Teachers' Attitudes towards Communicative Approach

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Abstract: *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) focuses on developing learners' communication abilities in a second language, shifting the emphasis from grammar to practical communication skills. Widely accepted among English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators, CLT's principles are embraced globally. Utilizing a quantitative approach,a set of Likert scale questionnaire from the Evdokia Karavakas – Doukas on the study of Using Attitude Scales to investigate teachers' attitudes to the communicative approach was administered. The study found that teachers generally held favorable attitudes toward CLT principles and demonstrated alignment between their beliefs and classroom practices. This congruence suggests the successful integration of CLT into teaching strategies, enhancing learners' communicative competence. The study underscores the importance of examining teachers' attitudes towards CLT and its implementation within diverse educational settings to understand its impact on language learning outcomes further.*

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The study by Karavas (1996) focused on assessing the degree to which a communicative, learner-centred approach was implemented in Greek public secondary school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. This approach was facilitated through the introduction of textbooks and a curriculum aligned with the principles of communicative language teaching as advocated by the Council of Europe Project No.12 (Van Ek, 1987). The curriculum aimed at enhancing students' linguistic repertoire, sociolinguistic skills, interactive strategies, and overall intellectual and social development through foreign language learning. Teachers were encouraged in the teachers' guides to centre learners' attention by fostering student initiatives and providing opportunities for authentic, spontaneous communication in real-world contexts. However, there was a need to investigate Greek English language teachers' attitudes towards this communicative approach to determine their readiness to implement it effectively.

Despite the popularity of the communicative approach, classroom studies suggested that communicative classrooms were not common. Many teachers claimed to follow this approach, but in practice, they tended to adopt more traditional methods (Karakas-Doukas, 1993). This discrepancy highlighted the importance of understanding teachers' attitudes and their impact on classroom practices.Freeman (2020) argued that teacher education should encompass knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness, emphasizing the pivotal role of teachers' feelings and emotions in the teaching process.Teachers' attitudes play a crucial role in the successful implementation of the communicative approach and the learning process (Hargreaves, A., Earl, L., & Ryan, J,1996)

To assess teachers' attitudes towards the communicative approach, a Likert-type attitude scale was developed, aiming to understand their perceptions within the context of EFL innovation in Greek public secondary schools. This scale provided a crude measure by presenting respondents with statements to gauge their agreement or disagreement, thus placing them on a continuum from least to most favorable attitudes (Karavas-Doukas, 1996). The Likert-type scale was chosen for its ease of construction, minimal statistical assumptions, and independence from external judgment.

In summary, Karavas's study shed light on the implementation of communicative language teaching in Greek EFL classrooms and the importance of understanding teachers' attitudes towards this approach. Effective teacher education should encompass not only knowledge and skills but also attitudes and awareness, acknowledging the

significant role of teachers' feelings and emotions in the teaching process. Assessing teachers' attitudes through instruments like the Likert-type scale can provide valuable insights for improving language education practices.

In this paper the correlation between teachers' attitude towards the Communicative Approach and their classroom practices is being investigated. The following questions will be addressed in this study:

1. What are the prevailing attitudes of teachers towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)?
2. What are the fundamental factors influencing teachers' attitudes towards CLT?
3. Is there a variance between teachers' promoted beliefs in CLT and their actual implementation of CLT principles in the classroom?

2.0   Literature review

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has become a widely discussed pedagogical approach in language education. However, its interpretation can vary widely due to the diverse understandings of the term "communicative" (Johnson, 2004). Johnson highlighted three key characteristics relevant to CLT: its emphasis on message-focused language practice, utilization of techniques such as information transfer, and its integration into a learning model rather than an acquisition model. CLT is more of an approach than a rigid method, seeking to develop communicative competence in students through various strategies (Mangubhai et al., 1998). It prioritizes language use over language knowledge, focusing on fluency and appropriateness rather than structural correctness (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Mangubhai et al., 1998). The classroom environment under CLT is interactive, encouraging risk-taking and student autonomy, with teachers acting as facilitators (Savignon, 2002).

Berns outlined eight principles of CLT, emphasizing language as a tool for communication, the recognition of linguistic diversity, and the significance of culture in shaping communicative competence (Savignon, 2002). Learners are actively engaged in using language for various purposes throughout the learning process. While CLT is widely discussed, there's a scarcity of studies on teachers' understanding and implementation of CLT approaches, with existing research being limited in scope and context (Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Savignon & Wang, 2003). Understanding teachers' attitudes and practices is crucial, as teaching is considered an intensely psychological process (Calderhead, 1996; Pianta, 1999; Watson, 2003).

