A Qualitative Investigation into Teachers' Perceptions of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Pakistani ESL Classrooms

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Abstract

This qualitative research investigates how Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) functions in large tertiary-level ESL classrooms from the viewpoint of teachers. The study was carried out at a university in Pakistan, where overcrowded, examination-driven classes are a common reality. Information was gathered through semi-structured interviews with six English language instructors and examined using thematic analysis. The results indicate that most teachers regard CLT as an effective, student-focused approach that promotes learners' speaking ability, fluency, and self-confidence by involving them in meaningful, real-world communication activities. Despite these advantages, participants also identified several practical difficulties in implementing CLT in large classes. These challenges include managing and supervising all students, providing personalized feedback, handling classroom noise and discipline, coping with limited time, and addressing unequal participation between high- and low-performing students. To overcome these issues, teachers reported modifying CLT practices by incorporating pair and group work, assigning specific roles to students, designing shorter and more structured activities, and selecting locally relevant topics. They also combine CLT with other teaching approaches, such as the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, Task-Based Learning, and Audio-Lingual techniques. The study emphasizes the importance of professional development, institutional backing, improved class management or reduced class sizes, and assessment systems that prioritize communicative competence. Overall, the findings suggest that while CLT can positively influence large ESL classrooms, its effectiveness depends on flexible, blended implementation that takes contextual limitations into account.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), ESL Classrooms, Instructors' Viewpoints, Higher Education Context In Pakistan, Blended Instructional Approaches.

1. Introduction:

Teaching approaches are central to the success of language education. English, being one of the most widely used languages across the globe, plays a vital role in areas such as science, technology, and international business. Its global status has increased the need for effective teaching strategies and appropriate learning resources. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emerged in England during the 1970s, marked a significant shift in language pedagogy by placing communication at the heart of instruction. Since then, it has been widely acknowledged as one of the most influential and effective approaches to English language teaching (Ansarey, 2012). At its core, CLT moves beyond the traditional focus on grammar rules and

memorized vocabulary. Instead, it emphasizes the interpretation and expression of meaning in authentic communicative contexts (Qasserras, 2023). The approach views communication as the primary goal of second language learning and prioritizes meaningful interaction over structural accuracy (Magnan, 2007). Often referred to as the notional–functional approach, CLT was developed under the guidance of the Council of Europe in the 1970s, influenced by Wilkins' work on learners' communicative needs. This perspective shifted attention from mastering grammatical forms to effectively conveying and understanding meaning in real-life situations (Qasserras, 2023).

In the contemporary world, acquiring a foreign language has become increasingly essential. Communicative tasks and interactive classroom activities are therefore considered valuable tools for helping students develop practical language skills. Unlike earlier methods that concentrated mainly on grammatical competence, modern learners expect to gain communicative competence that enables them to use English confidently in real-world contexts (Abdelmageed & Omer, 2020). Class size is a significant factor affecting the quality of foreign language instruction. A number of studies (Blatchford, Bassett, & Brown, 2011; Mulryan-Kyne, 2010; Finn et al., 2003; Gibbs & Jenkins, 1992) have explored how the number of students in a classroom influences both teaching effectiveness and the selection of appropriate instructional strategies. Blatchford et al. (2011) particularly highlighted the importance of student engagement, teacher–student interaction, individual attention, and teachers' classroom management strategies, all of which are directly influenced by class size (Turinská, 2017). Large classrooms pose multiple challenges that affect both educators and learners. In developing countries, overcrowded classes have been found to negatively impact teachers' ability to use instructional time effectively and manage classroom activities efficiently (Benbow et al., 2007). Such environments often weaken overall teaching quality and make it difficult to sustain effective learning practices (Benbow et al., 2007; Ndethiu et al., 2017). Perceptions of what constitutes a "large class" vary across contexts. Cultural, economic, and institutional factors shape how teachers and students define and tolerate large class sizes (Ndethiu et al., 2017; Hayes, 1997). As a result, the concept of a large class is context-dependent rather than universal. Students in overcrowded classrooms frequently receive limited individual attention, which can reduce their engagement and focus (Blatchford, Bassett, & Brown, 2011). When teachers are unable to address learners' specific needs, students may lose motivation, leading to lower academic achievement (Ndethiu et al., 2017). Furthermore, large classes can negatively influence teacher morale and classroom dynamics, creating additional obstacles to effective teaching (Ndethiu et al., 2017).

