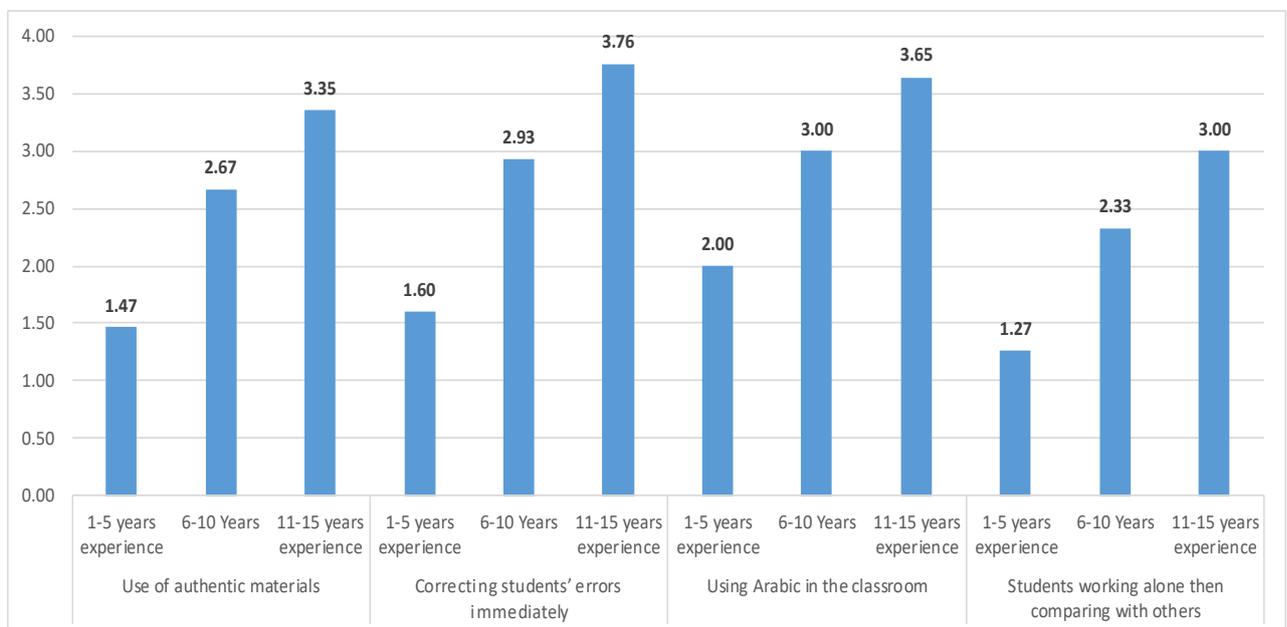


Figure 6.2 Summary of the effect of teaching experience on authentic materials, errors, use of Arabic and working alone

As Figure 6.2 indicates, teaching experience in years has an effect on all four aspects. For example, teachers with 1–5 years' experience apply *use of authentic materials* to a greater extent ($M = 1.47$) than teachers with 6–10 years' experience ($M = 2.67$) and 11–15 years' experience ($M = 3.35$). The application of *use of authentic materials* is significantly different for the three categories of teachers at the 5% level [$F = 57.77$, $p = 0.001$ (< 0.05)]. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons further revealed differences between the groups (1–5 vs 6–10, $p = 0.001$; 1–5 vs 11–15, $p = 0.001$; 6–10 vs 11–15, $p = 0.001$).

All these indicate that teachers with fewer years of teaching experience reported using authentic materials more than teachers with more years of teaching experience. In addition, in order to interpret these results with teachers' perceptions regarding the use of L1 in class. The statistics analysis in Figure 6.2 shows that most of the teachers use students' L1 to some extent. Q4 in the interviews asked how often teachers use Arabic in their classes. The participants indicated in post observation interviews that the use of L1 (Arabic) exists, but it is preceded by various attempts to encourage students to understand in the L2.

One of the teachers said: *"I am trying to help my students because the syllabus is higher than their language competence and they can barely answer questions in English. Therefore, I explain such grammar rules or texts in English first and then I repeat the meaning in L1"* (T4)

She then clarified that most of the students in her class were repeaters (students who had repeated the same level twice or more) and they were only hoping to pass the final exam. Otherwise, their academic future might be affected:

"Honestly, the students' current situation has encouraged me to apply this method to help them, especially in teaching the grammar rules." (Teacher 1)

Furthermore, another aspect that arose in the process of analysis was the case of NEST instructors with low-level English proficiency students. During the interviews, such teachers were asked how they dealt with students who could not get the concept or meaning of the lesson and one stated:

“When I have a problem with some of the students in my class, I try different ways to address the language message; if not, I ask their colleagues to translate the meaning in Arabic. I believe individual students have different goals and thus they need to pass the module... I do not mind using any possible method to help them and make a good point to pass the module but ‘carefully’.” (Teacher 6)

Furthermore, using available authentic materials, whether visual or printed (e.g. newspaper or magazine articles and YouTube videos), in class might be subject to faith or cultural concerns. This is because these materials may contain elements that are not necessarily appropriate for Saudi culture. During the classroom observations, one of the teachers used a YouTube video of a well-known Arabic TV programme, in which the content was presented in Arabic with subtitles in English. When I asked her about the purpose of this activity, she replied:

“The regulation of the university does not encourage teachers to use any types of materials that contrast with the students’ religion and culture and therefore I have to be careful when I pick teaching materials to ensure they are contextually suited to the local culture.” (Teacher 1)

Another teacher pointed out that the course book provides good instructional material to guide teachers and students in the processes of language teaching and learning. She said that:

“My teaching depends on the main course book and a workbook to do some exercises. Both textbooks provide teachers and students with guidelines to follow the methodological construction and are a good reference for students to learn and comprehend essential language learning processes.” (Teacher 6)

Another factor preventing teachers from using the CLT approach fully was the lack of authentic materials. According to the analysis of the interviews, most of the teachers indicated that a lack of resources influenced them in applying different approaches and methods to promote their students' contribution. Regarding the lack of authentic materials, number of the teachers claimed that:

“...the textbook is the only language teaching resource that I use in my teaching and a supplement CD for listening.” (Teachers 1, 3 ,4)

Another teacher reported that some students have a good knowledge of language and have high expectations of the English classes in terms of developing their speaking skills. To meet their expectations, effective classroom activities needs to be employed, for example authentic tasks, watching videos, role play and functional language practice. However, she claimed that

“...due to extensive teaching hours and the large number of students in one class, I rarely implement the CLT approach using authentic materials in my teaching classes. However, I attempted to use appropriate materials time to time” (Teacher 2).

Section Four: There are three statements under this section namely drilling and repeating sentences, memorizing grammar rules and information gap activities. The output from the analysis is summarised in Table 6.2 below.

Table 6.2 Summary of the effect of teaching experience on drilling and repeating sentences, grammar rules and information gap activities

Variables	Teaching experience in years	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	F statistics	P value	Pairwise comparison
Drilling and repeating sentences	1-5	1.40	0.51	1	68.70	0.001	(1-5 v 6-10: p = 0.001); (1-5 v 11-15: p = 0.001); (6-10 v 11-15: p = 0.001)
	6-10	2.27	0.46	2			
	11-15	3.00	0.00	3			
Memorizing grammar rules	1-5	1.20	0.41	1	118.43	0.001	(1-5 v 6-10: p = 0.001); (1-5 v 11-15: p = 0.001); (6-10 v 11-15: p = 0.001)
	6-10	2.20	0.41	2			
	11-15	3.00	0.00	3			
Information gap activities	1-5	1.53	0.52	2	114.67	0.001	(1-5 v 6-10: p = 0.001); (1-5 v 11-15: p = 0.001); (6-10 v 11-15: p = 0.001)
	6-10	3.13	0.64	3			
	11-15	4.00	0.00	4			

As Table 6.2 indicates, teaching experience in years has an effect on all three aspects. For example, teachers with fewer years' experience reported using *drilling and repeating sentences* to a greater extent (M = 1.40) than teachers with 6-10 years' experience (M = 2.27) and 11-15 years' experience (M = 3.00). The application of *drilling and repeating sentences* is significantly different for the three groups of teachers at the 5% level [F = 68.70, p = 0.001 (<0.05)]. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons further revealed differences between the groups (1-5 vs 6-10, p = 0.001; 1-5 vs 11-15 years, p = 0.001; 6-10 vs 11-15, p = 0.001). All these indicate that teachers with fewer years of teaching experience reported applied *drilling and repeating sentences* more than teachers with more years of teaching experience.

Section Five: There are three statements under this section namely *games*, *problem solving activities* and *functional activities*. The output from the analysis is summarised in Figure 6.3.

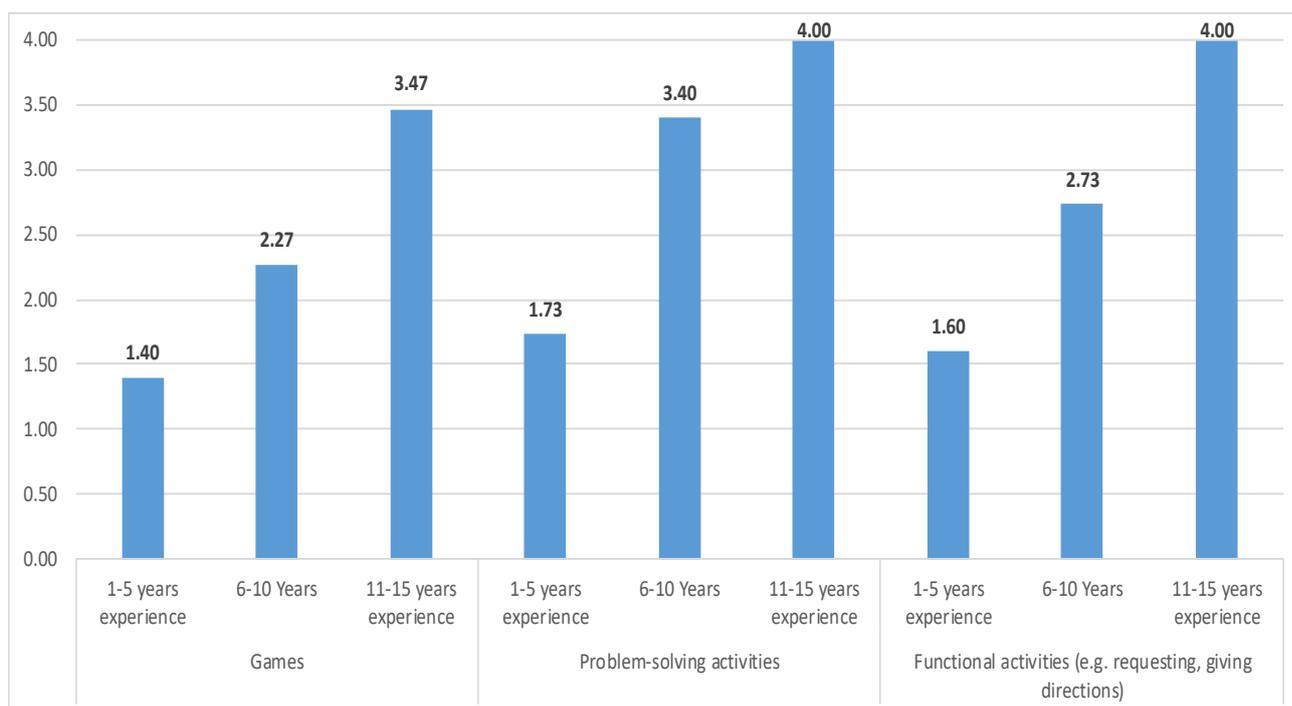


Figure 6.3 Summary of the effect of teaching experience on games, problem-solving activities and functional activities

As Figure 6.3 indicates, years of teaching experience have an effect on all three aspects. For example, teachers with fewer years' experience reported using games to a greater extent ($M = 1.40$) than teachers with 6–10 years' ($M = 2.27$) and 11–15 years' (mean=3.47) experience. The application of games differed significantly for the three groups of teachers at the 5% level [$F = 70.93$, $p = 0.001$ (< 0.05)]. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons further revealed differences between the groups (1–5 vs 6–10, $p = 0.001$; 1–5 vs 11–15 years, $p = 0.001$; 6–10 vs 11–15, $p = 0.001$). These figures indicate that teachers with fewer years of teaching experience applied games more than teachers with more years of teaching experience. Furthermore, these results were interpreted in light of teachers' perceptions regarding the use of games in class. In the interviews, teachers were asked to explain how they used games in their classes. The participants reported that using games in their current L2 settings was not easy, but was

preceded by various attempts to encourage students to participate in the L2 activities. One of the teachers said:

“I am trying to help my students using various types of games-based activities to motivate them in class. For some students the current syllabus is higher than their language competence and they can barely answer questions in English. Therefore, I explain such lessons or grammar rules through well-designed games because I do believe that students would learn more if they were motivated in class.” (Teacher 6)

6.3 EFL teachers’ responses concerning their language teaching practice

This section aims to identify the extent to which each of the teachers considered that they had applied the aspects of language teaching activities in their teaching practice as indicates in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3 Summary of teachers' responses towards language practice (N = 47)

Q3. To what extent do you apply the following in your teaching practice?	To a great extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all
Teaching grammar explicitly	23 (48.9%)	10 (21.3%)	14 (29.8%)	0 (0%)
Pair work	10 (21.2%)	20 (42.5%)	17 (36.1%)	0 (0%)
Group work	6 (12.8%)	11 (23.4%)	14 (29.7%)	16 (34%)
Role play	15 (31.9%)	18 (38.2%)	8 (17.0%)	6 (12.8%)
Use of authentic materials	8 (17.0%)	12 (25.5)	21 (44.7%)	6 (12.8%)
Correcting students’ errors immediately	6 (12.7%)	10 (21.3%)	18 (38.3%)	13 (27.6%)
Using Arabic in the classroom	0 (0%)	15 (31.9%)	21 (44.7%)	11 (23.4%)
Students working alone then comparing with others	11 (23.4%)	14 (29.8%)	22 (46.8%)	0 (0%)
Drilling and repeating sentences	9 (19.1%)	17 (36.2%)	21 (44.7%)	0 (0%)
Memorizing grammar rules	12 (25.5%)	15 (31.9%)	20 (44.7%)	0 (0%)
Information gap activities	7 (14.8%)	10 (21.2%)	9 (19.1%)	21 (44.6%)
Games	9 (19.1%)	17 (36.1%)	13 (26.6%)	8 (17.0%)
Problem-solving activities focus on students’ thinking skills	4 (8.5%)	11 (23.4%)	9 (19.1%)	23 (48.9%)
Functional activities (e.g. requesting, giving directions)	6 (12.8%)	13 (27.6%)	11 (23.4%)	17 (36.1%)

The above table shows that 70.2% of the teachers consider they teach grammar explicitly and 29.8% of them stated to a limited extent. In all, 34% of the teachers reported not employing group-work activities and most 36.2% of the teachers considered they did so, while 29.7% of the teachers reported doing so to a limited extent. Pair work was used by 63.8% of the teachers

and to a limited extent by 36.1%. Regarding role-play activities, 70.1% of the participants stated they used them in classroom practices, while 17% stated to a limited extent and 12.8% not at all. In addition, regarding the use of games, the majority 76.6% of the teachers stated that games were used to facilitate language learning process. In addition, 26.6% of them declare to a limited extent and 17% not at all.

Information gap activities were used only by 36.2% of the teachers, and 19.1% Said to a limited extent. While, the majority 44.6% were not used. In addition, only 31.9% the teachers use problem solving activities, and 19.1% of them to a limited extent, while the majority 48.9% of the teachers were not used. Around 40.4% of the teachers reported, they use functional activities such as requesting, apologizing and giving direction, and 23.4% of indicated that they did so to a limited extent. While, the majority 36.1% of the teachers did not using functional activities at all in their classes. Furthermore, regarding the use of authentic materials, the majority 42.5% of the teachers reported they did so and 44.7% of them stated to a limited extent, while 12.8% declared not at all. In addition, students' errors were considered to be corrected almost always immediately by 34% of the teachers and 38.3% of them stated to a limited extent, while, 27.6% did not correct errors immediately at all. Regarding the use of L1 in classroom, the majority 44.7% of the teachers declared that they used it to a limited extent, 31.3% said to some extent, while 23.4% reported not at all.

However, with regard to the statement concerning students working alone and then comparing with others, most (53.3%) of the teachers used it most of the time and 46.8% declared to a limited extent. Drilling and repeating sentences were used by 55.3% of the teachers and 44.7% to a limited extent. In addition, encouraging students to memorize language items was used by the majority (57.4%) of the teachers, while 44.7% stated to a limited extent. The teachers' explanations for these quantitative findings are addressed in the following sub-sections, drawing on the interviews.

6.3.1 Lecturing teaching style

During the classroom observation process, it was observed that teachers engaged in a considerable amount of lecturing, this being one of the teaching methods in most classes. This point was raised in the interviews and teachers were asked to express their views concerning the extent to which this method supported them in delivering and achieve language teaching goals. Most teachers agreed that this method is effective in delivering specific theoretical or conceptual ideas and aspects of language components. The English module in the ELI has much to cover and this method helps teachers present a planned lesson in a well-organized manner. In addition, they claimed that using this traditional method is associated with many aspects of the language programme environment, a point that will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7. Two teachers were asked about their philosophy of teaching language. They stated that there are different reasons for teachers preferring one teaching method over another. It is also important for teachers to recognize when and how to manage students' involvement, enabling them to benefit from the time spent in the English classroom. One of the teachers stated:

“It depends on the objectives of the lesson. I tend to use such methods from time to time to address specific language meaning (grammar rules); at the same time, I try to encourage my students in classroom discussions, either in group activity or by adopting and applying relevant tasks.” (Teacher 1)

6.3.2 CLT implementation problems

Q13 in the questionnaire asked teachers to articulate the problems that they face in implementing CLT in Saudi EFL classes. Analysis of the questionnaire showed that most teachers fail to implement CLT features in their teaching practice and they attributed this to various factors. Table 6.4 summarizes teachers' responses regarding the challenges in implementing CLT in class.

Table 6.4 Summary of problems in implementing the CLT approach (N = 47)

Q13. What difficulties do you experience in implementing CLT in EFL classrooms?	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Grammar-based assessment procedures	32 (68.0%)	10 (21.7%)	5 (10.6%)	0 (0%)
Lack of authentic materials	28 (59.5%)	11 (23.4%)	6 (12.8%)	0 (0%)
Lack of CLT knowledge	0 (0%)	5 (10.6%)	19(40.4%)	23 (49%)
Lack of authority	10 (21.2%)	16 (34.0%)	21 (44.6%)	0 (0%)
Misconceptions of CLT	11 (23.4%)	10 (21.2%)	14 (29.8%)	12 (25.5%)
Students' lack of motivation in pair- and group-based activities	22 (46.8%)	15 (31.9%)	10 (21.3%)	0 (0%)
Lack of in-service training in CLT	25 (53.2%)	15 (31.9%)	7 (14.9%)	0 (0%)
Large numbers of students in class	23 (49%)	9 (19.1%)	15 (32%)	0 (0%)
Overloaded teaching hours	29 (61.7%)	11 (23.4%)	7 (14.9%)	0 (0%)
Passive learning attitude	21 (44.7%)	15 (31.9%)	11 (23.4%)	0 (0%)
Students' poor L2 proficiency	24 (51%)	19 (40.4%)	4 (8.5%)	0 (0%)

Data from the questionnaire and discussions give the impression that most teachers faced difficulty implementing CLT in their classes. For instance, the findings in Table 6.4 reveal that 89.4% of the teachers stated that grammar-based assessment procedures made the implementation of CLT in teaching classes much more difficult and only 10.6% disagreed. Furthermore, 82.9% of the teachers indicated that lack of authentic materials also contributed to and caused difficulties in implementing CLT and only 12.8% of the disagreed. In addition, most 89.4% of the teachers strongly disagreed that, lack of CLT knowledge to be a problem, while, 10.6% of them agreed that lack of CLT knowledge can be a problem. Whilst, 44.6% of the teachers stated misunderstanding of CLT contributed difficulties in CLT implementation, and 29.8% + 25.5 (of the strongly disagree ones) of them disagreed that this is a problem. It was also noticed that most of the teachers 78.7% think that students' lack of motivation caused problems in implementing CLT and only 21.3% of them did not agreed. A further 85.1% of the teachers justified their argument due to lack of professional training in the CLT approach, as well as necessary pedagogical knowledge and skills to implement CLT properly, whilst, 14.9% disagreed. It is also noticed that the majority of the teachers 68% stated that having large number of students in class made the adoption of CLT difficult, whilst 32% of them disagreed.

