

Developing a Scale to Explore Iranian EFL Learners' Attitudes Toward CLT: A Validation Study

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Abstract

Attitude plays a pivotal role in language learning as it influences learners' motivation, engagement, and, ultimately, their proficiency. Given the significance of attitude in language learning and toward language teaching methodologies, particularly Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), this study aimed to develop and validate a scale tailored to Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward CLT, titled the Communicative Language Teaching Questionnaire (CLTQ). To this end, using a correlational study which relied on an exploratory sequential mixed methods design, we first interviewed 21 intermediate and 10 advanced EFL learners selected through convenience sampling method. Then, we constructed the CLTQ based on the interview results and checked its psychometric properties to ensure its accuracy and appropriateness in an EFL context. The developed questionnaire was administered among a sample of 295 EFL learners selected through the purposive sampling method and validated through principal component analysis (PCA) and structural equation modeling (SEM). The results obtained revealed a 6-factor with 31 items. The statistical findings also showed that the CLTQ enjoys acceptable psychometric properties in terms of reliability and validity. The reliability indices for the components of the questionnaire, based on Cronbach alpha, were as follows: interactive learning ($\alpha=0.900$), learners' ability ($\alpha=0.899$), learners' participation in class activities ($\alpha=0.955$), learning needs assessment ($\alpha=0.945$), speaking-auditory communication ($\alpha=0.791$), and teacher empowerment ($\alpha=0.967$). The construct validity of the CLTQ was confirmed through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The research outcomes underscore the importance of locally relevant instruments such as the CLTQ in assessing Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward CLT, offering valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers aiming to enhance language teaching practices in Iran.

Keywords: attitude, CLT, scale development, PCA, SEM

Introduction

The global recognition of English as a lingua franca has significantly influenced its instructional methodologies worldwide. With diverse motivations such as accessing resources, engaging in business, and exploring different cultures, English language learning has seen the emergence of various teaching methodologies over the past fifty

years. Despite the complexity of language teaching issues encompassing grammar instruction, fluency development, teacher skills, learner motivation, and the role of technology (Dewi, 2019), the English language teaching profession has undergone numerous transitions to meet learners' evolving needs (Huang & Wang, 2024).

In the 1970s, communicative language teaching (CLT) emerged as a response to the shortcomings of more conventional approaches, such as situational language instruction and the grammar-translation technique, which primarily focused on grammar (Nisha, 2022). Advocating for language as a tool for communication rather than an amalgamation of grammatical components, CLT emphasizes functions and notions essential for effective communication in social contexts (Alluhaidan et al., 2023; Alsaghiar, 2018). Although CLT has become the predominant language teaching paradigm globally, its implementation in second and foreign language learning contexts faces challenges. These challenges include the absence of teacher training, cultural differences in learning and teaching, and limited teacher involvement in policy-making processes (Alakrash, 2021). Additionally, barriers such as teacher and student resistance, inadequate teacher knowledge and skills, and students' low English proficiency and motivation persist (Alakrash, 2021; Alluhaidan et al., 2023). CLT is also considered as an approach focusing on developing students' communicative competence through interactive activities and communication. Principles of CLT include focus on communication, functional language use, task-based activities, collaborative learning, and student-centered learning (Lesiana et al., 2024). CLT definitions share four major components about communicative competence, meaningful communication, fluency, and spontaneity (Obenza & Mendoza, 2024). Among the components of CLT in the EFL classroom, one may refer to interactive learning, written and oral communication, and learners' effective class participation (Zhang, 2023). Likewise, some scholars have considered learners' communicative ability, teacher engagement, and learners' needs as effective factors in advancing a communicative oriented language training (Baker, 2022; Mulia, 2024).

The learner's mentality is one of several crucial aspects of language acquisition. Denis (2020) argues that attitude, as a psychosocial phenomenon, is crucial to second language acquisition. A person's mental construction of how they feel about their language and other languages is known as their attitude toward language. Attitudes toward a language other than one's native tongue, as well as toward the target language, its speakers, and the culture or setting in which it is spoken, are all components of what is called "foreign language attitudes" (Artamonova, 2020, p. 807). In the CLT domain, developing an effective communication among the interlocutors is possible in case they take a positive attitude towards each other's cultural norms (Haryono, 2019). Le and Le (2022) state that when one learns a new language, they carry a set of values with them. This collection of values is known as their attitude toward language. This mindset is influenced by the learner's expectations about the benefits and consequences of language acquisition. Many factors, including immersion in the target language, interactions with

native speakers, travel, and the influence and perspective of family and friends, shape an individual's core values and perspective on the target language. The educational, cultural, and social contexts are considered in this definition of attitude. Since attitudes regarding a foreign language are not contained inside the confines of the foreign language classroom, the social component of attitude development becomes increasingly significant (Getie, 2020).

Several studies have explored the challenges of implementing CLT in EFL contexts from various perspectives, including learners' attitudes and teachers' perceptions (Alakrash, 2021; Hiep, 2007; Mowlaie & Rahimi, 2010; Vaezi & Abbaspour, 2014). However, these studies often employed small sample sizes and lacked a coherent measure of teachers' attitudes toward CLT practices. While some studies have addressed learners' attitudes toward CLT practices using questionnaires or survey techniques, they often failed to fully capture learners' perspectives (Khatib & Tootkaboni, 2019; Mirzaee, 2016). Thus, there is a need for a rigorous scale development procedure to accurately measure Iranian EFL learners' attitudes regarding CLT classroom practices.

One of the most influential aspects of language acquisition is, obviously, one's attitude (Firman et al., 2020). A high degree of emotional investment in one's sentiments, identity, and interpersonal connections is another hallmark (Khan & Mankash, 2022). It is believed that learners' high motivation and positive attitude promote second/foreign language learning. Thus, learners' attitudes must be incorporated into language learning as they can affect learners' performance and contribute to acquiring the target language.

Regarding the important role of attitude in language learning and because CLT is nowadays the mainstream language teaching approach around the world, many studies have investigated learners' and teachers' attitudes toward this approach. To find out how university lecturers in Taiwan felt about CLT, Alakrash (2021) conducted interviews with them. The results demonstrated that the instructors held favorable views of the CLT principles and emphasized the efficacy of this method. In the same vein, the views of Iranian EFL students on CLT in the classroom were studied by Mirzaee (2016). The students' attitudes toward instructional practice, their ideas about learning English in general, and their attitudes about English practice in the classroom were measured via a questionnaire that he administered to the participants. The results showed that while grammar-based methods are more commonly used to teach English in Iranian high schools, CLT was the favored approach among students. Additionally, it was found that the communicative and linguistic aspects of language should be given equal weight. Another study carried out by Anani Sarab et al. (2016) concerning the views of teachers about CLT in Iranian high school classes found that effective use of CLT in the L2 classroom is bound to a shift in teachers' perspectives from the reading and translating approach to a communicative approach.