Teachers working in such settings often struggle with lesson management and meaningful student interaction (Benbow et al., 2007, as cited in Ndethiu et al., 2017). Many educators believe that smaller classes allow for more effective instruction and closer monitoring of individual progress. Research also indicates that reduced class sizes contribute to improved student outcomes and higher teacher satisfaction, as instructors can dedicate more time to each learner (Anderson, 2000; Rice, 1999, as cited in Ndethiu et al., 2017). Although large classes are generally viewed as challenging, some researchers suggest that they may offer certain benefits. For instance, Blatchford (2003) notes that while teacher–student interaction may decline, peer collaboration among students can increase, presenting both difficulties and opportunities (Ndethiu et al., 2017). However, teachers frequently report feeling overwhelmed by the demands of teaching and grading in large classes, often resorting to brief assessments instead of detailed evaluations. School leaders have also observed that subjects such as science, mathematics, and languages are particularly difficult to manage in overcrowded classrooms, contributing to teacher fatigue and stress (Ndethiu et al., 2017). Overcrowded classrooms also limit teachers' mobility, restricting their ability to monitor students effectively and maintain engagement. This often results in reduced participation and limited interaction, which can weaken the overall learning experience (Ndethiu et al., 2017). Against this background, the present study seeks to explore the influence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on student learning in large ESL classrooms. It also aims to examine teachers' perceptions and experiences of implementing CLT in such contexts. By addressing these issues, the study

intends to provide a deeper understanding of CLT's practical effectiveness and the strategies teachers adopt to manage challenges in overcrowded settings.

Problem Statement
Although Communicative Language Teaching is widely recognized as an effective method for developing communicative competence, its practical application in large ESL classrooms presents persistent challenges. Teachers must cope with high student numbers, time limitations, and diverse proficiency levels while attempting to facilitate meaningful interaction. Much of the existing research has emphasized CLT's theoretical advantages or learners' attitudes, but relatively limited attention has been given to teachers' lived experiences and perceptions in overcrowded settings. This gap restricts understanding of how CLT functions in real classroom conditions and what strategies educators employ to adapt it. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the perceived impact of CLT in large ESL classrooms from the perspective of university English teachers in Pakistan, drawing upon data collected from instructors working in this context.

Research Objectives:
- To examine how CLT is generally perceived to influence learning in ESL classrooms.
- To analyze English language teachers' views and experiences regarding the implementation of CLT in class settings.

Research Questions:
Q1: How is the impact of CLT understood in the context of ESL classrooms?
Q2: In what ways do English language teachers view and experience the use of CLT in classroom environments?

2. Literature Review
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasizes meaningful, real-life communication as the foundation for developing language proficiency. Even though large classrooms often create barriers such as overcrowding and limited resources, effective use of CLT can still strengthen students' speaking abilities and enhance their motivation. While reduced interaction and insufficient materials can limit its application in large classes, CLT continues to be regarded as a valuable approach for fostering oral skills and learner engagement. Kasum (2015) examined the implementation and outcomes of CLT in Kosovo high schools through a mixed approach that included literature review, classroom observation, and experimental comparison. The study compared urban and rural students' performance in reading, writing, speaking, and listening between those taught with CLT and those instructed through traditional methods. Results showed that urban learners performed slightly better, partly because teachers applied the ESA (Engage–Study–Activate) framework, whereas rural teachers relied more on behaviorist and direct approaches, which proved less effective. Students in experimental groups exposed to CLT in both contexts achieved significantly higher results than control groups. The study concluded that CLT aligns well with the Kosovo curriculum and positively influences both student performance and teaching effectiveness.

Sherwani and Kilic (2017) found that Iraqi EFL teachers generally support the principles of CLT and recognize its role in improving communicative competence. However, they encounter multiple obstacles when attempting to apply it, particularly in large or poorly resourced classrooms. These challenges include overcrowded classes, outdated syllabi, insufficient teaching materials, and limited teacher fluency in English. The authors argue that successful CLT implementation depends on systemic factors such as curriculum design, teacher preparedness, student proficiency, and the inherent characteristics of CLT itself. Their findings also show variation in teacher attitudes toward different CLT components: while group work and learner-centered roles were moderately accepted, teachers showed less preference for reduced grammar emphasis and

limited error correction. The researchers recommend reducing class sizes, updating curricula, improving resources, and providing targeted professional development to support effective CLT practice, especially in large classrooms.