As CLT requires a lot of teaching materials preparation, overloaded teaching hours was assigned by 85.1% of the teachers indicated that overloaded teaching hours prevented them from implementing CLT in classes properly, whilst, 14.9% of them were disagreed. Furthermore, 59.5% + 23.4% of the teachers indicated that lack of authentic materials also contributed to and caused difficulties in implementing CLT. In addition, 51% + 40.4% attributed their difficulties to the students' poor English language proficiency. Moreover, 44.7% indicated that these were due to Passive learning attitude with the CLT approach.

6.3.3 Grammar-based assessment procedures

The aim of this sub-section is to analyse the teachers' interviews regarding one of the key problems that they considered they faced in attempting to implement the CLT approach in class. Here they responded to questions related to grammar-based assessment procedures and how these prevented them from implementing the CLT approach. One teacher stated:

“In our context, language teaching is more focused on grammatical rules than developing language skills and this leads teachers to pay more attention to drilling and memorizing patterns, with little attention to reading skills.” (Teacher 2)

Another teacher noted:

“Most of the students are concerned about the final exam and passing the course, regardless of learning and understanding the main language skills, and this in turn has encouraged some teachers just to focus on the grammar-based approach rather than raising students' awareness of communicative English skills. Students are afraid of grammar and they always ask about grammatical structures.” (Teacher 3)

Furthermore, teachers in the ELI made great efforts to meet exam requirements. They were of the view that language teaching is important not just to develop communicative aspects, but also to enable students to meet their academic and professional needs. In this regard, two of the teachers criticized the exam board, stating:

“There is a mismatch between the outlined objectives of the course and the content of assessment procedures, as well as what takes place in class teaching... [We] think that mid and final exam questions are complex for the students’ language level and students’ performance in most receptive and productive skills are always behind the standardized level. This because subject teachers have no authority in the decision-making process regarding the types of questions and the assessment criteria that students need to meet.” (Teachers 4, 6)

The process has long been centralized, for reasons that are beyond the scope of this study.

Another teacher stated:

“My teaching is totally dependent on the course book and the types of activities we do in class; however, in comparing mid or final exam samples, we found that exam questions were totally different from the ones in the book. I believe students need to be trained in the types of exam questions and strategies prior to preparing for final assessment.” (Teachers 2, 5)

6.3.4 Overloaded teaching hours

Another problem that teachers mentioned during the interviews was having extra teaching hours. The teachers were required to teach 18 contact hours per week, and they were dissatisfied with the teaching load; this was viewed as being in conflict with the notion of a CLT curriculum addressed at meeting the students’ language needs. The fact is that preparing activities to enhance communicative English skills needs more time and effort, which in turn forces the teachers to use the traditional approach rather than the CLT. One of the teachers stated:

“I think in the ELI the English language teaching programme structure is a little unusual; rather than teaching two semesters, we teach four modules in two semesters. We think that there is a considerable pressure on teachers and students in terms of concluding the module within the limited time; it’s actually seven week and this might have a negative impact on students’ exam outcomes as two weeks out of the seven are used for exam purposes.” (Teacher 6)

One teacher mentioned an additional issue beyond the teaching load, namely that the programme is for credit and provides an intensive course of instruction designed to bring all students up to the required level for first-year university students. However, the pedagogical content requires more time and effort to achieve and meet the students' language needs:

“My teaching load is 18 hours and I have no time to prepare any materials for motivating the students' interaction and therefore I prefer to focus on the traditional method using the course book activities because they are easy to prepare and present, as it a challenge to offer any other sources for students.” (Teacher 3)

6.3.5 Lack of in-service training in CLT

This sub-section addresses the lack of in-service training as one of the areas that affects EFL teachers in the implementation of CLT. According to Table 5.4, based on the teachers' questionnaire, 40 (85.1%) of the teachers in the ELI had not attended any in-service training regarding the CLT approach. However, 7 (14.9%) of the teachers stated that they had attained training in the ELI, mainly concerning the use of technology in language teaching, such as online teaching and preparation of various lesson plans. In addition, during the interviews, teachers were asked about the importance of in-service training. They noted that the university has a world-class mission to develop the English language programme by adopting the best available English language teaching curriculum.

However, it seems that there is a lack of connection between the content of the curriculum, which is designed to develop the students' linguistic and communicative competence, and what the ELI offers currently in terms of teacher training. The teachers indicated that they needed a well-established teacher training programme, taking into consideration the broader perspective of in-service training to fulfil and match the communicative-based classroom practice requirements. In the interviews, Teachers 5 and 6 stated that:

“Although the university adopted a curriculum which is very much focused on communicative teaching and that is the whole approach to teaching students’ English language through each units, in this context, teachers’ in-service training workshops do not enhance EFL teachers’ ability to use student-centred activities in the classroom. Even though it is important to reinforce teachers’ knowledge and proficiency to fill the gap between communicative-based classroom practice and teachers’ professional development, the training we had was in different areas, such as lesson planning and use of technology in the classroom. (Teachers 5 and 6)

Therefore, in-service training needs to be designed based on needs analysis, taking into consideration both teachers’ and students’ needs in terms of the current language teaching approaches. This aspect is further discussed in Chapter 7 which addresses RQ3 concerning the difficulties in implementing the CLT principles (cf. 7.4 -7.4.3). The following section discussed teachers’ understanding and misunderstanding of CLT principles.

Table 6.5 Teachers’ understanding and misunderstanding of CLT principles (N = 47)

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
CLT means no grammar teaching	37 (78.7%)	4 (8.5%)	6 (12.7%)	0 (0%)
CLT focuses only on speaking and listening	35 (74.4%)	8 (17%)	4 (8.5%)	0 (0%)
CLT enhances students’ autonomy	29 (61.7%)	10 (21.2%)	8 (17%)	0 (0%)
CLT emphasizes fluency over accuracy	30 (63.8%)	12 (25.5%)	5 (10.6%)	0 (0%)
CLT student-centred approach	38 (80.8%)	5 (10.6%)	4 (8.5%)	0 (0%)
CLT encourages communication in L2	35 (74.4%)	12 (25.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
CLT emphasizes only pair and group activities	34 (72.3%)	8 (17%)	5 (10.6%)	0 (0%)
CLT requires teachers with high proficiency	32 (66.6%)	12 (25.5%)	3 (6.4%)	0 (0%)
Teachers’ lack of authority	25 (53.1%)	13 (27.6%)	3(6.4%)	6 (12.7%)

Table 6.5 reveals that most of the teachers agreed with the certain statements namely: 91.5% of the teachers stated that CLT is a student-centred approach and 8.5% did not so, whilst 87.2% thought that CLT means not teaching grammar and only 12.7% of the teachers disagreed. In addition, all the teachers recognized that CLT emphasizes the use of L2 for communication and similarly 91.5% of them stated that CLT promotes learners in developing oral skills, while 89.3% of the teachers stated that pair- and group-work activities are central features of the

approach. Furthermore, 93.6% of the teachers indicated that CLT teachers' proficiency is very important in CLT, but only 6.4% stated disagree. Furthermore, 80.5% claimed that teachers lack authority in their current teaching settings, and 6.4% of them disagree, whilst, 12.7% of the teachers strongly disagree. In all, 82.9% of participants agreed that CLT values students' autonomy and only 17% of the teachers were not agree. In this study, teachers were asked via interviews and the questionnaire to explore their perceptions regarding the importance of CLT principles in the language teaching process. Nevertheless, as the findings from classroom observation revealed that teachers' teaching practices did not reflect their deep beliefs and understanding of CLT, although they appear grasping the general idea of CLT apart from thinking that CLT omitted the teaching of grammar.

6.3.6 Teachers' understanding of CLT

Analysis of the questionnaire showed that all participants (N = 47) held positive beliefs about CLT. In the interviews, three teachers stated:

"I believe that CLT is an approach which establishes real language interaction. It's flexible in using tasks for communication goals ... and its primary units are focused on developing students' language skills, encouraging them to be active rather than being passive learners. Moreover, it helps students to manage their own learning strategies."
(Teacher 5, 6, 2).

However, the data indicated that while Saudi teachers mainly recognized the principles of the CLT approach as an effective means of fulfilling the goal of communication, most of these teachers were lacking in terms of the practical implementation of CLT principles in their classrooms. Language teaching activities heavily depended on the traditional language teaching approach rather than CLT.

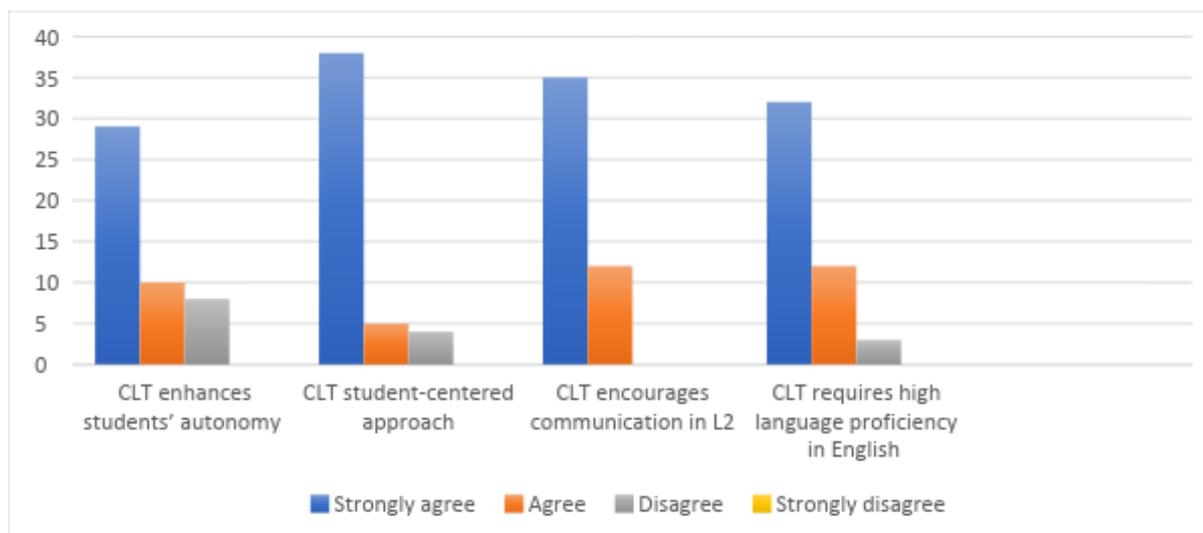


Figure 6.4 Teachers' understanding of CLT principles

Figure 6.4 presents the participants' responses to the questionnaire which have a close similarity to the features of CLT, for example 38 of the 47 participants in the questionnaire survey indicated that CLT is a student-centred approach, 35 teachers indicated that CLT emphasizes the use of the target language in classroom interaction and 34 the majority agreed that CLT encourages students' collaborative classroom activities. Moreover, 32 teachers stated that CLT requires that teachers have high proficiency in English. In addition, 30 teachers noted that CLT emphasizes fluency over accuracy and 29 teachers also stated that CLT encourages students' autonomy in language learning. These findings correspond with the data arising from the interviews, as well as the observations of teachers. In an interview, one of the teachers stated:

"I believe CLT offers students a great opportunity that facilitates the language learning process, through the flexibility of CLT principles that enable students to guide and manage the class interaction, whether teacher to students or student interaction..." She also added that "CLT allows teachers to apply various techniques and materials that make the language comprehensible from the context of the sentence" (Teacher 1).

Moreover, the data obtained from the interviews also suggest that teachers' reluctance to apply the communicative approach might be influenced by existing factors, as listed in Figure 6.4, with most teachers believing that CLT highlights the teaching of oral skills over other skills

6.3.7 Misunderstandings of CLT

Figure 6.5 illustrates the teachers' misunderstanding of some CLT features. This section highlights teachers' disinclination for the CLT approach.

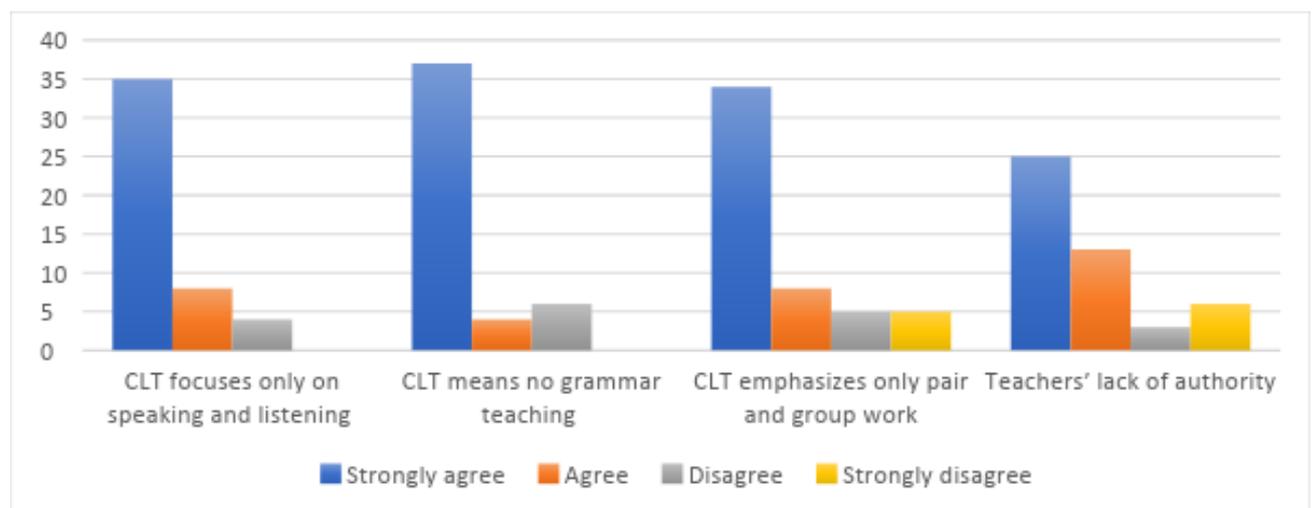


Figure 6.5 Teachers' misunderstandings of the CLT principles

6.3.8 CLT means no grammar teaching

During the interviews, teachers were asked to clarify their misunderstanding of some CLT principles. Figure 6.5 show that teachers thought that CLT omitted the teaching of grammar.

One of the teachers stated:

“I believe that CLT can offer many more language learning opportunities for students than the traditional methods. In addition, CLT emphasizes developing students’ oral skills, as well as grammatical rules. However, with the aim of implementing CLT, many challenges that prevent teachers need to be considered.” (Teacher 6)

She added:

“CLT is all about offering opportunities for students to master and understand various grammar points” (Teacher 6)

Another teacher commented:

“I try to manage the teaching methods depending on the objectives of the lesson. If the focus is grammar and word meaning, I tend to use grammar methods because they are more accurate in terms of addressing grammatical components.” (Teacher 1)

On the other hand, analysis of the interviews suggests that there is another factor inhibiting teachers from applying the CLT approach in their classes. This is related to their own beliefs about the CLT activities. For example, one of the teachers stated:

“[The] CLT approach allows students to lead and manage the activities and its principles are in conflict with teachers’ authority in terms of controlling students’ behaviour in class.” (Teacher 2)

Another teacher declared:

“When I try to change the routine and use some activities ... for example, role play or games, the class becomes chaotic; as a result, students do not take the lesson seriously. Thus, it affects the lesson plan as well as being time consuming. Therefore, I think CLT is not suitable, particularly to teach grammar, as it’s a complex subject for students. To teach grammatical rules, students need to be taught in a controlled manner.” (Teacher 3)

The data obtained through both interviews and questionnaire revealed that some of the teachers misunderstood CLT as focusing only on fluency over accuracy. Therefore, these teachers tended to teach grammar explicitly to address accuracy through the application of language textbook activities rather than using CLT principles. One of the teachers stated:

“I think what students need from grammar is different from what we are teaching in speaking. Therefore, I do not think students achieve language accuracy through communicative activities. For me, each component should be applied for different goals.” (Teacher 4)

In this study, the findings suggest that misunderstanding of CLT influences Saudi EFL teachers' preference for traditional teaching methods over CLT and the results in Figure 6.5 correlation with the findings in the interviews, as well as the observation data. It seems that teachers prefer the traditional grammar teaching methods only to fulfil their lesson plan goals and to meet examination requirements. Teachers' misunderstanding of CLT principles requires further investigation and professional pedagogical training from language programme leaders.

6.3.9 CLT means teaching speaking and listening

As reflected in the results of the questionnaire and the interviews, although most of the participants held positive beliefs concerning CLT, analysis of the data revealed that 34 of the teachers in the questionnaire believed that CLT only focuses on speaking and listening, neglecting other skills or linguistic knowledge. These beliefs were also emphasized by most of the participants (i.e. four teachers believed that CLT was all about teaching oral skills). One such teacher stated:

“My understanding of CLT is that it strongly focuses on teaching oral skills over the other language skills and forms. As CLT stresses teaching listening and speaking, it is expected that teachers pay more attention to these skills and increase students' contribution in class through collaborative activities.” (Teacher 1)

Another teacher noted:

“It is a challenge to focus on the objective of the lesson, especially when grammar is the primary concern in the ELL. Therefore, I tend to isolate grammar activities from the speaking lesson.” (Teacher 2)

As Table 6.1 in section one indicated, speaking skills scored lower than other skills. Thus, teachers' lack of willingness to adopt the CLT approach in their classes might be attributed to their misunderstanding of this approach. In addition, the results indicate that there is an

association between teachers' actual teaching practice and their misunderstanding of the CLT approach.

6.3.10 Teachers' lack of authority

Another factor contributing to the teachers' misunderstanding of the CLT approach was that most believed that CLT diminishes teachers' authority over the class as it is based on a student-centred approach. During the interviews, teachers were asked to explain their roles in the classroom. One stated:

"I believe that teachers should control students' behaviours in language teaching classes." (Teacher 1)

Figure 6.5 shows 25 teachers in the questionnaire indicated that CLT is a student-centred approach and emphasizes that class activities need to be facilitated and managed by the learners. In addition, teachers who preferred the traditional teaching methods seemed to believe that CLT minimized their role in class. Analysis of the interviews reveals that four teachers claimed the CLT approach provided students with great freedom to choose appropriate language activities. These teachers also argued that it is a challenge to apply the CLT approach in the current language teaching programme because the teaching practices are limited to a pedagogical curriculum oriented to exam-based language teaching processes. One of the teachers stated:

"When students lead the teaching processes, how can they get the right knowledge and I think the teacher's authority is important in terms of planning and transferring language knowledge. I do not think that our students are experienced in planning for their own learning as they are still at the level of receivers of knowledge." (Teacher 5)

Two teachers also pointed out in this matter:

“I think the application of CLT features are not appropriate to our context because when students are given more freedom in class, this might cause a problem in terms of minimizing the teacher’s role in the teaching process and this is not in the interests of the students in the first place and classroom interaction somehow should be controlled by the class teacher.” (Teacher 3,4)

However, some teachers believed that CLT is an approach that encompasses all language teaching and learning processes through enabling classroom interaction and identifying the responsibilities of the members in the language teaching environment (teachers and students). These teachers suggested that CLT does not contradict the teachers’ authority as it highlights their authority as facilitators through the implementation of various teaching techniques to increase students’ motivation and construct knowledge according to their language needs, rather than being passive learners. Two teachers stated:

“Teachers can manage and organize teaching activities to encourage student interaction through various teaching activities and materials that promote the learning process. At the same time, teachers can be facilitators of teaching processes for better learning outcome.” (Teacher 2)

Another teacher further explained her teaching techniques to manage the teacher–student and student–student interaction, stating:

“In my opinion, CLT does not affect teachers’ roles with the students if the teacher knows how to apply engagement methods to maintain students’ concentration within the class discourse” (Teacher 6)

Another teacher added:

“Usually, I encourage my students to participate in role play and I also include myself in the activity to make the lesson enjoyable for the students. In addition, I realized that most of the students in my class enjoy the types of activities that enable them to speak rather than controlled activities.” (Teacher 5)

For further elaboration of teachers' classroom practices from their students' perception and in line with the fourth research question, the following section address, the students' perceptions of teaching in terms of various aspects of language teachers' classroom practices, firstly, students' perceptions of teachers' CLT practices, secondly, group-and pair-work activities, thirdly, use of authentic materials; fourthly, grammar teaching and learning; fifthly, teachers' error correction; use of L1; finally, the use of four skills; are then laid out.

