

The Paradox of the CLT Practice in Indonesia: Challenges and Constraints

Shofie Nurul Azizah¹, Fahry Rizaldy Putra²

^{1,2} Yogyakarta State University

¹shofienurulazizah5@gmail.com, fahryrizaldy09@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Keywords: communicative language teaching, communicative competence, challenges and constraints

Indonesia has already used the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach for more than two decades, and research from that time reveals its challenges. This paper aims to synthesize past research to address challenges and constraints in CLT implementation and then suggest ways to tackle the mentioned challenges and constraints. The comprehensive framework from Fadilah (2018) was used to identify four broad categories of challenges. This helped us classify challenges by source and then to solve them. The finding of this study by analyzing Indonesian CLT implantation research is that the challenges of CLT can be divided into four frameworks: a) societal classroom constraints include teacher beliefs, teacher beliefs vs students' preferences, and teachers' workload; b) socioeconomic constraints include class size, grammar-based syllabus, the low of students' participation, unequal educational recourses c) cultural constraints include, local norms, students anxiety, and embarrassment; d) ideological constraints includes English as a foreign language. Further, this paper concludes that these challenges are interconnected and require a systematic approach, with government intervention as a potential first step. This paper offers research-based practical and theoretical recommendation to develop the CLT practice in specific context.

1. Introduction

For over a century, the issue of finding the most excellent and effective ways to teach English as a second and foreign language is still a trending topic in ELT and linguistic areas. The main issues of argument and discussion among the teaching professions for more than a century have been producing grammar rules in language curricula, strengthening the abilities to generate and receive a language, and activating correctness with fluency in language methods (Alamri, 2018). One of the methods of ELT nearly found in 1960 – 1980 is communicative language teaching (CLT). As a result of frustration with older approaches like the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the Audio-Lingual Method, CLT has been adopted in Indonesia (ALM). Approximately 35 years ago, this method was adopted as part of the mandatory education system in Indonesia (Rahmawati, 2018).

CLT was proven to have advantages in the use of English language classrooms. Hien (2021) argued that this approach makes the relationship between teacher and student stronger. It's a relationship that goes both ways. CLT gives students the chance to find out what skills they have and show them off. In this way, the students can learn the target language in a fun way. In the Indonesia context, CLT occasionally failed to be implemented satisfactorily since it was used in 1980 for the first time (Ariatna, 2016). Several limitations posed challenges to the CLT in this developing country, such as the number of students in a classroom, the student's learning preferences, and non-native students' implementation of speaker instructs. Many scholars have

looked into the difficulties and practices of CLT to determine what may be improved in its implementation in Indonesia (Rahman, 2018). Similar research applied to this notion of CLT challenges in Indonesia (Christianto, 2019; Musthafa, 2015; Rahman, 2018) by analyzing the teachers' voices.

However, in the notion of CLT challenges and constraints, those challenges were not being collected comprehensively and divided to the terms in what is called four big frameworks of CLT challenges by Fadilah in 2018. Therefore, this paper will examine some of the challenges and constraints in practicing CLT in Indonesia and give several recommendations to tackle those challenges. This valuable paper can help other researchers or practitioners to develop the best and appropriate practice of CLT in Indonesia by portraying Indonesia's social, economic, and cultural-ideological systems. This paper also can give the government recommendations on the first action to tackle challenges in CLT constraints.

The following section provides an overview of the theory of CLT and discusses implementation challenges in Indonesia. This will be accomplished by reviewing the research related to CLT practices in Indonesia (Christianto, 2019; Gloriez, 2022; Rahmawati, 2018; Sotlikova & Sugirin, 2016). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a perspective on language learning that prioritizes language as a means of verbal communication. This approach developed in the era of "method" between the 1960s - 1980s, in which the language teaching method was considered a determining factor for the success of the learning process (Madya, 2013).

