

Barriers in Implementing Communicative Language Teaching Approach: EFL Learners' Perspective

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Abstract

Over the last few decades, foreign language teaching has changed, favouring a more communicative-focused approach. However, researchers have reported a number of barriers that may hinder its successful implementation. This study, then, investigates the difficulties that affect the smooth implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Saudi EFL classrooms, specifically from the learners' point of view, as well as the reasons behind them, in order to provide suitable and practical recommendations to different EFL contexts. A mixed-method research, which included a written questionnaire and follow-up interviews, was conducted with 74 Saudi EFL students, all of whom were undergraduate students in their first level and enlisted on a speaking and listening course that adhered to the principles of the Communicative Approach (CA). The results revealed that students had positive attitudes towards conducting communicative activities in their English classes. The study further reported various barriers that students encountered whilst participating in communicative classroom activities: difficulty expressing themselves and organising ideas, low levels of participation, foreign language inhibition, anxiety, an inability to understand others, limited teaching time, and excessive mother tongue use. Moreover, the findings highlighted different reasons for these barriers, such as limited English proficiency, a lack of motivation, teacher and activity-related reasons, and previous instructional practices in schools. Finally, implications for pedagogy were presented based on the findings. These implications should be taken into consideration in order to more effectively implement CLT. Finally, this essay suggests various practical recommendations that educators, teachers, and policy makers can implement in order to maximise the effectiveness of the CLT approach.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, EFL classroom, Saudi learners.

DOI: 10.7176/JEP/12-9-01

Publication date: March 31st 2021

1. Introduction

An innovative method of language teaching, CLT broke with previous methods of teaching foreign languages, such as the grammar-translation method, the audio-lingual method, and the direct method, all of which failed to improve the learners' ability to use the target language fluently in everyday communication. Despite widespread acknowledgement that CLT is an effective method when it comes to improving students' ability to communicate successfully in everyday life situations, many studies, such as (Abu-Ras, 2009; Al-Mohanna, 2010; Madkur, 2018), have demonstrated the failure of its implementation, especially in EFL contexts where English is taught as a foreign language. This may be due to some difficulties and barriers, such as poor English proficiency, a lack of time, and issues relating to anxiety, which were discussed from the teachers' point of view (Abdulkader, 2016; Huang, 2016).

Little attention, however, has been paid to this issue, particularly from the EFL learners' perspective. Hence, an investigation from their perspective, relating to the difficulties and challenges they face in CLT practices, can be very informative, providing guidance to augment its effectiveness in EFL settings. Therefore, this study addresses a topic that may prove to be vital in bringing about positive changes in English classroom teaching.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Although communicative language teaching has been adopted in EFL contexts for more than three decades, many traditional methods, such as the grammar-translation method, are still prevalent (Al-Mohanna, 2010, p. 69). As a result, most EFL learners are unable to use English for communicative purposes. Even if the policies and curricula support the adoption of CLT, there are many factors that could contribute to the failure of CLT adaptation in EFL classrooms. Many of these have been pointed out by other researchers as student-related issues, such as low English proficiency and anxiety (Chen, 2007; Khan, 2011). Hence, only EFL learners can explain what they have experienced. Thus, it is essential to explore their views regarding any difficulties they might encounter in a communicative classroom, as this will help teachers, educators, and policy makers to adapt any necessary changes, to make the approach more successful in their contexts.

1.2. Significance of the Study

Difficulties that pose themselves as barriers in the implementation of CLT stem from educators' own feelings towards communicative language teaching (Abdulkader, 2016; Chang, 2011; Huang, 2016; Li, 1998). However, only a few studies have investigated learners' views towards the obstacles that could hinder the successful

implementation of CLT (Chen, 2007). Learners' views in relation to learning and learning difficulties cannot be ignored, as noted by Savignon (1991), particularly when there is a mismatch between the beliefs of teachers and learners (Schulz 1996, as cited in Savignon & Wang, 2003).

The significance of the present study partially emerges from the fact that it has not been previously conducted in a Saudi context. Indeed, to the best of my knowledge, no previous studies have attempted to investigate learners' viewpoints about CLT implementation in a Saudi context. This, then, underlines the dire need for such research. As such, the present study is important, for it explores why CLT, specifically as an innovative approach, is not always successfully adopted into EFL Saudi English classrooms. Also, the results from the learners' viewpoint may hopefully lead to a number of recommendations that will contribute to the improvement of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Saudi Arabia and across other EFL contexts.

1.3. Research Questions

This study investigates the barriers or difficulties that hinder, or at least affect, the smooth implementation of communicative language teaching in English classes in a Saudi context, specifically from the learners' point of view. Furthermore, it finds the reasons behind them, to provide suitable and practical recommendations.

The following questions are answered:

- a. Do Saudi EFL students welcome the communicative approach in their English classrooms?
- b. What are the difficulties or barriers that students may face?
- c. Why do these issues exist?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Communicative Competence

Chomsky was the first person to realise that there exists a clear difference between lexical items, such as *performance* versus *competence*. He believed that competence refers to a language user's knowledge of various grammatical rules, whilst performance is the use of this knowledge to successfully communicate (Hymes, 1972). Yet, the model has been criticised for its simplicity (Halliday, 1975; Hymes, 1972). In response to Chomsky's idealised competence, Hymes countered that he ignores sociocultural factors. Indeed, he suggested that possessing linguistic knowledge is not enough to communicate within meaningful contexts for foreign language learners, as language is not a separate entity, but rather a means of social communication within society (Richards, 2006). Hymes (1972) came up with the concept of "communicative competence," which is defined as the knowledge a language speaker must gain in order to communicate within any 'speech community' (Hymes, 1972). For instance, a speaker must consider if their language will be appropriate in the context in which it is used, in addition to speaking in accordance to existing grammatical and linguistic rules.

2.2. Definition of CLT

The primary goal of CLT is to develop the communicative competence of learners. Although a plethora of definitions have been offered in the literature relating to CLT, most scholars, like Richards and Rodgers (1986), have agreed on a main feature of CLT: "It is learner-centered and experience-based" (p. 69). Brown (2001) offered the following four characteristics as a clear definition of CLT, and they are aligned with the current study:

- a. "Classroom goals are focused on all the components of communicative competence and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.
- b. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus, but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.
- c. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times, fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.
- d. In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts" (Brown, 2001, p. 267).

2.3. CLT Implementation and Resistance in EFL Classrooms

The influential role of CLT in English Language Teaching has spread from Western countries to non-Western ones, where English, as a lingua-franca, is now being taught as a second language. CLT was introduced within an ESL context in the early 1970s, but it took a decade to be used as an English Language Teaching method in an EFL context (Butler, 2011, p. 39). The ELT literature revealed that CLT, as an approach, was adopted by policy makers and language educators in the late 20th century (W. Littlewood, 2007). This is because EFL learners need to use English for communication purposes, which is a result of the rapidly growing international needs for business, travel, and technology. The traditional approaches no longer serve the needs of EFL learners.