Using a Likert-type scale, Khatib and Tootkaboni (2019) surveyed 242 Iranian EFL students about their beliefs regarding six tenets of the CLT approach. These tenets include the following: the significance of grammar, the utilization of group and pair work,

the students' and teachers' respective roles in the classroom, the frequency and method of error correction and assessment, and the role of the students' native language in EFL classes. The findings showed that pupils were not always in favor of CLT principles. Nonetheless, most of them valued CLT principles. Similarly, using a Likert-type scale, Tootkaboni (2019) investigated the attitudes of Iranian EFL instructors about the communicative method. The data used to build the measure came from 154 Iranian English language instructors who had their classroom activities observed. The findings showed that the majority of educators had a positive impression of CLT principles. Nevertheless, the instructors' ideals and the way they implemented CLT were clearly at odds with one another. Seirafi et al. (2024) also conducted a qualitative grounded-theory research that examined how Iranian EFL students felt about CLT in the classroom. They identified seven overarching themes of communicative language training, speaking and listening comprehension, student engagement, instructor agency, identifying and meeting students' individual learning needs, and interactive learning. These elements could potentially enhance the effectiveness of CLT in Iranian EFL classes.

A look at the literature indicates that various lines of research have addressed English teachers' and learners' attitudes toward CLT. Most studies have, however, used various tools, such as interviews and direct observations to measure learners' attitudes toward CLT (Akramy et al., 2024; Alluhaidan et al., 2024; Banafi, 2023). That is why implementing another method in the Iranian social-cultural context can help researchers find out the attitudes of L2 learners about CLT in the L2 classroom. While interviews and observation data can provide valuable insights into CLT practices, they are limited in their ability to provide quantitative data that can be used for comparison and generalization. In fact, it is believed that there is a need for a valid, consistent, and more unified instrument to be used for measuring EFL learners' attitudes toward CLT practices quantitatively. Among different ways to assess these practices, the construction of a quantitative measure that can properly unveil the nature of CLT in Iran is recommended.

Considering the study conducted by Seirafi et. al. (2024), the researchers of the present study decided to extend their findings by constructing a measure for assessing CLT practices. As their findings needed statistical support, it was regarded as necessary to conduct a factor analysis study to establish the construct validity of the CLT questionnaire (CLTQ). Hence, the primary purpose of this study was to find the factors which contributed to the development of the CLTQ through delving into the Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward classroom practices of CLT. Then, the secondary purpose of this study was to test the psychometric properties and the underlying structure of the CLTQ using two techniques commonly employed in the questionnaire development-exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). This led us to address the following questions:

1. What are Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward classroom practices of CLT?
2. To what extent does the CLTQ enjoy construct validity and reliability as psychometric values?

Method

Research Design

Using an exploratory sequential mixed methods design, we first collected the data in the qualitative phase of the study to explore the Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward classroom practices in CLT. Then, in the quantitative phase, we developed and validated a scale to measure these attitudes. In the qualitative phase, through in-depth interviews with 31 EFL learners, we discovered Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward classroom practices of CLT. This type of qualitative research helps develop a theory or model regarding a specific phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the quantitative phase, the reliability and construct validity of the scale were estimated using the data collected from 295 EFL learners.

Participants

The sample of the study included 295 intermediate and advanced EFL learners who were admitted to the English language programs taught according to CLT tenets in language institutes in Khoy – the capital of Khoy County, West Azerbaijan Province, Iran, and were taking classes during the winter 2020 semester. In the qualitative phase of the study, rather than determining a specific number of interviewees selected based on convenience sampling, the data collection process continued until the data reached the theoretical saturation, i.e., the point at which each recent qualitative interview would reproduce only previously discovered data. The sample included 21 intermediate and 10 advanced EFL learners. In the study's quantitative phase, based on the purposive sampling method, a sample of 295 participants was selected through the G*power software (effect size = 1, α = 0.05, power = 0.78). The criteria for selecting the participants were: 1) studying in a CLT program vs. other programs, 2) studying English for at least three years and reaching the intermediate or advanced levels, and 3) with the age range of 15 to 35, which represented the majority of the available participants taking part in the study as young adults and adults.

As presented in Table 1, 95 participants (32.20%) were male, and 196 participants (66.44%) were female. Also, 4 participants (0.135%) did not answer the gender question. 127 participants (43.1%) were less than 25 years old; 78 participants (26.4%) were 25-35 years old; 56 participants (19%) were 35-45 years old, and 23 participants (7.8%) were over 45 years old. All of the learners taking part in the study were Turkish native speakers. Also, 11 participants (3.7%) did not answer the age question. Regarding their level of education, 157 participants (53.22%) were at the intermediate level and 134 participants (45.42%) were at the advanced level.

Table 1

Demographic Information

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	95	32.20
	Female	196	66.44
	Missing	4	1.36
Age group	14-25	127	43.1
	26-35	78	26.4
	36-45	56	19.0
	46-50	23	7.8
	Missing	11	3.7
Education	Intermediate	157	53.22
	Avanced	134	45.42
	Missing	4	1.35
Total		295	100

Instrumentation

In-depth Interviews

To obtain the necessary qualitative data for this study, in-depth interviews with the participants were conducted by one the researchers at the language institutes where the research was being carried out. The study participants were selected from among the lerners in three language institutes of Khoy city according to the criteria mentioned above. To this aim, a semi-structured interview guide was developed and conducted to elicit Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward classroom practices of CLT. There was no limitation for the participants in terms of language for answering the interview questions. Each interview began with some questions about the participant's gender, age, and the type of school (governmental or non-governmental) they were studying. Then, they were asked six questions about the classroom practices of CLT, for example, the role of grammar, learner's role, teacher's role, error correction/evaluation, group/pair work, and the role of native language in the CLT classes. The interview guide consisted of a series of open-ended and retrospective questions and the interviews each lasted between thirty and forty minutes. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and fially analyzed.

Communicative Language Teaching Questionnaire (CLTQ)

The initially developed instrument, the CLTQ, included sections that correspond to seven main themes that emerged in the qualitative phase of the study. The seven themes were (i) *Interactive Learning*, (ii) *Speaking-Auditory Communication*, (iii) *Learners' Participation in Class Activities*, (iv) *Learners' Ability*, (v) *Teacher Empowerment*, (vi),

Learning Needs Assessment, (vii) *Communicative Language Training*. To be more specific, the initial seven-factor CLTQ included 35 items with a set of Likert-scale responses, ranging from strongly agree=4, agree=3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree =1. Scores range from a low of 31 to a high of 124, with higher scores reflecting more positive attitudes toward CLT practices. The CLTQ also included a section for instructions and respondents' demographic information as appears in Appendix A.