It was a common practice in education to use communicative language teaching (CLT) to help students improve their communication skills. Theoretically, the basic concept of the CLT approach was introduced by Noam Chomsky, a linguist from America, through competency formulation communicative. Nunan (1991) listed the five most important things about CLT: 1. Putting the most effort into learning how to talk in the target language. 2. Doing learning activities with real texts. 3. Giving learners chances to improve their language skills and the way they learn. 4. Stressing the importance of personal experience as a key part of classroom activities. 5. Trying to link classroom work with things that happen outside of school. Based on these characteristics, Canale & Swain (1980) introduced four communicative competencies of CLT, including "grammatical competence," "sociolinguistic competence," "discourse competence," and "strategic competence," while Bachman (1990) divides it into "organizational competence" and "pragmatic competence." CLT means being able to understand and use language in real-life situations (Kiato and Kiato, 1996 cited in Hien, 2021)

There are six characteristics of CLT in common defined by Brown. (1) Classroom objectives are centered on all aspects of communicative competence (grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic). (2) Language techniques are intended to engage students in pragmatic, authentic, functional language use for meaningful purposes. (3) Fluency and accuracy are supplementary principles underpinning communication techniques. (4) Students in a communicative class must eventually use the language in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom, both productively and receptively. (5) Students can focus on their learning process by understanding their learning styles and developing appropriate strategies for autonomous learning. (6) The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide. Students are therefore encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with others (Brown, 1994).

Based on several definitions, assumptions and characteristics previously stated by experts, it can be understood that the CLT approach has a very complex conception and is comprehensive, so there are no limits in articulating that perspective. Yet every expert refers to the same foundation in interpreting the CLT approach, namely, the function of language as a communication tool, interactive and communicative learning activities, learning meaningful, student-centered approach as a general framework learning, cooperative learning as a way to achieve goals learning, communicative competence of language as an achievement in CLT classes, and task-based learning as an effort to build learning motivation.

Brown (1994) indicates several activities for use in the CLT classroom. Among these activities are the fill information gaps, the jigsaw puzzles, the film series, the storytelling, the information-transfer activities, the debate and group discussion, the role-play or mini-drama activity. In Indonesia, CLT applications are common for each school level since there are many documented reports which found this kind of approach is the favourite one. A study by Yanti (2017) investigates teacher perceptions and attitudes toward CLT. She found eight studies from 2013-2019. This review paper categorized research on teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward Communicative Language Teaching into three patterns: teachers' theoretical understanding of CLT, their classroom implementation, and their implementation challenges.

Most teachers liked CLT and understood it theoretically, according to the results. In practice, many teachers disagreed with what they claimed about CLT. This may be due to a lack of teaching training, overwork, students' reluctance to use the target language, large class sizes, and grammar-based examinations. These research reports focused on their teaching contexts, so each setting's culture may affect their perceptions and attitudes toward CLT. Rahmawati (2018) conducted exploratory research on EFL Indonesian teachers' perfectives on using a communicative approach in their classrooms. Two people were selected from each educational level for six participants (primary, secondary and university levels). A questionnaire and in-depth interviews were used to collect qualitative data for the study.

According to the findings, the university teachers in this study have a more nuanced understanding of CLT than their counterparts (primary and secondary teachers), who appear to have developed some misconceptions about it, such as "not" teaching grammar and "only" teaching speaking. Further, the use of Bahasa Indonesia, the teacher's role, and the facilities contradict the CLT practice theory. CLT encourages extensive use of the target language and discourages using the native tongue. However, the participants argued that using Bahasa Indonesia was crucial for facilitating students' comprehension of the material and fostering self-confidence.

Gloriez (2022) examined teachers' perceptions of CLT and its implementation in online education. This study employed a survey research design, and thirty teachers participated as participants. Teachers from junior and senior high schools in Tanjungpinang-Bintan and Batam participated. Two questionnaires served as the research instruments. The findings of this study indicated that teachers had a solid grasp of the CLT principle. However, most teachers disagreed regarding the absence of grammar instruction in CLT. In addition, the teachers utilized CLT in online learning and believed it to be effective and appropriate. Despite the lack of instructional materials, they were also provided with sufficient platform media and Internet access. It demonstrates that teachers had favorable attitudes toward applying and practicing CLT in online learning.