Despite the widespread use of CLT in various EFL contexts, research has pointed to many sources of

resistance to a CLT approach, much of which has been reported by teachers (Abdulkader, 2016; Abu-Ras, 2009; Bakarman, 2004; Chang, 2011; Huang, 2016; Wada, 2002; Zulu, 2019), whilst some have been reported by students (Chen, 2007). For example, Littlewood's (2007) review of several published papers revealed that factors associated with classroom management, students' avoidance of English, minimal demands on English competence, and conflicts with educational values and traditions possibly constrained CLT. Some studies (Chen, 2007; Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2004; Li, 1998; Menking, 2001; Ozsevik, 2010; Wang, 2002) have found that it is very difficult for teachers to conduct oral communicative activities with students who possess low levels of English language proficiency. Huang (2016) found students' English proficiency to be the main problem in CLT implementation in an EFL context. This barrier prevented them from using the target language freely. Another barrier faced by learners is the continuous influence of their mother tongue. According to Baker and Westrup (2003, p. 12), "[...] barriers to learning can occur if students knowingly or unknowingly transfer the cultural rules from their mother tongue to a foreign language." Moreover, a lack of student motivation towards communicative competence is a key problem according to many critics (Chen, 2007; Ellis, 1994; Huang, 2016; Li, 1998; Rao, 2002). Teachers attempting to implement communicative activities find it difficult to do so, as their students' primary aim is only to pass grammar-based exams (Al-Mohanna, 2010; Alrabai, 2018).

In addition, Menking (2001) identified other problems from the teachers' perspectives. He conducted his study on 36 instructors at different universities and junior colleges in Japan using a questionnaire. The findings indicate the following: (a) students have negative attitudes towards pair and group work, (b) it is difficult for them to interact verbally in pairs and small groups, and (c) most are embarrassed to make mistakes in front of the class. Menking (2001) recommended that instruction should continue for a period of time before students accept the CA.

Chen (2007) also highlighted student-related barriers in relation to CLT implementation, investigating students' attitudes via questionnaires and interviews. His findings revealed that the students had positive attitudes towards interactive activities, but barriers exist in relation to the communicative approach. These include: (a) ideological factors, (b) a lack of real interaction in the atmosphere and environment, and (c) problems due to their English proficiency.

Finally, Inceay and Inceay (2009) investigated the perceptions of thirty Turkish college students' attitudes towards CLT and non-CLT activities in their EFL classes. They found that the teaching methods of Turkish EFL classroom must be modified, so that they can cater to the students' existing learning habits. It was further suggested that students would benefit from both communicative and non-communicative activities. So, aligning CLT with traditional teaching practices is beneficial for EFL students.

The present study investigates the barriers when it comes to implementing CLT in Saudi EFL classrooms. The above discussion has shown that many studies have explored teachers' perspectives towards the sources of resistance to CLT in EFL classrooms. However, only a few have focused on investigating EFL learners' voice regarding these difficulties. Hence, this study explores barriers in the implementation of CLT from the learners' point of view.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Type of Study

For the purpose of the study, the researcher conducted a mixed-method research consisting of a questionnaire and face-to-face interviews. Having the privilege of "the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in which the data collected concurrently or sequentially [...] involves the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research" (Creswell, 2003, p. 112).

In this study, the mixed methodology is represented in the use of a survey questionnaire and follow-up face-to-face interviews. These methods helped to unravel the Saudi EFL learners' perceived difficulties in relation to the successful implementation of CLT. The interviews enabled the researcher to probe into the difficulties or challenges not processable through a questionnaire alone. An important advantage of mixed-method research methodology is triangulation. Indeed, this step can validate data, helping to ensure the credibility of the findings (Amores, 1997; Creswell, 2003).

3.2. Participants

The participants in this study were 74 EFL Saudi female university students. All were undergraduate students in their first level, enrolled in a Listening and Speaking 1 course as a part of five-year BA program. Their median age was 19-years-old. All of the participants studied a Listening and Speaking course according to the CLT principles. This course was taught by a native-speaking English teacher. Resources other than textbooks were used in order to gather communicative materials. At the end of the first semester, all participants were asked to complete the questionnaire, and 27 were asked to participate in a succeeding interview.

In the selection of the interview informants, Patton's "maximum variation sampling" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) was used, to ensure that the participants were representative of the sample. The researcher allowed for maximum variation in the participants' English proficiency levels (9 Good, 9 Fair, and 9 Poor).

3.3. Instruments of Data Collection

Approval from the College Dean had to be granted prior to data collection. An informed consent form was given to the participants, explaining the purpose of the present study, along with their rights. Permission for the researcher to use their data for research purposes was also sought. In this study, two types of data collection methods were primarily used: a survey questionnaire (Appendix A) and semi-structured interviews (Appendix B).

3.3.1. Written Questionnaire

The written questionnaire used in this study consists of 39 items. Some of the questionnaire items (1, 2, 9, 12, 13, 14, 22, 40, and 41) were selected items from previous studies (Al-Twairish, 2009; Gardner, 1972; E. K. Horwitz, 1988; Savignon & Wang, 2003; Schmidt & Watanabe, 2001). The others, totalling 29 in number, were created by the researcher based on extensive reading in the related literature review. The items in the written survey were selected, modified, and created, to explore EFL learners' attitudes towards CLT, the difficulties and challenges they may have encountered whilst practicing CLT activities in a Saudi context, and the potential reasons behind them.

All of the items in the questionnaire were translated into Arabic, the learners' mother tongue, to avoid any misunderstandings. I translated the questionnaire into Arabic (I have a B.A. degree in English-Arabic Translation). The translation was then revised by two bilingual experts, both of whom approved the translation.

3.3.2. Interview

Semi-structured interviews with 27 participant students were further conducted, which acted as another crucial method of data collection. Berg (1989) argued that interviews of this nature are conducted in a "[...] systematic and consistent order, but it allows the interviewers sufficient freedom to digress; that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact, expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared and standardized questions" (p. 17). Thus, a semi-structured interview allows for adaptability in questioning. Consequently, the interview data helped the researcher to gain a deeper understanding in relation to CLT use in a Saudi context. Furthermore, the interview data enabled the researcher to receive follow-up information that was helpful in the case of incomplete or hard-to-understand questionnaire responses (Salkind, 2009, p. 195).

After signing the consent forms, the researcher conducted the interviews with 27 participants, all of whom had different levels of English proficiency (9 Good, 9 Fair, and 9 Poor) in Arabic, so they could express themselves fully and freely. Each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes. The semi-structured questionnaire involved a list of open-ended questions, as well as closed-ended ones. Justification questions were also used, depending on the interviewees' responses. All of the questions focused on revealing the difficulties that learners faced in communicative classrooms, other than those reported in the survey questionnaire, and understanding the reasons behind them in a Saudi context. Moreover, the interviews were audio-recorded, then transcribed after the students' consent had been obtained, in order to gather accurate information. For the purposes of confidentiality, a pseudonym was given to the participants when any direct quotations were used in the final report, therefore ensuring their privacy.