6.4. Students' questionnaire analysis

6.4.1 Students' perceptions of teachers' CLT practices

The students were asked to describe their perceptions regarding their teachers' actual classroom practices on a scale of 1 = "to a great extent", 2 = "to some extent", 3 = "to a limited extent" and 4 = "not at all". Table 6.6 shows the results obtained from the students' questionnaire regarding the following question: "To what extent do the following statements apply to your teacher's activities in class?"

Table 6.6 Summary of students' responses on language teaching activities (N = 175)

Q2. To what extent do the following statements apply to your teacher's activities in class?	To a great extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all
Classroom activities focus on memorizing grammar rules	133 (76%)	15 (8.6%)	27 (15.4%)	0 (0%)
There is use of Arabic (L1) in the classroom	69 (39.4%)	20 (11.4%)	62 (35.4%)	24 (13.7%)
The teacher corrects errors immediately	23 (13.1%)	69 (39.4%)	73 (41.1%)	10 (5.7%)
Pair/group activities are used in classroom	30 (17.1%)	15 (8.5%)	92 (52.6%)	38 (21.7%)
The teacher frequently uses different aids, such as tasks, maps, games and videos	24 (13.7%)	18 (10.3%)	61 (34.8%)	72 (41.1%)
The teacher mostly focuses on communication, with grammar rules when necessary	15 (8.6%)	23 (13.1%)	52 (29.7%)	85 (48.3%)
The teacher frequently encourages individual work in the classroom	81 (46.3%)	26 (14.8%)	68 (38.8%)	0 (0%)
The teacher dominates the classroom interaction through lecturing only	58 (33.1%)	63 (36%)	54 (30.8%)	0 (0%)
Students are given more talking time than the teacher	19 (10.8%)	33 (18.8%)	60 (34.3%)	63 (36%)
The course book is the only source that the teacher uses in the classroom	64 (36.6%)	58 (33.1%)	53 (30.3%)	0 (0%)
The teacher uses drilling and repeating sentences a lot	56 (32%)	61 (34.8%)	58 (33.1%)	0 (0%)

The results obtained from students' questionnaire in Table 6.6 show that the majority (84.6%) of the students consider that teachers usually focus on memorizing grammar rules to a great and some extent, while only 15.4% of them selected "to a limited extent". Regarding the use of L1 in classroom, only 13.7% of the students chose "not at all", with the majority (50.8%) stating that teachers do use Arabic in the classroom "to a great and some extent" and 35.4% reporting "to a limited extent" whereas 13.7% of the participants stating, "not at all". In error correction, 52.6% of the students said that teachers correct students' errors immediately "to a great and some extent" and 41.1% "to a limited extent", with only 5.7% saying "not at all".

Concerning the statement that teachers frequently use different teaching materials, such as tasks, maps, games and videos, 41.1% of the students reported "not at all" and 34.8% said "to a limited extent", while only 19.4% stated teachers do so "to a great extent". In contrast, most of the students (69.7%) reported that the course book was the only source used to some and

great extent in classroom and 30.3% indicated that teachers used the course book in classroom activities “to a limited extent”. This may indicate that teachers have limited access to various sorts of teaching materials to enhance the students’ language learning opportunities.

In terms of interaction, most of the students indicated that teachers dominate the classroom interaction “to a great extent” through lecturing, rather than using a communicative-based approach, while only 30.8% of the students selected “to a limited extent”. Indeed, almost 70.3% of the students reported that they were not given opportunity to speak in class and only 29.7% of the students considered they had the opportunity to speak “to a great extent”. Moreover, 66.8% of the students reported that teachers use drilling and repeating sentences in class “to a great and some extent”. This is reinforced by students’ responses regarding pair and group work activities, with most of the students (52.6%) reporting that teachers applied these activities “to a limited extent” and 21.7% “not at all”, whereas only 25.7% indicated “to a great and some extent”. In contrast, 61.1% of the students reported that teachers frequently encouraged individual work activities in classroom “to a great and some extent” and 38.8% “to a limited extent”.

6.4.2 Group- and pair-work activities

In the interviews, students were asked to describe the extent to which group and pair work activities fulfilled their needs in English language courses. First, there was an overwhelming expression of dissatisfaction with the limited use of such activities. The majority stated that they were used "to some extent" or "not at all". The students considered that the teachers needed to put more effort into arranging group and pair work activities which would allow them to develop their communicative skills. One student even mentioned:

“What I can remember from the few activities that teachers conducted is just a few words.” (S4)

Students' lack of satisfaction with teachers' classroom practices was attributed to different factors. Some students attributed this to the lack of effectiveness of teaching techniques and methods in developing the desired skills. One student mentioned:

“Our teachers emphasize grammar and the structure of the language rather than developing our communication skills. Since I joined this programme, I have never seen a teacher ask a student to roughly say just a sentence in English, let alone a dialogue or a group-based conversation. We couldn't even develop the skill of communication as we were supposed to.” (S6)

Another student stated:

“I hope our teachers increase the use of group/pair activities to practise real language for communication goals using authentic materials which promotes exposure to the target language...” (S8)

She added that although the teacher tried to use group and pair work, the activities were only taken from course books, emphasizing memorization of grammar, gap filling and word matching exercises. When asked to describe their preferences in terms of the type of activities, one student responded:

“...if the focus is on grammar aspects, I prefer to work independently than in group-based work, because it allows me to concentrate more. However, I enjoy working in groups if the content of the language is in relation to the language skills speaking and reading because it gives more time to speak in classroom discourse.” (S7)

In the interviews, students were also asked to express their opinion regarding working individually rather than working as a group. A few students indicated that working individually made its own contribution to the language learning process. Three students stated that:

“...working independently would help us to focus and grasp the main idea of the lesson. However, when the teacher arranges the class in groups/pairs, [we] change the dialogue into social interaction, frequently using L1 rather than focusing on the lesson.” (S1, S2, S6)

The overall impression was that most students would prefer group- and pair-based activities which satisfied their needs and interests. During the interviews, most of the students stated that working in group-based activities helped them to apply the knowledge they obtained in a more practical way than individual-based activities in which the teachers asked a single question of individual students. However, there were conflicting views of group or pair work activities:

“...group-based activity enhances full understanding of the language in classroom discourse and my English is poor, so I need to be involved in group-based activities as much as possible to develop my language capability.” (S14)

“Due to lack of my speaking ability in English, I feel shy about speaking in group discussions.” (S15)

6.4.3 Use of authentic materials

Q10 in the interviews asked students to express their perceptions concerning their teachers' use of authentic materials in the classroom. Students believed that the use of authentic materials enables them to obtain more information about other cultures through reading and listening to various language-teaching materials. Students argued that their teachers need to be more aware of using these types of authentic materials in class. One student mentioned:

“...students have difficulties understanding English, specifically when they watch a programme or movie on the television or when they travel abroad. Implementing authentic materials would help us to understand various aspects of language structures effectively.” (S11)

Others associated the use of authentic materials with language difficulties, particularly when teachers select and use advanced materials, which prevents student–teacher classroom interaction. A good point in the students' interviews was that some students had challenged themselves to improve their language learning using authentic materials, for example developing their vocabulary, phrases, sentences and sounds:

“...we think it is important to challenge ourselves to achieve a good level of language capacity and self-confidence. In authentic materials there are topics which encourage students to be exposed to new and daily use of language.” (S4, S5, S8)

However, some of the students expressed their difficulties in terms of using authentic materials:

“...due to our limited English language ability, we do not know how to answer teachers’ questions in terms of new vocabulary or sentences. Therefore, we feel nervous and do not know how to answer or be involved in the class dialogue...our teachers need to manage and consider that.” (S2, S7, S8)

A few other students also gave personal reasons for their preferences in the use of authentic materials. One of the students stated:

“... In my class some students liked the idea of using authentic materials, but I personally prefer it when teachers use activities from the students’ course book because it covers the four language skills and can be used as a guide in the language learning process and is a good reference for exam preparation.” (S6)

Based on the above, I believe teachers need to consider students’ various aspects of concern regarding the language learning process and choice of materials.

6.4.4 Grammar teaching and learning

In the interviews, students were asked to express their opinions regarding the techniques that teachers use to teach grammar rules in class. Most of the students believed that isolated grammar-focused instruction would not enhance their communication ability. They argued that grammar-focused language learning needs to be reconsidered at the university stage. Students emphasized that language teaching and learning needs to be based on real-life communication and mastering aspects of grammatical rules needs to be done implicitly. In addition, students perceived a discrepancy between what they learn in the English language classroom and what is required in their future subject area (business, economics and finance). For instance, one student claimed:

"I believe that grammar is important. However, I have been learning grammar for eight years in school and I do not know how to use my knowledge for real communication or writing...my aspiration is to develop my language skills, especially speaking and writing, which are required for my future area." (S3)

Most of the students reported that teachers should try to develop their communication skills and explain grammar only when necessary. Others also made the criticism that what took place in their classrooms was not up to the standard of their expectations:

"Teachers usually made a great effort to address grammatical aspects. However, there was less attention in terms of the practical use of speaking and writing skills in the classroom." (S7)

On the other hand, some students believed that grammar-focused instruction is essential and makes its own contribution to accuracy in language learning. When asked in what way it was important, they reported:

"...grammar is complex and explicit explanation helps in understanding the rules...also it helps us to recognize the language structure in speaking and writing." (S12)

Other students supported this, saying:

"I think grammar is a vital aspect in second language learning because mastering grammatical knowledge and vocabulary promotes accuracy in English." (S1, S3, S5)

In general, most of the students noted that less attention was paid to other language skills than to grammar by most teachers and criticized the fact that grammar-focused teaching was emphasized over other language skills. I therefore consider that teachers need to recognize how to teach grammar through CLT.

6.4.5 Teachers' error correction

All the students interviewed expressed positive attitudes towards error correction. Interestingly, most of the students believed that making errors challenged them to improve their self-confidence and resulted in effective learning outcomes. In addition, most students stated that error correction should be limited in relation to communicative errors and should focus explicitly on grammatical structures. It appears that students' views of error correction are distinct from their perceptions of making errors as related to the learning process. A group of students reported:

"...we do not prefer our teacher to correct our speaking errors; it makes us feel humiliated in class. However, grammatical items need to be considered." (S4, S8)

Other students added:

"...it is important that teachers should correct grammatical errors in writing and speaking because it helps in improving language knowledge and performing correctly." (S1, S3, S6)

Another student also reported:

"I like it when my teacher writes all the errors on the board and corrects them explicitly because this technique stimulates me to learn from my mistakes... Therefore, errors should not be neglected." (S9)

Based on the students' responses, it can be argued that this is evidence of a lack of awareness among the students of the distinction between accuracy and fluency. The teachers may consider that correcting all errors conflicts with the development of fluency, while students think that correcting all or most errors contributes to the development of speaking skills.

6.4.6 Use of L1

Q6 in the interviews asked the students to describe their opinions of the use of L1 in the classroom. Of the students interviewed, 16 criticized their teachers' use of L1 in class. They

reported that due to their inadequate language ability, some of their teachers used L1 very often; while this might be helpful for immediate understanding of the lesson, it was not perceived as developing linguistic ability. A group of students stated:

“As far as English language learning is concerned, we believe using L1 will negatively affect our English language learning process.” (S2, S5)

According to another student:

“...in my opinion, the classroom is the only place that [we] are exposed to the target language. If the teacher uses L1 to explain every language aspect, how can we improve our listening or speaking skills? My English language is insufficient because the teacher at the school stage used to speak Arabic a lot and now in my foundation year I am suffering because the same thing is being repeated.” (S4)

Furthermore, two students noted that although the use of L1 might be useful to simplify complex language items, teachers should attempt to use different methods to explain linguistic features and minimize the use of L1 in class. One student stated: “In my class the teacher attempts to use various methods that would promote [our] understanding of the language, rather than immediate translation. For example, she uses pictures, gestures, guessing the meaning of words or sentences, before proposing a direct answer... this approach has helped me to improve my understanding of English vocabulary and grammar.” (S8) In addition, another student reported: “I think there is no prevention from using L1 however in extreme necessity, if the other techniques have failed to address the language message.” (S6)

Furthermore, a group of students whose preferred subject was not English reported that the use of L1 in the language classroom helped them to understand the meaning and they thought that the use of Arabic was important because, as they put it: “We learn English grammar rules to follow in everyday lesson. If teachers do not explain them in Arabic, we cannot understand them easily.” (S3, S6, S7)

6.4.7 The four skills

The students were asked to describe their perceptions regarding the teachers' actual practices according to the four main skills on a scale of 1 = "to a great extent", 2 = "to some extent", 3 = "to a limited extent" and 4 = "not at all". Table 6.7 shows the results obtained from the students' questionnaire regarding the following question: "To what extent does your teacher practise the four main skills in class?"

Table 6.7 Summary of students' responses about teachers' classroom practice (N = 175)

English skills	To a great extent	To some Extent	To a limited extent	Not at all
Reading	25 (14.3%)	60 (34.3%)	72 (41.1%)	18 (10.3%)
Writing	13 (7.4%)	24 (13.7%)	58 (33.2%)	80 (45.7%)
Listening	22 (12.6%)	80 (45.7%)	73 (41.7%)	0 (0%)
Speaking	15 (8.7%)	30 (17.1%)	89 (50.8%)	41 (23.4%)

Table 6.7 above shows that 48.6% of the students indicated that reading skills were practised "to a great and some extent", closely followed by 41.1% reporting "to a limited extent", while only 10.8% chose "not at all". However, the majority (45.7%) stated that writing skills were not practised at all, while 33.2% reported "to a limited extent" and only 21.1% "to a great extent". The importance of all English language skills, particularly writing, was emphasized in the interviews.

6.4.8 Reading and writing

Students have different language needs depending on the use that is going to be made of them in the future. Therefore, each skill needs to be given equal weight and students also need to pay attention to how to use these skills effectively. For instance, reading is a very important aspect because it enhances students' language input in terms of understanding language structure, vocabulary and the ability to write properly. However, what is taught in the classroom is not up to the expectations of the students:

“Reading skills activities, for instance, are very basic and mostly require a direct answer. In other words, no more than filling the gap and matching the column. Exams, on the other hand, always require students to understand the given passages and analyse the text. Therefore, in my opinion, teachers should focus and prepare us for an advanced level of reading comprehension to overcome the difficulties in reading comprehension exams.” (S10, S15)

Furthermore, the results in this section revealed that teachers mostly emphasise only reading aloud; however, the objectives of reading include not only helping students to improve their pronunciation and intonation, but also enhancing their reading comprehension in broad sense. Therefore, the impression was that the students were dissatisfied regarding teachers’ teaching techniques, as described in Table 6.6 above. As one of the students stated:

“In my class the teacher asks students randomly to read the text aloud, then she makes sure that we all understand the language aspects and do the exercises independently. However, what we need to develop is practising more reading activities to understand the broad aspects of reading skills rather than just reading aloud.” (S11)

Regarding writing skills, the data from the students’ interviews showed that teaching of writing skills was paid less attention or predominantly neglected by most of the EFL teachers in their classes. Moreover, it has been observed that most teachers do not provide basic writing strategies to develop students’ writing skills. As a result, most of the students reported not knowing how to write a full sentence in English. In addition, in preparation for writing examinations, students were told to memorize specific texts to pass. One student stated:

“My teacher made free an online group to help us with writing skills. Every week we chose our favourite topic to write about. However, the problem was that we did not have basic knowledge of know how to write a paragraph. I believe teachers should pay more attention to developing a systematic approach in teaching writing skills.” (S5)

To sum up, during the interviews students rated that writing as the most difficult skill among the four language skills. Teachers, on the other hand, described one of the most problematic

issues that Saudi students face in writing courses being their lack of ability to select and use appropriate words. Nonetheless, in addition to the students' perceptions of their teachers' classroom practice, my classroom observation showed that most of the teachers had insufficient knowledge or were unable to apply appropriate methodology to teach writing skills.

6.4.9 Listening and speaking

As shown in Table 6.6, 58.3% of the students reported that listening skills were practised "to a great and some extent", while 41.7% stated "to a limited extent". In contrast, the majority (50.8%) of the students stated that speaking skills were practised "to a limited extent", 23.4% indicated "not at all" and only 25.7% chose "to a great or some extent".

In the interviews, the students were asked to describe their perceptions of their teachers' classroom practices regarding speaking skills. Most of the students indicated that to improve both listening and speaking skills, classroom activities need to emphasize the importance of communication using the target language. One of the students claimed that *"listening and speaking should be given more attention because they facilitate communication processes outside the classroom"* (S5). Another student added:

"Teachers must provide more time and space for students to express and practise speaking skills in class enhancing the use of language in meaningful communication. In my opinion, teachers should highlight more intensive listening and speaking activities to increase our motivation because students do not have other places to practise and interact in English." (S9)

In addition, during the interview students criticized the teachers' classroom performance. Most of the students described the various difficulties that they faced in language learning, including a lack of classroom practice in speaking. Students are not usually exposed to speaking activities in their daily lives and do not use English at home or in public places. Moreover, when topics

are assigned by a teacher for completion, either in or outside class time, this mostly takes place in the context of very little exposure to English. One of the students said:

“In our case the course book is the only source for us to practise listening and speaking skills. Teachers do not use any additional materials that promote our motivation to speak, as the classroom is the only place for us to use and practise English...we need more language labs, for instance, to develop our listening and speaking skills.” (S9)

In addition, students reported that the teachers mostly dominate classroom activities and they do not offer opportunities for students to talk:

“In class, I rarely get a chance to communicate with my classmates. The only chance available to speak is when answering the teacher’s questions.” (S6)

Another student raised the issue of the presence of native-speaker teachers of English: “Our listening and speaking skills in class have improved because the teacher is a native speaker and we speak English all the time.” (S2)

In this study, teachers should aim to develop language learners’ knowledge and enable them to interact successfully with various members of society. As previously discussed, (cf. 3.7), researchers have seen that the teaching approach plays a significant role in developing foreign language learners’ ability to communicate appropriately using the target language.

6.5 Summary

This chapter has presented the data gathered from the teachers’ and the students’ questionnaire and interviews to answer the overarching research question: “To what extent are EFL teachers’ perspectives and knowledge of CLT in line with actual classroom practices in a Saudi English language preparatory year programme?” The interviews were undertaken to focus on the main question of the research: “What differences are there between what language teachers say they do and their actual practice in the ELT classroom?” The themes arising from both the questionnaire and the interviews were set out in five categories: (a) language teaching methods,

including teaching grammar explicitly, the use of translation, explaining/lecturing, correcting errors and the four language skills; (b) various principles of classroom activities; (c) using language teaching materials; (d) Teachers' understanding of the communicative approach (CLT); (e) difficulties in implementing CLT in the language classroom. In this study, the analysis of the interviews shows remarkable similarities between teachers in their responses. The similarities can be summarized in terms of, for example, understanding and misunderstanding of the CLT principles and how teachers' misunderstanding of the CLT approach can be attributed to their unwillingness to implement it. This chapter also shows that teachers' lack of motivation in using CLT was due to students' low-level language background and proficiency and the large numbers of students in classes.

Moreover, the lack of teachers' support for using authentic materials in English courses also hampers CLT implementation in their language teaching and learning. Furthermore, in comparing the implementation problems for the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), most participants of the study indicated that speaking was the most difficult skill to teach using CLT. To address these problems, the teachers indicated that their main need was more professional training focusing on CLT knowledge and its application in their practical teaching context, as well as obtaining teacher support for authentic materials that assist CLT implementation. Furthermore, a close examination of language teaching practices did not match the principles of CLT, practices tending to be teacher centred in contrast to CLT principles, which focus on a student-centred teaching style.

As Brown (2007) discussed, the principles of CLT (see Chapter 3) are based on student-centeredness and are designed to engage learners in pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus; rather, it is aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish these purposes. Furthermore, based on many large-scale studies (e.g. Richards, 2001), it is suggested that to

develop communicative competence, scholars must have extended opportunities to use the foreign language productively. As a way forward, in order to help English language teachers improve their content knowledge and practical skills, the language programme should primarily assist the teachers to improve their CLT knowledge and skills continuously, leading to: (a) the promotion of student learning; (b) the engagement of the teachers in the learning approaches they use with their students; (c) the encouragement of teachers to collaborate with their colleagues concerning the various CLT-based activities they use in their teaching classes.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results presented in Chapters 5 and 6. It synthesizes the findings to identify key areas needing further improvement. An integrated approach is therefore used in terms of the presentation of the qualitative and quantitative (statistical findings) in relation to each research question. The discussion addresses the research questions raised in the original design of the study (cf. 4.2) to provide answers in line with the reviewed literature. The main research question was “To what extent are EFL teachers’ teaching practices in line with the principles of the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach?”