Attitudes play a significant role in shaping teachers' practices and behaviors (Richardson, 1996). Positive attitudes foster mutual respect and trust between teachers and students (Larson & Silverman, 2000; Noddings, 1984). Teachers' agendas should align with students' needs to create a positive learning environment (Carlson & Hastie, 1997). Constructivist-based teaching emphasizes student-centered learning and the development of students' autonomy (Zimmerman, 1990; Claxton, 1996; Richardson, 1999).Teachers' appreciation of students' diverse learning styles and needs is vital for effective instruction (McNergney & Keller, 1999). Encouraging creativity and incorporating multiple intelligences into lesson planning can enhance student engagement and learning outcomes (Gardner, 1999).

CLT represents a dynamic approach to language teaching, emphasizing communication and learner-centeredness. Understanding teachers' attitudes and practices is essential for effective implementation of CLT principles, fostering positive learning experiences and outcomes for students. Integrating diverse teaching strategies and accommodating students' individual needs can further enhance the effectiveness of CLT in language education.

3.0 Method

The study was conducted across four private schools in Malaysia, involving thirty teachers. Among these participants, 28 were female and 2 were male, with ages ranging from twenty-one to fifty-four years old and teaching experience spanning from 2 to 30 years. Selection of participants was randomized for inclusivity. A quantitative approach was adopted, wherein the researcher distributed questionnaires to collect numerical data, utilizing a Likert-type scale adapted from Karavas-Doukas (1996) to gauge teachers' attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Quantitative analysis involved tabulation of questionnaire responses to calculate percentages and means.

3.1 Participant
Table 3.1 displays the distribution of participants based on their genders. There was a total of 30 English Language teachers who were involved in this research.

Table 3.1 Distribution of participants by gender

Gender	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)

Male	2	6.7
Female	28	93.3
Total	30	100

4.0 Results

There were 24 items in this section and were divided into 5 thematic groups:

i. Group / pair work
ii. Quality and quantity of error correction
iii. The role and contribution of learners in the learning process
iv. The role of the teacher in the classroom
v. Place / importance of grammar

4.1. Participants' perception on pair and group work

Below is the description for each item and the analysis base on descriptive analysis. Table 4.1 reflects the distribution of participants perception of pair and group work.

Table 4.1: Distribution of participants' perception on pair and group work
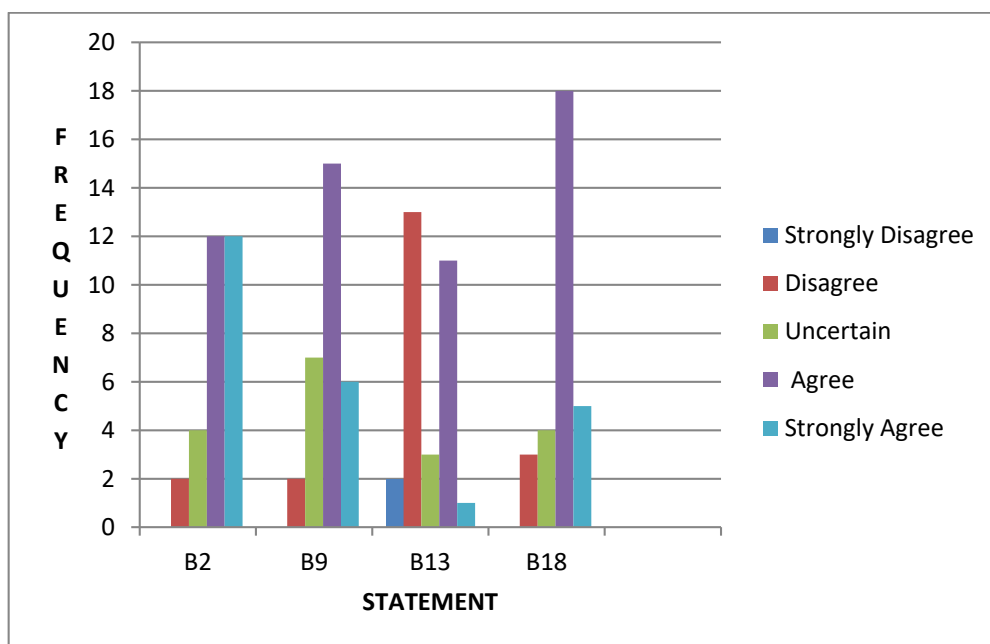
The findings pertaining to this aspect reveal that among the four statements examined, statement B18 garnered the most favorable response towards the communicative approach. A substantial majority of 18 participants (60%) agreed that language acquisition is most effective when utilized as a tool for practical tasks rather than through direct or explicit study. Conversely, statement 13 received the least favorable response, with only 12 participants (40%) agreeing that organizing group work activities is time-consuming and detracts from valuable teaching time. The results depicted in Table 4.1 illustrate that participants perceive pair and group work as beneficial, facilitating genuine interaction among students, as evidenced by the mean score of 4.13 for statement B2. This findings underscore the importance of collaborative activities in fostering effective language learning environments .