3.4. Data Analysis

The questionnaire data was analysed using SPSS, specifically to calculate the means and total number of the participants' responses, frequency, and percentage marking on each response for each statement. In order to perform statistical analysis, their responses to the questionnaire items were calculated by assigning a value to each response. The quantitative data was sorted into several categories to integrate with the qualitative data.

In analysing the qualitative interview data, the researcher will use the content analysis technique, which involves creating a list of coded categories, then proceeding to insert each into its respective category. This mode of analysis makes it easier for researchers to systematically decipher volumes of data. In addition, it allows for inferences to be made, all of which may be corroborated via alternative methods of gathering data (Merriam, 2001).

4. Results

4.1. Analysis of Descriptive Statistics

The following sections introduce the descriptive statistical analysis of the written survey, as well as an analysis of the open-ended responses. The results will be reported according to the three research questions in three major subsections: 1) learners' attitudes towards CLT, 2) learners' perceived difficulties in implementing CLT, and 3) the reasons behind these difficulties.

4.1.1. Learners' Attitudes Towards CLT

As seen in Table 1, the majority of students agreed with all of the items.

Table 1: Mean Scores for Learners' Attitudes Towards Communicative Activities

No	Item		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD	Order
9	I like learning English through group and pair work.	Freq.	34	30	6	3	1	4.26	0.877	3
		%	45.9	40.5	8.1	4.1	1.4			
10	Working in pairs and small groups helps to improve my English skills	Freq.	36	30	4	4	-	4.32	0.813	2
		%	48.6	40.5	5.4	5.4	-			
11	Working in pairs and small groups encourages students who are not willing to speak in front of a full class.	Freq.	46	18	9	1	-	4.47	0.763	1
		%	62.2	24.3	12.2	1.4	-			
12	Working in pairs and small groups increases my self-confidence.	Freq.	33	27	9	4	1	4.18	0.942	4
		%	44.6	36.5	12.2	5.4	1.4			
General Mean							4.307			

The highest mean score is 4.86 for item ten, indicating that the majority of the respondents (98%) believed that working in pairs and small groups helped to improve their English skills. In addition, a high number of students (86.5%) believed that working in pairs and small groups encouraged those who were not willing to speak in front of a full class, as indicated by the mean score of 4.47 for item eleven. Moreover, item nine received a mean score of 4.26, indicating that 86.4% of the participants liked learning English through groups and pairs. Finally, item 12 received the lowest mean (4.18), indicating that most of the students (81.1%) strongly agreed, or agreed, that working in pairs and small groups increased their self-confidence.

The general mean of this subscale was 4.307, indicating that students had positive attitudes towards CLT implementation in their English classes. However, the questionnaire data revealed that 93.2% of the participants faced difficulties whilst participating in communicative activities, as evidenced from the mean score of 4.36, which is shown in Table 2. This indicated that the majority of the participants encountered problems whilst carrying out interactive tasks.

Table 2: Mean Score for item 22

No	Item		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
22	I may face some difficulties whilst participating in interactive activities.	Freq.	34	35	3	2	-	4.36	0.694
		%	45.9	47.3	4.1	2.7	-		

In other words, the participating students welcomed the communicative language teaching in their English classes. However, they faced some barriers or difficulties that may have hindered the effectiveness of successful implementation of CLT. These difficulties are highlighted and discussed from the learners' perspective in the following section.

4.1.2. Learners' Perceived Difficulties in Communicative Classroom

According to the questionnaire results, the difficulties that learners face, which stem from interactive activities, are as follows: difficulty in expressing themselves (82.4%), low levels of participation (60.8%), foreign language inhibition and anxiety (56.05%), difficulty in organising ideas (51.3%), and difficulty in understanding others (48.6%). Figure 1 provides a clearer view of the learners' difficulties in a communicative classroom, as evidenced from the questionnaire.

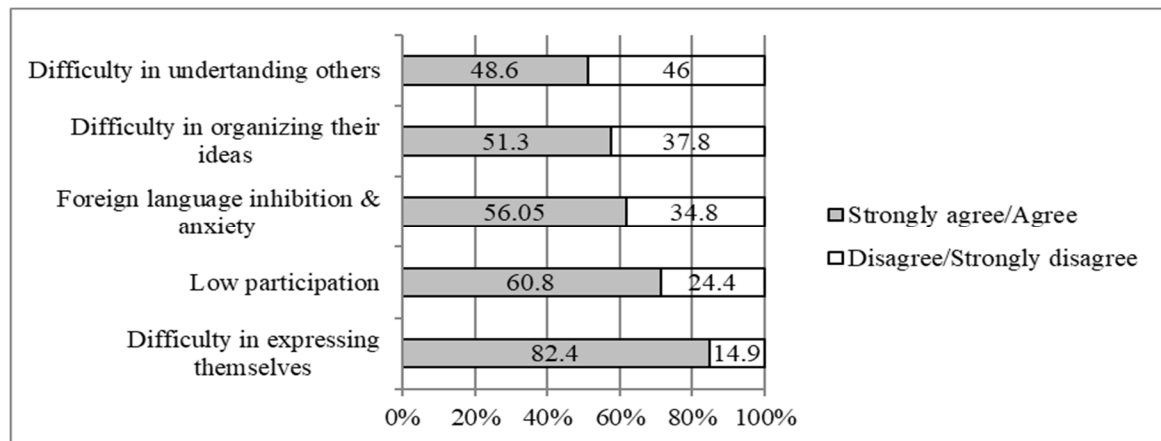


Figure 1. Learners' perceived difficulties, as evidenced from the questionnaire

As shown in Figure 1, the majority of the respondents (82.4%) admitted that their *inability to express themselves in English* was a major challenge. According to their responses, difficulty in expressing themselves was ranked by the majority as the first major barrier when it came to participating in interactive activities.

Secondly, most of the participants (28.4% strongly agreed and 32.4% agreed) confirmed that they *rarely participated in English classes*. In other words, 60.8% tended to keep silent in communicative classrooms. With a mean of 3.58, this barrier was ranked as the second major problem.

The third barrier demonstrated by most of the students was *inhibition and anxiety*. Table 4.4 presents the descriptive statistics for the items relating to foreign language inhibition and anxiety (item 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, and 34).

Table 3: Mean Scores for Items 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, and 34 (Inhibition and Anxiety)

Item No	Statement	SA	A	Neutral	Dis	SDis	Mean	SD	Order	
29	I always feel embarrassed when I try to speak English in front of the class.	Freq.	22	25	7	16	4	3.61	1.269	2
		%	29.7	33.8	9.5	21.6	5.4			
30	I always feel anxious when I try to speak English in front of the class.	Freq.	18	23	10	19	4	3.43	1.261	4
		%	24.3	31.1	13.5	25.7	5.4			
31	I always feel afraid of making mistakes in front of the class.	Freq.	22	20	8	20	4	3.49	1.306	3
		%	29.7	27	10.8	27	5.4			
32	I always feel hesitant when it comes to asking my teacher questions in front of the class.	Freq.	19	21	5	23	6	3.32	1.336	5
		%	25.7	28.4	6.8	31.1	8.1			
33	I always feel afraid of being laughed at by others when I try to speak English.	Freq.	12	18	2	31	11	2.85	1.38	6
		%	16.2	24.3	2.7	41.9	14.9			
34	I speak English only when I am sure I can correctly answer.	Freq.	35	14	8	15	2	3.88	1.282	1
		%	47.3	18.9	10.8	20.3	2.7			
	Average of the participants' responses	Freq.	21	20	7	21	5	3.43	1.305	
		%	28.8	27.25	9.01	27.9	6.9			

It appears from Table 3 that the majority of the respondents agreed to all of the aforementioned three items, except item number 33 (M=2.85), which was approved by 40.5%. This indicated that most of the participants suffered from foreign language inhibition and anxiety, which prohibited them from being actively involved in communicative activities.