Procedure

Using the themes and subthemes that emerged in the qualitative phase, we developed the initial version of the CLTQ. More specifically, the scale items were created following DeVellis's (2012) approach to scale development:

1. *Conceptualization of the Construct*: The CLT practices were conceptualized in the qualitative phase, as mentioned above and as presented in Seirafi et al. (2024).
2. *Item Generation*: We generated a pool of items that could be used to measure the CLT practices. This involved creating new items based on themes and subthemes that emerged in the qualitative phase of the study. We also received feedback from experts.
3. *Item Reduction*: After generating a pool of items, the next step was to reduce the number of items to a manageable size. This can be done through various methods, such as evaluating the relevance and clarity of items, conducting factor analyses to identify redundant or poorly performing items, and soliciting feedback from target populations.
4. *Scale Evaluation*: Once a preliminary set of items was identified, the scale was evaluated for its reliability and validity. This involved conducting statistical analyses, such as Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency and factor analysis for construct validity.

After all, the developed questionnaire was administered to the intended participants. First, principal component analysis (PCA) as exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was run ignoring the factors established in the first phase, and the items were analyzed with other items irrespective of the factor under which they were located. Next, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was run to determine the number of factors, possible correlations between the factors, and the items that were located under each factor. Furthermore, the convergent and divergent validity of the newly developed scale was checked and reported. The results of all these stages are presented in the next section.

Results

Thematic Analysis

To answer the first research question, the researchers took the steps of qualitative thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) as follows:

A. Get to Know Our Data

When starting the thematic analysis, researchers immerse themselves in the data in such a way that they become completely familiar with the depth and richness of the data content. Data immersion requires frequent data reading and review in an active manner. In this case, while reading the text, some ideas and patterns are recognized. Figure 1 shows the coding process of the research interview in MAXQDA20 software.

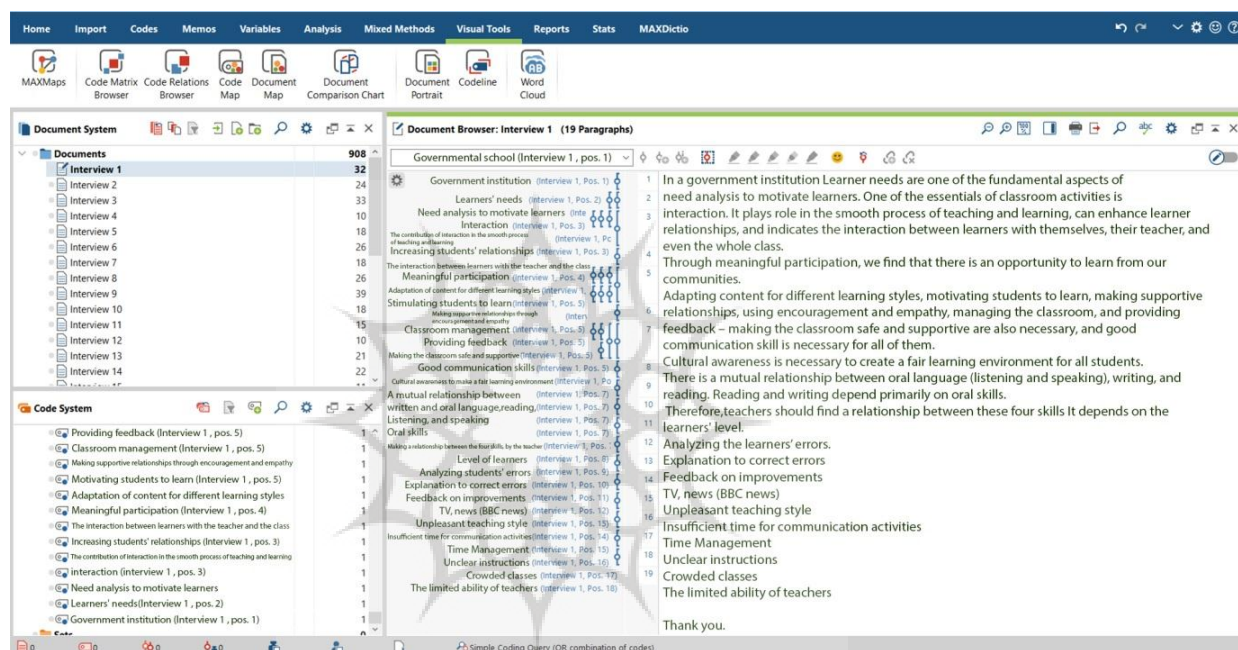


Figure 1. An Example of Coding of the Interview Text in MAXQDA20 Software

Generating Preliminary Codes and Coding

Step two begins when the researcher has studied, familiarized himself with the data, and prepared a preliminary list of ideas in the data and their interesting points; therefore, this step requires generating preliminary codes out of the data content. In this step, codes are used to divide textual data into understandable and usable parts such as clauses, phrases, words, or other criteria necessary for specific analysis.

B. Searching and Understanding Themes

This step focuses on the analysis at a level higher than codes and different codes are arranged in the form of themes, and all the coded data related to each theme are identified and collected.

C. Reviewing Themes

Step four begins once a set of themes is devised and requires refinement. Known themes are the main source of the theme networks. In this step, it will be clear that some proposed themes are not real themes (for example, if there is not enough data or the data is too diverse), some themes overlap with each other (for example, if two separate themes

have one meaning and concept and together form a single theme) and it may be necessary to separate other themes into separate themes. Internal homogeneity and heterogeneity can be used here to judge themes.

D. Analyzing the Network of Themes

Step five begins when the researcher reaches a network of satisfactory themes. In this case, the researcher can define and adjust the proposed themes for data analysis and analyze the data accordingly. In this step, the theme networks are drawn, investigated, and analyzed. As mentioned earlier, the theme networks are a tool for analysis, not the analysis itself. These networks help the researcher obtain a deeper understanding of the meanings of the texts and be able to describe the obtained themes and recognize their patterns. The main and sub-themes of the study are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Main and Sub-Themes and their Frequency