Several subordinate questions were employed to address the main question: RQ1 considered the EFL teachers’ perceptions of CLT; RQ2 examined the extent to which the EFL teachers’ actual teaching practices were in line with CLT principles; RQ3 aimed to identify and articulate the contextual limitations on the teachers in terms of implementing CLT; RQ4 considered the students’ perceptions of their teachers’ practices in their classrooms; RQ5 aimed to identify the similarities and discrepancies among the teachers. Each research question is addressed in turn.

7.2 RQ1: What are EFL teachers’ perceptions of CLT?

As discussed in the literature review (cf. 3.6.1), exploring teachers’ existing perceptions and knowledge with respect to the principles of CLT should be the starting point for the implementation of such an approach. Furthermore, teachers’ belief systems have an impact on the way they run their classes. For example, the existing knowledge of teachers affects the ways in which they perceive and value a teaching approach. It also affects the actions teachers take in using the ideas of such a method (Brown, 2007; Loucks-Horsely et al., 2010). In addition, understanding teachers’ perceptions helps to identify areas of focus in pre-service and in-service teachers’ professional development programmes for the proper implementation of the

desired teaching methods (Putnam & Borko, 1997). The aim of the discussion mainly focuses on identifying the participants' perceptions concerning the application of CLT in their classrooms. The following sub-sections focus on teachers' perceptions of grammar teaching in relation to CLT, teachers' understanding of CLT, teachers' misunderstandings of CLT, teachers' lack of authority, the role of the teacher in CLT, Finally, teachers' perceptions of learners' roles in CLT is discussed.

7.2.1 Teachers' perceptions of grammar teaching in relation to CLT

Teachers were asked about several aspects concerning their perceptions of the application of CLT in the EFL context. The first question focused on how EFL teachers perceived the role of grammar in CLT. Most of the participants believed that grammar plays an important role in the EFL context. However, there are researchers who support the exclusion of explicit grammar learning (e.g. Prabhu, 1987), although other researchers stress the need to include grammar teaching in CLT (Wong & Barrea-Marlys, 2012). For instance, those teachers who believed it important to implement CLT principles in the EFL context worked on developing the students' linguistic knowledge first so that students could fully understand the language structures, recognizing meaningful sentences, then use this knowledge for communicative purposes using various language skills.

Furthermore, the findings obtained from the statistical analysis indicate that years of teaching experience have an effect on teachers' teaching practices. For example, teachers with 1–5 years' experience apply *teaching grammar explicitly* to a greater extent ($M = 1$) than teachers with 6–10 years' ($M = 1.47$) and 11–15 years' ($M = 2.82$) experience. The application of *teaching grammar explicitly* is significantly different for the three categories of teachers at the 5% level [$F = 103,1$ $p = 0.001$ (< 0.05)]. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons further reveal that differences between the groups (1–5 vs 6–10, $p = 0.001$; 1–5 vs 11–15, $p = 0.001$; 6–10 vs 11–15, $p = 0.001$). All these indicate that teachers with fewer years of teaching experience reported

using *teaching grammar explicitly* more than teachers with greater years of teaching experience (for further information, see Table 6.1). This in turn confirms the importance of the work of Ellis (2015), as discussed in the literature review (cf. 3.6.3), which suggests that language teachers need to apply two approaches “focus-on-forms” and “focus-on form” and these should be complementary rather than oppositional in the language teaching classroom. In addition, teachers’ use of these approaches is in line with many researchers who believe that if teachers teach grammar in a communicative way to enhance students’ linguistic knowledge, this can help them to improve their CC (Ellis, 1994; Littlewood, 1981; Savignon, 1991). Moreover, the question that needs to be asked here is “why do teachers differ in their perceptions of the implementation of CLT?” I believe there might be various explanations. For instance, it is clear that teachers’ perceptions are vital in influencing their decision to implement CLT, yet they are the main participants of the teaching and learning process. According to Littlewood (1981), the concept of CLT may challenge teachers’ contemporary opinions regarding their roles and teaching methods.

Exploring teachers’ teaching methods could potentially help identify the possible conflicts between their beliefs and their actual practice with regard to CLT principles. In this study, the findings from the post-observation interviews showed that the majority of EFL teachers were educated through the GTM, but they were required to use CLT in their classes. The distinction between teachers therefore goes back to their educational background, teaching experience and their own beliefs or teaching philosophy. Administrative factors (cf. 7.4.3) could also contribute to teachers’ insecurity, leading them to teach students to pass examinations rather than focusing on real-life communicative purposes. Many of the teachers’ classroom practices observed in this study were not in line with their stated beliefs or CLT principles. For example, during the post-observation interviews, some of the teachers stated that CLT supported and facilitated the language teaching and learning process. However, one of the teachers professed

“My teaching approach mostly depends on the traditional teaching methods, because I believe it helps students to grasp what they need to pass the module” (cf. 6.2.3). Thus, the teachers observed rarely implemented some CLT activities (i.e. teacher–student interaction, group-work activities and various types of error correction techniques) (Rahman et al., 2018).

On the other hand, teachers are facing various sorts of pressures to accomplish their teaching process. For instance, the cause of difficulties included problems caused by the teachers themselves due to lack of training, many students in one classroom and instructional policies related to a centralized educational system. The researcher identified three areas to which decision makers need to pay attention for successful use of CLT: (a) the value of training; (b) reorientation of society in general; (c) adapting rather than adopting CLT. In this study, observed teachers intended to use aspects of both traditional and communicative approaches in their teaching, preferring traditional methods over CLT. As discussed in Chapter 3 (section, 3.7), this in turn further suggests that “relationship between beliefs and actions is interactive”. The findings of this study therefore are in line with those reported by Abdulkader (2013), Batawi (2006), and Hassan (2013) who investigated teachers’ perceptions of the appropriateness and grammar teaching in CLT.

7.2.2 Teachers’ understanding of CLT

Teachers were asked about their views regarding the importance of CLT principles in the language teaching process. The findings from the interviews showed that all participants had positive beliefs about CLT. They viewed CLT as an approach which establishes real language interaction and as flexible in using tasks to achieve communicative goals. They added that CLT focuses on developing students’ language skills, encouraging them to be active rather than being passive learners. Moreover, it helps students to manage their own learning strategies. However, the classroom observation findings showed significant differences in the EFL teachers’ classroom practices based on their understanding and misunderstanding of the CLT

principles. For instance, the EFL teachers had different perceptions regarding grammar teaching in their classrooms. Teachers' responses presented various discrepancies in the ways they considered the role of grammar. The claims for CLT differ, for some it means little more than an integration of grammatical and functional teaching. For others, however, as Littlewood (1981) emphasises one of the most characteristic features of CLT "is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language" (p.1). Therefore, in the current programme some teachers believed that combining grammar teaching within the context and with the students' communication needs would enhance the application of CLT in the EFL context. On the other hand, others held views that mostly challenged the principles of CLT. These teachers mostly focused on grammar because they believed it helped students grasp what they needed to know to pass the module and they believed that they were driven by the curriculum.

7.2.3 Teachers' misunderstandings of CLT

Teachers were also asked to clarify their misunderstandings of some CLT principles. Although most of the participants held positive beliefs about CLT, 34 out of 47 believed that CLT only focuses on speaking and listening, to the detriment of other skills or linguistic knowledge. Thus, it can be argued that there is very limited understanding of what CLT is from the teachers' point of view. Such beliefs were also confirmed during the post-observation interviews by most of the participants. Teachers declared that their understanding of CLT was that it strongly focused on teaching oral skills over the other language skills and forms. It was also observed that teachers, based on their perceptions, tended to isolate grammar activities from speaking and listening activities. Furthermore, teachers' reluctance to adopt the CLT approach in their classes might be attributed to their misunderstanding of this approach. The results indicated that there is an association between teachers' actual teaching practices and their (mis-)

perceptions of CLT. This in turn, highlights that teachers are influenced by the focus of L2 instruction under the guidance of audio-lingua method.

As discussed in literature by Kumaravadivelu (2006), the ALM concerns the application of a theory in which language learning is considered to involve the forming of habits and the assimilation of language in a hierarchical system (cf. 3.4.2). However, many CLT researchers agreed that one of the basic tenets of CLT was that linguistics skills and communicative abilities should not be treated in isolation from each other (Savignon, 1997). In addition, this highlights the lack of understanding of the opportunity afforded by CLT in terms of the appropriate usage of the two approaches as indicated in (section, 7.2.1) (Ellis, 2015, Long, 1991). This issue is further discussed in relation to RQ2 regarding teachers' classroom practices (see 7.3).

7.2.4 Teachers' lack of authority

From the findings of the interviews, it is evident that there is a direct influence of the teachers' perceptions of the CLT approach on their day-to-day classroom practices. For example, during the interviews, teachers declared that CLT allows students to lead and manage their classroom activities as the main purpose of CLT is to enable learners to use the target language in various situations communicatively (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). However, teachers with inadequate knowledge and understanding of CLT were more concerned with their classroom authority than the concept of implementing CLT in their teaching. Thus, misunderstanding of CLT principles influences the study participants' preference for the traditional teaching method over CLT. In addition, during the interviews, teachers were asked to explain their roles in the classroom. One of the participant for instance stated that she believes that teachers should control students' behaviours in language teaching classes. In addition, teachers perceived that when students lead the teaching processes, how can they get the right knowledge and teachers believe that the teacher's authority is important in terms of planning and transferring language

knowledge. Moreover, teachers do not think that students are experienced in planning for their own learning as they are still at the level of receivers of knowledge (cf.6.3.10). A possible explanation of why Saudi EFL teachers in the current context maintain their classroom authority principally goes back to their perceptions of traditional teaching methods. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014) the teacher is the only language instructor, controller and source of information, with students required to listen and complete tasks according to the directions given by the teacher (p. 56). In contrast, the role of teachers' shifts in CLT from that of the traditional approach. Breen and Candlin (1980, p. 99) consider that the language teacher plays at least three key roles in CLT: the first can be labelled “facilitator of the communication process”, helping learners to become engaged in the communication process through involvement in various activities in the classroom; the second is to act as an “interdependent participant within the learning–teaching group”; the third is that the teacher is more autonomous in CLT classroom practices in organizing and guiding the teaching processes. These three teachers’ roles do not operate separately in shaping teachers’ use of CLT; rather, they work dynamically to form teachers’ CLT classroom practices (Liao & Zhao, 2012). Thus, teachers who preferred the traditional teaching methods seemed to believe that CLT would minimize their role in class. In addition, during the post observation interviews, four teachers claimed that the CLT approach provided students with great freedom to choose appropriate language activities, but they needed to be taught in a controlled manner. Teachers considered that when they tried to change the routine and activities such as pair or group work, the class became chaotic and as a result, students did not take the lesson seriously. These teachers also argued that it is a challenge in the current programme to implement CLT, because teaching practices are limited to a pedagogical curriculum oriented to an examination-based language teaching process. The results in Figure 6.5 correspond with the findings of the interviews, as well as the observation data, showing that how such misunderstandings affect teachers’

behaviours. These findings revealed that identifying the existing knowledge of teachers which affects the way in which they perceive and value a teaching method. In addition, how teachers' existing knowledge also affects the actions that teachers take in using the ideas of such a method are consistent with those of Brown (2007) and Loucks-Horsely et al., (2010).

7.2.5 The role of the teacher in CLT

The role of the teacher in CLT, as discussed in the literature review (section 3.6.8), in supporting students' learning might vary among facilitator, planner, motivator and group organizer (Brown, 2007). In this study, the findings showed that, as demonstrated by Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2012), Al-Jarf (2008) and Ansari (2012), EFL teachers' perceptions concerning their roles and their students influenced their accepted teaching approach.

In the post-observation interviews, those who stated they adopted only a grammar-based approach perceived their role in language teaching to be that of knowledge transmitters, controlling most of the learning aspects in the classroom. However, teachers who adopted more elements of CLT viewed their roles as being more facilitators or moderators rather than transmitters of knowledge (Brown, 2007). Many researchers have argued that exploration of teachers' existing perceptions and knowledge with respect to the principles of language teaching and learning should be the starting point for professional development programmes. In this study, the findings showed that the existing knowledge of teachers with regard to the implementation of CLT principles affected the way in which they perceived and valued teaching methods. Such considerations also affect the actions teachers take in using the ideas of a particular method (Brown, 2007; Loucks-Horsely et al., 2010). Therefore, it is important to understand teachers' perceptions to identify areas of focus in pre-service and in-service professional development programmes to ensure the proper implementation of the desired teaching methods (Putnam & Borko, 1997).

Teachers must understand their role in EFL classes to increase students' motivation and they must also be aware that their performance has an influence on students' desire to learn the foreign language. Indeed, the teachers' role is a powerful motivational tool potentially attracting language learners to enhance and develop their learning processes (Dornyei, 2001). Thus, teachers should decide on the roles they should apply in the EFL classroom (Alison, 1993).

7.2.6 Teachers' perceptions of learners' roles in CLT

Following the discussion in the literature review (section 3.6.9), teachers were asked to describe the learners' role in their classrooms. The findings from the interviews showed that teachers believed that learners are at the centre of the CLT approach and are expected to interact effectively within a group of learners and as material users (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In addition, learners in their classes had different roles and some of them were able to manage their own learning and interaction rather than responding to roles assigned by their teachers. Furthermore, teachers believed that this in turn helped increase learners' independence within CLT. Thus, certain teachers required learners to be fully engaged in pair or small group activities, such as information sharing, negotiation of meaning and interaction. Regarding the role of the learners in the programme under investigation, the findings from the teachers' interviews showed that teachers believed that the role of the students was an important factor in their classes. In addition, teachers argued that when students really wanted to improve their English language ability, they always tried their best to understand their colleagues and make themselves understood and thereby participated actively. However, teachers also pointed out that student rarely practised English in their classes. Some noted that if the students really wanted to learn, they would try to speak English instead of Arabic and participate in group discussions. Thus, the lesson that can be learned from the findings of this section is that having only positive perceptions of CLT is not sufficient for implementing it as an approach. From a practical perspective, identifying EFL teachers' perceptions of CLT is useful for language

teaching institutes, in particular because any implementation of CLT principles without well-organized professional training and full support from language instructors appears to be a waste of the budget and energy as it is the teachers who ultimately implement the techniques and principles and who can make or mar CLT (Mowlaie & Rahimi, 2010). In this regard, the difficulties articulated by the teachers interviewed which discourage them from practising CLT in their classrooms need to be discussed for further improvement (cf.7.4).

7.3 RQ2: To what extent are EFL teachers' practices in line with CLT principles?

As identified in the literature review, CLT has gained acceptance as a model of English language learning and is considered an effective approach, as demonstrated by many applied linguists and EFL teachers around the world (see e.g. Brandl, 2008; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Nunan, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Tarone & Yule, 1989). However, whether there are discrepancies between belief and practice is perhaps not always discussed or explored. Therefore, this section aims to identify the extent to which teachers' classroom practices are in line with CLT principles based on selected aspects noted in the previous chapters.

7.3.1 Teaching grammar explicitly

The findings showed that teachers adopted grammar-based activities in every class. As demonstrated by Brown (2007), Chang & Goswami (2011) and Douglas and Frazier (2001), teachers who prefer teaching using a traditional approach, which is broadly encouraged in the GTM, tend to emphasize the importance of acquiring content knowledge and appreciate accuracy over fluency. However, teachers who adopt the less traditional way of teaching that is usually encouraged in CLT tend to concentrate on the development and attainment of language learning skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Although focusing only on grammatical rules can help students pass examinations, the over-emphasis on accuracy can inhibit students, leading them to remain silent rather than be

proactive in terms of classroom interaction; this in turn has a negative impact on the language learning process and students' usage of language in real-life situations (Hedge, 2000; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). While the teachers in this study considered grammar to be a very significant aspect in passing final examinations, their beliefs and perceptions nonetheless affected the value they accorded their teaching approach and the actions they took, particularly in terms of methodology.

Indeed, the findings showed that perceptions and classroom practices differed from one teacher to another. For example, in the post-observation interviews, some teachers reported that they not only taught grammar implicitly, but also involved their students in real-life communication by trying to combine the unit in the coursebook with “genuine” activities, applying various communicative activities to motivate participations in class discourse (cf. 6.2.3). Thus, the discrepancies observed between EFL teachers' beliefs and behaviours was based on the fact that they taught grammar explicitly because the assessment procedures were mostly focused on grammatical rules and teachers wanted to help their students to pass the exams.

Another important point that needs to be discussed here is that in the current EFL context, the institutional policy asks teachers to apply CLT principles, but has not yet resolved some of the external factors (huge class sizes, limited exposure to English, insufficient assessment techniques and a structurally oriented syllabus and shortage of time) that would enable them to do so. However, the source of difficulties in implementing CLT also includes issues related to the teachers themselves, for example lack of training, as well as the instructional policies related to a centralized educational system. Thus, three areas have been identified requiring attention from decision makers to enable the successful implementation of CLT: (i) appropriate training; (ii) the reorientation of society in general in terms of expectations; (iii) adapting rather than adopting CLT. This finding is valuable in that it demonstrates that in the long term the

Saudi EFL context should establish its own research base to develop appropriate language teaching methods that are appropriate to the specific context.

Another finding from the interviews with students was that they argued grammar-focused language learning should be reconsidered at the university stage, including instead a focus on real-life communication. They added that mastering aspects of grammatical rules could be achieved through various ways, for instance implicitly rather than explicitly. Another important point was that students perceived a discrepancy between what they learned in the English language classroom and what was required in their future subject area. Moreover, there was a very clear trend of varying expectations and needs among students: some clearly only wanted to pass examinations, while others seemed to want to learn English for their future careers and to be able to communicate.

Other findings from the teacher interviews indicated that some of the students' English language learning difficulties were rooted in the lack of background knowledge about language learning strategies (Al-Asmari, 2013). Moreover, in relation to the second research question, namely whether EFL teachers' classroom practices are in line with CLT principles, the findings were in line with those of others which found discrepancies between teachers' beliefs about CLT and classroom practices (Al-Rabadi, 2012; Fareh, 2010; Rahman et al., 2018).

7.3.2 Pair-, group-work and role-play activities

Going beyond grammar teaching, the study also found that teachers' perceptions of CLT do not always match their actual practice and it was possible to relate this finding to the other components of EFL delivery to show missing links between them. Another point of interest was that some EFL teachers recognized the principles of the CLT approach as an effective means of fulfilling the goal of communication. In addition, findings also showed that teachers stated that group-work and pair-work activities enhanced students' language practice, showing

a preference for pair-work activities. However, in the student questionnaire, the majority (52.6%) of the students reported that teachers applied pair- and group-work activities only “to a limited extent” or not at all (21.7%) (see, Table 6.6). In contrast, 61.1% of the students reported that teachers frequently encouraged individual work in the classroom “to a great or some extent”. However, most of these teachers lacked practical implementation of CLT principles in their classrooms.

In addition, as shown in Figure 6.1, the statistical analysis showed that years of teaching experience had an effect on all three aspects of teaching (pair-, group-work and role-play activities). Teachers with 1–5 years’ experience applied *pair work* to a greater extent ($M = 1.33$) than teachers with 6–10 years’ ($M = 2.00$) and 11–15 years’ ($M = 3.00$) experience. The application of *pair work* differed significantly among the three categories of teachers at the 5% level [$F = 149.32$, $p = 0.001$ (< 0.05)]. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons further revealed differences between the groups (1–5 vs 6–10, $p = 0.001$; 1–5 vs 11–15, $p = 0.001$; 6–10 vs 11–15, $p = 0.001$). Thus, teachers with fewer years of teaching experience used *pair work* more than teachers with more years of teaching experience. Moreover, the activities reflected the GTM to a much greater extent than CLT. Classroom activities were practised on an individual basis, overlooking group- and pair-work activities (Lindsay & Knight, 2006).

In the interviews, students were asked to describe the extent to which individual work met their needs in English language courses. First, there was an overwhelming expression of dissatisfaction with the limited use of other, collaborative, activities. Again, they stated that they were used “to some extent” or “not at all”. The students considered that the teachers needed to put more effort into arranging group- and pair-work activities, which would allow them to develop their communicative skills. One of the students even stated that what she remembered from the few such activities teachers conducted was just a few words (cf. 6.4.2).