The highest mean score was 3.88 for item 34, which indicates that a high number of the students (47.3% strongly agreed and 18.9% agreed) were comfortable speaking English if their language was correct. In addition, participants' responses to item 29 showed that 63.5% (29.7% strongly agreed and 33.8% agreed) expressed a feeling of embarrassment when they attempted to speak English in front of their peers (M=3.61). More than half (56.7%: 29.7% strongly agreed and 27% agreed, M=3.49) demonstrated that they felt afraid of making mistakes (item 31). Moreover, 55.4% (24.3% strongly agreed and 31.1% agreed) always felt anxious when they were asked to speak English in classroom activities. Indeed, the item addressing this issue (item 30) received a mean score of 3.43. Furthermore, item 32 received a mean score of 3.32, showing that 54.1% of students (25.7% strongly agreed and 28.4% agreed) hesitated when it came to asking the teacher a question. Item 33, however, received the lowest mean score (2.85), indicating that less than half of the students (16.2% agreed and 24.3% strongly agreed) showed resistance to participating in communicative activities, as they were afraid of being laughed at when they were asked to speak in English.

The survey respondents found that *difficulty in organising their ideas* forms a fourth obstacle for students. More than half of the students (51.3%) strongly agreed, and agreed that they had difficulty in organising their ideas whilst preparing for interactive activities. However, 37.8% believed that organising their ideas within a group was not an issue (Figure 2).

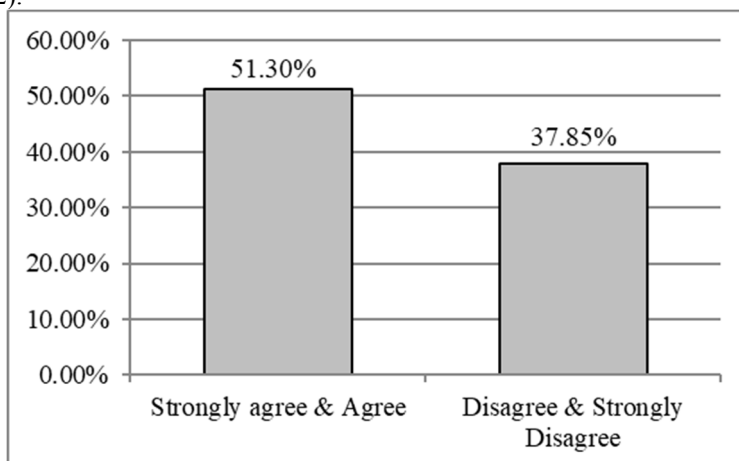


Figure 2. Learners' difficulties in organising their ideas

Students' difficulty in understanding their teacher or friends whilst communicating in the classroom was reported as another important barrier when it came to implementing CLT in English classes. However, the participants differed in their responses to item 24: "In communicative activities, I always find it difficult to understand others." Thirty-six students, which is 48.6% (13.5% strongly agreed and 35.1% agreed), had difficulty understanding others, whereas thirty-four, which is 46% (36.5% disagreed and 9.5% strongly disagreed), reported that this was not a challenging factor. Yet, the number of the students who agreed was slightly more than those who did not (Figure 3).

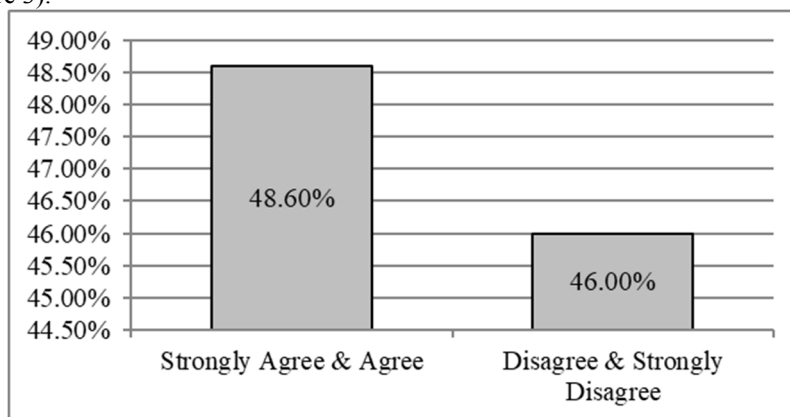


Figure 3. Students' difficulty in understanding their teacher or friends in communicative activities

4.1.3. Reasons behind Learners' Perceived Difficulties

According to the survey results, these difficulties can be classified as follows: (a) learners' limited English proficiency, (b) lack of motivation, (c) previous instructional practice in Secondary schools, (d) reasons pertaining to the teacher, (e) reasons pertaining to classroom activities, and (f) other reasons, each of which will be discussed and analysed in detail below.

a. Learners' Limited English Proficiency

The results of the survey showed that one major difficulty for the learners was their lack of ability to express themselves fluently. This was a direct consequence of their poor language proficiency. Thus, the participants were asked to respond to some questions relating to their language proficiency, in order to become more acquainted with the reasons behind their failure to express their ideas. The following problems emerged, as can be seen in Table 4.5.

Table 4: Mean Scores for Learners' Problems Relating to English Language Proficiency

Item No	Problem		SA	A	Neutral	Dis	SDis	Mean	SD	Order
25	Learners' incapability to produce grammatically correct sentences.	Freq.	16	27	3	25	3	3.38	1.268	2
		%	21.6	36.5	4.1	33.8	4.1			
26	Lack of vocabulary	Freq.	33	31	3	5	2	4.19	0.989	1
		%	44.6	41.9	4.1	6.8	2.7			
27	Learners' poor pronunciation of English words	Freq.	17	18	9	23	7	3.20	1.455	3
		%	23.0	24.3	12.2	31.1	9.5			
General Mean			3.59							

According to Table 4, the highest mean score was 4.19 for item 26, indicating that the majority of the students (44.6% strongly agreed and 41.9% agreed) suggested that a lack of adequate vocabulary constituted a major barrier, as it stopped them from speaking in a range of interactive lessons. In addition, more than half of the students (58.1%) strongly agreed or agreed that they could not express themselves, as they were incapable of producing grammatically correct sentences, with a mean score of 3.38 for item 25. The lowest mean score was 3.20 for item 27, indicating that 47.3% (23% strongly agreed and 24.3% agreed) of the students believed that their poor pronunciation could potentially hinder their active participation in communicative activities. Generally, the participants admitted that their lack of vocabulary, inability to produce grammatically correct sentences, and poor pronunciation were all factors that negatively affected their degree of involvement in interactive activities.

b. Lack of Motivation

In this section, the students were asked to respond to eight 5-Likert scale items designed to investigate their attitudes and motivation towards learning English. Table 4.6 offers an overview of these findings.