Collaborative activities involve learners working together in pairs or groups to accomplish a task, practice language skills, and engage in meaningful interactions. A few studies that highlight the benefits of collaborative activities in language learning are Mercer, N., & Littleton, K. (2007) who said discussed the role of dialogue in cognitive development and argued that collaborative talk promotes higher-order thinking skills. Swain, M. (1995) emphasizes the

importance of output (speaking and writing) in language learning. Collaborative activities provide learners with opportunities for meaningful output as they engage in conversations and negotiate meaning with their peers.Another study by Storch (2002) examines the patterns of interaction that emerge during pair work activities in ESL (English as a Second Language) classrooms. The study highlights the importance of collaborative activities in promoting language production and negotiation of meaning among learners.Johnson, D. W et al (1998) study provides practical strategies for implementing cooperative learning structures in the classroom across various subjects, including language learning. It emphasizes the positive impact of collaboration on student motivation, engagement, and achievement. Kessler (1992) investigates the outcomes of cooperative language learning activities and peer tutoring arrangements. The study suggests that collaborative activities enhance language proficiency, promote learner autonomy, and foster positive interdependence among students.These studies provide empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks supporting the importance of collaborative activities in language learning environments. Collaborative learning not only facilitates language acquisition but also promotes social interaction, critical thinking, and intercultural competence among learners.

4.2. Participants' perception on quality and quantity of error correction.

Figure 4.2 Distribution of participants perception on quality and quantity of error correction.
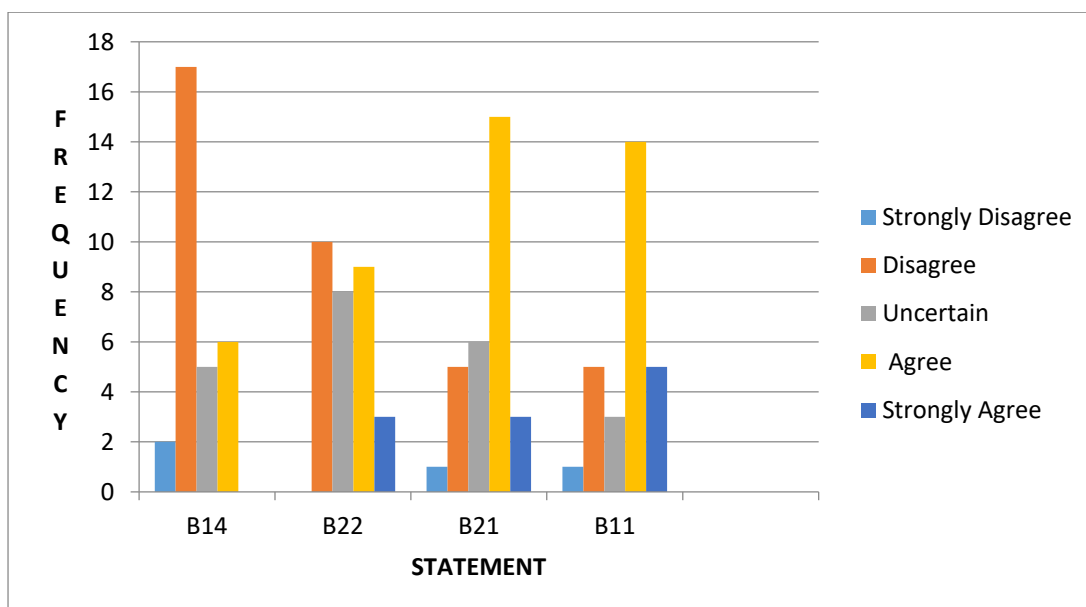
The results pertaining to this aspect indicate that among the four statements analyzed, Statement 14 garnered the most favorable attitude towards the communicative approach. A majority of 17 participants (56.7%) expressed disagreement with the notion that errors are an inherent aspect of learning, therefore deeming correction as a waste of time. Conversely, Statement 11 received the least favorable response, with only 1 participants (3.3%) strongly disagreeing with the feasibility of tailoring teaching to accommodate the needs of all students in a large class. The results depicted in Table 4.2.2 highlight the perceived difficulty in executing error correction effectively within such contexts, as evidenced by the mean score of 3.7 for Statement B11. Ellis, R. (2008) study provides empirical evidence on how various error correction methods impact the accuracy of second language writing. By examining quantitative measures of writing accuracy, such as grammatical correctness or lexical precision, it helps teachers and researchers understand which error correction methods are most effective in improving writing proficiency in CLT classrooms.