Main theme	Sub-theme	An example of the concept mentioned in the interview texts	Frequency
Interactive learning	1. Increasing learning opportunities	It has provided the students with the opportunity to learn together with creativity and action. (Interview 28, code 5) A friendly atmosphere and two-way interaction between students significantly help to improve learning. (Interview 29, Code 6)	3
	2. Information transfer	When we interact in our class, I feel it is easier to transfer information, and I enjoy the class and learning more. (Interview 6, Code 2)	2
	3. In-class and out-of-class interactions	We always practice English together, and our teacher emphasizes in-class and even out-of-class interactions (Interview 2, code 23).	2
	4. Receiving feedback from learners' interactions	When we ask students to talk about a topic in pairs and in groups, and then we get feedback on what they heard from their peers, we help them learn through conversation and communication with each other. (Interview 3, Code 13)	4
	5. Creating conditions and encouraging interaction between learners	In my opinion, the teacher should create comfortable, interactive conditions for learners and encourage students to interact with each other. (Interview 8, Code 3)	5
	6. Using new types of interactive and valid activities and topics	New types of activities and topics are used during the teaching and learning process that are interactive and authentic from different aspects (Interview 16, code 7).	2
Speaking-auditory	7. Listening skills	Yes, we listen to audio files and learn by imitation. (interview 2, code 11)	5

communicati on		And also reading and listening to English files (interview 30, code 6)	
	8. Speaking skills	Oral language (listening and speaking), written language, and reading are all interconnected. Oral skills are mostly used in reading and writing. Teachers should, therefore, establish a connection between the four talents. Code 18 (Interview 1,)	4
	9. Improving fluency and mastery of speaking	But to improve the fluency of our words, he ignores them during the interaction and corrects them at the end of the class (interview 2, code 16).	5
Learners' participation in class activities	10. Meaningful participation	Through meaningful participation, we find that we have an opportunity to learn from our communities. (Interview 1, Code 8)	9
	11. Classroom activities and opinion exchange	Our teacher always encourages students to be active in the classroom, participate in activities, and exchange ideas with the teacher and students, especially during open discussions. (Interview 2, Code 4)	5
	12. Receive understandable language data	Increasing participation by speaking activities, playing games in class, and lectures. (Interview 29, code 7)	4
	13. Encouragement of students by the teacher using cooperative strategies	According to the classroom conditions, the teacher encourages 100% of the students to engage in cooperative strategies. (Interview 23, code 7)	6
	14. Pair, group activities, role plays and discussion	It is a top priority in our English class. He gives us activities based on pair and group work, role-playing, and discussion. (Interview 2, code 14)	4
	15. Imposing no compulsion, anxiety, and stress on students	It should be indirect because forcing students to speak correctly will cause anxiety and stress. (Interview 14, Code 13)	1
Learners' ability	16. Comprehension skills	And they need to work on our comprehension and speaking skills more frequently. (Interview 4, code 4)	2
	17. Considering different learning styles of learners	In fact, there is a different academic level in the class (interview 26, code 57)	1
	18. Understanding the culture of language beyond words	Because they are learning other language concepts. We have to learn how to communicate by understanding their culture beyond words. (Interview 16, Code 23)	1

Teacher empowerment	19. Providing the necessary infrastructure and building self-confidence in learners	Yes, considering that today's generation has become familiar with the English language, this is possible. Basic infrastructure must be provided. The learners should be given the opportunity to grow and build self-confidence in them. (Interview 24, code 47)	2
	20. Help to develop the speaking ability in different situations	Different activities help to develop the ability to speak in different situations (interview 5, code 5)	2
	21. Solving the economic problems of teachers	and teachers' economic problems are solved (interview 14, code 21)	1
	22. Supporting the teaching and learning process	To regularly discuss their needs throughout the course so that I think the necessary needs to support the teaching and learning process are met by examining the results (interview 16, code 4)	2
	23. Listening to the teacher and correcting mistakes at the end of the discussion	While a student is talking or two students are talking together, even when we have group work, the teacher is just listening and taking notes. At the end of the activity, he asks other students to correct the mistakes, or he mentions them himself. (Interview 2, code 19)	5
	24. Provision of audiovisual facilities in schools and institutions	Some public institutions and schools lack audiovisual aids (Interview 24, code 4).	6
	25. Providing adequate training to teachers	Teachers must first be well trained. If there is an obstacle, this factor will be the same. (Interview 11, code 15)	1
Learning needs assessment	26. Using audio and video tools for educational purposes	Audiovisual aids are used in the classes. (Interview 15, code 4)	10
	27. Performing needs analysis to motivate learners	Learners' needs are a fundamental aspect of the analysis, which is the need to keep learners motivated. (Interview 1, code 2)	2
	28. Adapting materials to suit learner needs	And I think the book we use to learn the language is not what we really need. (Interview 4, Code 3)	2
	29. Creating opportunities to talk about interests and needs	In my opinion, if the teacher gives us the opportunity to talk about our interests and needs in the second language (interview 9, code 2)	3
	30. Considering the needs of learners by the teacher	The teacher should also consider their needs (interview 16, code 38).	1

	31. Bridging the gap between the interests and needs of learners	There are many subjects that teachers teach, and students forget after the course. Why does this happen? This shows the gap between the taught material and the learners, their interests, and needs. (Interview 18, Code 8)	1
Communicative language training	32. Teaching communicative language forms and their use	Therefore, it can be concluded that the language is not taught as it should be in public schools based on current and standard methods. I think dialogue should be given more importance. (Interview 24, code 6)	4
	33. Learners' satisfaction with their communicative educational activity	I think we all enjoy what we do in class, and we all learn interesting and useful things. (Interview 21, code 29)	2
	34. Improving interpersonal communication	Communicative language training leads to better communication. (Interview 11, Code 3)	4
	35. Implementation of communicative language teaching	Communicative language training is also applicable in our class (Interview 18, code 70)	1

Finally, investigation and categorization of the descriptive codes led to the emergence of 35 sub-themes, and according to their meaning similarity, they were placed in seven main themes, including *interactive learning*, *speaking-listening communication*, *learners' participation in class activities*, *learners' ability*, *teacher empowerment*, *learning needs assessment* and *communicative language training (CLT)*.

3.2 Validation of the Newly-developed Instrument

The second research question of the study dealt with the psychometric values of the CLTQ. To validate the CLTQ, the identified themes were classified as latent variables, and indicators (questionnaire items) as the observed variables. In the first part of the validation process, EFA was carried out by IBM SPSS Statistics 26, and CFA was performed utilizing SMART PLS to confirm the results of EFA. In the present study, the research sample was divided into two groups – the first sample ($n=150$) for EFA and the holdout sample ($n=145$) for CFA.

3.2.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis of the CLTQ

A pool of 35 items (questions) was prepared for the intended questionnaire. In the first part of EFA, the sampling adequacy was considered using Kaiser-Meyer-Elkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The KMO value was 0.85, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p=.000$). The results suggested that the sampling adequacy in the EFA of CLTQ was high. In other words, a sample size of $n=150$ was adequate for EFA of CLTQ.