Next is descriptive research by Sotlikova & Sugirin (2016), which described the English lecturers' perceptions of CLT by learning about their understanding and knowledge of CLT, attitudes toward CLT, and challenges in implementing CLT in their English class. This research was qualitative, with 13 Yogyakarta State University Engineering English lecturers participating in this study. Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and documents were used to collect data. The findings indicate that the participants have a solid foundation of knowledge about CLT, a favorable outlook on it, and some experience with it, but that they still face obstacles when trying to implement CLT in their classrooms (a large number of students, different levels of students English proficiency, lost preparation in making the material).

Christian (2019) explored the teachers' perception of using CLT in the English classroom setting of IONS International Education, a non-formal education institute. In-depth interviews were conducted with 4 REAL course teachers at IONS International Education. He found that the teacher has a positive attitude toward using CLT. Besides that, the research participants revealed several challenges in implementing CLT in their classes: students' willingness to speak in English, CLT

material and activities, too noisy classroom, unbalanced interaction between students, big classes, and grammar errors.

2. Method

A library-based approach to qualitative research is used in this paper. The researcher gathered appropriate sources of information and data on the subject, which were the difficulties and constraints related to teachers, students, policy, and the CLT approach itself. Furthermore, Fadilah (2018) comprehensive framework for CLT implementation challenges is used to organize the challenges into meaningful categories and identify key underlying issues with CLT implementation in Indonesia. The framework helps us organize issues into four categories: societal classroom constraints, socioeconomic constraints, cultural constraints, and ideological constraints.

3. Results and Discussion

In this section, several research findings are discussed. To begin, the author's discussion, viewing the CLT in Indonesian curricula context is in the first section and followed by the challenges and constraints of CLT with the author's recommendation to tackle them. Contextually, CLT has been applied in Indonesia for years. It was first incorporated into Indonesia's English language teaching curriculum in Curriculum 1984. Dardjowidjojo (2000) argued, the implementation of CLT was far from communicative at the time. The syllabi and textbook demonstrated that they still strongly understood the Audio Lingual Approach.

In response to this criticism, the communicative-based curriculum has been revised several times. It began in 1994 (meaning-based) when the government began incorporating local content into the curriculum. As the name suggests, it aimed to make learning more meaningful. Reading became the primary focus of the learning objectives in this curriculum (Riadi, 2019). It was then completed in the 2004 curriculum (competency-based). Its distinguishing feature was its emphasis on developing communicative competence for "oracy and literacy" (Agustien, 2004). Standard competencies and indicators were used as criteria to determine whether or not students had achieved the learning outcome. Those who met the criteria were allowed to pass the English subject and vice versa.

Teachers were free to design their teaching process in curriculum 2006 (school-based). The government's role was to establish several minimum standards that students must meet at the end of their learning process. Later, the teachers chose some of them based on the needs of their students. In 2013, Curriculum 13 was introduced (K-13). This curriculum emphasized student character development, resulting in fewer teaching hours and content for English language subjects at the senior high school level (Riadi, 2019). This curriculum used a theme-based teaching approach to help students improve their competence based on their interests. Students were expected to do well in English classes and gain certain linguistic functions, particularly those that could be used in the student's daily communication, such as reading magazines. K-13, like previous curricula, sparked a heated debate among educators, with some blaming insufficient information distributed to teachers and teachers' inability to improve or scaffold limited materials provided by the government.

Finally, the latest curriculum is named by *Merdeka* curriculum. According to Rian Iwinsyah (2020), independent learning in *Merdeka* curricula is one of the initiative programs of the Minister of Education and Culture who wants to create a happy learning atmosphere and a happy atmosphere. The purpose of independent learning is the teachers, students, and parents can have a happy atmosphere. "Freedom learns that the educational process must create happy atmospheres." Therefore, in the context of CLT for *merdeka* curricula the teachers need to give attention to two things; fluency and accuracy (Sari, 2020).