4.3 Role and contribution of learners in the learning process.

Figure: 4.3: The Distribution of Respondents based on the role and contribution of

learners in the learning process.
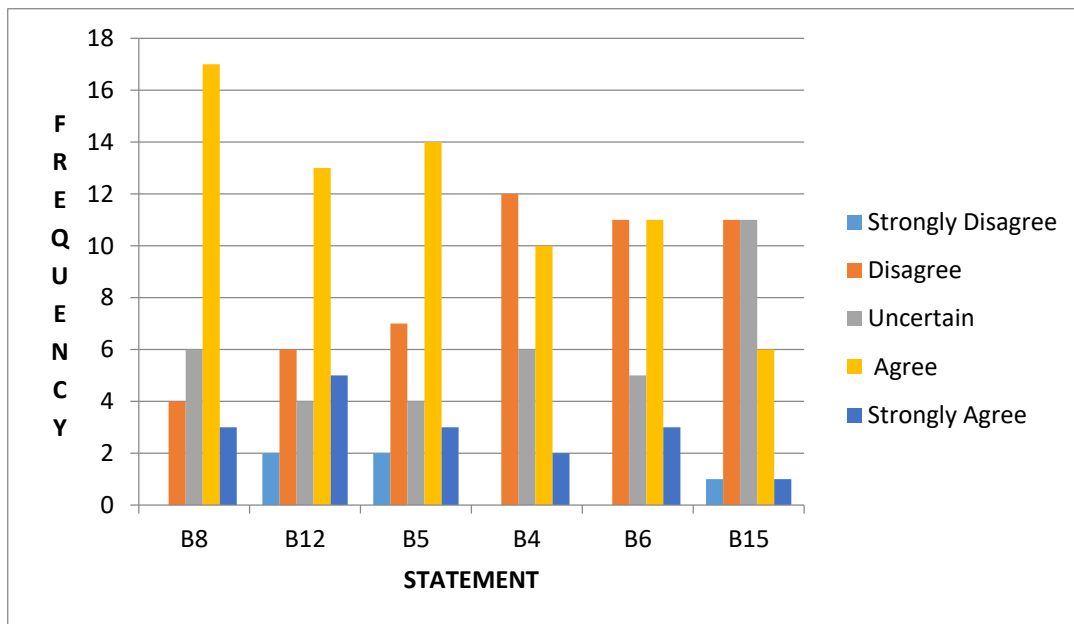
The findings relating to this theme show that from the 6 statements, the most favourable attitude towards the communicative approach is Statement 8 with 17 respondents (56.7%) agreed that the learner centred approach to language teaching encourages responsibility and self-discipline and allows each student to develop his/her full potential; and there are two least favourable that is Statement 15 with only 1 (3.3%) respondent each that strongly disagree and strongly agree that the communicative approach to language teaching produces fluent but inaccurate learners. The results shown in Figure 4.2 indicates that the learner centred approach to language teaching encourages responsibility and self-discipline and allows each student to develop his/her full potential . It is suggested that a fundamental contributing factor to the overall success of students in higher education is their engagement (Xerri et al., 2018; Derakhshan, 2021).

There is widespread acknowledgment that students who actively participate in the learning process and show interest in their academic pursuits are more likely to attain higher levels of achievement (Wang et al., 2021). Therefore, educational institutions at the higher level encourage students to utilize their abilities, as well as the learning opportunities and resources available to them, to actively involve themselves in their studies (Broido, 2014; Xie and Derakhshan, 2021).