Activities that focus on encouraging students to engage in extended discussions usually aim to produce a lot of language from students with minimal effort from the teacher. Teachers can design an extended discussion among students requiring them to use various forms of sentences. However, Table 5.4 shows that the types of activities practised in 66.6% of the classes observed did not include extended or even short conversations, either between teacher and students or among the students themselves. This result shows that activities in the Saudi EFL classroom are typically teacher- rather than student-centred. Students working on different tasks, for instance, drilling and repetition of sentences were mostly used (cf. 5.6.3). This in turn further suggests that there is a conflict between what teachers say about activities in class during interviews and what they actually do in the language teaching classroom. Teachers were asked to clarify the sources of this discrepancy between what they believe about language teaching and their classroom practice. In the post-observation interviews, teachers stated that most of the students in this study had a negative attitude towards pair- and group-based activities. Moreover, although they had been taught English for many years prior to attending university, they were still struggling to communicate in class using English. A few students were observed answering teachers' questions using a word or two, rather than expanding or giving explanations. Teachers added that students were more concerned about passing the course than learning English for communication. From the teachers' perspective, this in turn reinforced the focus on individual-based activities instead of using pair or group work. Moreover, it was observed that students were afraid of speaking in class because the teachers tended to correct their speaking errors in front of their colleagues and that made some of them, if not all, feel humiliated in class.

In clarifying the reasons for discrepancies between the aim of teaching language for communication and classroom practice, the teachers referenced what the programme requires them to do. It could be argued that EFL teachers in this context are greatly constrained by the

final assessment and by resources. Therefore, an attempt to implement CLT often meets obstacles, as the examination system is more concerned with knowledge of language than the ability to use that knowledge in real-life communicative activities as suggested by the CLT approach (Brown, 2007). Furthermore, as discussed in the literature (cf. 3.6.3 & 3.6.4), classroom interaction enhances students' ongoing language input through engagement in various activities, such as listening to and reading authentic language or using the language in dialogues to share ideas and undertake problem-solving activities (Choudhury, 2005). However, teachers cited lack of resources and time as factors inhibiting them from implementing such an approach. Contextual limitations are discussed in detail in relation to research question three (cf. 7.4.1). Taken together, the findings from all the data sources in this study showed teachers' uncertainty in terms of how to apply group- and pair-work activities. Thus, Table 5.4 showed that activities in the Saudi EFL classroom are typically teacher- rather than student-centred. This in turn confirmed that teachers' perceptions of CLT do not always necessarily match what happens in the language teaching classroom.

7.3.3 Teaching the four skills

In any language teaching and learning environment, students have different language learning needs, depending in part on the use that they are going to make of the language in the future. Therefore, each skill needs to be given equal weight and students also need to pay attention to how to use these skills effectively. For instance, reading is a very important aspect because it enhances students' language input in terms of understanding language structure, vocabulary and the ability to write properly. However, what teachers taught in the classroom was not up to the expectations of the students. Therefore, the following sub-sections discuss some of the issues in the teaching of the four main language skills and the perceived usefulness on the part of the students. Again, there is a focus on the extent to which teachers' approach to the four skills is in line with their perceptions of CLT and the principles of the approach.

7.3.3.1 Speaking

As discussed in the literature review, CC involves acquiring the ability to produce various utterances to fulfil different communicative functions in a given social context; therefore, further domains are assumed to be important. As pointed out by Hymes (1972, cited in Hedge, 2000), CC includes not only social and cultural knowledge, but also the ability to employ that knowledge in effective communication. Furthermore, the relationship between classroom participation and student attainment in language learning is undisputed (Richards, 2001). However, the findings from the classroom observations and students' interviews revealed that students face various problems in language learning, including a lack of speaking in class.

Students are not usually exposed to speaking activities in their daily lives and do not use English at home, school or at university to any great extent. In addition, when topics are assigned by a teacher for completion, either in or out of class time, this mostly takes place in a context of very little exposure to English (cf. 6.4.7). The findings from the students' interviews showed that in class, any speaking is mostly dominated by the teachers and they do not offer opportunities for students to talk. Thus, students rarely get a chance to communicate with their classmates. The only opportunity available to speak is when students answer the teacher's questions (cf. 6.4.9).

Furthermore, the findings from the statistical analysis indicated that years of teaching experience had an effect on the teaching of all four skills. For example, teachers with 1–5 years' experience applied *speaking* to greater extent ($M = 1.20$) than teachers with 6–10 years' ($M = 1.27$) and 11–15 years' ($M = 3.00$) experience. The application of speaking differed significantly among the three categories of teachers (see Table 6.1). Teachers with fewer years of teaching experience used speaking more than teachers with greater years of teaching experience. When teachers were asked to elaborate on their reasons for this in the post-

observation interviews, those with more than 10 years of experience mentioned that most students in the programme had serious problems with their speaking skills

This is especially clear in terms of students being silent or speaking English with little coherence or fluency. This might be due in part to personality, which can hinder the capacity to learn English in general and particularly to acquire speaking skills. The teachers in this study cited examples of shy students who avoided communicating with other students or teachers. As discussed in Chapter 3, teachers in EFL classes face students' reticence and silence in the classroom (cf. 3.6.9). These students tend only to socialize with their close friends and miss out on the opportunities and benefits of classroom activities. When I asked teachers for further explanation of students' speaking difficulties, they stressed that the problems and obstacles which students face start at an early stage in their English language learning process (Alwazir & Shukri, 2017). Indeed, the factors underlying the students' inability to excel in English include, for example, the fact that the English language curriculum taught in public schools in Saudi Arabia is weak and inadequate in preparing students for higher education (Fareh, 2010). As a result, students are under immense pressure and stress when required to speak or communicate in English at the university stage. Another aspect contributing to the students' speaking difficulties was that teachers mostly applied grammar-based teaching; students neither engage in spoken use of the language nor do they acquire the necessary skills to truly develop speaking competence (cf. 6.4.4). The findings from the classroom observation further confirm this, with Table 5.4 showing that teachers in every class practised grammar-based activities.

Moreover, the findings showed that in 83.3% of the classes observed, teachers dominated most classroom time and neglected the importance of student classroom participation. In addition, there was not much variation in terms of classroom speaking activity. Teachers in most (83.3%) of the classes used the same task for all groups and only in 16.6% of the classes did teachers

use different resources, such as cards, maps, pictures and posters. Moreover, it was observed that most teachers did not provide basic strategies (e.g., scaffolding, schemata or partially completed prompts or use of keywords) to develop students' speaking skills. As a result, most of the students reported not knowing how to communicate in English (cf. 6.4.8).

A possible explanation for teachers not undertaking speaking or writing activities that would motivate students in class was overloaded teaching hours and lack of time to prepare the materials to motivate student interaction. Therefore, they preferred to focus on traditional methodology using the coursebook activities, which are easy to prepare and present; it is a challenge to offer any other sources for students. This focus on lack of time indicated the EFL teachers' misconception of CLT, believing that it requires more time than traditional methods for the development of materials. Moreover, in terms of misconceptions of CLT, the teachers might not have been familiar with what was required in the language teaching classroom or not have been prepared for the development of activities to motivate student participation in classes. Again, this clearly showed teachers' uncertainty about the application of communicative techniques in their classrooms.

This finding is valuable in that it demonstrates how teachers struggled to implement the CLT principles in their classrooms. However, some of these obstacles occurred due to the lack of support and infrastructure which should have been provided by the institution to allow the successful implementation of CLT. In other words, the current institutional policy shares responsibility for the teachers' misconceptions regarding the implementation of CLT in the EFL context. This finding is in line with Li (1998), as discussed in the literature review (cf. 3.7.1). Li categorized the difficulties and reported them in relation to teachers, students, the educational system and the CLT approach itself. The most frequent difficulties associated with teachers included teachers' deficiencies in spoken English, deficiencies in strategic and sociolinguistic competence, lack of training in CLT, lack of opportunities for re-training,

misconceptions of CLT and inadequate time and expertise in developing communicative materials. Difficulties concerning students included the students' low oral communication proficiency, lack of motivation to develop CC and resistance to participating in class. The educational system itself was also found to be a source of difficulty, for example large classes, grammar-based examinations, an inadequate account of EFL teaching using the CLT approach and lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments in CLT.

7.3.3.2 Writing

Regarding the practice of writing skills in class, the results of the students' questionnaire showed that 78.9% considered writing was practised "to a limited extent" or "not at all" (cf. 6.4.7). In addition, the findings of the students' interviews showed that little attention was paid to the teaching of writing skills or it was mainly neglected by most of the EFL teachers in their classes. Moreover, the data from classroom observation showed that most of the teachers did not provide basic writing strategies to develop students' writing skills. As a result, the students reported not knowing how to write a full sentence in English. This point was raised during the post-observation teachers' interviews and the reasons for disregarding writing skills in the classroom were discussed with the participants.

Most of the teachers stated that due to the intensity of the course, writing skills were not taught frequently during classroom time, particularly as they were not a major focus in the examinations. Indeed, teaching of writing skills did not start from the beginning of the course, but in the last two weeks of the course. However, the post-observation interviews further showed that two out of the six teachers encouraged their students to write about the topics discussed during the lesson. Students were also asked to bring the first draft to the class to get written feedback on their writing. Although students were helped to some extent in terms of learning basic writing skills in the last two weeks of the course, in preparation for the final examination, students were required to memorize certain passages. This in turn indicated that

students had a lack of adequate knowledge and understanding of the basic writing process. The findings therefore suggest that students were not taught writing skills properly in terms of CLT principles.

7.3.3.3 Reading

From my experience and classroom observations, students to some extent link their language learning problems to the teaching techniques that teachers use in language classrooms. It should also be borne in mind that most students in the Saudi educational system who join the PYP and language institutes such as the ELI come from schools that follow traditional teaching methodologies (Al-Seghayer, 2012). As already noted, however, the data showed a very clear trend for varying expectations and needs among students, with some focused on passing the examinations to complete the course and others taking a broader view. This leads to consideration of the extent to which teachers' teaching techniques were concerned with the students' various expectations and individual needs related to reading skills. The data from the teachers' observations indicated that in 66.6% of the classes, reading passages were used to ask students direct, non-inferential questions while their textbooks were open to look at the passages. In addition, the reading passages were scarcely used to develop listening activities in any of the observed classes. In most classes, a substantial amount of time was spent reading aloud from textbooks. Teachers were asked to elaborate on this.

They stated that they focused on reading because they believed that reading skills are key to the acquisition process and students can gain more vocabulary knowledge. Teachers generally concentrated on explaining the meaning of difficult words, vocabulary and accurate reading. Regarding the latter aspect, students were asked to read aloud so that teachers could correct their pronunciation and intonation. However, the students' interviews revealed that these teaching techniques did not meet their expectations. There is thus a discrepancy between what teachers think is useful to their students and what some students feel they should be doing. For

example, students expected to enhance their reading comprehension in broad sense (cf. 6.4.7) and the focus on accuracy gave rise to dissatisfaction with class teaching techniques, as described in 6.4.8. In addition, teachers highlighted that their focus on reading was due to its importance in the mid and final examinations and the students' difficulty in tackling these. However, what the teachers did not realize was that students at the university level have different language learning needs depending on the use that is going to be made of the language in the future. Therefore, each skill needs to be given equal weight and students also need to pay attention to how to use these skills effectively. In this regard teachers may think that such practice developed students' reading skills. However, while reading aloud may help students with pronunciation, it is less effective in developing the comprehension skills that most students expect.

During the interviews most of the students stressed that they needed more practice of a wider range of reading activities to understand the broader aspects of reading skills rather than just reading aloud (cf. 6.4.7). The findings from the classroom observation showed that reading activities were very basic and mostly required a direct answer. In other words, students did no more than filling gaps and matching. In contrast, the examinations required students to understand the given passages and analyse the text. Thus, the key findings showed conflicts between the language skills and tasks that teachers highlighted as necessary and reading as implemented in the classroom. The consequence of this is a gap between the language skills, which the students should be developing, and the teaching practices used in language courses. Therefore, the students' further expectations in terms of an advanced level of reading comprehension need to be considered by the EFL teachers to overcome the difficulties and challenges in examinations, as well as meeting their future career and academic requirements.

7.3.3.4 Listening

As reflected in the questionnaire results and interview findings, although the importance of listening was well-recognized by most of the teachers, it was not practised often in the lessons observed. Teachers were asked about their language teaching techniques in terms of developing students' listening skills. Most of the teachers observed agreed that some skills, mostly listening, were not sufficiently practised. According to the questionnaire data, listening was just practised to a limited extent and students did not fully participate in listening class. In addition, the findings reflect Fareh's (2010) point that a common misconception is that skills are best taught in separation instead of integrating listening skills with other skills to develop the students' language learning proficiency. Teachers were of the view that listening skills were not properly addressed and gave the reason that there is a lack of freedom in providing language teaching aids and materials to motivate students in class. Again, it was observed that each course book came with a CD to be used, but only a few teachers exploited this in their classes.

The findings from the students' interview also indicated that teachers preferred to keep their teacher–student interaction in a very limited space, not more than answering questions related to the textbook exercises. In this regard, students believed that the course book is the only source for them to practise listening and speaking skills. (cf. 6.4.9). In addition, the findings showed that audio-visual aids were not used to enhance their listening ability and they were not involved in organizing listening activities. In the classes observed, pair- and group-work activities were not undertaken to enhance the students' listening skills. In this section, the findings showed that some of the EFL teachers in this study were able to communicate the basic features of CLT in their responses and practices. However, a major critical finding was that although the importance of CLT was widely recognized by the teachers, most did not use CLT in their classrooms. This reflects the issues rose in the literature review (e.g. Al-Nouh, 2008; Fareh, 2010; Li, 1998; Rahman, Singh, & Pandian, 2018). For example, although, those

studies were conducted in various EFL contexts, many of their findings are shared by the present study. Nouh, (2008) revealed that her findings showed that Kuwait teachers used language-centred teaching, focused on grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, spent more time on accuracy than other aspects of communication. On the other hand, Fareh (2010) emphasised that the major challenges in his study comprised lack of CLT training, huge class sizes, limited exposure to English, a structurally oriented syllabus and shortage of time. However, Rahman, Singh, and Pandian, (2018) findings indicated that the samples of their study possess a set of complex beliefs, which not always realized in their classroom practices for a variety of potential reasons: some of these might directly be related to the context of teaching rather than the teaching approach. These findings are taken up in the following chapter to make recommendations.

7.4 RQ3: What are the difficulties in implementing CLT in a Saudi PYP?

Despite the implementation of CLT globally as an effective communicative language teaching approach (Ellis, 1994; Li, 1998; Savignon, 2002), as discussed in the literature review (cf. 3.9) the implementation of CLT in EFL contexts has faced significant difficulties and EFL teachers experience problems in adopting CLT in their classrooms (e.g. Fareh, 2010; Hassan, 2013; Li, 1998; Rahman, Singh, & Pandian, 2018). The results from the questionnaires, classroom observations and interviews revealed that the difficulties that Saudi English language teachers face in their attempts to implement CLT can be divided into three main groups: factors faced by teachers; factors faced by students; factors faced by the English language programme administration. These are illustrated in Table 7.1 and discussed as follow.

Table 7.1 Summary of difficulties in implementing CLT in EFL context

No	Sources	Factors
1	Factors faced by teachers	Teachers' resistance to implementing CLT Lack of understanding of CLT Lack of in-service training in CLT
2	Factors faced by students	Lack of motivation in class participation Resistance to class participation Poor English language proficiency
3	Factors faced by the programme administration	Effect of tradition exams procedures Large number of students Extensive teaching hours Lack of institutional support

7.4.1 Teacher factors

The majority of teachers were aware of the importance of developing their language teaching practices in line with CLT principles. They were not, however, completely conscious of applying CLT principles during their actual classroom teaching. Teachers clarified that CLT principles did not receive sufficient attention in the ELI and they also highlighted some of the contextual limitations (e.g. class size, students' language deficiency, extensive teaching hours and lack of students' motivation to participate in and outside class, etc.) These limitations discussed in more details (see section, 7.4.3). Moreover, during the informal meetings, teachers highlighted the idea of informing decision makers at the ELI regarding the need for a systematic and comprehensive analysis of teachers' requirements. This must take their academic and professional language teaching training into consideration. The net result would be an increase in student language proficiency.

In the questionnaire, teachers were asked to explain the difficulties that they face in implementing CLT in their EFL classes. The following four factors appeared to be at the centre of teachers' difficulties: (a) teachers' resistance to implementing CLT; (b) teachers' understanding of CLT; (c) lack of training in CLT. The findings of the classroom observations revealed that some of the teachers in this study had some sort of training, but it seemed that they still lacked the necessary methodological skills for this approach. Other teachers revealed

that they had not received any training regarding the implementation of CLT. In addition, there were issues with the EFL teachers' understandings of CLT. Thus, teachers indicated that their resistance to CLT or failure to implement it was due to the lack of organized in-service teacher training, as well as insufficient understanding of CLT. This suggests the need for a specific teacher-training programme, which focuses on improving instructional techniques, and calls for an organized approach to pre-and in-service education for EFL teachers (Al-Hazmi, 2003). As discussed in 3.4, lack of proper training in CLT has been found in several empirical studies to be a key challenge to its implementation in various EFL contexts (Aleixo, 2003; Hassan, 2013; Karim, 2004; Li, 1998; Mowlaie & Rahimi, 2010). Therefore, the findings of this study concur with those of previous research. Teachers' training needs to be given priority in the implementation of CLT in Saudi language teaching and learning classrooms.

7.4.2 Student factors

The results from the questionnaires and post-observation interviews revealed that most teachers faced difficulty implementing CLT in their classes due to several factors related to the students, for instance, their poor English language proficiency, and lack of motivation in pair and group activities and resistance to class participation. In the interviews, teachers stated that most students hold a negative attitude towards CLT, and this is one of the challenges that they face when they try to implement the CLT approach in their classrooms. In addition, in interviews students criticized the teachers' classroom practice, describing the various difficulties that they faced in language learning, in particular lack of speaking, as they are not usually exposed to speaking activities in their daily lives. Moreover, when topics are assigned by a teacher for completion, either in or outside class time, this mostly takes place in the context of very little exposure to English (cf. 6.4.9). It was observed that although the students had been taught English for eight years prior to attending university, they were still struggling to communicate in English and rarely participated in classroom activities. In addition, the students' exhibited

poor communicative ability, in part as they appeared to be unmotivated to practise English, either in their classrooms or out of school. This in turn indicates that there is a “conflict” in thinking. On one hand, students are demanding something from teachers but on the other, they are not willing to invest themselves into the learning process. This behaviour from the students is perhaps not surprising as findings from the teacher interviews indicated that some of the students’ English language learning difficulties were rooted in the lack of background knowledge about language learning strategies (Al-Asmari, 2013). Other researchers have similarly highlighted that in the Saudi education system learners are not taught how to use various language learning strategies, which is highly overlooked (Al-Asmari, 2013; Alwazir and Shukri, 2017).

Students’ level of spoken English was also a problem, possibly due to their inadequate ability to talk in groups and a tendency to prefer working on an individual basis. Teachers also recognized that some of the students had a fear of making mistakes in front of others and lacked the confidence to express their opinions. As discussed in (3.7) the three major student factors, namely their inadequate English language proficiency, their poor motivation to improve their CC and their resistance to class participation, have been found in several empirical studies to be a key challenge in CLT implementation in various EFL contexts (Fareh, 2010; Hassan, 2013; Karim, 2004; Li, 1998). Consequently, the findings of this study are in line with those of previous research. Therefore, such difficulties need to be discussed, particularly with a view to understanding students’ individual differences. Teachers should also encourage their students to participate using various types of activities and teaching techniques (Abdulkader, 2013). For instance, teachers need to distinguish that there is a great advantage in combining communicative and non-communicative activities in the language classroom. Algonhaim (2014) for instance, suggested that oral activities, which require the use of the target language

in the classroom led to the most anxiety among students, whereas activities that were “group-oriented” produced less anxiety.

7.4.3 Administrative factors

The findings of the classroom observations and teachers’ interviews revealed that there are at least four administrative problems that EFL teachers encounter when seeking to implement CLT in their classrooms. These include, for instance, the effect of traditional examination procedures, having large numbers of students in a class and extensive teaching hours. Regarding the extent to which EFL teachers in Saudi are encouraged to use CLT, all the participants indicated that they faced problems due to having to prepare students for grammar-based examinations, which has a dramatic impact on the integration of CLT in EFL classrooms. Indeed, the post-observation interviews revealed that teachers are under pressure to prepare students and help them succeed in the examinations (Li, 1998) because most of the students are more concerned about the exams and passing the course than with learning and understanding as advocated in communicative-based language learning. Indeed, the findings from the student interviews showed that they were indeed less interested in improving their English language proficiency than passing the course and they were thus not motivated to engage in communicative tasks which were not included in the examinations (Chang & Goswami, 2011). There is also a lack of support from the administration in terms of applying traditional examinations rather than focusing on raising students’ awareness of communicative English skills (cf. 6.3.3).