After the sampling adequacy test, the number of latent factors was identified. For this purpose, Table 3 presents the results of determining the number of latent factors in

terms of eigenvalues. The column of eigenvalues introduces six factors encompassing 31 items with an eigenvalue higher than 1, so the proposed factorial structure has six factors, which explains about 76.45% of the variance (the number of latent factors is determined based on eigenvalues higher than 1). The factors were extracted using Varimax rotation. The six factors of Interactive Learning, Learners' Participation in Class Activities, Speaking-Auditory Communication, Teacher Empowerment, Learners' Ability, and Learning Needs Assessment, were the factors identified. However, *Communicative Language Training* with four items was the only component of the tentative model that did not fit the scale.

Table 3
Total Variance Explained by Extracted Factors

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	11.902	38.392	38.392
2	3.287	10.603	48.995
3	2.886	9.310	58.305
4	2.529	8.158	66.463
5	1.924	6.207	72.670
6	1.172	3.781	76.451
7	.804	2.592	79.043
8	.696	2.246	81.289
9	.631	2.034	83.323
10	.570	1.839	85.162
11	.535	1.724	86.886
12	.484	1.562	88.449
13	.400	1.291	89.740
14	.379	1.222	90.962
15	.342	1.102	92.065
16	.309	.998	93.062
17	.277	.894	93.957
18	.262	.846	94.803
19	.218	.702	95.505
20	.207	.666	96.171
21	.188	.605	96.777
22	.172	.555	97.332
23	.158	.510	97.842
24	.144	.466	98.307

25	.129	.415	98.722
26	.105	.338	99.060
27	.089	.287	99.348
28	.079	.254	99.602
29	.071	.229	99.831
30	.044	.142	99.973
31	.008	.027	100.000

The final structure of the factors is presented in the rotated matrix (Table 4). The rotated component matrix classified the observed variables into six factors. The results shown in this matrix are the basis for the classification of indicators. Accordingly, several indicators with high factor loadings (higher than 0.5) are assigned to each latent factor. Accordingly, the identified factors are based on 31 indicators and are categorized according to the concept of indicators and the theoretical literature in Table 4.

Table 4
Rotated Component Matrix

	Component					
	Learning needs assessment	Learners' ability	Teacher empowerment	Interactive learning	Learners' participation in	Speaking-auditory communication
1. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) increases learning opportunities.	.06 9	.22 5	.12 9	.76 8	.15 6	.086
2. CLT makes the transfer of information more accessible and leads to more learning.	.08 0	.12 3	.12 7	.76 2	.00 6	.251
3. CLT leads to interaction inside and outside the classroom.	.16 8	.18 5	.12 1	.72 5	.18 1	.165
4. Learners learn from each other through pair and group activities in the CLT method.	.05 8	.15 7	.06 5	.73 7	.27 6	.053
5. CLT increases interaction between learners.	.12 1	.05 5	.07 0	.85 3	.09 7	.049
6. CLT emphasizes doing new interactive activities.	.15 3	.18 9	.13 3	.76 4	.21 2	.123
7. CLT strengthens listening skills.	.13 4	.31 9	.11 6	.26 3	.26 6	.765

8. CLT strengthens speaking skills.	.12	.32	.14	.29	.17	.740
	8	6	6	4	4	
9. CLT significantly impacts the mastery and fluency of speech.	.16	.35	.12	.22	.24	.752
	2	4	2	2	9	
10. CLT leads to meaningful participation among learners.	.18	.10	.17	.16	.71	.174
	2	3	0	5	4	
11. CLT leads to activity and exchange of information between learners.	.20	.08	.09	.18	.61	.245
	7	8	5	1	8	
12. CLT increases participation in the class through speaking, playing, and oral presentations.	.14	-	.06	.19	.66	.286
	7	.05	0	5	0	
		9				
13. In CLT, the teacher encourages learners to engage in collaborative strategies.	.10	.06	.17	.19	.65	.219
	1	6	6	9	9	
14. In CLT, pair and group activities are especially important.	.22	.12	.09	.10	.74	-
	0	6	8	0	3	.031
15. In CLT, the teacher reduces the learners' stress and anxiety as much as possible.	.09	.18	.10	.07	.75	-
	3	8	2	1	7	.112
16. CLT has a significant impact on comprehension skills.	.13	.85	.17	.23	.11	.182
	5	3	5	1	5	
17. In CLT, instructional strategies differ according to learners' proficiency level.	.08	.86	.12	.11	.08	.154
	1	7	8	1	1	
18. In CLT, understanding language culture goes beyond words.	.20	.79	.12	.20	.10	.161
	1	4	0	2	6	
19. CLT provides the necessary infrastructure for learning English and increases self-confidence.	.15	.87	.15	.14	.08	.108
	7	4	4	7	9	
20. CLT provides the ability to speak in different situations.	.16	.85	.17	.22	.13	.177
	9	6	1	4	7	
21. Teachers who teach using the CLT method are paid more.	.17	.16	.82	.16	.23	.087
	2	3	7	6	8	
22. CLT supports the teaching and learning processes.	.16	.09	.90	.15	.15	.068
	7	1	0	0	1	
23. The teacher corrects the learner's mistakes at the end of the discussion.	.10	.08	.91	.08	.08	.086
	0	0	0	5	6	
24. Schools and institutions where CLT is implemented are equipped with audiovisual facilities.	.18	.21	.88	.09	.14	.068
	1	7	6	5	1	
25. The teacher has received sufficient prior training to implement CLT in the classroom.	.15	.18	.89	.12	.08	.057
	0	6	5	4	0	
26. The teacher uses audiovisual tools in the classroom.	.84	.04	.11	.19	.08	.053
	8	7	1	5	8	

27. To motivate the learners, the teacher analyzes their needs.	.82 6	.09 3	.05 3	.15 2	.18 4	- .038
28. The CLT textbooks and materials are suitable for the real needs of the learners.	.85 3	.13 3	.11 9	.09 3	.21 2	.033
29. Learners are allowed to talk about their interests and needs.	.82 9	.14 7	.15 9	.05 2	.12 4	.114
30. The teacher considers the needs of the learners.	.85 9	.18 1	.22 5	.05 5	.16 2	.145
31. In CLT, there is no gap between learners, their interests, and their needs.	.84 5	.17 2	.16 0	.10 2	.19 1	.167

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the CLTQ

In the previous section, six latent factors were identified for the CLTQ, including *Interactive Learning*, *Learners' Participation in Class Activities*, *Speaking-Auditory Communication*, *Teacher Empowerment*, *Learners' Ability*, and *Learning Needs Assessment*. It is worth mentioning that six components of the CLT practice scale were compatible with the tentative conceptual model as the outcome of the qualitative phase, the seventh component of the tentative model; *Communicative Language Training*, did not fit the scale.