Table 5: Mean Scores for Learners' English Language Learning Attitudes and Motivation

Item No	Statement		SA	A	Neutral	Dis	SDis	Mean	SD	Order
1	English is a difficult language to learn.	Freq.	10	37	3	17	6	3.38	1.221	5
		%	13.7	50.7	4.1	23.3	8.2			
2	Learning English is important in my life.	Freq.	58	15	-	1	-	4.76	0.518	1
		%	78.37	20.3	-	1.4	-			
3	I like learning English.	Freq.	42	29	2	1	-	4.51	0.625	2
		%	56.8	39.2	2.7	1.4	-			
4	My main objective when it comes to learning English is to pass exams.	Freq.	22	27	-	17	8	3.51	1.407	4
		%	29.7	36.5	-	23	10.8			
5	During English classes, I try to improve my listening and speaking skills.	Freq.	12	18	2	31	11	2.85	1.38	6
		%	16.2	24.3	2.7	41.9	14.9			
6	If English was not taught at school, I would study it on my own.	Freq.	10	12	6	29	12	2.58	1.365	8
		%	13.5	16.2	8.1	39.2	23.0			
7	I enjoy using English outside the classroom whenever I have the chance.	Freq.	28	24	5	14	2	3.85	1.21	3
		%	38.4	32.9	6.8	19.2	2.7			
8	I try to read English books, newspapers, or magazines outside my English coursework.	Freq.	9	14	6	35	10	2.69	1.271	7
		%	12.2	18.9	8.1	47.3	13.5			
General Mean			3.516							

The highest mean score is 4.76 for item two, indicating that more than 98.67% of the students confirmed that learning English was important to them. Moreover, the majority enjoyed learning English, as indicated by a mean score of 4.51 for item three. Also, item seven received a mean score of 3.85, showing that 71.3% used English outside of the classroom whenever possible.

However, with a mean score of 3.51, more than half of the students admitted that their ultimate goal when it came to learning English was to pass exams. Moreover, a high number (64.4%), with a mean score of 3.38, thought that English was a difficult language to learn. Item five, on the other hand, received a low mean score of 2.85, indicating that more than half of the students (56.8%) did not try to improve their communicative skills during English classes. Another mean score was 2.69, where most of the students did not read different English materials outside of their English coursework syllabus (item eight). Finally, the lowest mean score was 2.58, indicating that 62.2% of the participants disagreed, or strongly disagreed, that they would study English by themselves (item six).

In general, the findings of this part of the questionnaire show that most of the participants have positive attitudes towards learning English, yet they do nothing to improve, as they lack motivation. Thus, the questionnaire data reveals how this particular factor largely accounts for their interactive failures.

c. Previous Instructional Practices in Secondary Schools

An examination of Table 6 shows that the students were asked to respond to three 5-Likert scale items in order to gain insight into general instructional practice they experienced at Secondary school.

Table 6: Mean Scores for previous Classroom Practice in Secondary Schools

Item No	Statement		SA	A	Neutral	Dis	SDis	Mean	SD	Order
13	Whilst learning English, I seldom needed to speak in the classroom	Freq.	18	22	4	21	9	3.26	1.415	1
		%	24.3	29.7	5.4	28.4	12.2			
14	English teaching in my high school was communication-based.	Freq.	1	7	4	32	30	1.88	0.979	3
		%	1.4	9.5	5.4	43.2	40.5			
15	My English teachers often created an atmosphere for us to use English.	Freq.	10	12	6	29	12	2.58	1.365	2
		%	13.5	16.2	8.1	39.2	23.0			
General Mean			2.573							

The highest mean was 3.26, which indicates that more than half of the participants (54%) admitted that they seldom talked in English classes during Secondary school. Moreover, 62.2%, with a mean of 2.58 (39.2% disagreed and 23% strongly disagreed), believed that their English teacher at Secondary school did not create an atmosphere for them to practice English, therefore accounting for their lack of motivation to learn. The lowest mean was 1.88, indicating that the majority (83.7%) believed that English teaching was not communication-based.

On the whole, most of the participating students confirmed that English teaching in Secondary school was mainly based on traditional methods that did not aim to improve their communicative skills. It has been demonstrated that using traditional styles in English teaching is the main reason behind most Saudi students' limited English proficiency, which results in their inability to use the English language for communicative purposes (Abu-Ras, 2009; Al-Mohanna, 2010; Bakarman, 2004).

d. Teacher-related Reasons

In Table 7, the participants were asked to respond to five items in order to trace any teacher-related factors behind learners' difficulties in communicative classrooms.

Table 7: Mean Scores for all questionnaire items related to teacher practices in the classroom

	Statement		SA	A	Neutral	Dis	SDis	Mean	SD	Order
17	During a Listening and Speaking class, my teacher encourages me to talk in English.	Freq.	9	14	6	35	10	2.69	1.271	4
		%	12.2	18.9	8.1	47.3	13.5			
18	When I have difficulty expressing myself, I feel able to ask my teacher for help.	Freq.	21	24	11	13	5	3.58	1.261	2
		%	28.4	32.4	14.9	17.6	6.8			
19	During a task, my teacher helps me as much as he/she can.	Freq.	20	40	4	8	2	3.92	1.004	1
		%	27	54.1	5.4	10.8	2.7			
20	My English teacher tries to engage us in various activities, to help us learn English.	Freq.	11	27	6	25	5	3.19	1.246	3
		%	14.9	36.5	8.1	33.8	6.8			
38	The presence of my teacher in the classroom hinders my active participation in communicative activities.	Freq.	5	17	7	34	11	2.61	1.191	5
		%	6.8	23	9.5	45.9	14.9			
General Mean			3.198							

Item 19 showed the highest mean (3.92), indicating that the majority of the students (27% strongly agreed and 54.1% agreed) thought that their teacher supported them. In addition, most (60.8%) felt able to ask their teacher for help when they had difficulty expressing themselves during interactive activities (item 18). More than half (14.9% strongly agreed and 36.5% agreed) admitted that their teacher tried to engage them in various activities, so they could practice using English (item 20).

Item 17, however, received a mean score of 2.69, which indicated that most of the students (47.3% disagreed and 13.5% strongly disagreed) believed that their teacher did not encourage them to speak in English inside the classroom. In other words, according to 60.8%, the teacher was not a good motivator for his/her students during interactive activities. The lowest mean was 2.61, revealing that more than half of the students (45.9% disagreed and 14.9% strongly disagreed) felt that the presence of their teacher in the classroom could not hinder their active participation in communicative activities (item 38).