Almohideb (2019) explored the challenges of applying CLT in contexts similar to large ESL settings. The study revealed mixed responses from teachers and learners. Although CLT was acknowledged for its potential to strengthen communicative competence, practical implementation was restricted by factors such as overcrowded classes, limited instructional time, and scarce materials. These constraints often led teachers to simplify communicative tasks, reducing opportunities for authentic interaction. Additionally, socio-cultural influences—such as preference for teacher-centered instruction and examination-driven systems—further limited communicative practices.

Abdelmageed and Omer (2020) conducted a quantitative investigation into the effectiveness of CLT in enhancing speaking skills in Sudanese secondary schools from teachers' perspectives. Surveying 100 English teachers in Omdurman Locality, they found that educators strongly believed positive attitudes facilitate successful CLT implementation. However, they also identified large class sizes and the absence of authentic materials as significant barriers. Despite these difficulties, teachers agreed that CLT improves students' speaking proficiency and encourages accurate language use both inside and beyond the classroom.

Faizy (2020) highlighted a noticeable gap between ESL teachers' expressed support for CLT and their actual classroom practices. While teachers endorsed learner-centered instruction integrating grammar, vocabulary, and the four language skills, real classroom conditions restricted full adherence to CLT principles. Educators emphasized pair and group activities and described themselves as facilitators, consistent with communicative theory. However, they also focused heavily on error correction to avoid fossilization and strategically used learners' first language to clarify meaning and structure. The study underscores the tension between ideal communicative approaches and practical classroom realities, suggesting that reflective practice may help bridge the divide between theory and implementation, particularly in large ESL environments.

Le Thi Ngoc Hien (2021) noted that although CLT has existed since the 1970s, its adoption in Asian higher education, including Vietnam, remains limited. CLT is valued for promoting communicative competence through authentic resources, interactive tasks, and active learner involvement. It offers learners practical communication opportunities that grammar-focused methods often lack. However, significant barriers exist, including exam-oriented systems prioritizing written assessments, insufficient teacher training and confidence, lack of authentic materials, cultural expectations about language instruction, and large class sizes. Managing mixed-ability learners while consistently using the target language poses additional challenges, which can affect student motivation.

Ghafar (2023) reviewed numerous studies examining CLT's impact on speaking skills and found consistent evidence supporting its effectiveness. Research across various contexts demonstrated improvements in fluency, vocabulary development, pronunciation, and comprehension. For instance, Kasum (2015) reported improved speaking outcomes in urban Kosovo schools; Ratih and Hanafi (2016) observed gains among Indonesian learners; Aalaei (2017) linked positive learner attitudes in Iran with enhanced speaking and listening skills; Owen and Razali (2018) confirmed increased fluency without gender differences; and Mangaleswaran and Aziz (2019) connected speaking improvement with teacher and parental support. Overall, these studies confirm CLT's substantial positive influence on ESL speaking performance when properly implemented.

Salam and Luksfinanto (2024) also concluded that CLT enhances communicative competence and learner motivation but faces implementation barriers in large ESL classrooms. Insufficient teacher training, limited instructional resources, and cultural diversity complicate its effective application. Nevertheless, teachers value its interactive nature and believe that stronger institutional support, improved training, and better access to materials are essential for maximizing its potential.

3. Methodology

Research Design

This research adopted a qualitative approach and utilized semi-structured interviews to investigate university teachers' perceptions regarding the effects of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in large English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they provided a structured set of guiding questions while also allowing the researcher to explore additional insights when participants introduced significant or unanticipated ideas. This approach was appropriate for gaining in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences, viewpoints, and instructional practices related to CLT within real tertiary-level classroom environments.

Participants and Sampling

The study involved six university teachers who were purposefully chosen from two public sector universities located in Hyderabad and Karachi. Their ages ranged from 28 to 45 years, and their teaching experience varied between approximately four and twenty years. Three participants possessed PhD degrees in English, while the remaining three had completed Master's degrees. All participants were currently teaching large ESL classes at the university level. The purposive sampling ensured that each participant had relevant and practical experience with both CLT and large classroom contexts.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were gathered through individual semi-structured interviews. Four interviews were conducted in person, whereas two were carried out online based on the availability and convenience of the participants. Prior to each interview, the researcher clarified the aim of the study and obtained verbal consent for participation as well as for audio recording. All interviews were recorded using a mobile phone to ensure accurate transcription and detailed analysis at a later stage. Each session lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes.