In this section, CFA is used to ensure the fit of the data with the factor structure. CFA is commonly used to confirm the reliability and validity of measuring tools. In CFA, when factor loadings are close to one, the questionnaire items have a stronger relationship with the latent variables; conversely, when the standard factor loading is zero, it means no relationship exists between questionnaire items and the latent variable (Field, 2018). Prior to examining the factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR) were used for the model in this study. Cronbach's alpha of all extracted factors of the CLTQ was higher than 0.7, indicating the accuracy of the items. CR of the extracted factors of the CLTQ was also higher than 0.6. AVE was higher than the limit of 0.5, indicating convergent validity. Therefore, it could be considered that the CFA model had a good fit with the extracted data. Cross-validated commonality was used to check the quality of the model fit.

The results show that the tested model (due to the positivity of the obtained numbers) is of good quality. According to the mentioned items and the confirmation of the indicators, it can be said that the relevant model had sufficient and appropriate reliability (Table 5). The goodness of fit index (GFI) was also used for the model. A GFI higher than 0.4 indicates the appropriate fit of the model. According to Table 5, the GFI in the present model is equal to 0.71, indicating a strong fit of the model with the research data.

Table 5

Criteria of Model Quality in CFA of CLTQ

	Construct Reliability and Validity			Cross-validated Communality	GFI
	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)		
Interactive learning	0.900	0.924	0.669	0.531	0.71
Learners' ability	0.899	0.926	0.714	0.564	
Learners' participation in class activities	0.955	0.964	0.816	0.734	
Learning needs assessment	0.945	0.956	0.785	0.693	
Speaking-auditory communication	0.791	0.878	0.706	0.402	
Teacher empowerment	0.967	0.974	0.883	0.810	

Additionally, the discriminant validity is confirmed using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. In discriminant validity, the correlation between an index and its related factor should be higher than the correlation between that index and other factors. What this means is that each latent variable's square root of its AVE should be greater than the highest possible correlation among all latent variables. We can see that the model is discriminant valid by looking at Table 6. It shows that the square root of AVE (found in the cells of the major diameter of the matrix) for each latent variable is higher than the highest correlation between that variable and other latent variables.

Table 6
Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion) of CLTQ

	Interactive learning	Learners' ability	Learners' participation in class activities	Learning needs assessment	Speaking- auditory communication	Teacher empowerment
Interactive learning	0.818					
Learners' ability	0.434	0.845				
Learners' participation in class activities	0.413	0.364	0.904			
Learning needs assessment	0.380	0.381	0.251	0.886		

Speaking-auditory communication	0.369	0.382	0.242	0.232	0.840	
Teacher empowerment	0.159	0.378	0.342	0.345	0.283	0.940

The output results of SMART PLS for factor loadings of the research model are shown in Figure 2. As shown, it can be said that the factor loadings of all observed variables are above 0.6, indicating the appropriateness of these values. In other words, it can be said that the observed variables in the model can properly explain the latent factors.

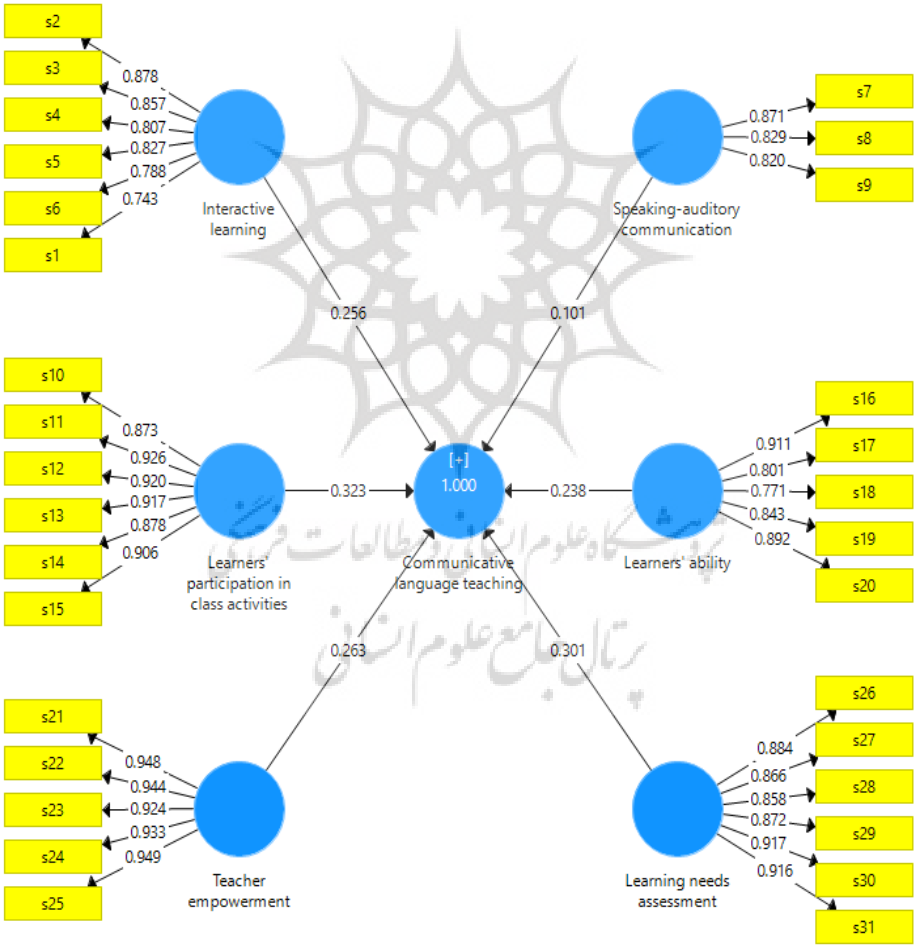


Figure 2 . Factor Loadings of Extracted Factors in CFA of CLTQ

The significance of factor loadings can be investigated by two methods. As indicated in Table 7, the significance level of all factor loadings is equal to 0.000 and less than the error level of 0.01. Therefore, all factor loadings are significant.