Furthermore, student dissatisfaction, boredom, negative experiences, and dropout rates can partly be attributed to low engagement in academic activities (Derakhshan et al., 2021). It has been established that engagement is directly and indirectly linked to intelligence, interest, motivation, and satisfaction with learning outcomes across various academic disciplines (Yin, 2018). Similarly, engagement is a concept that arises from the intricate interplay of perceptions, emotions, and motivation, aligning with the principles of self-determination theory in the realm of motivation (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020).

Moreover, student motivation plays a crucial role in fostering learning and consequently enhancing the value of higher education, as the more motivated students are, the more likely they are to succeed in their actions (Derakhshan et al., 2020; Halif et al., 2020).

4.4 The role of the teacher in the classroom.

Figure 4.4 Distribution of Respondents based on the role of the teacher in the classroom.
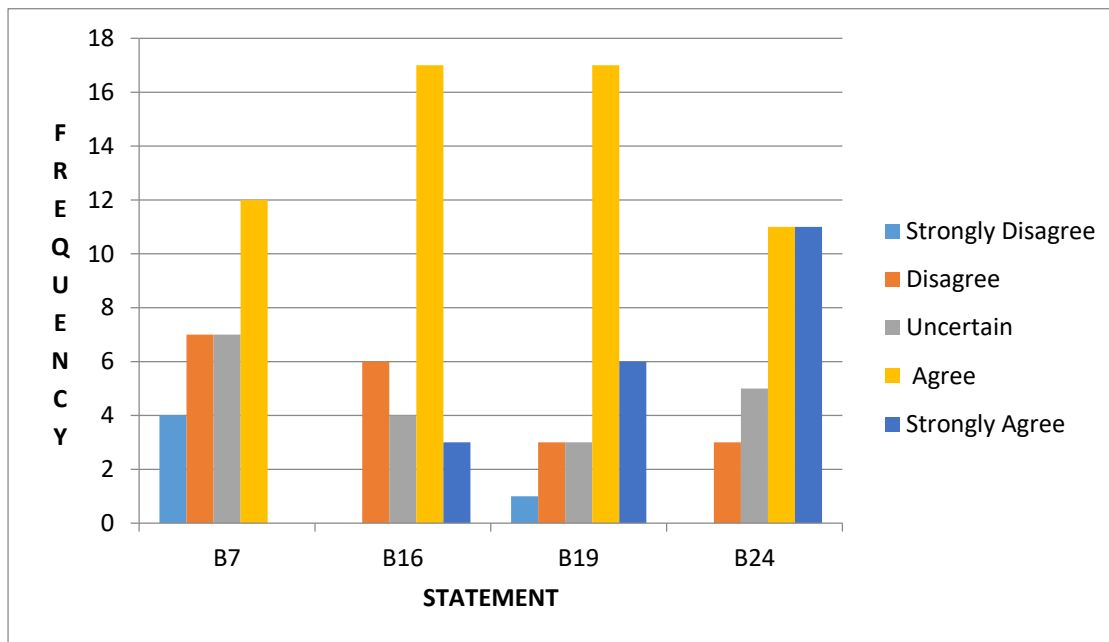
The findings relating to this theme show that from the 4 statements, there are two most favourable attitude towards the communicative approach is Statement 16 and 19 with 17(56.7%) respondents each agreed and both statement agreed that teachers role are very dominant in a language class.; and the least favourable that is Statement 19 with only 1 (3.3%)respondent strongly disagree that the role of the teacher in a language classroom is to impart knowledge through activities such as explanation, writing and example. The results shown in Table 4..4 indicates that a textbook alone is not able to cater for all the needs and interests of the students. The teacher must supplement the textbook with other materials and tasks so as to satisfy the widely differing needs of the students based on the 4.00 mean score of the Statement B24. Viewing the teacher's roles from different angles reveals diverse classifications. In the 2016 TED talk, Calhoun illustrates that beyond the conventional roles outlined by Harmer (2015)—such as controller, organizer, assessor, prompter, participant, resource, tutor, observer, performer, and teaching aid—a teacher is perceived not only as an instructor who imparts knowledge and evaluates students' progress, which is fundamental from a pedagogical perspective, but also as a counselor, mentor, nurturer, role model, and advocate whom students can turn to for support. Calhoun primarily categorizes this based on the broader teacher-student relationship, highlighting how teachers can embody various familial and societal roles, while Harmer's focus remains primarily on traditional teaching functions.