Interview Questions

The interviews were structured around a series of open-ended questions aimed at exploring teachers' experiences and perspectives on CLT in large ESL classrooms. The primary questions were as follows:

1. Describe the overall impact of CLT in ESL classrooms. What specific effects does CLT have in large tertiary-level ESL classes?
2. What difficulties do you encounter when implementing CLT in large ESL classrooms (e.g., time constraints, large student numbers, participation issues)? How do you address or adapt CLT to manage these challenges?
3. In your opinion, is it practical to implement CLT in classrooms? Please explain your reasoning.
4. What are your views on CLT, particularly regarding the development of speaking skills?
5. Do you believe CLT is appropriate for large ESL classrooms in Pakistan (or within your specific teaching context)? Why or why not?
6. Do you personally apply CLT in your classes? What types of communicative activities or tasks do you use to encourage student interaction?
7. Besides CLT, which other teaching approaches do you incorporate?
8. What kind of professional development or institutional support do teachers require to effectively implement CLT in large ESL classrooms?
9. Based on your experience, how many students constitute a "large" class?
10. Does linguistic diversity create obstacles among students or between teachers and students in large ESL classrooms?

Additional follow-up questions were posed when necessary to obtain further clarification or elaboration from participants.

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Data Analysis

Following each interview, the audio recordings were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. This process involved identifying recurring codes and organizing them into broader themes. As interviews progressed, responses began to reinforce patterns observed in earlier data, particularly regarding the advantages of CLT for improving fluency, the difficulties associated with supervising large classes, unequal student participation, and the importance of structured group work and teacher training. By the sixth interview, no new significant themes emerged, indicating that data saturation had been achieved and additional interviews were therefore unnecessary.

Findings

This section outlines the key themes identified from the semi-structured interviews conducted with six university teachers regarding the influence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in large ESL classrooms. Through thematic analysis, a number of related themes and sub-categories were identified. These are first summarized in the table below and then discussed in detail under each theme, supported by interpretive insights drawn from the participants' responses.

Table: Themes and Codes from Teacher Interviews

Theme	Key Codes	Insights
1. Positive impact of CLT on fluency and confidence	1. Improves fluency and speaking 2. Builds student confidence 3. Encourages active participation 4. Creates relaxed/interactive environment	Teachers reported that CLT helps students use English in real-life communication, supports fluency development, and builds confidence by encouraging them to speak more and rely less on memorization.
2. Practical challenges of CLT in large ESL classrooms	1. Difficult to monitor all students 2. Limited individual feedback 3. Noise and discipline issues 4. Time constraints and syllabus pressure 5. Unequal participation (dominant vs quiet students)	All teachers highlighted that CLT becomes difficult in large classes due to high student numbers, classroom noise, lack of time, and the impossibility of giving equal attention and feedback to every learner.

3. Adaptation strategies for large classes	1. Group work and pair work 2. Fixed roles (leader, note-taker, etc.) 3. Short, structured tasks 4. Use of local/contextual topics 5. Use of technology (videos, WhatsApp groups)	Teachers described how they adapt CLT to large groups by using group and pair activities, assigning roles, designing shorter tasks, choosing familiar topics, and sometimes using digital tools to continue communication beyond class.
4. Mixed or conditional support for CLT	1. CLT seen as effective but not sufficient alone 2. Need to combine CLT with other methods (GTM, direct method, task-based learning, drills) 3. Dependence on students' language level and motivation	Several teachers stated that CLT is valuable, especially for speaking, but should not be used in isolation. They prefer a hybrid approach where CLT is combined with more traditional methods depending on students' proficiency and exam demands.
5. Role of other teaching methods	1. Grammar-Translation Method (for rules, exams) 2. Direct Method and task-based learning 3. Presentations, debates, storytelling 4. Audio-lingual drills for pronunciation	Participants frequently mentioned other methods they use alongside CLT, especially when focusing on grammar accuracy, exam preparation, or pronunciation practice.
6. Need for teacher training and institutional support	1. Workshops on CLT and large-class management 2. Support in handling noise and participation 3. Alignment of exams with CLT goals 4. Teaching assistants or additional resources	Teachers emphasized that effective use of CLT in large ESL classrooms requires formal training, practical workshops, institutional backing, and assessment systems that recognize communicative skills, not just written exams.
7. Understanding of —large class‖ and language barriers	1. —Large class‖ = 40–70 students 2. Language gaps and translanguaging 3. Weaker students becoming silent	Teachers generally described large classes as groups of around 40–70 students and noted that language differences and limited proficiency can create communication barriers, often forcing teachers to use L1 or translanguaging and making weaker students less visible.