To sum up, the participants' responses to items number 18, 19, and 38 indicated that a good relationship existed between the teacher and the students, especially with respect to the provision of help. Moreover, students' responses to item number 20, for example, showed that the teacher provided students with various communicative activities in which they could practice English. However, their responses to item 17 indicated that the teacher failed to motivate them to learn and speak English inside the classroom. It seems that this resulted in participants' feelings of shyness and further contributed to low participation rates.

e. Reasons Pertaining to Classroom Activities

In this part, the students were asked to respond to three 5-point Likert scale items intended to identify activity-related reasons that could contribute to their resistance against communicative activities, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Mean Scores for Items (20, 34, and 35) Related to Classroom Activities

Item No	Statement		SA	A	Neutral	Dis	SDis	Mean	SD	Order
21	The communicative tasks designed by the teacher are close to my real-life situations.	Freq.	5	17	7	34	11	2.61	1.191	3
		%	6.8	23	9.5	45.9	14.9			
35	The time allocated for the task is very short, so I cannot think freely and organise my ideas.	Freq.	17	18	11	24	4	3.27	1.285	2
		%	23.0	24.3	14.9	32.4	5.4			
36	The time allocated for the task is very short, so I cannot exchange ideas with my friends.	Freq.	22	20	8	20	4	3.49	1.306	1
		%	29.7	27	10.8	27	5.4			
General Mean			3.123							

Almost half of the participants (47.3%) thought the time allocated for communicative tasks was not sufficient. Indeed, feeling pressurised for time hindered some students from thinking and organising their ideas. Most of the students (56.7%), with the highest mean score of 3.49, reported that this prevented them from exchanging ideas with friends. The lowest mean score was 2.61, indicating that many of the participants (60.8%) admitted that their classroom tasks or activities did not mirror their real-life situations. Generally, the results revealed that many students confirmed that the short time allocated for an activity and its topic contributed to their weak participation in interactive activities.

f. Other Reasons

Two other factors contributing to students' difficulties in interactive activities were reported by the participants. The first one was *class noise*. As shown in Table 9 below, the majority of the participants (23% strongly agreed and 51.4% agreed) reported that when they were asked to interact with one another, the noise in the class distracted them, as indicated by a mean score of 3.76 for item 39. During interactive activity, there is usually some sort of noise resulting from students' interaction and movement around the classroom. Such noise caused some of the students to become frustrated. Moreover, *Group structure* was also an issue. A mean score of 3.53 indicated that more than half of the participants (59.5%) pointed out that they rarely spoke during interactive activities, as some students tended to dominate.

Table 9: Mean Scores for Students' Opinion Towards Items 37 and 39

Item No	Statement		SA	A	Neutral	Dis	SDis	Mean	SD	Order
39	During group or pair activities, class noise usually distracts me.	Freq.	17	38	5	12	2	3.76	1.07-	1
		%	23	51.4	6.8	16.2	2.7			
37	Sometimes, I keep silent during interactive activities, as some students in my group dominate the whole time.	Freq.	19	25	12	12	6	3.53	1.263	2
		%	25.7	33.8	16.2	16.2	8.1			
General Mean							3.645			

4.2. Analysis of the Interview Data

In this study, 27 students were interviewed. They all had different levels of English proficiency (9 Good level, 9 Fair level, and 9 Poor level), in order to ensure that they were representative of the sample of eighty (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 62). Thematic analysis was applied to analyse the data. Then, frequencies were calculated separately.

The interview data verified the students' favourable attitudes towards CLT. According to the interview data, all of the interviewees welcomed the communicative activities conducted in their English classroom, as they expressed positive attitudes towards CLT. Moreover, the interview data verified the above-mentioned problems and reasons seen in the questionnaire. However, participants reported two new difficulties: the first was the limited contact hours for the Listening and Speaking course, which was reported by 80.8% of the interviewees. In this regard, Ashwaq commented, "We were 35 students in the class. 45 minutes was not enough [time] for the teacher to listen to us or ask us to speak." The participants believed that, as a result of this problem, they did not have an adequate amount of time to practice more communicative activities. The second most reported problem was using Arabic (the participants' mother tongue) to discuss classroom activities. This barrier was reported by 76.9% of the interviewees, all of whom believed that this obstacle prevented them from practicing English. Indeed, Ghadah stated: "The members of my group, unfortunately, used Arabic to discuss the activity. As a result, we could not practice English and benefit from the activity. I think that this is a big problem."

In relation to the reason behind the students' difficulties, the interviewees revealed new issues. Firstly, most respondents reported various activity-related reasons, such as uninteresting, ambiguous, or difficult activities. For example, the teacher may have chosen a topic that their students knew very little or nothing about. As a result, they had nothing to contribute, whether in their native language or the foreign language. Mouneerah explained this situation:

I remember that our teacher asked us, in groups, to compare between the educational system in Saudi Arabia and in the United States. I know our educational system, but I have nothing to say about the American educational system, even in Arabic. Most of my friends share the same feeling."

In addition, 85.1% of the students mentioned that living in an EFL context was a big factor that accounted for their poor communicative skills, in addition to their lack of motivation to learn English. This, in turn, hinders the smooth implementation of the interactive approach within English classes, or even results in complete failure.

To conclude, the questionnaire data revealed that although all of the participating students desired the communicative activities to be implemented, they faced some difficulties that could hinder the effectiveness of the activities. For example, difficulties in expressing themselves, low levels of participation, foreign language inhibition and anxiety, difficulty in organising ideas and understanding others, limited contact hours for the course, and the use of Arabic were all reported as challenges students faced when it came to implementing interactive activities. According to the students, these barriers stemmed from different reasons, such as limited English proficiency, previous instructional practices in Secondary school, the teacher's role as a motivator, the amount of time allocated for classroom activities (including the topic, noise levels, and group structures), the examination system, activity-related issues, and the EFL context. The reported barriers and reasons vary in their degree of difficulty amongst the participants.

5. Discussion

Regarding the RQ1, the findings revealed that almost all of the participants had a positive attitude towards implementing communicative language teaching in their English class. This result concurs with other studies investigating learners' attitudes towards CLT (Al-Twairish, 2009; Chen, 2007; Farooq, 2015; Huang, 2016; Rao, 2002). Moreover, the majority believed that communicative activities improved their English skills (M= 4.32),

encouraged students who were not willing to speak in front of a full class ($M= 4.47$), and increased their self-confidence ($M= 4.18$). These findings corroborate with the findings of other critics (Chen, 2007; Kouicem, 2010; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Zulu, 2019), many of whom have argued that students' oral proficiency can be improved when they engage in communicative activities, mainly by interacting with one another.

The difficulties reported from the study's results, then, is consistent with that of the current existing literature. As such, it can be argued that students learning English in other EFL countries face the same, or similar, difficulties when it comes to the implementation of CLT. However, some of these studies have reported learners' difficulties from their teachers' point of view (Abdulkader, 2016; Chang, 2011; Huang, 2016; Zulu, 2019).

One major barrier reported by the participants of this study was *learners' inability to express themselves freely in English*. Dana and Tracy (1996), Chen (2007), and Huang (2016) reported that students had great difficulty expressing themselves in English inside the classroom. In these studies, identical results were produced.