4.5 The place / importance of grammar

Figure 4.5 The Distribution of Respondents based on the Place / importance of grammar
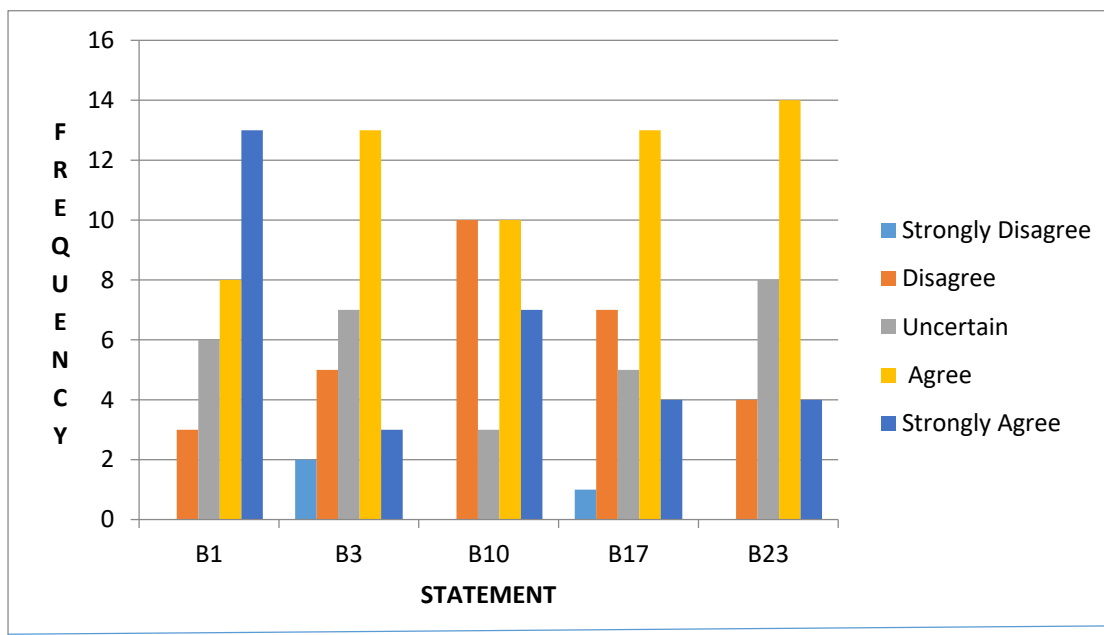
The findings relating to this theme show that from the 5 statements, the most favourable attitude towards the communicative approach is Statement 23 with 14 respondents (46.7%) agreed that direct instruction in the rules and terminology of grammar is essential if students are to learn to communicate effectively; and the least favourable that is Statement 17 with only 1 (3.3%)respondent strongly disagree that by mastering the rules of grammar, students become fully capable of communicating with a native speaker.The results shown in Table 4.5 indicates that tasks and activities should be negotiated and adapted to suit the students' needs rather than imposed on. Grammar is important in teaching English, and there is a lot of evidence to show why it is helpful. For example, Norris and Ortega (2000) looked at 49 studies and found that when teachers focus on grammar, it makes teaching language better overall. Another study by Scheffler and Cinciała (2011) showed that learning grammar can help people get better at speaking a second language. They say that understanding how sentences are put together can make learners feel more confident of themselves and help them learn better. Also, a study by Jones, Myhill, and Bailey (2013) found that teaching grammar while writing can make students' writing better.

5.Discussion

Based on the data provided, it is evident that the prevailing attitudes of teachers towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) tend to be generally positive. These attitudes are underscored by the recognition of CLT's significance in promoting cooperative relationships among students and fostering genuine interaction within the classroom. The high mean scores for statements B2 and B9, indicating that teachers perceive group work activities as essential for facilitating student autonomy and meaningful learning experiences, reflect this positive outlook. This suggests that teachers recognize the value of CLT in not only enhancing student engagement but also in creating collaborative learning environments where students can actively participate and interact with one another.

However, despite the overall positive attitudes towards CLT, several fundamental factors influence teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards its implementation. While participants express support for CLT principles, concerns about the practical challenges associated with its implementation are evident from the data. For instance, statement B13 receives a relatively lower mean score of 3.43, suggesting that teachers perceive group work activities as time-consuming and potentially disruptive to the classroom routine. Additionally, statement B22 receives a mean score of 3.16, indicating that some teachers may have reservations about the efficacy of group work activities due to difficulties in monitoring students and preventing the use of their native language. These concerns highlight the importance of considering practical challenges when implementing CLT in the classroom.