Table 7

Summary of the Results of CFA of CLTQ

Factor (latent variable)	Indicators	Factor loadings	P Values	Result
Interactive learning	s1	0.743	0.000	Valid
	s2	0.878	0.000	Valid
	s3	0.857	0.000	Valid
	s4	0.807	0.000	Valid
	s5	0.827	0.000	Valid
	s6	0.788	0.000	Valid
Speaking-auditory communication	s7	0.871	0.000	Valid
	s8	0.829	0.000	Valid
	s9	0.820	0.000	Valid
Learners' participation in class activities	s10	0.873	0.000	Valid
	s11	0.926	0.000	Valid
	s12	0.920	0.000	Valid
	s13	0.917	0.000	Valid
	s14	0.878	0.000	Valid
	s15	0.906	0.000	Valid
Learners' ability	s16	0.911	0.000	Valid
	s17	0.801	0.000	Valid
	s18	0.771	0.000	Valid
	s19	0.843	0.000	Valid
	s20	0.892	0.000	Valid
Teacher empowerment	s21	0.948	0.000	Valid
	s22	0.944	0.000	Valid
	s23	0.924	0.000	Valid
	s24	0.933	0.000	Valid
	s25	0.949	0.000	Valid
Learning needs assessment	s26	0.884	0.000	Valid
	s27	0.866	0.000	Valid
	s28	0.858	0.000	Valid
	s29	0.872	0.000	Valid
	s30	0.917	0.000	Valid
	s31	0.916	0.000	Valid

Discussion

This research aimed to construct and validate an instrument for measuring CLT practices in the Iranian EFL context. Accordingly, the two following research questions were formulated: 1) What are Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward classroom practices of CLT?, 2) To what extent does the CLTQ enjoy construct validity and reliability as psychometric values?

The results of the qualitative data analysis revealed interactive learning, learners' participation in class activities, speaking-auditory communication, teacher empowerment, learners' ability, and learning needs assessment as the factors representing EFL learners' attitudes about CLT. The outcomes of the EFA and CFA demonstrated an acceptable model-to-data fit and also confirmed the factor structure of the scale. The finalized questionnaire included 31 items representing the factors of the CLTQ.

Given the results of the qualitative study, *interactive learning* was considered as one of the factors affecting CLT practices in the EFL classroom. It was discovered that several aspects of CLT practices in the classroom, such as increasing learning opportunities, making information transfer more accessible and leading the classroom conditions to increased learning, providing interaction inside and outside the classroom, helping learners learn from each other through pair and group activities, increasing interaction between learners, and emphasizing the practice of new interactive activities had significant effects on the development of CLT practices in the EFL classroom. These findings are consistent with the results of earlier empirical research (Atai & Mazlum, 2013; Eisenring & Margana, 2019; Kardoust & Saeedian, 2021) stressing that learners' views and interactional perspectives should be taken into account (Kardoust & Saeedian, 2021). It emphasizes the interaction among learners and between the learner and the teacher (Atai & Mazlum, 2013), which can foster the L2 development of the learner and enhance the capability of the teaching program in helping teachers fit new curricula in their teaching, respectively. The notion of interaction manifested in interactive learning is a fundamental aspect of CLT, as proposed by Savignon (1987) in her seminal work on CLT. The notion represents that learners enjoying interactive learning can improve their second language in a more facilitated way compared to the students trained in a classroom with the minimum interaction among learners or between the learner and the teacher (Eisenring & Margana, 2019).

A possible justification for this finding is that different aspects of a second/foreign language program, such as textbooks, teachers, the curriculum, and the policy agenda, have the potential to increase or at least pave the way for increasing the amount of interaction in the classroom context, which in turn helps strengthen the student's learning and making them as communicative as possible. This finding can also be supported by Toro et al.'s (2019) study, which confirms that classroom-related factors such as authentic language environment, interactional activities, and CLT providence can affect the oral skills of EFL learners. Learning through interaction within the CLT, considered significant in the EFL domain since the 1980s (Littlewood, 2011). From this perspective,

interactive learning also confirms its urgency in the conceptual model of CLT practice in the EFL classroom.

The second component of the CLTQ was *Speaking-Auditory Communication*. It was found that some notions, including paying attention to listening skills, strengthening speaking skills, and focusing on the interaction channel, significantly impact the mastery and fluency of speech among EFL learners. Some empirical findings available in the literature are compatible with the achieved results (e.g., Dos Santos, 2020; Firoozi et al., 2019; Rezalou & Yagiz, 2021; Toro et al., 2019; Xolmurodova, 2021). It might be stated that the key methods teachers employ to assist students in developing their communicative abilities include modeling, repetition, pair work, and group work. These techniques are often employed in CLT lessons, and they are considered effective in encouraging student engagement. It is vital to express that there are several tactics besides the ones previously described that can be included to offer learners more opportunities to generate the language orally. The research in this area demonstrates that the above-listed elements are seen as facilitators of oral communicative skills. Consistent with the present study, Rahman et al. (2019), in the EFL context of Bangladesh, found that speaking-auditory communication can be considered CLT's discrimination power. Similarly, the present study's findings can take support from Rezalou and Yagiz's (2021) study, confirming that speaking lessons at the CLT are more effective than other techniques because students report higher levels of satisfaction with their speaking abilities.

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The third dimension of the CLTQ was *Learners' Participation in Class Activities*. The CLT elements pave the ground for meaningful participation among learners, leading them to take part in classroom activities and exchanging of information with one another, increasing participation in the class through speaking, playing games, and oral presentations, encouraging learners to engage in collaborative strategies, introducing pair and group activities, and reducing learners' stress and anxiety as much as possible, were found to play important roles in affecting CLT practices in EFL classroom. The present findings can be supported by Dos Santos's (2020) study on this ground of CLT being part of the CLT domain, students have the opportunity to enhance their comprehension, practicality, and communication skills through the use of language. It follows that CLT can potentially pique students' interest in teaching and learning more generally. Students' interests may be nurtured outside the classroom walls by allowing them to engage in some real-life stories and exercises in the CLT setting, in contrast to the GTM (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004), in which they are the sole listeners of the lectures. Among other

studies supporting the present finding is Rezalou and Yagiz (2021) reporting on EFL learners' attitudes towards CLT activities in the EFL classroom, arguing that students were able to speak with purpose, and their views toward employing communicative activities in the classroom were positively impacted by learning via these activities.

The fourth component affecting CLT practices in the EFL classroom, as highlighted in the CLTQ, is *Learners' Ability* in which some factors such as relative mastery over comprehension skills, making use of instructional strategies based on their proficiency levels, understanding the target language culture, high self-confidence, and the ability to speak in different situations were detected. The study participants cited these factors as the positive points a CLT-based classroom can provide them with. Bakar et al.'s (2019) study is compatible with the abovementioned result. They also confirmed that developing abilities such as comprehension skills, communication self-confidence, and speaking in different situations are often defined as unique practices in the CLT classroom. In addition, the present findings are in line with Dos Santos (2020), who argues that learners' communication abilities will be increased in the CLT classroom, providing them with a more expanded worldview to initiate effective communication whenever required.