When teachers were asked about the problems that needed to be addressed so that CLT could be used more successfully, in addition to the grammar-based examinations, most of the teachers highlighted the extensive teaching hours, the large number of students in class and teachers’ in-service training programme. The study conducted by Hall and Hewings (2001) also highlighted similar factors such as class size, work overload and lack of authentic materials as

main obstacles to the implementation of CLT. These factors were found to be the major obstacles to implementing CLT in EFL classes. Teachers reported that they were required to teach extensive hours per week in class, while also being required to adopt a CLT approach to meet the students' language needs. They considered that they had insufficient time out of class to prepare communicative activities. This in turn created a discrepancy between the stated aims of the programme in terms of implementing the CLT and the existing contextual limitations, affecting the EFL teachers' actual practices and leading to the use of the traditional approach rather than the CLT. As Carless (2003, p. 494) notes, when time for CLT preparation is scarce, teachers prefer to use a traditional teaching strategy and follow the course book because planning CLT based classroom activities is more demanding in terms of time and energy. Therefore, teachers' classroom practices were found to be focused on transferring knowledge of explicitly taught grammatical patterns and practices. In addition, these teachers stated that this strategy related to preparing students for examinations rather than utilizing classroom time to provide comprehensive English language skills (Richards, 2001).

Indeed, teachers in the ELI made great efforts to meet the examination requirements. This was despite their belief in the importance of language teaching and learning to achieve real communication goals and enable students to meet their future academic and professional needs. In this regard, the teachers criticized the exam committee for the discrepancy between the outlined objectives of the course and the content of assessment procedures and blamed this for what was taking place in the classroom. The post-observation interviews also revealed that teachers thought that the mid and final examination questions were beyond the students' language level and students' performance in receptive and productive skills were consistently below the standardized level. EFL teachers have no authority in the decision-making process regarding the types of questions and the assessment criteria that students need to fulfil. Assessment has been centralized for many reasons, which are beyond the scope of this study.

However, the study recognised that changes in educational sectors contains many and interrelated factors and it will not happen immediately (Shamim, 1996). This in turn further suggests that the educational change in Saudi Arabia should be gradual and collaborative. Therefore, the study suggested that for the adaption of CLT to be successful, the whole approach of education needs to be accepted by teachers, students, and the administrative system and they should be parts of this change. In this study, the findings suggest that to effectively use CLT, policy makers or language programme leaders must give attention to the following three areas: the value of in-service training, reconsidering the current assessment procedure, and the adaptation of CLT rather than adopting (Batawi, 2006). The lesson which needs to be learned, is that having a positive attitude towards CLT alone is not sufficient for implementing it as an approach. Therefore, changing the examination system seems to be an urgent need at this stage and should be given high priority by the change agents. In addition, the difficulties and challenges, which discourage teachers from practising CLT in their classrooms, need to be remediated by providing proper in-service, as well as pre-service teacher training, concerning the implementation of CLT. Moreover, reducing the number of students in class should be considered if the administration wishes to succeed in the implementation of CLT. Indeed, I believe the goals of teachers, students and the current programme could be achieved by removing all the obstacles that prevent teachers from implementing CLT.

7.5 RQ4: What are the students' perceptions of teaching practices in class?

In this section, the students' perceptions of teaching in terms of various aspects of language teachers' classroom practices was discussed. Firstly, students' perceptions of grammar teaching are clarified. Secondly, students' perceptions of teachers' use of LI are elaborated. Thirdly, students' perceptions of the teaching of the four skills (writing, speaking, listening and reading) are also explained. Fourthly, students' perceptions of pair- and group-work activity highlighted and finally, the summary of this chapter is then laid out.

7.5.1 Students' perceptions of grammar teaching

The findings obtained from the students' questionnaire (N = 175) showed, for instance, that the majority (84.6%) of the students considered teachers tended to focus on teaching grammar rules to a great extent. However, the majority of the students believed that isolated grammar-focused instruction would not enhance their communicative ability and considered that teachers should try to develop the students' communication skills and explain grammar only when necessary. The findings also indicated that students made the criticism that what taken place in their classrooms was not up to the standard of their expectations. Students argued that grammar-focused language learning needs to be reconsidered at the university stage. This finding is valuable in that it demonstrates that students believed that language teaching and learning needs to be based on real-life communication and mastering aspects of grammatical rules needs to be done implicitly. Moreover, the students' perceptions of their teachers' classroom practices showed that there is a discrepancy between what they learn in the English language classroom and what is required in their future subject area (e.g. communicative based skills).

On the other hand, the findings showed that some students believed that grammar-focused instruction is essential and makes its own contribution to accuracy in language learning. These types of students viewed grammar as a vital aspect in second language learning because mastering grammatical knowledge and vocabulary promotes accuracy in English. This again reflects a discrepancy among the participants and indicates that teachers are required to attain a balance between students' needs for real-life communication skills on the one hand and address the students' linguistic knowledge and the current programme's assessment requirements on the other. These findings are parallel to those reported in Raissi et al.'s (2013) study, which investigated how CLT is implemented in English language teaching classrooms in Malaysia and in which negative points raised by students concerned the focus on grammatical structure, which they considered to be inappropriate in meeting their various needs

(cf. 3.7.1). In general, it is important to be careful and understand that the “one size fits all” approach does not work (cf. 3.6.2). Thus, recognizing that changes in educational sectors contains many and interrelated factors and it will not happen immediately (Shamim, 1996). The findings also further suggested that the educational change in Saudi Arabia should be gradual and collaborative. Therefore, the study advised that for the adaption of CLT to be successful, the whole approach of education needs to be accepted by teachers, students, and the administrative system and they should be parts of this change.

7.5.2 Students’ perceptions of teachers’ use of L1

The findings from the post observation interviews showed that the majority of the students criticized their teachers’ use of L1 in class. Students believed that due to their inadequate language ability, some of their teachers used L1 very often; while this might be helpful for immediate understanding of the lesson, it was not perceived as developing linguistic ability. Another important point that students declared was conscious of the negative effect of using L1 in English language classes. The findings showed that the students emphasised that teachers need to bear in mind that in Saudi Arabia the classroom is the only place in which students are exposed to the target language. If they use L1 to explain every language aspect, students will be unable to improve their listening and speaking skills. Students believed that some of their teachers lacked knowledge and confidence in using English and therefore tended to use Arabic very often. On the other hand, the students whose preferred subject was not English reported that the use of L1 in the language classroom helped them to understand the meaning and they thought that the use of Arabic was important because they learned English grammar rules to follow in everyday lessons. If the teachers did not explain them in Arabic, they could not easily understand (cf. 6.4.9). Again, there are differences here between the participants. However, this in turn raises questions as to why students who have such different needs and expectations are taught in the same class. This raises a more fundamental question as to whether it might be

more appropriate to adopt an “English for academic purposes” (EAP) approach instead of a wholesale adoption of CLT. The EAP approach is perhaps a better way forward in terms of addressing field/ subject specific language thereby more effectively meet the needs of students in various academic disciplines. Therefore, programme leaders need to reconsider to what extent they can address learners’ language learning needs and future expectations.

7.5.3 Students’ perceptions of the teaching of the four skills

The students were asked to describe their perceptions of the teachers’ actual practices related to the four main skills. For instance, the majority (48.6%) of the students indicated that teachers practised reading skills in class. While students understood that reading is a very important aspect because it enhances their language input in terms of understanding language structure, vocabulary and the ability to write properly, they also stated that they had different language needs depending on the use they were going to make of English in the future and in some respects, classroom practice was not up to their expectations. In particular, the range of activities was very limited, and the responses required of them very basic. In the examinations, however, they were required to understand the given passages and analyse the text. Therefore, in my opinion, teachers should focus on developing an advanced level of reading comprehension to overcome the difficulties in reading comprehension examinations and prepare students for later academic and professional work (cf. 6.4.8).

Regarding writing skills, the data from the students’ interviews showed little or no attention was paid to these by most of the EFL teachers in their classes. Furthermore, 45.7% of the students confirmed that most teachers do not provide basic writing strategies to develop students’ writing skills. As a result, most of the students reported not knowing how to write a full sentence in English. In addition, writing was considered the most difficult of the four language skills. Teachers described one of the most problematic issues being that Saudi students lack the ability to select and use appropriate words during the writing courses.

However, in addition to the students' perceptions of their teachers' classroom practice, my classroom observations showed that most of the teachers had insufficient knowledge of or were unable to help learners develop strategic competence in relation to writing skills. Strategic competence refers to knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies which enhance the ability of the L2 learner to tackle difficulties they face in communication due to insufficient competence in actual communicative situations (Canale & Swain, 1980). Understanding such competence enables EFL learners to develop academic writing skills, through for instance practising free writing.

As discussed in literature (cf.3.5) knowledge of such strategies enables learners in the early stage of learning an L2 and helps maintain the flow of communication effectively (Savignon, 2007). In the classes observed, however, students regularly copied the answers in the textbooks instead of engaging in "free writing". Therefore, teachers need to provide as many opportunities as possible to EFL learners to communicate in a real-life situation in writing. Another possible explanation for students' writing difficulties is that the students themselves followed unsuitable writing strategies to study writing course. For instance, many students during the study's interview expressed that due to the absence of overt writing instruction, apart from short essay structure and basic grammatical and lexical advice they depended on memorization strategies (Al-Asmari, 2013) in preparation for final and mid writing exams. Consequently, I believe that the current English programme requires revision to ensure an adequate focus on speaking and writing skills.

In addition, the assessment criteria and the curriculum, which encourage the traditional teaching, need to be changed. Students should be able and engaged in more communicative based classroom interaction. Grammar, however, appears to be highlighted over skills development; thus, while students may gain certain knowledge of the target language, they may not develop the skills to use it (Richards, 2001). In addition, as indicated by Ellis (1996, p.

213), for the communicative approach to be made suitable for the EFL context, “it needs to be both culturally attuned and culturally accepted” and this essentially depends on classroom teachers to filter their teaching method, ensuring that it is appropriate to the local cultural norms and re-defining the teacher–student relationship.

7.5.4 Students’ perceptions of pair- and group-work activity

Another point that the data showed in this study was conflicting views of group- and pair-work activities. A few students indicated that working individually made its own contribution to the language learning process. These students believed that working independently would help them to focus and grasp the main idea of the lesson. Moreover, some noted that language learning interaction often turned into social interaction, frequently using L1 rather than focusing on the aims. However, the overall impression was that most students would prefer group- and pair-based activities which satisfied their needs and interests. During the interviews, most of the students stated that working in groups helped them to apply the knowledge they obtained in a more practical way than individual activities in which the teachers asked a single question of individual students. The sources of these conflicting views seem to depend on the students’ English language proficiency and aims, with students wanting to improve their speaking skills believing that group-based activity increases their full understanding of the language in classroom discourse. On the other hand, there are students who are shy about speaking in-group discussions, although they need every opportunity to enhance their speaking skills.

7.6 RQ5: What are the similarities and discrepancies between the teachers’ perceptions and their actual classroom practices?

This research question was added as a result of the data driven findings that the researcher found it valuable to focus upon some of the similarities and more discrepancies that the EFL

teachers were shared on. For instance, during the classroom observation process, it was distinguished that all of the teachers whom participated in this study were qualified to some extent and had been involved in language teaching for several years. Key findings from the observations showed that the language instructors had different perceptions in terms of language teaching methods as well as their actual practice. This finding is valuable in that it demonstrates that some teachers for instance, were able to teach communicatively, whereas others still had misconceptions of CLT, assuming that communicative-based activities cannot be merged with grammar teaching (cf. 6.3.8). Yet, at the end of the observations, it became clear that teachers' classroom practices were highly influenced by their educational background, teaching perceptions and years of experiences rather than individual nationalities. In the following section, two important aspects of teachers' similarities and discrepancies in terms of classroom practices were discussed. Moreover, the result of this study revealed that the discrepancies between the (N=6) observed teachers taken place in terms of language teaching components that teachers use in the EFL classroom (see 5.2). These components include (types of CLT activities, lesson preparation, interaction between teacher and student, interaction between students and teacher, teachers' role and teaching grammar).

The classroom observation findings showed that teachers differed in the ways in which they practised the CLT activities in their classroom. In one of the six classes observed, students were not allowed to engage in group work activity. Although the numbers of students were the same in two other classes, the students were motivated using various techniques, such as individual and collaborative working methods, and engaging in pair and small group-based activities.

One possible explanation for these discrepancies might be that T5 and T6 shared a common pattern in terms of engaging their students in classroom activities. This, in turn, can be attributed to their educational background, as well as their qualifications and years of experience; both were NESTs. In contrast, the NNEST, T1, as her profile indicated (see 5.5),

had less experience and a different educational background. In her class there was no such communicative group work. The explanation that she provided was that when students were asked to work on a task in groups, they often switched into informal discussion in Arabic. Moreover, passive learners tended to depend on other students when they were asked to answer any questions. The findings showed that she tended to use pair-work activities to gain students' attention, as well as to control the flow of the lesson within the given period (cf. 5.6). In contrast, it was noted that in classes conducted by T6, communicative activities were managed through grouping the students and giving them sufficient time to practise the language.

Another finding from the classroom observation in terms of lesson preparation showed that only one of the six teachers observed did not prepare a day-to-day lesson plan. However, the students seemed to be used to their teachers' daily routine in terms of teaching practices. The other five teachers differed to some extent, with some of them going an extra mile to satisfy their students' language learning needs. For example, T6 not only prepared daily lesson plans, but also provided additional materials alongside the course book, such as handouts, cards, maps and pictures. T3 always wrote the topic and teaching instructions on the whiteboard and explained the objective of the specific topic of the day to the students. The other three teachers engaged in the same processes; they were very well prepared in terms of using additional materials, planning their delivery of what was supposed to be taught on that day and conducting pair- and group-based activities.

Another very important aspect observed concerned the students' and teachers' classroom interactions. The findings showed that teachers differed from one to another based on their preferences. For example, T5 had a very good relationship with the students and there was interaction between the students and the teacher. T6 also had a very good relationship with the students and created a positive language learning environment. In contrast, the other four teachers presented various forms of student–teacher interaction. T1 and T3 engaged in one-to-

one interaction between the teacher and student. With regard to student–student classroom interaction, T1 did not provide opportunities for classroom discussion; rather, the students were expected to answer the specific questions asked by the teacher. However, the majority of the teachers allowed their students to interact and participate in classroom activities enabling them to enhance and develop their language learning proficiency.

These discrepancies between the teachers’ instructional practices were clearly attributable to particular causes. Although all the teachers taught the same classes and the same numbers of students, they differed in terms of their individual perceptions of aspects of language teaching. In this regard, Borg (2003: 88) stated that “teachers’ prior language learning experiences establish understandings about learning and language learning which form the basis of their initial conceptualizations of L2 teaching during teacher education, and which may continue to be influential throughout their professional lives”.

The classroom observation findings showed that teachers were similar in various respects. In particular, they shared an extensive and explicit focus on grammatical rules in their classes. Moreover, NESTs were similar in the ways in which they interacted with their students. For instance, T5 and T6 both engaged their students in communicative activities when teaching grammatical rules, which had a considerable effect on the students’ in-class participation. These teachers also developed friendship-type relationships with their students, rather than typical student–teacher relationships. These two teachers particularly provided opportunities for their students to engage in extended discussion in class, enabling them to discuss and develop their understanding and interesting points. In contrast, the NNESTs heavily emphasized the importance of addressing grammar rules over a communicative based teaching and due to the students’ weak language proficiency, some of the teachers found translated grammar rules into Arabic. However, in terms of the interaction between NNESTs and the students, the interaction mainly based on a one-to-one basis not more than answering the

students' short questions than further discussion. This in turn indicates some of the similarities in terms of a one to one basis classroom interaction between the NNESTs. The findings from the students' interviews indicated that students need more time to practice English during their classroom interactions. Avoiding or minimizing the students' classroom discussion has of course a negative impact on the language learning process and student usage of language in real-life situations (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Hedge, 2000; Richards and Rodgers, 1986). A possible explanation for this result might be goes to the discrepancies in terms of teachers' perceptions and their actual classroom practices, which prevent the effective use of CLT in many EFL settings such as Saudi Arabia.

7.7 Summary

This section has focused on various aspects of the students' perceptions of teaching in terms of language teachers' classroom practices for example, the students' perceptions of grammar teaching revealed that the majority of the students considered teachers tended to focus on teaching grammar rules. Most of the students believed that what took place in their classrooms was not up to the standard of their expectations. Students also argued language teaching and learning need to be grounded on real-life communication, the mastering of aspects of grammatical rules needs to be done implicitly. Another interesting finding of this section was that students' perceptions of their teachers' classroom practices showed that there is a discrepancy between what they learn in the English language classroom and what is required in their future subject area (e.g. business, economics and finance). This in turn indicates the importance of reconsideration of the "one size fits all" approach in language learning process. Another significant finding of this section is the student's opinion regarding the use of L1 in the classroom.

As discussed in (Chapter 3 section, 3.4.1) that L1 can be used to explain some grammar rules, difficult words and managing classes by teachers. Learners can also use L1 when discussing

tasks during their pair or group work activities, clarifying purposes of learning the new language (Cook, 2001). In addition, more reasons justifying learners' use of L1 have been discussed. As a result, the students whose preferred subject was not English reported that the use of L1 in the language classroom helped them to understand the meaning and they expressed that the use of Arabic was important because they learned English grammar rules to follow in everyday lessons. Students added that if the teachers did not explain such rules in Arabic, they could not easily understand them (cf. 6.4.6). In contrast to this, the rest of the students criticized their teachers' use of L1 in class. It shows that some of the students those who have conscious of the negative effect of using L1 in English language classes. Students believed that teachers need to bear in mind that in Saudi Arabia the classroom is the only place in which students are exposed to the target language. However, this use of L1 by teachers or learners need to be for clarifying purposes and should not be the key method of communication in the L2 classroom (Cook, 2001).

This section has also shed some light on the students' perceptions of the teaching of the four skills. For instance, regarding writing skills, the data showed that little or no attention was paid to these by most of the EFL teachers in their classes. Writing was considered the most difficult component of the four language skills. The majority of the students therefore confirmed that most teachers do not provide basic writing strategies to develop students' writing skills. Apart from that, teachers need provide as many opportunities as possible to EFL learners to communicate in a real-life situation in writing. However, a possible explanation for students' writing difficulties is that the students themselves followed unsuitable writing strategies to study writing course. For instance, many students during the study's interview expressed that due to the absence of overt writing instruction, apart from short essay structure and basic grammatical and lexical advice they depended on memorization strategies (Al-Asmari, 2013). This in turn indicates that the current programme requires revision to ensure an adequate focus

on teaching writing skills. In addition, another important point that the data showed in this section was that classroom teachers need to filter their teaching method, ensuring it is appropriate to the local cultural norms and re-defining the teacher–student relationship. In other words, for the communicative approach to be made suitable for the EFL context, as indicated by Ellis (1996, p. 213), “it needs to be both culturally attuned and culturally accepted” and this essentially depends on language teachers.

This chapter discussed the main findings and points of discussions, which are the wide range of actual practices and differences among them. For instance, regarding the differences among teachers and their beliefs, this chapter argued that discrepancies in terms of teachers’ perceptions and their actual classroom practices, which prevent the effective use of CLT in many EFL settings such as Saudi Arabia, must be determined to achieve the maximum benefits from CLT. It was also discussed that there is a direct influence of the teachers’ perceptions of the CLT approach on their classroom authority. For example, during the interview teachers declared that CLT allows students to lead and manage their classroom activities, as the main purpose of CLT is to enable learners to use the target language in various situations communicatively (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Therefore, it was realised that teachers who preferred the traditional teaching methods seemed to believe that CLT would minimize their role in class. Most teachers claimed that the CLT approach provided students with great freedom to choose appropriate language activities, but they needed to be taught in a controlled manner. In other words, when teachers tried to change the routine and activities such as pair or group work, to provide more rooms to the students, the class became chaotic and as a result, students did not take the lesson seriously.