In addition, *students' low level of participation* was identified as a major problem. This finding supports Ellis's (1994) claim that anxiety is one of the main reasons for learners' reticence. According to Khan (2011) and Rivers (1968), personality factors can affect participation in a foreign language. There are some students who tend to be dominant when working in groups. However, others prefer to speak only if they are sure that their answer is correct, whilst others keep silent, showing no interest in participating throughout the course.

Foreign language inhibition and an anxiety barrier were also noted by other researchers. Indeed, Alrabai (2014), E. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), W Littlewood (1999) and Tanveer (2007) revealed how this is a huge problem in second language learning. For example, Littlewood (1999) argued, "It is too easy for a foreign language classroom to create inhibition and anxiety" (p. 93). Most scholars have agreed that foreign language anxiety is a complex phenomenon and predictor of foreign language achievement (Young, 1999). For example, Alrabai (2014) asserted that it adversely affects students' self-confidence and, ultimately, hampers their proficiency regarding language acquisition. It has been estimated that about one-third of students experience some type of foreign language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). Tanveer (2007) claimed that feelings of anxiety, apprehension, and nervousness had a harmful effect on learners' speaking abilities and communication levels in relation to the target language. He suggested that learners' anxieties should be reduced in order to improve their speaking abilities.

The interviewees reported different anxiety provoking sources in the classroom, such as low English proficiency, a negative classroom experience, an inability to comprehend, and the learners' learning style. These reported sources also confirm the findings of previous research (Huang, 2016; Oxford, 1999; Phillips, 1999; Tanveer, 2007).

In addition, *the difficulties learners face when it comes to organising their ideas* was identified as another challenge for those in a communicative classroom. Chen (2007) pointed out that some of her students had difficulty organising their ideas whilst speaking. Also, Menking (2001) emphasised this problem, but from the teachers' perspective.

The questionnaire data also exposed *the problems learners encounter when it comes to understanding others*. This is another barrier that prevented them from becoming involved in interactive activities. Previous research confirms that students had great difficulty with class participation in terms of general listening comprehension (Chen, 2007; Dana & Tracy, 1996; Dooley, 2006; Matsuya, 2003).

Many of the student participants admitted that they possessed poor listening comprehension skills, which they claimed to have inherited from the traditional methods of English teaching within a school setting. This supports Al-Hajailan's (2006) finding that most EFL students in Saudi schools rarely listened to native speakers and authentic materials. He suggested that teachers should use different kinds of different audio recourses, where students listen to native speakers in order to improve their listening comprehension.

It was also reported that *limited contact hours for the Listening and Speaking course* was another significant cause for most of the participants' problems. This corresponds to AbuGrarah's (1993) and Al-Ma'shy's (2011) respective studies. Indeed, they found that one of the main causes for students' weakness when it comes to speaking English is the limited number of lessons they receive. Moreover, the instruction time was reported in previous studies from the teachers' point of view as a potential problem impeding the implementation of CLT (Abdulkader, 2016; Al-Ma'shy, 2011; Huang, 2011; Jia & Jia, 2003; Wang, 2002). Some of the teachers involved in these studies aimed to improve their students' communicative skills. However, they found it difficult to conduct communicative activities, as they are very time-consuming. The study's results reveal a number of factors that contributed to the learners' difficulties. These findings are consistent with the discussion that took place in chapter two, although some of these reasons were investigated from the teachers' perspectives. In the present study, the *learners' limited English proficiency* was considered to be a major factor that created difficulties in a communicative classroom. Bachman (1990) argued that linguistic competence is made up of two factors: organisation competence and pragmatic competence. Organisational competence refers to a language user's textual and grammatical competence, whilst the latter refers to their knowledge of the ways in which linguistic rules convey meanings. The ill development of students' communicative competence was reported by the majority of the survey respondents.

They identified three dimensions of English proficiency, all of which are quite similar to those reported by other researchers, such as: (a) the lack of adequate vocabulary (Al-Ma'shy, 2011; Chen, 2007; Huang, 2016; Tanveer, 2007), (b) poor pronunciation (Al-Ma'shy, 2011; Khan, 2011; Ozsevik, 2010; Wang, 2002; Zulu, 2019), and (c) the inability to produce grammatically correct sentences (Al-Khreshah, 2010; Al-Mohanna, 2010; Al-Musharraf, 2007; Chen, 2007; Khan, 2011).

Another reason reported from the findings of the present study was *learners' lack of motivation in relation to communicative competence*. Motivation is a key factor in language learning: utilising it can help teachers to increase students' achievement and long-term persistence in learning. The findings of the present study mirror those of Rababah (2002), Rao (2002), Chen (2007), Ozsevik (2010) and Huang (2016), all of whom reported that students' lack of motivation was a primary reason for their resistance to communicative activities.

The findings of this study demonstrate how the *general instruction practices that students experienced at school* was one of the reasons for their problems, such as their deficiency in spoken English, which consequently resulted in their inability to use English for communicative purposes. A majority of the students believed that the English lessons they received in Secondary school depended on traditional methods that focused on structural knowledge. This confirms the findings of previous studies (Abu-Ras, 2009; Al-Hajailan, 2006; Al-Mohanna, 2010; Alrabai, 2018; Zulu, 2019). As such, it is recommended that English teachers make use of CLT implementation in their classes, to improve students' communicative skills.

In this regard, an explanation for the students' resistance against interactive activities can be offered. As the participating students have been in school for at least seven years by the time they enter university, they are accustomed to the traditional language teaching styles in English classes, which is dominated by a teacher-centered, book-centered approach and an emphasis on rote memorisation. Therefore, as suggested by Menking (2001), communicative approach instruction should keep on for a period of time before students accept it.

The findings of this study further reveal how the survey respondents mentioned some other *reasons pertaining to the nature of classroom activities*. Most thought the time allocated for a task was insufficient for them to think freely, organise their ideas, and exchange them with their partners. Hence, it is difficult to achieve CLT-oriented activities, because they are so time-consuming (Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2004; Jia & Jia, 2003; Liao, 2000; Wang, 2002).

In addition, the findings reported that *the amount of noise involved in group work* could contribute to the difficulties students faced. Indeed, there was normally some sort of noise when the students were asked to interact in groups or pairs inside the classroom. This resulted from moving around chairs and, of course, the collective talk of the students. Therefore, students may find it difficult to hear each other, so they may raise their voices, increasing the noise levels within the classroom. Rao (2002) reported that loud noises cause students to feel frustrated during group interactions. Furthermore, the results showed that more than half of the participants (59.5%) were not active participants, as some *group members tended to dominate talk time*. Indeed, some students complained of having a talkative member in their group – one who prevented them from practicing English, as reported by Kouicem (2010). Yet, some students were happy with this, as it took the attention off them. Harmer (2001) suggested grouping the weaker contributors in groups and letting them work together, so they would not be able to hide behind the stronger ones. As such, the teacher will achieve higher levels of participation.