The fifth component of CLT practice in the EFL classroom, as observed in the CLTQ, is *Teacher Empowerment*. This component highlights that (i) teachers who teach based on CLT are paid more, (ii) CLT supports the teaching and learning processes, (iii) teachers delayed corrective feedback through fine-tuning is considered a privilege, (iv) the CLT teacher is provided with audiovisual facilities by schools and institutions, and (v) such teachers are provided with in-service training programs to get updated. It could be argued that such findings signify what is necessary for a CLT teacher. As Rahman et al. (2018) found, both teachers' knowledge and access to classroom aids and technological facilities help them hold a more effective classroom. Then, it can be argued that teaching strategies enriched through teachers' power, job satisfaction, and the facilities they are provided with will strengthen the motivation to teach, leading to learner success in L2 development. The results obtained in the present study concerning teacher empowerment are in line with Hu (2002), Ozsevik (2010), Tiwari (2021), Haryono (2019), and Zulu (2019). All these studies consider teacher empowerment and job satisfaction as influential factors in the development of CLT practices in EFL classrooms.

The sixth factor of the CLTQ is *Needs Assessment* which considers teachers' use of audiovisual tools in the classroom, motivating learners through analyzing their needs, selecting CLT textbooks and materials in line with the real needs of the learners, giving room to learners to talk about their interests and needs, recognizing learners' needs, and focusing on learners' needs, wants, and requirements. These factors are considered fundamental aspects of CLT, as proposed by Prabhu (1987), who later developed the principles of task-based language teaching (TBLT). Accordingly, this finding can take support from both CLT and TBLT studies paying attention to the significant notion of "needs" (Akhatovna, 2023; Ju, 2013; Ozsevik, 2010; Rashidi & Kehtarfard, 2014; Willis,

1996). It can be argued that English teaching in Iran needs to be better planned with respect to learners' needs. This study has shown that English is one of the core subjects in the Iranian educational context and plays a significant role in this respect. The CLT and TBLT practiced in private institutions are to a great extent in line with the proposed principle of CLT in the present study and those of the CLT literature in the Iranian context (Goodarzi et al., 2020; Memari, 2013; Khatib & Tootkaboni, 2019; Seirafi et al., 2024; Tarlanialiabadi, 2022; Vaezi & Abbaspour, 2014), while high schools in Iran do not have enough resources to support such a massive initiative.

The current research findings showed that the six CLTQ components were compatible with the available literature. Therefore, it can be considered an efficient instrument for assessing perceptions that Iranian EFL learners hold toward their CLT classroom practices. Besides, it can be used as a reliable and valid evaluation instrument in different educational settings. That is, EFL teachers can evaluate their learners' CLT practices in terms of its different aspects by employing this instrument. In addition, EFL teachers can employ the factors highlighted in the *Needs Assessment* component of the CLT model and provide their learners with the activities and tasks that meet their real needs. In addition, concerning *Learners' Participation in Class Activities* as another significant component of the CLT practice model, EFL teachers can provide their learners with opportunities for classroom participation. Moreover, they can help them be interactive in the L2 classroom by enhancing *Interactive Learning* and make them more willing to participate in the communicative activities in English in the classroom context relying on *Speaking-Auditory Communication*. Besides, the findings of this study imply that EFL teachers should pay more attention to the learner-oriented activities in the EFL classroom and enhance *Learners' Ability* in L2 development. This is possible in an attempt to connect classroom activities to the real life of the learners and help them expand their worldviews through meaningful and purposeful activities. In addition, Teacher Empowerment, as another factor in the CLTQ can help teachers apply teaching strategies appropriate for different learners to facilitate the learning process.

The present study relied on the EFL learners' perspectives toward CLT practices in the EFL context. Researchers and EFL instructors in Iran might be the subject of future studies that inquire about their perspectives on CLT practices and the methods they use to instruct EFL students in the development of their communicative competence. This can reveal whether there are differences in opinion among researchers regarding the level of CLT understanding and practice in the classroom. Another limitation of the present study was that the individual characteristics of the learners participating in the study were not taken into account. Personality traits such as introversion/extraversion, anxiety, and motivational factors have proved effective in communicative activities and tasks (Aksak & Cubukcu, 2020; Cameron, 2015; Mirzaei Shojakhanlou et al., 2022; Šafranĳ & Katić, 2019). Therefore, such factors could have affected learners' responses and the final CLT practice scale. All first-level structural equation models (SEMs) and regression analyses might have this issue; these methods are widely used in second language research.

Multilevel modeling and other sophisticated statistical processes can be employed to investigate the impact of factors at several levels, such as class, school/university, and district to resolve this matter.

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Appendix A

CLT Questionnaire

Part A: Demographics

Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐

Age: Less than 15 years ☐ 15-25 years ☐ 25-35 years ☐
 More than 35 years ☐

Education Level: Less than a diploma ☐ Diploma and associate degree ☐
 Bachelor ☐ Master's degree ☐

School Type: Public ☐ Private ☐

Part B: Questionnaire Items

Directions: Read each item carefully and then select 4= Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2= Disagree, and 1= Strongly Disagree

Descriptors	1	2	3	4
1. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) increases learning opportunities.				
2. CLT makes the transfer of information more accessible and leads to more learning.				
3. CLT leads to interaction inside and outside the classroom.				
4. Learners learn from each other through pair and group activities in the CLT method.				
5. CLT increases interaction between learners.				

6. CLT emphasizes doing new interactive activities.				
7. CLT strengthens listening skills.				
8. CLT strengthens speaking skills.				
9. CLT significantly impacts the mastery and fluency of speech.				
10. CLT leads to meaningful participation among learners.				
11. CLT leads to activity and exchange of information between learners.				
12. CLT increases participation in the class through speaking, playing, and oral presentations.				
13. In CLT, the teacher encourages learners to engage in collaborative strategies.				
14. In CLT, pair and group activities are especially important.				
15. In CLT, the teacher reduces the learners' stress and anxiety as much as possible.				
16. CLT has a significant impact on comprehension skills.				
17. In CLT, instructional strategies differ according to the proficiency levels of learners.				
18. In CLT, understanding language culture goes beyond words.				
19. CLT provides the necessary infrastructure for learning English and increases self-confidence.				
20. CLT provides the ability to speak in different situations.				
21. Teachers who teach using the CLT method are paid more.				
22. CLT supports the teaching and learning processes.				
23. The teacher corrects the learners' mistakes at the end of the discussion.				
24. Schools and institutions where CLT are implemented are equipped with audiovisual facilities.				
25. The teacher has received sufficient prior training to implement CLT in the classroom.				
26. The teacher uses audiovisual tools in the classroom.				
27. To motivate the learners, the teacher analyzes their needs.				
28. The CLT textbooks and materials are suitable for the real needs of the learners.				

29. Learners are allowed to talk about their interests and needs.				
30. The teacher considers the needs of the learners.				
31. In CLT, there is no gap between learners, their interests, and needs.				

Biodata

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