In addition, with regard to the point of misunderstanding of CLT features, teachers argued that it is a challenge in the current programme to implement such approach, because the current teaching practices are limited to a pedagogical curriculum oriented to an examination-based

language teaching processes. Thus, misunderstanding of CLT principles by programme leaders in turn influences Saudi EFL teachers' preference for the traditional teaching method over CLT. The discussion also emphasised that teachers with inadequate knowledge and understanding of CLT were more concerned with their classroom authority than the concept of implementing CLT in their teaching. The main findings of this chapter in turn showed that such misunderstandings affect teachers' behaviours. These findings are identifying the existing knowledge of teachers, which affects the way in which they perceive and value a teaching method. Another finding discussed in this chapter found from the teachers' interviews indicated that some of the students' English language learning difficulties were rooted in the lack of background knowledge about language learning strategies. For instance, a possible explanation for students' writing difficulties is that the students themselves followed unsuitable writing strategies to study writing course. Furthermore, many students during the study's interview expressed that due to the absence of overt writing instruction, apart from short essay structure and basic grammatical and lexical advice they depended on memorization strategies in preparation for final and mid writing exams (Al-Asmari, 2013). A further interesting finding that emerged from the questionnaire is that teachers were asked to explain the difficulties that they face in implementing CLT in their EFL classes. The following four factors appeared to be at the centre of teachers' difficulties: (a) teachers' resistance to implementing CLT; (b) teachers' understanding of CLT; (c) lack of training in CLT. The findings of the classroom observations revealed that some of the teachers in this study had some sort of training, but it seemed that they still lacked the necessary methodological skills for this approach.

Other teachers revealed that they had not received any training regarding the implementation of CLT. In addition, there were issues with the EFL teachers' understandings of CLT. Thus, teachers indicated that their resistance to CLT or failure to implement it was due to the lack of organized in-service teacher training, as well as insufficient understanding of CLT. This

suggests the need for a specific teacher-training programme, which focuses on improving instructional techniques, and calls for an organized approach to pre-and in-service education for EFL teachers (Al-Hazmi, 2003). Moreover, during the informal meetings, teachers highlighted the idea of informing decision makers at the ELI regarding the need for a systematic and comprehensive analysis of teacher requirements. This must take their academic and professional language teaching training into consideration. The net result would be an increase in student language proficiency.

This chapter also discussed the findings from the post-observation interviews which teachers revealed that although the students had been taught English for eight years prior to attending university; they were still struggling to communicate in English and rarely participated in classroom activities. In addition, the students' exhibited poor communicative ability, in part, as they appeared to be unmotivated to practise English, either in their classrooms or out of school. This in turn indicates that there is a "conflict" in thinking. On one hand, students are demanding something from teachers but on the other, they are not willing to invest themselves into the learning process. This behaviour from the students is perhaps not surprising as findings from the teacher interviews indicated that some of the students' English language learning difficulties were rooted in the lack of background knowledge about language learning strategies (Al-Asmari, 2013). Other researchers have similarly highlighted that in the Saudi education system learners are not taught how to use various language-learning strategies, which is highly overlooked (Al-Asmari, 2013; Alwazir and Shukri, 2017).

Another important finding discussed in this study is the role the administrative factor. Indeed, teachers in the ELI made great efforts to meet the examination requirements. This was despite their belief in the importance of language teaching and learning to achieve real communication goals and enable students to meet their future academic and professional needs. In this regard, the teachers criticized the exam committee for the discrepancy between the outlined objectives

of the course and the content of assessment procedures and blamed this for what was taking place in the classroom. The post-observation interviews also revealed that teachers thought that the mid and final examination questions were beyond the students' language level and students' performance in receptive and productive skills were consistently below the standardized level. EFL teachers have no authority in the decision-making process regarding the types of questions and the assessment criteria that students need to fulfil.

To sum up, in this chapter the following areas are discussed: differences between teachers' perceptions and actual classroom practice; mismatch of expectations among students and teachers; teachers' misunderstandings of CLT; difficulties due to factors faced by teachers, students, and English language programme administration; and a discrepancy between top down initiatives, i.e. "the wholesale adoption of CLT" and the actual "following through" which has to be supported by the availability of the appropriate infrastructure in terms of teachers' development and appropriate assessment strategies. However, findings in turn has created an opportunity to ask policy makers at ELI a more fundamental question needs to be answered: "Is CLT what is needed in Saudi language teaching context?"

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the main findings of the study related to the research questions as discussed in Chapter 7. The major findings, implications of the research, recommendations for further research, limitations of the study and conclusions are also discussed. The literature review in Chapter 3 (cf. 3.5) stated that communicative language teaching (CLT) is an approach that emphasizes the role of language teaching as being to develop communicative competence (CC) in the four language skills via a wide range of methods and techniques to achieve the purpose of communicating using the target language (Brown, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Savignon, 2002). However, there is a lack of mixed methods research investigating the extent to which EFL teachers' teaching practices are in line with the principles of the CLT approach, particularly in Saudi Arabia. This research has attempted to address this gap. The overarching research question outlined in section 4.2 was answered through the following sub-questions:

RQ1: What are the EFL teachers' perceptions and knowledge of the CLT approach? Using data from interviews and a questionnaire, the aim of this question was to clarify the participants' perceptions of the importance of CLT.

RQ2: To what extent are the EFL teachers' instruction practices in line with CLT principles? Drawing on classroom observation, the aim of this question was to examine the EFL teachers' actual teaching practices and the extent to which they are in line with CLT principles.

RQ3: What are the difficulties in using the CLT approach in a Saudi preparatory year programme? Using interviews and questionnaires, the purpose of this question was to identify and articulate the difficulties of using CLT methods in the PYP at the ELI.

RQ4: *What are the students' perceptions of their EFL teachers' practices in their classroom?*

Using data obtained from interviews and questionnaire, the aim was to explore the EFL teachers' teaching practices based on the students' perceptions.

RQ5: *What are the similarities and discrepancies between the teachers' perceptions and their actual classroom practices?* The aim was to identify the similarities and discrepancies among the teachers who were participated in this study.

This chapter presents the major findings of this study in section 8.2, contribution of the study in section 8.3, addresses the limitations of the study in section 8.4, suggestions for future research in section 8.5, recommendations in section 8.6 and finally draws conclusions in section 8.7.

8.2 Major findings of the study

Based on the findings of this study, it seems that the English language PYP in ELI needs certain revisions regarding the implementation of CLT to exploit existing opportunities. The key findings mainly concern EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia but can potentially be extended to other EFL countries. Discrepancies in terms of teachers' perceptions and their actual classroom practices, which prevent the effective use of CLT in many EFL settings such as Saudi Arabia, must be determined to achieve the maximum benefits from CLT. Thus, consideration needs to be given to the following areas with the aim of addressing the difficulties identified: differences between teachers' perceptions and actual classroom practice; mismatch of expectations among students and teachers; teachers' misunderstandings of CLT; difficulties due to factors faced by teachers, students, and by English language programme administration; and a discrepancy between top down initiatives, i.e. "the wholesale adoption of CLT" and the actual "following through" which has to be supported by the availability of the appropriate infrastructure in terms of teachers' development and appropriate assessment strategies.

8.2.1 Exploring teachers' existing perceptions and knowledge of the principles of CLT

As discussed in Chapter 7, the results presented in Chapters 5 and 6 synthesized the findings to identify key areas needing further improvement. In this section, an integrated approach is also used in terms of the presentation of the qualitative and quantitative findings in relation to each research question. The findings related to the teachers' perceptions of grammar teaching in CLT in the EFL context, for example, showed that most of the participants believed that grammar plays an important role.

8.2.2 Discrepancies in the way teachers think about grammar and CLT

The findings suggested differences in the way teachers think about grammar teaching and its relationship with CLT. As a result, teachers' classroom practices differ from one teacher to another. For example, it was found that most of the teachers taught grammar explicitly. These teachers consider that grammar is very significant to pass final examinations. Thus, the existing beliefs and perceptions of teachers affect the ways in which they perceive and value their teaching approach. They also affect the actions teachers take in applying the ideas of such methodology. A few teachers were found to believe that combining grammar teaching with contextualized learning and students' communication needs consistent with the principles of CLT in the EFL context. However, others held perceptions that mostly challenged the principles of CLT. Therefore, the main finding of this section is that identifying the participants' perceptions could provide recommendations towards the application of CLT in their classrooms.

8.2.3 Discrepancies among the students

Another discrepancy was found between what students learn in the English language classroom and what is required in their future subject area. In addition, there was a very clear trend for varying expectations and needs among the students themselves. The findings revealed that

some students only want to pass examinations, while others want to learn English for their future academic and professional careers and to be able to communicate.

8.2.4 The four main skills

The findings indicated that teachers mostly perceive the importance of integrating the four main skills. However, the findings revealed that teachers do not offer opportunities for students to talk through speaking activities and the lessons are mostly dominated by the teachers. One of the interesting points of this study was that students were given opportunities to criticize any activities that they did not find helpful to improve their English language learning in the preparatory year. Here, students articulated problems with speaking lessons, namely that the teachers mostly used traditional-based teaching, neither letting students engage with the language nor helping them acquire the necessary skills to truly develop speaking competence. These students argued that teachers and programme leaders need to be more concerned about the students' communicative language needs as well as linguistic competence.

8.2.5 Examining EFL teachers' actual teaching practices

One of the main findings of this study was that teachers' perceptions of CLT do not always match their actual practice and the study was able to relate this finding to the other components of EFL delivery to show missing links between them. For example, a point of interest was that EFL teachers mainly recognized the principles of the CLT approach as an effective means of fulfilling the goals of communication (see Figure 6.4). However, most of these teachers were lacking in terms of the practical implementation of the CLT principles in their classrooms (cf, 6.5). Pair- and group-based activities heavily depended on traditional language teaching techniques rather than using communicative-based approaches. Students were also dissatisfied with teachers' limited use of such activities in language classes. I believe that teachers need to put more effort into arranging group- and pair-work activities, which would allow development of the students' communicative skills. The results of this study are in line with those of Al-

Rabadi (2012), Fareh (2010) and Rahman, Singh & Pandian (2018) in terms of the substantial role played by discrepancies between EFL teachers' beliefs about CLT and their classroom practices in the EFL context.

8.2.6 Identifying and articulating the difficulties of using CLT in the PYP

The findings suggest that as discussed in Chapter 3 (3.9), EFL teachers face three significant aspects of difficulty and challenge in the implementation of CLT in their classrooms.

8.2.6.1 Teacher factors

The classroom observations showed that four out of the six (79.8%) teachers failed to implement the CLT approach in their classrooms. Some had received training in the use of CLT, but more had not. Thus, the teachers had different levels of knowledge and teaching skills in ELT and understanding of CLT, which affected their perceptions, attitudes and practice. Indeed, the teachers stated that their failure to try to implement CLT was because of the lack of organized teacher training and their insufficient understanding of the approach. Lack of proper training in CLT has been found in several empirical studies to be a key challenge to its implementation in various EFL contexts (Aleixo, 2003; Karim, 2004; Li, 1998). Therefore, the findings of this study are in line with those of previous research. Teacher training needs to be given priority in Saudi language teaching and learning settings.

8.2.6.2 Student factors

Both teachers and students in this study articulated several factors leading to problems in language teaching and learning. Those suggested by teachers include students' inadequate English language proficiency, their poor motivation to improve their CC through pair and group work and their resistance to class participation (e.g. asking for explanation). This is not particularly surprising as the traditional teaching approach, in Saudi schools does not encourage students to talk in the language classroom and they are not expected to take the initiative, for

instance by asking questions. These aspects have been found in several empirical studies to be major challenges for CLT implementation in various EFL contexts (Fareh, 2010; Hassan, 2013; Karim, 2004; Li, 1998). Consequently, the findings of this study in line with those of previous research (cf. 3.7). Such difficulties need to be discussed and addressed. Moreover, teachers should encourage their students to participate using various types of activities and teaching techniques (Abdulkader, 2013).

8.2.6.3 Administrative factors

As discussed in Chapter 7, several difficulties prevent teachers' implementing CLT in Saudi English language classrooms. Among these are administrative factors and certain aspects of the system, which affect the teaching and learning experience. For example, extensive teaching hours and large numbers of students in class prevent teachers from making effective use of CLT in their classes. In addition, classroom instruction is usually focused on traditional teaching methods in which grammar is prioritized over other important skills, such as listening and speaking. Therefore, to implement CLT in the Saudi context, teaching hours and class sizes need to be reduced and the provision of training in communicative-based approaches and appropriate materials need to be considered.

Another important finding from the post-observation interviews is that teachers are under pressure to prepare students for examinations, both from the administration and from students themselves. In particular, the teachers criticized the examination committee specifically on the grounds that the mid and final examination questions are not aligned with the students' language level. The teachers in the ELI do not have any input in the design of the assessments. They also highlight a substantial discrepancy between the express objectives of the course and the content of the assessment procedures, which affects what is taking place in classrooms. Therefore, to apply CLT in the Saudi context, assessment needs to be aligned with the purposes

of the course to foster implementation of communicative-based activities (Abdulkader, 2013; Fareh, 2010).

8.2.7 Students' perceptions of EFL teachers' teaching practices

Another important finding of this study concerns the students' perceptions of teaching practices. Most of the students considered that teachers should try to develop their communication skills and explain grammar only when necessary. Some made the criticism that teachers' classroom practices were not up to the standard of their expectations. Students argued that grammar-focused language learning needs to be reconsidered at the university stage. Indeed, students argued that language teaching and learning at the university level needs to be based on real-life communication and mastering aspects of grammatical rules needs to be done implicitly. In particular, they were of the view that there is a discrepancy between what they learn in the English language classroom, and what is required in their future subject area as discussed by (Basturkmen, 1998; Edwards, 2000), (e.g. business, economics and finance). Thus, students perceived that what the teachers presented in their classrooms had nothing to do with their future English language needs. There were particular problems concerning the development of writing skills, considered to be the most difficult among the four language skills. Teachers stated that one of the most problematic issues that Saudi students face in writing courses is their lack of ability to select and use appropriate words. However, my classroom observations showed that most of the teachers had insufficient knowledge of or were unable to apply appropriate methodology to teach writing skills. Consequently, I believe that the current English programme requires revision to ensure an adequate focus on speaking and writing skills. Grammar appears to be highlighted over skills development and thus, while students may gain certain knowledge of the target language, they may not develop communicative skills to use it (Richards, 2001).

8.3 Contribution of the study

The main purpose of this study was to explore the students' and teachers' perspectives and the extent in which EFL teachers' teaching practices are in line with the principles of the CLT approach, particularly in Saudi Arabia, an area in which current research is lacking. This study attempted, by integrating a multi-method research approach, to gain a deeper understanding of significant aspects, such as EFL students' views and teachers' practices toward CLT and the difficulties that they face in implementing the approach in EFL classrooms as opposed to existing research which only focus on one group of stake holders, e.g. either teachers or students. This research thus contributes to the theoretical and pedagogical field in several ways. The methodology used in this study is one of the key contributions. That is through a mixed-method research approach, which includes classroom observation, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. In addition, exploring students' views regarding their preferences of teaching methods, current academic and future language needs and expectation on the one hand and the implementation of CLT and EFL teachers' classroom practices on the other hand which was used in Saudi English language teaching context for the first time. This in turn indicates that the current study is distinguished from most of the studies cited in this research, e.g. Alhawsawi (2013); Algonhaim (2014); Al-Rabadi (2012); and Abdullah (2015), none of which have used all the instruments used in this study. This systematic mixed approach consequently contributes to the field of methodology and provides future researchers who interested to investigate similar topics of this study to implement these research tools easily. Furthermore, the use of triangulation as a result of the application of mixed-methods approach strengthens the findings of the study through the combination of research tools used in the study. Through observing teachers' classroom practice, it was possible to distinguish between their theoretical beliefs and actual practice. In turn, the results of this study indicate that although Saudi EFL teachers have positive attitudes towards the CLT approach, the English language programme

as currently implemented is not in line with the principles of CLT. Through semi-structured interviews, aspects of the teachers and students' perceptions were explored. It was also possible to gain some elaboration behind the teachers' classroom practices that may have not been revealed from classroom observation even with the use of field notes. Similarly, by distributing questionnaires, it was possible to establish students' perceptions and practice preferences regarding teachers' instructional performance.

To sum up, this study also contributes to the field of research that has been carried out to examine the implementation of CLT in EFL context and more specifically in Saudi Arabia the disputes presently extending in theoretical and empirical studies regarding the application of this important teaching method in the EFL classroom environment.

8.4 Limitations of the study

All research has its limitations and this study is no exception. The participants were 47 female EFL teachers and 175 students. Due to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's gender-segregated higher education system, it was not possible to extend the study to include male students and teachers in this study, which would have made for a larger, more robust sample. It would also have been preferable to have had more female and male teachers keen to participate in interviews. Moreover, having a greater number of lecturers in applied linguistics as a major participant in the study would have led to a richer set of data in terms of determining choices linked to the teaching methodology, an area which still needs further development.

There were issues with access to staff, both due to their heavy teaching schedules and in some cases, refusal to participate. There were also issues with regard to access to students willing to participate in interviews outside the classroom; more would have enriched the data regarding the effectiveness of the current English language preparatory year programme. Furthermore, although the study used multiple sources and made use of mixed methods, the findings would

have been strengthened had actual examination documents (mid and final) been collected to analyse the content and link this to the observation and interview data and students' language needs.

8.5 Suggestions for future research

Based on the findings and the limitations identified above, several suggestions can be made for future research.

1. Given the findings concerning students' lack of motivation and preference for individual tasks, investigating Saudi EFL students' motivation for CLT activities and ways of fostering this could enhance not only teaching but also learning.
2. One of the difficulties in using CLT in the Saudi context was identified as a lack of support from administration. I would suggest that further research include the perceptions of programme leaders as a fruitful way of identifying their priorities and any misunderstandings they might have in relation to the importance of CLT in the English language teaching process.
3. Although there are clearly shortages in terms of numbers of English language teachers, the government still accepts more students each semester. This in turn has a negative impact on the students' learning and the language teaching process due to large class sizes. Future studies might investigate the impact of large class sizes on students' language learning, especially in the Saudi context.
4. Research that includes both female and male learners' views and perspectives would help to gain a better understanding of the status of CLT in Saudi Arabia.
5. The study was conducted in one language institute in a Saudi university. Research with teachers in other contexts would be enhance the findings of this study.

6. As far as writing was considered the most difficult of the four language skills. Future studies might examine whether students' writing strategies reflect the knowledge presented and learned during writing classrooms?
7. In this study, dealing only the implementation of CLT with students at a preparatory year bound the research to a particular setting, which is representative of similar contexts only. This limitation qualified to access and time constraints, which forced the researcher to carry out this study over a certain period in only one particular setting. Further research on different level of students could develop to clarify the effectiveness of CLT in larger sample of participants.
8. The findings of the study indicated that teachers stated that most students hold a negative attitude towards CLT, and this is one of the challenges that they face when they try to implement the CLT approach in their classrooms. Further studies could research the students' language learning motivation prior the implementation of such approach.

8.6 Recommendations

1. The difficulties and challenges that discourage teachers from practising CLT in their classrooms need to be remediated by providing proper in-service as well as pre-service teacher training towards the implementation of CLT.
2. Teachers' extensive teaching hours should be taken into consideration, if the administration wishes to succeed in the implementation of the CLT.
3. It is important to realise that "one size fits all" approach needs to be carefully evaluated by decision makers. Specifically, when it comes to programme policies, standard examinations, pre, and in-service training.
4. Teaching activities need to be learner-centred rather than teacher-centred.

5. It is necessary to creating an environment that is helpful for learning and increase the students' exposure to English in class, in particular increasing student talking time and adopting interactive communicative teaching activities.
6. Programme leaders need to pay greater attention to the students' future language needs. EFL teachers expressed concerns regarding the difficulties deriving from the managerial approach and emphasized the serious need for a strong English language programme. In this regard, assessment needs to be addressed as a priority.
7. In addition, based on many large-scale studies (e.g. Richards, 2001), it is suggested that to develop communicative competence, scholars must have extended opportunities to use the foreign language productively. As a way forward, in order to help English language teachers improve their content knowledge and practical skills, the language programme should primarily assist the teachers to improve their CLT knowledge and skills continuously, leading to: (a) the promotion of student learning; (b) the engagement of the teachers in the learning approaches they use with their students; (c) the encouragement of teachers to collaborate with their colleagues concerning the various CLT-based activities they use in their teaching classes. In addition, policy makers, should concern about the assessment criteria and the curriculum that encourage the traditional teaching in current language teaching classroom. Students should also be able and engaged in more communicative based classroom interaction.