Another related reason was the topic of the activity itself. More than half of the participants demonstrated that some of the activities they practiced in class were not *close to their real-life situations*. An explanation can be offered to illuminate this finding. If a teacher is a native speaker of English, this might make their knowledge about Saudi students' needs and culture insufficient, as there is a chance they may not fully understand the culture. Thus, he/she may sometimes choose topics which are irrelevant to the Saudi students' real lives, such as talking about the American education system and comparing it to the Saudi one. Therefore, previous research has tended to report that non-native English-speaking teachers can be more empathetic to the needs of their learners (Medgyes, 1992; Walkinshaw & H., 2012). Indeed, as they are also learners, they are still struggling with English, which makes them more sensitive and understanding to learners' needs (Reves & Medgyes, 1994).

The results from the interview revealed that the third reason for students' difficulties was the EFL situation. A majority (85.1%) indicated that this was the main cause for their weakness in spoken English. This corresponds to various findings that confirm how learning English in an EFL situation contributes to students' poor communication skills and reduces their motivation to learn English (Ellis, 1994; Hiep, 2007; Ozsevik, 2010; Rababah, 2002).

As indicated by Ellis (1994), a "culturally heterogeneous language classroom" helps learners to increase their motivation and adapt to new learning methods more quickly. However, the participants of the current study have the same native tongue (i.e., Arabic). Therefore, they generally attempted to use Arabic in class to discuss tasks, for example. This reduced their chance to practice speaking English and, in turn, improve their communicative competence.

Learners in an EFL context tend to only learn English for specific purposes. As indicated before, the participants seemed to be instrumentally motivated: most revealed they only learned English to obtain a high-paying job, for instance (Harmer, 2001). Hence, the EFL situation is responsible for the participants' low

motivation for learning English, which consequently results in their second language deficiencies. Abu-Ghararah (1993) suggested that, to solve this problem, the hours spent teaching and speaking English, and encouraging students to communicate with other peers in English, both inside and outside the classroom, should be increased.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations, which arose from this study's findings, can be made to EFL educators and policy makers. Adequate training should be offered to EFL teachers through pre-service and in-service courses, to help them successfully adopt CLT in their classrooms and help students to become autonomous learners. Also, this step will counter the learners' lack of motivation to learn English due to the EFL situation. Students should further be encouraged to use English to communicate with their classmates and teachers, both inside and outside of the classroom. Moreover, there is a serious need to increase the number of English teaching contact hours, in order to offer EFL learners additional opportunities to practice interactive activities. In addition, teachers are highly recommended to create a comfortable and friendly atmosphere for learners, to reduce language anxiety within their English classrooms. More importantly, English assessments should incorporate all four skills, with an emphasis on speaking. These changes would positively impact upon students' learning strategies and roles, consequently encouraging them to engage with CLT principles.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Please, put (✓) under the statement that corresponds to your degree of agreement.

May I thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Example:

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Learning English helps me to read books, newspapers or magazines written in English.	✓				

1. General Language Learning Attitudes and Motivation						
No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	English is a difficult language to learn.					
2	Learning English is important in my life.					
3	I like to learn English.					
4	My main objective in learning English is to pass exams.					
5	During English classes, I try to improve my listening and speaking skills.					
6	If English were not taught at school, I would study it on my own.					
7	I enjoy using English outside the classroom whenever I have the chance.					
8	I try to read English books, newspapers or magazines outside my English coursework.					
2. Attitudes Towards Communicative Language Teaching						
No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	
9	I like learning English through groups and pairs.					
10	Working in pairs and small groups helps to improve my English skills.					
11	Working in pairs and small groups encourages students who are not willing to speak in front of a full class.					
12	Working in pairs and small groups increases my self-confidence.					
3. English Practice in the classroom in my High School						
No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
13	Whilst learning English, I seldom needed to speak in the classroom.					
14	English teaching in my high school was communication-based.					
15	My English teachers often created an atmosphere for us to use English.					

4. Practicing English during my Speaking & Listening Classes Now						
No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16	In a Listening & Speaking class, I rarely speak English.					
17	During a Listening & Speaking class, my teacher encourages me to speak English.					
18	When I have difficulty expressing myself, I feel able to ask my teacher for help.					
19	During a task, my teacher helps me as much as he/she can.					
20	My English teacher tries to engage us in various activities, to help us learn English.					
21	The communicative tasks designed by the teacher are close to my real-life situations.					
5. Difficulties in Participating in CLT activities and Reasons behind them						
No	Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
22	I face some difficulties while participating in interactive activities.					
23	I always find it difficult to express myself in English freely.					
24	In communicative activities, I always find it difficult to understand others.					
25	In communicative activities, I have difficulty in producing grammatically correct sentences.					
26	Lack of vocabulary is a problem that may hinder my active participation in communicative activities.					
27	My poor pronunciation of English words is a problem that may hinder my active participation in communicative activities.					
28	In communicative activities, I always find it difficult to organize my ideas.					
29	I always feel embarrassed when I try to speak English in front of the class.					
30	I always feel anxious when I try to speak English in front of the class.					
31	I always feel afraid of making mistakes in front of the class.					
32	I always feel hesitant when it comes to asking my teacher questions in front of the class.					
33	I always feel afraid of being laughed at by others when I try to speak English.					
34	I speak English only when I am sure I can correctly answer.					
35	The time allocated for the task is very short, so I cannot think freely and organise my ideas.					
36	The time allocated for the task is very short, so I cannot exchange ideas with my friends.					
37	Sometimes, I keep silent during interactive activities, as some students in my group dominate the whole time.					
38	The presence of my teacher in the classroom hinders my active participation in communicative activities.					
39	During group or pair activities, class noise usually distracts me.					

If You have any other difficulties that may face you while participating in communicative activities, would you kindly mention them:

End of the Questionnaire

Appendix B

Interview Questions (English version)

General Instructions: This interview is mainly composed of open-ended questions that address the difficulties learners face in classrooms where Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been implemented. The interviewer can ask some additional questions based on the interviewees' responses.

Sample Questions:

1. Opening the interview.
2. To what extent do you participate in communicative activities? Do you use English to express yourself OR do you prefer to remain silent?
3. In classroom activities, do you prefer to work alone OR within a group? Why?
4. Have there been any difficulties that you have faced whilst participating in communicative activities?
5. What were these difficulties?
6. What do you think are the reasons behind these difficulties?
7. Do you think these difficulties can be overcome? If yes, how? Also, to what extent?
8. In group work, do you and your friends use Arabic to discuss the activity?
9. Do you think there are some other factors that may affect your active participation in classroom activities, such as anxiety, shyness, a fear of making mistakes, and so forth?
10. What are the reasons behind your lack of participation in communicative activities? (i.e., the task instruction was not clear/the topic was not interesting or related to Saudi culture/you did not have enough information about it, etc.)
11. What do you think about the structure of your group? Describe it, and what is your reaction towards it?
12. Does your teacher interrupt you to correct your mistakes? If so, how do you react?
13. Do you have any other difficulties OR suggestions that may help to increase your participation in communicative activities?