Furthermore, there appears to be a variance between teachers' promoted beliefs in CLT and their actual implementation of CLT principles. While participants endorse CLT principles in theory, the extent to which these principles are implemented in practice varies among teachers. This dissonance between promoted beliefs and actual implementation

may stem from a variety of factors, including institutional constraints, time limitations, and individual teaching preferences. Additionally, perceptions of the effectiveness of CLT and familiarity with its principles may also influence the degree to which teachers incorporate CLT practices into their teaching.

Overall, the data suggests that while teachers generally hold positive attitudes towards CLT, the practical implementation of CLT principles may be influenced by various factors. These include time constraints, organizational challenges, and individual teaching preferences. It is essential for educators to consider these factors when implementing CLT in the classroom to ensure that its principles are effectively applied and that students can fully benefit from this approach to language learning. By addressing practical challenges and aligning teaching practices with CLT principals, teachers can create more engaging and effective learning environments that promote language acquisition and meaningful interaction among students.

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Questionnaire

Distribution of participants' perception on pair and group work		
Item	**Statement**	**Mean**
2	Group work activities are essential for co-operative relationships to emerge and in promoting genuine interaction among students.	4.13
9	Group work allows students to explore problems for themselves and thus have some measure of control over their own learning. It is therefore an invaluable means of organizing classroom experience.	3.83
13	Group work activities take too long to organise and waste a lot of valuable teaching time.	3.43
18	For most students language is acquired most effectively when it is used as a vehicle for doing something else and not when it is studied in a direct or explicit way.	3.83
Distribution of participants perception on quality and quantity of error correction.		
tem	Statement	Mean
14	Since errors are a normal part of learning, much correction is wasteful of time.	2.50
22	Group work activities have little use since it is very difficult for the teacher to monitor the students' performance and prevent them from using their mother tongue.	3.16
21	Students do their best when taught as a class by the teacher. Small Group work may occasionally be useful to vary the routine, but it can never replace sound formal instruction by a competent teacher.	3.46
11	It is impossible in a large class of students to organise your teaching so as to suit the needs of all.	3.7
Distribution of Respondents based on the role and contribution of learners in the learning process.		
tem	Statement	Mean
8	The learner-centred approach to language teaching encourages responsibility and self-discipline and allows each student to develop his/her full potential.	3.63
12	Knowledge of the rules of language does not guarantee ability to use the language.	3.43
5	Training learners to take responsibility for their own learning is futile since learners are not used to such an approach.	3.3
4	Since the learner comes to the language classroom with little or no knowledge of the language, he/she is in no position to suggest what the content of the lesson should be or what activities are useful for him or her.	3.06
6	For students to become effective communicators in the foreign language, the teachers' feedback must be focused on the appropriateness and not the linguistic form of the students' responses.	3.3
15	The communicative approach to language teaching produces fluent but inaccurate learners.	2.83
Distribution of Respondents based on the role of the teacher in the classroom.		
tem	Statement	Mean
7	The teacher as 'authority' and 'instructor' is no longer adequate to describe the teachers' role in the classroom.	2.9
16	The teacher as tramsmitter of knowledge is only one of the many different roles h/she must perform during a lesson.	3.56
19	The role of the teacher in a language classroom is to impart knowledge through activities such as explanation, writing and example.	3.8
24	A textbook alone is not able to cater for all the needs and interests of the students. The teacher must supplement the textbooks with other materials and tasks so as to satisfy the widely differing needs of the students.	4.00
Distribution of Respondents based on the Place / importance of grammar		
tem	**Statement**	**Mean**
1	Grammatical correctness is the most important criterion by which language performance should be judged	4.03

3	Grammar should be taught only as a means to an end and not as an end in itself.	3.33
10	The teacher should correct all the grammatical errors students make. If errors are ignored, this will result in imperfect learning.	3.46
17	By mastering the rules of grammar, students become fully capable of communicating with a native speaker.	3.4
23	Group work activities have little use since it is very difficult for the teacher to monitor the students' performance and prevent them from using their mother tongue.	3.6
20	Tasks and activities should be negotiated and adapted to suit the students' needs rather than imposed on them.	4.06