Results and Findings:
Theme 1: Positive impact of CLT on fluency and confidence
Teachers reported that CLT has a clear positive impact on students' speaking, fluency and confidence. They saw it as a learner-centered approach where students take part in real-life communicative tasks such as

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role plays, presentations and group discussions. One teacher said that CLT —increases the confidence of the students that they can understand, and they can communicate in English when it comes to, like, engaging into a lively discussion‖ (Teacher 2). Another explained that it —improves their fluency and even though the students make errors, they communicate and their communication eventually becomes sharper, so they improve at the end of the day‖ (Teacher 6). A third teacher noted that it —generally has a very positive impact because the classroom environment is very relaxed and comfortable, the classroom anxiety is also reduced‖ and that —students tend to enjoy activities‖ (Teacher 3). Overall, when students are encouraged to speak in meaningful situations, they become less shy, more active and more confident in using English.

Theme 2: Practical challenges of CLT in large ESL classrooms
At the same time, these benefits were much harder to achieve in large ESL classrooms. All teachers mentioned serious practical challenges when using CLT with many students in one room. Monitoring and feedback were seen as major issues. One teacher stated that when there are too many students —it becomes almost impossible to monitor everyone, which is the basic requirement of a CLT classroom‖ (Teacher 6). Another, who taught —about 60–65 students‖, said that —when you're working in such a large class, it's difficult to give individual feedback to each student‖ while also having to —manage noise, deal with naughty students, and ensure everyone can hear and participate in the lesson‖ (Teacher 4).

Time constraints and syllabus pressure were also important, because —there is a limited time, and these time constraints press upon us, the hardest. So communicative tasks cannot be executed meaningfully‖ and —the institutional pressure to complete the syllabus definitely contradicts CLT's slow task-based pace because you have to rush the students‖ (Teacher 6). As a result, stronger students often dominate activities, while weaker or shy learners remain silent or —hide behind the stronger ones‖ (Teacher 6).

Theme 3: Adaptation strategies for large classes
In response to these difficulties, teachers did not stop using CLT but adapted it to large-class conditions. Many used group and pair work but kept groups small and structured. One teacher said, —I try not to form very large groups, maximum five students not more than five plus. I as facilitator keep moving around to see if they are talking about the task at hand‖ (Teacher 3). Another described —using fixed groups with definite assigned roles to prevent
freeloading and many short tasks instead of long projects‖ (Teacher 6). Some teachers chose local and familiar topics to increase engagement, explaining that —if I use local topics like discussing Eid celebrations or Pakistani food, the students engage way more‖ (Teacher 5). A few also extended communication beyond the classroom by using technology, for example
—using WhatsApp groups for homework discussions‖ (Teacher 5) or showing videos after in-class discussion (Teacher 1). These strategies suggest that with careful planning, clear roles and shorter tasks, CLT can still be used in large classes, although it requires extra effort and organization.

Theme 4: Mixed or conditional support for CLT
Teachers' support for CLT was generally positive but conditional. They valued CLT for speaking and confidence, yet did not see it as enough on its own. One teacher said, —I have mixed opinions about CLT. When I started teaching, I used to love CLT because it's fun, it engages students. But I didn't, as a teacher, I didn't find it very effective… so I think it should not be used alone, it should be integrated with other teaching methods‖ (Teacher 3). Another commented that —in my opinion, yes, it is suitable as it improves fluency even in crowded rooms. But the lack of trained teachers, the noisy environment and definitely the exam-oriented systems make full CLT unrealistic. So yes, a hybrid model will work better in our context because I personally don't go with pure CLT strategies‖ (Teacher 6). Teachers linked this conditional support to grammar accuracy, exam preparation and mixed language levels, and preferred to combine CLT with more

traditional methods.

Theme 5: Role of other teaching methods

Because of these concerns, other teaching methods still played an important role in classroom practice. Several teachers used the Grammar-Translation Method when teaching grammar rules or preparing students for written exams. One explained that ―if it's a class where you are to teach some grammatical rules or things like that, there you must resort to grammar translation method‖ (Teacher 2). Others mentioned direct method and task-based learning to keep students focused on the target language and meaningful tasks; for example, one said that in task-based learning ―they perform certain things like role plays and, you know, they give presentations, they draw certain things and then explain‖ (Teacher 1).

Audio-lingual drills were used especially for pronunciation and weaker students, as another teacher noted that ―audio-lingual drills… go side by side for the pronunciation of difficult words for weak students‖ (Teacher 6). Activities like debates, storytelling and argumentative essays were also used, with one teacher describing how she divides the class into two groups to ―raise points and argue, which encourages critical thinking and collaborative discussion‖ (Teacher 4).