Fluency includes pronunciation, intonation, and speech flow. Students should be introduced to situations and expressions before fluency. After the students can remember and feel comfortable with the idioms, they are taught the proper pronunciation. Some students may feel embarrassed, uncomfortable, or awkward saying these expressions. The teacher can combine this speaking practice with group methods, games (hot potatoes, etc.), or presentations. Telling the students to not to feel bad if they mispronounce. This will offer them confidence and incentive to keep trying. Some students may have trouble remembering the expressions to be discussed. The teacher can write expressions on the board and let students complete them. Students can write this in books. Once students adjust, the writing will be erased.

After fluency, comes pronunciation accuracy. Students increase linguistic accuracy by studying sentence structures when they feel safe, motivated, and familiar with expression tasks. Sentence accuracy helps pupils pronounce sentences correctly. Students' aptitude and recall with

basic sentence structures won't diminish if they want to shorten words or utilize slang later in life. Students will understand the structure of the English language, including subject and predicate, tenses, and sentence context.

They can recognize expressions' intonation. Further, the teacher may experience student disinterest and lack of excitement due to linguistic structural content. The teacher can construct games (jumbled words, fill in the blanks, etc.) and ask pupils to take notes. If these two variables are incorporated into learning English, students will be able to build their language skills autonomously. After selecting and analyzing several studies (Christianto, 2019; Gloriez, 2022; Rahman, 2018; Sotlikova & Sugirin, 2016; Yanti, 2019) in the context of CLT in Indonesia, the researcher found challenges and constraints in CLT practice, especially its practice with Indonesia's social and cultural conditions. Those challenges are divided into four big pictures namely societal classroom constraints, socioeconomic constraints, cultural constraints, and ideological constraints (Fadilah, 2018). The classroom is how CLT applies, where many issues can be found in this place, including several challenges related to the societal classroom.

It has been said that every teacher is "the product of their culture, training, learning, and experiences" (Harmer, 2003, p. 291). In the research, several teachers have a positive attitude toward CLT but some failed to understand the CLT notion. Subjecting teachers to school-based professional training and even extracting a promise to adhere to CLT will not always result in CLT classroom practices. Teachers' professional beliefs may conflict with classroom practice when context and students' English proficiency come into play as found in previous studies (Gloriez, 2022; Rahmawati, 2018). The classroom action research followed by the presentation of the results to peers and experts is the solution to enhance the teachers' beliefs in conducting CLT in their classes. The continuous guidance from the experts and the teacher community for example the program TEFLIN will have a greater impact (Fadilah, 2018).

Imposing a single teaching method in a diverse classroom ignores students' learning styles and other factors affecting language learning is another constraint. Further, the school readiness, teacher preparation, infrastructure, and instructional materials are neglected. A flexible or an 'eclectic method' as Kumaravadivelu (2006) proposed rather than a strictly CLT method, may be the best way to teach EFL in classrooms with diverse student backgrounds and abilities. Teachers' workload also taking account the difficulties of CLT. The preparation of teachers in conducting CLT such as the material, teaching techniques, and media is not a simple job, therefore the teacher workload includes to the third societal limitation on the classroom. Many Indonesian teachers, it is a known fact, work the equivalent of a factory shift, clocking in between 7-8 hours a day, 5-6 days a week. Teachers also have to plan lessons, prepare lessons, and grade student work during this time.

