

## Issues with Communicative Language Teaching Implementation in Saudi Arabia Concerning the Government Policy, Teachers, and Students: Two Decades of Research

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### Abstract

This paper focuses on the most significant empirical studies on the topic of challenges facing the communicative language teaching approach in Saudi Arabia. The communicative language teaching method has been used for more than two decades in Saudi Arabia and research conducted during this period offers some insight into the main challenges of the implementation. The main goal of this paper is to synthesize findings from research studies conducted in the past and by doing so, suggest the possible avenues for tackling these challenges. Four broad categories of challenges have been adopted from Li's (1998) comprehensive framework in an attempt to structure the challenges under meaningful labels. This, in turn, enabled us to categorize the challenges according to their source which helped our understanding of how to resolve them. The findings suggest that the most frequently observed policy-related challenges are the current exam system, overcrowded classes, no AV equipment, and low quality of in-house training programs for teachers. Teacher-related challenges mostly relate to conflicting ideas about CLT, low confidence in these methods, preference for the traditional learning model, focus on developing skills that feature in the exams, and deficiencies in teachers' English. Student-related challenges are found to be their low-level proficiency, passive learning style, lack of motivation to learn the target language, and fear of their marks being negatively affected if they are paired with weaker peers during communicative activities. This paper concludes that these challenges are all interconnected, and a systematic approach is essential in trying to tackle these with the government intervention being a potential first step.

*Keywords:* Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), CLT in Saudi Arabia, CLT-related challenges, language policies in Saudi Arabia, policy-related challenges, student-related challenges, teacher-related challenges

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## Introduction

In today's global context, it is recognized that the English language has become the language of the world, and many countries have adapted their education policies to reflect the ever-growing need for the English language. Saudi Arabia introduced a new policy regarding the way the English language is taught in schools in the early 2000s as it became increasingly clear that the English language was to play an essential role in various fields of the Saudi Arabian economy (Alharbi, 2020). This new policy favours a so-called Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach whereby the focus is moved away from developing students' grammar accuracy and skills. Instead, the emphasis is placed on developing students' communicative skills. This communicative approach is based on the notion that learning language successfully comes from having to communicate real meaning, therefore, when learners are engaged in real communication, they are inclined to utilize their natural strategies for language acquisition, and this enables them to learn the language. For this reason, learners are encouraged to use the target language in a variety of contexts and learn language functions (Al Asmari, 2015). Such an approach is student-centred and aims to improve listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills, while at the same time enhancing students' understanding of other cultures and helping them advance the target language for everyday use (Alharbi, 2020).

On the other hand, the implementation of the CLT in Saudi Arabia cannot be described as particularly successful and a number of studies that have been conducted throughout the last twenty years on the topic corroborate that notion. In such studies, researchers set out to investigate the numerous challenges of CLT implementation, but no study to date has tried to synthesize findings from these studies in a way that would enable to get a complete overview of the challenges and organize them in categories in such way that it enables to see the causal relationship among them. This paper will try to fill this gap and in doing so, explore the ways in which these challenges could be tackled.

## Literature Review

The following section will firstly provide an overview of the relevant literature regarding the CLT, and secondly, it will explore the challenges of CLT implementation in Saudi Arabia. The latter will be achieved by exploring the studies of Abahussain (2016), Al Asmari (2015), Almohideb (2019), Batawi (2006) and Farooq (2015).

The main objective of the CLT approach to language learning is using communicative language teaching to develop communicative competence (Richards & Rodgers, 2014), which can be defined as the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning (Savignon, 1997). Therefore, the goal of CLT is to enable learners to communicate in the target language and this is attainable only if language learners acquire knowledge about the language and the ability to use that language (Alamri, 2018). The success of language learning depends on how well learners have developed their communicative skills or competence and how well they can apply this knowledge of a language with sufficient proficiency to the process of communication (Al Asmari, 2015).

The basic principles of CLT are, firstly, a classroom that is learner-oriented instead of teacher-oriented. Secondly, the classes should include opportunities to develop a broad repository of activities. Thirdly, it includes teachers taking on multiple roles; and lastly, it means that teachers should make use of authentic materials (Mey, 1998). Learner-oriented classrooms mean a move from a teacher-centred curriculum toward a student-centred curriculum. Regarding the content of the curriculum, new strategies and techniques have been adopted that allow students to use the language purposefully and functionally in the classroom (Alharbi, 2020), while communicative-based activities support the natural growth of language ability (Farooq, 2015). The new curriculum also reflects the students' need for more space to use language, which should, in turn, help students develop their language competency.