8.7 Conclusion

In the field of EFL teaching, CLT has received considerable attention from researchers and linguists. Much has been written about CLT as an effective language teaching approach and the application of its principles in the language classroom (e.g. Canale & Swain, 1980; Chang & Goswami, 2011; Li, 1998; Littlewood, 2007; Pennycook, 1989; Savignon, 1991, 1997;

Savignon & Wang, 2003). However, less attention has been paid to the implementation of CLT in certain EFL contexts, such as Saudi Arabia. Therefore, this study has aimed to investigate Saudi EFL teachers' actual teaching practices and the extent to which they are in line with CLT principles. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect the data (classroom observation, questionnaire and semi-structured interview). The findings showed that teachers have positive attitudes towards the implementation of CLT in teaching language. The findings also emphasized teachers' awareness of the value of CLT principles in developing language learners' ability. However, teachers' actual classroom practice was not in line with the principles of CLT. In addition, EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia encounter several difficulties in implementing CLT including assessment constraints and these might establish major barriers to its application in EFL language classrooms. Perhaps due to these barriers, despite holding positive perceptions of CLT, teachers still tend to use traditional methods (e.g. teaching grammar explicitly, memorization, translation). In addition, the findings also indicated that students were not being encouraged in classroom interaction. This is because of teachers' lack of innovations in using various language-teaching techniques, and teachers reverted in using structural teaching methods. Thus, more research needs to be conducted in cooperation between EFL teachers, scholars and educational institutions to facilitate better language teaching outcomes. Teachers also need more practical training which would allow them to write their own materials and institute communicative practices in the classroom according to students' communicative needs.

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APPENDIX 1

Classroom Observation Checklist

Items	Yes	No	Comments
Classroom events			
1) Greeting and welcoming students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2) Revising previous lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3) Providing students with a new lesson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4) Providing feedback on student homework	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5) Introducing the purposes of the lesson;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6) Student error correction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Participant organization			
7) Using one central activity for the whole class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8) Teacher interacts with individual students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9) Teacher lets students work in pairs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10) Teacher lets students work in groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
11) Teacher dominates classroom activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
12) Teacher applies the same task to all groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
13) Teacher answers student questions using L1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
14) Teacher knows individual students' learning needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Classroom activities			
15) Extended discussion activity;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
16) Allowing students to work on different tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
17) Using drilling and repetition of sentences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
18) Focus on grammar-based teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
19) Teacher dominates classroom activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
20) Teacher applies the same task to all groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
21) Teacher answers student questions using L1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
22) Teacher knows individual students' learning needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Functional activities			
23) Making polite requests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
24) Asking open questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
25) Asking closed questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
26) Use of elicitation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
27) Social interaction activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
28) Teachers provide clarifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
29) Using L2 for interaction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Language skills			
30) Speaking skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
31) Listening skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
32) Writing skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
33) Reading skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Teaching materials			
34) Teacher uses a textbook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
35) Teacher reflects the reality of using a textbook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
36) Teacher uses authentic materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Student Modality			
37) Using L1 for answering teacher's questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
38) Using L2 for classroom interaction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
39) Asking teacher for clarifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
40) Listening to each other carefully during the group discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
41) Listening passively to the teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
42) Working alone and compare with each other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
43) Doing silent reading;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
44) Doing loud reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

APPENDIX 2

TEACHERS' CONSENT FORM

Dear teacher,

This questionnaire asks you for your perceptions toward the implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in your English teaching class. Your answers will help me to understand how far CLT is in practice in a Saudi university. The questionnaire can be completed in approximately 15-20 minutes. All the information gathered for the study will be kept completely confidential and your identity and personal information will not be revealed.

Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Thank you very much in advance for returning this questionnaire promptly.

Fatuma Abdulkader

Northumbria University, Newcastle, UK

Email: fatuma.a.m.abdulkader@northumbria.ac.uk

Name: Fatuma Abdulkader

Participant's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Signature: _____

APPENDIX 3

TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please complete the following sections as fully as possible.

1. Name: (optional) _____

2. Age

(1) 28-35 (2) 36-43

(3) 44-51 (4) 52-59

3. Gender:

(a) Male (b) Female

4. What level of qualification do you have in teaching English as a foreign language?

(1) BA in Literature

(2) MA in Applied Linguistics and TESOL

(3) PhD in language teaching methodology

(4) Other please specify _____.

5. How long have you been teaching English?

(1) 1-2 years (2) 3-5 years

(3) 6-10 years (4) 11-15 years (5) More than 15 years

6. How many hours do you spend weekly preparing teaching lessons (on average)?

(1) 1-2 hours (2) 3-4 hours

(3) 5-6 hours (4) 7-8

7. How many hours do you usually teach each week on average?

(1) 9- 11 hours (2) 12-15 hours

(3) 16-19 hours (4) 20-23hours

SECTION 2: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

8. Have you received any training in English language teaching methods since you joined the English Language Institute (ELI)?

(1) Yes (2) No

9. If so, was the content relevant to the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLT)? 1) Yes 2) No

SECTION 3: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CLT

10. What is your perception of the following statements?

Statements	To a great extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all
1. Grammar should be taught explicitly				
2. Group and pair activities emphasise students' language practice				
3. Students' L1 needs to be emphasised to facilitate the teaching processes				
4. Language content should be authentic to meet students' language needs				
5. Students concentrate more when they work alone				
6. Lectures are an effective teaching method and emphasises the role of teachers in the classroom				
7. Role-play activities emphasise students' language use				
8. Students' language errors need to be corrected immediately				
9. Information gap activities encourage students to ask questions				
10. Problem solving activities emphasise students' thinking skills				
11. Functional activities enhance students' confidence in language use				

SECTION 4: DEVELOPING LANGUAGE SKILLS.

11. Which of the following language teaching skills are more emphasised in your classroom Using CLT?

Language skills	To a great extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all
1. Reading comprehension				
2. Writing skills				
3. Listening comprehension				
4. Speaking skills				

SECTION 5: LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES IN PRACTICE.

12. To what extent do you apply the following classroom activities in your classes?

Statements	To a great extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all
1. Teaching grammar explicitly				
2. Pair work				
3. Group work				
4. Role-play				
5. I use authentic materials				
6. Correcting students' errors immediately				
7. I often use Arabic in classroom				
8. Working alone and compare with others				
9. I often use drilling and repeating sentences				
10. I encourage students to memorize grammar rules				
11. Information gap activities				
12. Games				
13. Problem solving activities				
14. Functional activities (requesting, giving directions)				

SECTION 6: DIFFICULTIES IN IMPLEMENTING CLT

13. To what extent do you think that the following statements affect the implementation of CLT in classroom?

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Grammar-based assessment procedures				
2. Lack of authentic materials				
3. Teachers' lack of CLT knowledge				
4. Lack of teacher's authority				
5. Teacher's misconceptions of CLT				
6. Students' lack of motivation in pair and group-based activities				
7. Lack of in-service training in CLT				
8. Large numbers of students in classroom				
9. Overloaded teaching hours				
10. Passive learning attitude				
11. Students' poor English language proficiency				

SECTION 7: TEACHERS UNDERSTANDING OF CLT.

14. To what extent the following statements describe your best understanding of CLT

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. CLT means no grammar teaching				
2. CLT focuses only on speaking and listening				

3. CLT enhances students' autonomy				
4. CLT emphasises fluency over accuracy				
5. CLT student-centred approach				
6. CLT encourages communication in L2				
7. CLT emphasizes only pair and group activities				
8. CLT requires teachers with high proficiency in English				
9. Teachers' lack of authority				

10. If you have further comments, please write them down.

End of questionnaire
Thank you very much for your cooperation

APPENDIX 4

STUDENT CONSENT FORM

Dear student,

This questionnaire investigates your views and perceptions towards the teaching method used in your English language classes. Your answers will help me to understand your views and needs, as well as to overcome any obstacles you may have with learning English. The questionnaire can be completed in approximately 15-20 minutes. All the information gathered for the study will be kept completely confidential and your identity and personal information will not be revealed. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Thank you

Fatuma Abdulkader

Northumbria University, Newcastle, UK

Email: fatuma.a.m.abdulkader@northumbria.ac.uk

Name: Fatuma Abdulkader

Participant's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Signature: _____

APPENDIX 5

STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please complete the following sections as fully as possible.

1. Name: (optional) _____

2. Age: (a) 18-20 (b) 21-22
(c) 23-24 (d) 25-26 (e) above 26

3. Gender: (a) Male (b) Female

4. Level of English language
(1) 101 (2) 102
(3) 103 (4) 104

SECTION 2: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

To what extent do your teacher apply the following classroom activities?

Statements	To a great extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all
5. Classroom activities focus on memorizing grammar rules				
6. The teacher uses of Arabic (L1) to translate vocabulary and grammar rules				
7. The teacher corrects errors immediately				
8. Pair/group activities are used in classroom				
9. The teacher frequently uses different aids, such as tasks, maps, games and videos				
10. The teacher mostly focuses on communication, with				

grammar rules when necessary				
11. The teacher frequently encourages individual work in the classroom				
12. The teacher dominates the classroom interaction through lecturing only				
13. Students are given more talking time than the teacher				
14. The coursebook is the only source that the teacher uses in the classroom				
15. The teacher uses drilling and repeating sentences a lot				

Section 2: Which of the following the English Language skills are more emphasises by your teacher?

English skills	To a great extent	To some Extent	To a limited extent	Not at all
16. Reading				
17. Writing				
18. Listening				
19. Speaking				

20. If You have any comments, please write them down.

End of the questionnaire

Thank you very much for your collaboration

APPENDIX 6

STUDENT CONSENT FORM (ARABIC VERSION)

استمارة موافقة الطالب

عزيزي الطالب

الهدف من الاستبيان هو معرفة وجهة نظرك وتصوراتك تجاه طرق التدريس المتبعة من قبل معمة اللغة الإنجليزية وستساعد إجاباتك على فهم وجهة نظرك واحتياجاتك للغة الانجليزية، وكذلك للتغلب على أي عقبات قد تكون لديك في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. يمكن الانتهاء من الاستبيان في حوالي 15-20 دقيقة. ولن يتم الكشف عن هويتك , ومعلوماتك الشخصية وسيتم الحفاظ على سرية جميع المعلومات التي تم جمعها للدراسة. نقدر لكم حسن مشاركتكم في الدراسة.

شكرا لكم

الباحثة : فاطمة عبدالقادر

جامعة نورثمبريا ، نيوكاسل ، المملكة المتحدة

fatuma.a.m.abdulkader@northumbria.ac.uk

اسم الباحثة: التوقيع: _____

اسم المشارك: _____ التوقيع: _____

APPENDIX 7

STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE (Arabic Version)

ارجوا إكمال الأقسام التالية على أكمل وجه ممكن

شخصية معلومات: الأول القسم

اختياري: الاسم

العمر:

مستوى اللغة الإنجليزية

EL 101 □ EL 102 □ EL 103 □ EL 104 □

على الاطلاق	إلى حد محدود	إلى حد ما	إلى حد كبير		
				تركز أنشطة الفصل على حفظ القواعد النحوية	1
				تستخدم المعلمة اللغة العربية لترجمة المفردات والقواعد النحوية	2
				يتم استخدام أنشطة الزوجية و الجماعية الفصول الدراسية في	3
				تستخدم المعلمة أنشطة الجماعية في الفصول الدراسية	4
				غالباً ما تستخدم المعلمة وسائل مختلفة مثل الخرائط والألعاب والفيديو	5
				تركز المعلمة في الغالب على التواصل مع القواعد النحوية عند الضرورة	6
				تشجع المعلمة بشكل متكرر العمل الفردي في الفصل	7
				تسيطر المعلمة على تفاعل الفصل الدراسي من خلال المحاضرات فقط	8
				يعد الكتاب الدراسي المصدر الوحيد الذي يستخدم في الفصل الدراسي	9
				كثيرا تستخدم المعلمة الحفظ عملية تكرار الجمل	10
أي من مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية أكثر ممارسة في الصف من قبل المعلمة ؟					
				القراءة	11
				الكتابة	12
				الاستماع	13
				التحدث	14

APPENDIX 8

Participant Information and Consent Form

Saudi University teachers' and Students' perceptions of CLT Approach

Dear Participant,

It is my pleasure to ask for your participation in the interview over your contribution in the study through the classroom observations. The study is investigating in which the extent of English language teaching methodology used in Saudi EFL language classroom is in line with the principles of communicative approach (CLT). The interview will be conducted face to face and will last approximately 30 minutes, the questions will be a reflection on what I have observed in your classroom. In addition, questions to your experience in CLT and some of the difficulties you might face in implementing CLT in your classroom. You were chosen to take part in the interviews based on your experience and knowledge in CLT which helps to fulfil the research goal to be achieved in Saudi English language classes. Your suggestion and recommendation in the study will be acknowledged.

The data gathered will be used only for the research purpose and personal information will not be referenced and will kept confidentially. You also have absolute freedom to answer the question or skip it. If you agree to be interviewed, please you signature bellow.

Name of participant..... Signature.....

Researcher..... Signature.....

Research contact information:

Fatuma Abdulkader PhD student at Northumbria University.

Email: fatuma.a.m.abdulkader@norhumbria.ac.uk

Thank you very much for your collaboration.

APPENDIX 9

TEACHERS' INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. I have observed that “focus on forms” teaching was emphasised in class. To what extent do you comment on your performance? Why?
2. I observed that you engaged students in pair/group activities. It is your regular practice? How is it important to use pair and group work in your teaching practice?
3. Some teachers use pair and group work; how often do you apply this method in your class?
4. I noticed that students use Arabic during group/pair work, also while answering your question. What do you think of that?
5. I saw that some teachers use L1 to translate language items and grammar rules. How often do you use it, why?
6. I observed that students work individually, to what extent do you use it and how does it help in language practice?
7. I observed most teachers do not use authentic materials, whilst, the course book is the main source used in teaching language skills. Could you explain why?
8. I have noticed that you encourage the students' participation through role-play, games, functional activities ... how is it important for language teacher to use different techniques in classroom? How often do you use these techniques in your teaching?
9. I observed some teachers scope on students' errors. To what extent do you correct students' errors?
10. What do you know about CLT (Communicative Language Teaching Approach)?
11. In your opinion what are the most difficulties that teachers face to use CLT in Saudi language classrooms?
12. in your opinion, to what extent in-service training enhanced teachers' teaching classroom performance?
13. I have observed that speaking and writing skills were less practised in classroom? Could you explain why?
14. I have observed that reading and listening skills were more practised in classroom? Could you explain why?

APPENDIX 10

STUDENTS' INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Students' interview questions were designed based on the classroom observation results.

1. I observed that you work alone most of the activities, do you think it is a good way to learn English? Why?
2. I observed that teachers highly focus on teaching grammar rules. To what extent it is important to you?
3. Some teachers use pair and group activities. While, some use individual work. Which one you mostly like. Why?
4. I observed that some students were use Arabic to answer teacher's question. Why?
5. I observed some teachers often use Arabic to translate vocabularies, while others use some other techniques such as gestures, giving examples, showing pictures. Which technique do you like more? Why?
6. Some classes, teachers used only English. Do you understand what your teacher saying?
7. T what extent it helps to improve your speaking skills?
8. What technique do teachers use in teaching language skills?
9. I observed some teachers use authentic material and course book, while some of them use only course book. Which one is used by your teacher? Which one do you like more?
10. I realized that writing skills was not practice. What do you think? How teacher assess your progression in writing?
11. I saw some teachers use a lot of memorizing sentences and grammar rules. What do you think of this type of technique uses in English class?
12. What barriers do you face in learning English? What do you want from your teachers to overcome any language difficulties?
13. I observed that speaking and writing skills were less emphasized in classroom practice?

APPENDIX 11

Communicative Orientation Language Teaching Scheme (COLT)

(APPENDIX 11)
Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT): Part A

SCHOOL TEACHER SUBJECT	TIME	ACTIVITIES	PARTIC. ORGANIZATION		MAN.	LANGUAGE	NUMBER	CONTENT		TOPIC CONTROL	DATE OBSERVER	STUDENT MODALITY
			Class	Group				OTHER TOPICS	BROAD			
			Class	Group	Discipline Procedural Gr./Ind.	Form Function Discourse Socioling.	Classroom Situat. Personal Other Pers./Bis. Situat. / Soc.	LIMITED	School T. Other Abstract Pers./Ref. Imagination World T. Other	Teacher / Stud. Teacher Other		Minimal Other Writing Reading Speaking Listening Student

Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT): Part B.

TARGET LANG.	TEACHER VERBAL INTERACTION		INCORPORATION of S. UTTERANCES	TARGET LANG.	INFORMATION GAP	STUT. SPEECH	STUDENT VERBAL INTERACTION	FORM	REACTION CODE/RES.
	REPT. SPEECH	CODE/RES.							
			Elaboration Expansion Comment Paraphrase Repetition No. Incopy		Giving Info. Request Info. Parade	Minimal Ultra-minimal	Explicit Code Reaction	Unrestricted Limited Restricted Sustained	

APPENDIX 12

Approval of Institution (King Abdulaziz University)

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA
Ministry of Higher Education
KING ABDULAZIZ UNIVERSITY
Vice presidency for Graduate
Studies & Academic Research
Deanship of Graduate Studies



المملكة العربية السعودية
وزارة التعليم العالي
جامعة الملك عبد العزيز
وكالة الجامعة للدراسات العليا والبحث العلمي
عمادة الدراسات العليا

إفادة قبول مباشرة مهمة علمية

إلى من يمه الأمر
تحية طيبة وبعد،،

تفيد وكالة عمادة الدراسات العليا بفرع السليمانية أنه صدرت موافقة سعادة وكيل الجامعة للدراسات العليا والبحث العلمي بموجب رقم معاملة (د/٣٧/١١٠٨٤٧) وتاريخ (١٤٣٧/٩/٢١هـ) في أن تباشر الباحثة/ فاطمة بنت أحمد عبدالقادر، صاحبة الهوية الوطنية (١١٠٤٥٥٨٩٦٨) وإحدى مبعثات وزارة التعليم العالي لمرحلة الدكتوراه في تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية من جامعة نورزامبريا-ببريطانيا؛ لمهنتها العلمية بمعهد اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة الملك عبدالعزيز فرع السليمانية مدة ثلاثة أشهر ابتداء من يوم الأربعاء ١٤٣٨/١/١١هـ

نأمل من سعادتكم التكرم بمساندة ومساعدة الباحثة على إنهاء مهنتها العلمية.

مع خالص شكرنا وتقديرنا لدعمكم ومساندتكم

وتقبلوا فائق التحية والتقدير

وكالة عمادة الدراسات العليا بالسليمانية
د. شذا بنت جميل طه خصيفان
٥٨١١١١٧

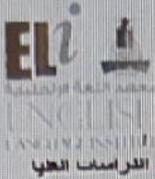


١٤٣٨/١/١١هـ
التاريخ: ١١/١/٢٠١٨

APPENDIX 13

Approval of Institution Female Campus (King Abdulaziz University)

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA
Higher Education
KING ABDULAZIZ UNIVERSITY
Women's Campus



وحدة الدراسات العليا

المملكة العربية السعودية Ministry of
وزارة التعليم العالي
جامعة الملك محمد السادس
شطر الطالبات

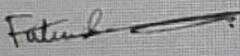
**Postgraduate Studies and Scholarships Unit
Data Collection Approval Form**

Part I: Researcher's Statement of Commitment

Researcher's name	Fatuma Ahmed Mohammed Abdulkader	KAU ID
Research Title	Investigating the current EFL Teachers' Pedagogical Methods within a Saudi undergraduate Context: Challenges and Potential Solutions	
Research Participants	English language Instructors, Academic coordinators and students	
Data collection Instrument (questionnaire, interview, etc.)	Classroom observation, questionnaire and Semi structured interview	

I confirm that I will fully address the following ethical issues:

- Informed consents will be signed by all participants and each participant will acknowledge the following:
- The participant has been given enough information about the research: purpose of the research; the reason why she was chosen as a participant; and place, time, duration and frequency of data collection sessions.
- The participant is made aware that she can withdraw from the study at anytime. (However students cannot withdraw from classes wherein data collection has been approved by ELI).
- The participant is reassured of anonymity and confidentiality issues
- Sufficient precautions will be taken in the processing and storage of confidential material (interviews, samples, etc)

Researcher's signature  Date 20/09/2016

Part II: Approval

Comments _____

Head of Postgraduate Studies and Scholarships **Dr Fatimah M A Alghamdi**
Date 28/SEP-2016 Signature 

Comments _____

Head of Educational Affairs **Dr Hanaa I Kutubkhanab**
Date 29/SEP, 2016 Signature 

Comments _____

Vice-dean **Dr Badia M Hakim**
Date 29/SEP/2016 Signature 