They are concerned about their student's performance on high-stakes tests and devote a great deal of time and effort to helping them prepare for these exams which contributes to the teachers' related challenges in applying CLT (Yanti, 2019). This task cannot be achieved by teachers and the government alone but there must be a joint effort involving parents, student representatives, sociologists, anthropologists, economists, and political scientists (Lie, 2007). There are three constraints related to socioeconomic found in Indonesia, and they are class size, a grammar-based syllabus, and low student participation. In Indonesia, the number of students in one English class is more than 20 students. The condition of big size class makes the CLT implementation result not generally good at once. The differences in students' reception of the particular approach visualize the challenges CLT practice in a big class. To tackle this constraint, the author would like to propose one technique namely the collaborative teaching technique. A kind of collaborative learning in a particular interest group.

To handle this grammar-based syllabus, applying the communicative task activities emphasizing meaning can be followed by a grammar lesson focusing on form, Seating arrangement and allowing students to choose the topic of discussion or giving differentiated learning instruction (Tomlinson, 2005) can help the teacher to fix the low participation of students in CLT classrooms. Due to Indonesia's cultural diversity, some communities find CLT practices offensive. Javanese is an example. Marcellino (2015) found that most Javanese students were passive in class, uncritical of the teacher's arguments and explanations, and compliant with the teacher's instructions because interrupting or questioning the teacher was impolite. In apathetic classrooms, teachers dominate the conversation. In the Indonesian EFL classroom, "total obedience, an unquestioning mind, and the belief that the old knows everything" are constraints (Marcellino, 2015). Anxiety causes Asian

students to be silent and inactive during speech activities in CLT classrooms. Further, the student's classroom silence is caused by embarrassment, low confidence, low English proficiency, previous negative experiences, personality traits, and fear of losing face (Liu & Jackson, 2008).

There are two recommendations proposed for the mentioned constraints, 1) Choose the topic of discussion based on the background knowledge of the students. 2) The second way of reducing student anxiety is to increase student-teacher rapport (Cao & Philp, 2006). The position of English language in Indonesia is still a foreign language, not a second language. Indonesian students who use English as a foreign language struggle to apply CLT in their English classroom. Their English, spoken, and written skills are trained in classroom activities, with a few outside classroom activities using English as the medium. They might communicate with their family and friends in Bahasa as their first language and their local language as their second language. Figuring out the ideological issue of CLT implementation, the author believes that strengthening cultural values or local insight way in CLT material and activities can make English more familiar with the Indonesian EFL context. Therefore, students will do what is called 'act locally and think globally'.

4. Conclusion

This research explores the challenges and constraints in the Indonesian context. CLT approach is a CLT approach practice, specifically in teaching English as a foreign language classroom. Using Fadilah's (2018) all-encompassing framework, the author can classify problems into four categories. This allowed us to identify problems' origins and find effective solutions. This study concludes, based on an examination of previous research into CLT installations in Indonesia, that these obstacles can be classified into four categories. a) societal classroom constraints include teacher beliefs, teacher beliefs vs students' preferences, and teachers' workload; b) socioeconomic constraints include class size, grammar-based syllabus, low students' participation, and unequal educational recourses c) cultural constraints include, local norms, students anxiety, and embarrassment; d) ideological constraints include English as a foreign language.

More importantly, this paper suggests that these problems are intertwined and calls for a systematic approach from all elements, starting from maintaining teacher beliefs until the continuous in-house training managed by government intervention as a possible initial step. This study provides both theoretical and practical implications for expanding CLT's application in a given setting. Finally, the author suggests that prospective researchers examine and evaluate the new concept of CLT which is adapted to Indonesian EFL students' characteristics. Another suggestion is for prospective other researchers who have CLT as their concentration to find out other constraints and challenges in different contexts. Furthermore, the government, it is suggested conducting in-house training for English teachers to maximize the advantages of CLT for the Indonesian ETL sector with the new concept.