Theme 6: Need for teacher training and institutional support

Another important finding was the strong need for teacher training and institutional support to make CLT workable in large settings. Many teachers called for workshops and training on CLT and large-class management. One remarked, ―I think teachers should be given the opportunity to attend workshops where they can learn how to manage large classes and overcome challenges in teaching‖ (Teacher 4). Another stressed that ―teachers training is necessary for class management strategies for large groups… workshops could be designed for short, efficient communicative tasks to teach the teachers how to do that‖ (Teacher 6). Some also suggested teaching assistants to help manage groups and participation, saying that ―a teacher needs to have an assistant, who can you know help her out in managing groups and group contribution plus large ESL classrooms‖ (Teacher 3). Teachers further pointed to a mismatch between CLT and exam systems; one commented that ―exam-oriented systems make full CLT unrealistic‖ and argued that ―aligning exams with CLT‖ is necessary so that communicative work is not neglected due to syllabus pressure (Teacher 6).

Theme 7: Understanding of "large class" and language barriers

Finally, the interviews showed how teachers understand ―large class‖ and related language barriers. Most described large classes as around 40–70 students or more. For instance, one teacher said, ―of course more than 30 students will make a class large‖ (Teacher 1), while another recalled teaching ―70 students‖ in one group (Teacher 3). Large numbers were linked with communication problems and unequal participation. Several teachers observed that many students are shy and prefer writing to speaking; one explained that students ―really get nervous whenever I ask them to communicate certain things. They feel comfortable while talking with their partners or with their friends but when I ask them to discuss it with the class… they get a little bit confused and hesitant to discuss it as an individual in front of the class‖ (Teacher 1). Others noticed that strong speakers often dominate while weaker students ―stay quiet‖ or ―become quiet or they hide behind the stronger ones‖ (Teachers 3 and 6). Because of mixed proficiency levels, teachers often had to use translanguaging or the first language; for example, one said, ―we must resort to translanguaging. Translanguaging means we must use their first language at times to make them understand what we want them to do or the type of feedback that we desire from them‖ (Teacher 2). These points show that in large ESL classrooms, class size and language gaps together make it harder to apply CLT equally for all learners.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore university teachers' perceptions of implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in large ESL classrooms. The findings do not suggest a simple conclusion that CLT is either entirely effective or ineffective. Instead, they reveal that its effectiveness is largely influenced by factors such as class size, examination practices, and institutional support. While teachers acknowledged CLT as an effective approach for enhancing students' fluency, confidence, and speaking ability, they also reported considerable challenges when attempting to apply communicative methods in overcrowded classrooms shaped by exam-oriented systems.

One important implication is that large class size is not merely a classroom management concern but a deeper instructional issue. When teachers are unable to monitor every student, provide individual feedback, or manage classroom noise effectively, essential elements of CLT—such as meaningful interaction, continuous feedback, and active student participation—are weakened. Under such circumstances, expecting the implementation of a completely "pure" CLT model becomes impractical. As a result, teachers often adopt a blended approach, combining communicative activities with more structured, teacher-directed techniques. Rather than interpreting this mixed approach as a limitation, it can be understood as a practical and context-responsive strategy that maintains the communicative objectives of CLT while accommodating curriculum and assessment requirements.

The findings further indicate that the effectiveness of CLT in large ESL classrooms should not be considered solely the responsibility of individual teachers. Institutional factors significantly influence classroom practices. In the absence of supportive policies—such as manageable class sizes, sufficient time for interactive activities, examinations that assess communicative skills, and professional development opportunities—teachers tend to revert to traditional lecture-based methods, even if they personally value communicative teaching. Therefore, promoting CLT in Pakistan's tertiary ESL settings requires both classroom-level techniques (such as structured group work and clearly assigned roles) and broader institutional reforms that formally recognize communicative competence as an essential learning objective.

It is important to acknowledge that this research is based on a small sample from a specific context and reflects only teachers' perspectives. Future studies could incorporate student perspectives, direct classroom observations, or comparative research across different institutions to examine how varying contexts influence CLT implementation in large classes. Despite these limitations, the study adds to the existing discussion by demonstrating that CLT can be implemented in large ESL classrooms, but typically in modified or hybrid forms, and only when adequate training and institutional support make communicative teaching realistically achievable.

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