REFERENCES

- Agustien, H. (2004). *A Setting Up New Standards: Preview of Indonesia's New Competence-Based Curriculum*. 15(1), 1–13.
- Alamri, W. A. (2018). Communicative Language Teaching: Possible Alternative Approaches to CLT and Teaching Contexts. *English Language Teaching*, 11(10), 132. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v11n10p132>
- Ariatna. (2016). The Need for Maintaining CLT in Indonesia. *TESOL Journal*, 7(4), 800–822. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.246>
- Brown, H. D. (1994). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). THEORETICAL BASES OF COMMUNICATIVE APPROACHES TO SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING AND TESTING. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 1–47. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/1.1.1>

- Cao, Y., & Philp, J. (2006). Interactional context and willingness to communicate: A comparison of behavior in whole class, group and dyadic interaction. *System*, 34(4), 480–493. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2006.05.002>
- Christianto, D. (2019). TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS ON THE USE OF THE COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING APPROACH IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOMS. *IJJET (International Journal of Indonesian Education and Teaching)*, 3(1), 90–101. <https://doi.org/10.24071/ijjet.v3i1.1707>
- Dardjowidjojo, S. (2000). *EA Journal*; v.18 n.1 p.22-30; Winter 2000, 18(1), 22–30.
- Fadilah, E. (2018). Rethinking the Maintenance of CLT in Indonesia: A Response to Ariatna's "The Need for Maintaining CLT in Indonesia." *TESOL Journal*, 9(1), 224–236. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.341>
- Gloriez, P. (2022). Communicative Language Teaching and Its Implementation in Online Learning: The Teachers' Voice. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics*, 7(1), 157. <https://doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v7i1.751>
- Hien, L. T. N. (2021). Communicative Language Teaching in Teaching ESL for University Students. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 3(6), 49–57. <https://doi.org/10.32996/jeltal.2021.3.6.7>
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006). *Understanding language teaching: From method to postmethod*. (pp. xviii, 258). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Liu, M., & Jackson, J. (2008). An Exploration of Chinese EFL Learners' Unwillingness to Communicate and Foreign Language Anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 92(1), 71–86. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2008.00687>
- Marcellino, M. (2015). ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INDONESIA: A CONTINUOUS CHALLENGE IN EDUCATION AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY. *TEFLIN Journal - A Publication on the Teaching and Learning of English*, 19(1), 57. <https://doi.org/10.15639/teflinjournal.v19i1/57-69>
- Musthafa, B. (2015). Communicative Language Teaching in Indonesia: Issues of Theoretical Assumptions and Challenges in the Classroom Practice. *TEFLIN Journal - A Publication on the Teaching and Learning of English*, 12(2), 184. <https://doi.org/10.15639/teflinjournal.v12i2/184-193>
- Nunan, D. (1991). Communicative Tasks and the Language Curriculum. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25(2), 279. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587464>
- Rahman, A. (2018). EMERGING FACTORS OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT) AND ITS APPLICATION IN INDONESIAN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) CLASSROOMS. *Langkawi: Journal of The Association for Arabic and English*, 3(2), 169. <https://doi.org/10.31332/lkw.v3i2.587>
- Rahmawati, Y. (2018). TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN INDONESIAN CLASSROOMS. *IJEE (Indonesian Journal of English Education)*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.15408/ijee.v5i1.9881>
- Riadi, A. (2019). An Empirical Studies on Indonesian English-Curriculum Changes: Opportunities and Constraints in an Underdeveloped Region. *Indonesian TESOL Journal*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.24256/itj.v1i2.835>
- Sari, A. R. (2020). Kelancaran dan Akurasi dalam Communicative Language Teaching. *Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset Dan Teknologi Ayo Guru Berbagi*. <https://ayoguruberbagi.kemdikbud.go.id/artikel/kelancaran-dan-akurasi-dalam-communicative-language-teaching/>
- Sotlikova, R., & Sugirin, S. (2016). *TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON USING COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE ENGLISH CLASS*.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2005). Grading and Differentiation: Paradox or Good Practice? *Theory Into Practice*, 44(3), 262–269. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4403_11
- Yanti, G. S. (2019). *PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF INDONESIAN TEACHERS TOWARD COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING*. 5(1). <http://journal.stbapontianak.ac.id/index.php/spectral/article/view/33>