Due to moving from a teacher-centred to a student-centred curriculum, the role of the teachers has also shifted, but the importance of teachers has largely remained unchanged in CLT. In other words, although the focus has shifted to students, teachers' role remains of the utmost importance in a classroom (Al Asmari, 2015). According to the CLT, teachers should be considered role models for accurate pronunciation and writing and they should provide support to learners in producing utterances that are free of errors and, ultimately, mistakes (Richards, 2006). However, teachers should also help develop an environment in which students are comfortable with group or pair work, instead of depending on the teacher as the sole language model (Richards, 2006). Such an environment supports students' learning autonomy and makes their teacher a facilitator, guide and co-learner (Al Asmari, 2015), whilst increasing students' responsibility by giving them more control of the learning process.

In a CLT approach, learning materials are very important and, consequently, it is important that the textbooks that are being utilized in the classrooms conform to the CLT approach. The Saudi Arabian education system is very centralized and mostly based on teaching from the textbook (Ministry of Education, 2002), where the textbook can be viewed as the core of any ELT program and it plays an important role in teaching the language since it offers suggestions on the pedagogy, lesson content, and the manner of teaching (Alharbi, 2020). A study by Alharbi (2020) examines the level of conformity between the CLT approach and a textbook used in Saudi Arabia. The findings suggest that the textbook used in secondary education in Saudi Arabia may restrict the main goals of CLT due to its relatively controlling nature. The findings from the same study also advocate that other factors are inhibiting the CLT approach in Saudi Arabia; in particular, the limited teaching time and high dependency on textbooks that are not organized in a way that supports CLT. The study further puts forward the idea that a broader approach might be needed to improve English teaching in Saudi Arabia as simply a change in the textbook may not have the desired impact in an approach that favours communicative activities over textbook use. Lastly, a suggestion is made to remove the less important content from the textbooks and, in this way, give space to teachers to increase the opportunities for students to use the language in a more meaningful way (Alharbi, 2020).

Batawi (2006) was one of the first to investigate the challenges of CLT in the context of Saudi Arabia and the findings from this study have influenced numerous scholars who have decided to take a similar undertaking. Batawi conducted a study that included giving a

questionnaire to one hundred female teachers (N=100), followed by a round of interviews (N=12). The questionnaire results revealed that the challenges these teachers faced were due to their deficiencies in the English language, fear of “losing face”, and a lack of sufficient knowledge of CLT. The questionnaire results also showed what the teachers thought were issues among students and these were first and foremost related to their low proficiency levels, which hindered their communicative development. It further highlighted students’ passive learning style, which involved listening to explanations from teachers. Another set of obstacles was identified relating to the textbooks that diverge from the communicative approach, overcrowded classes that make CLT implementation impossible, and grammar-based examinations which, in turn, force teachers to focus on grammar. The interviews, however, revealed that Saudi teachers tended to use both traditional and CLT methods of teaching with a marginal preference for the traditional approach. They also showed that teachers spend around 40% of their teaching time on teaching grammar and other skills, such as reading and writing, at the expense of speaking and listening since these skills constitute the majority of students' final grades. Most of the teachers also indicated their preference for teacher-centred classes for several reasons, some of which related to compatibility with students' passive learning style and ability to maintain discipline among students.

Al Asmari (2015) conducted an exploratory study on a large sample of English language teachers (N=100), adopting a questionnaire to uncover the challenges they are facing in creating a CLT environment. The first set of challenges seemed to be related to teachers, and it was suggested that the major contributors in this category were teachers' misconceptions about CLT focusing exclusively on teaching oral skills and no grammar, and their perception that CLT was challenging because CLT norms require "an unrealistically superhuman teacher" (Al Asmari, 2015, p. 979). It was also found that teachers lacked the time needed to develop communicative activities and opportunities for professional training despite the in-house continuous professional development programs. Other challenges revolved around language students, with some of the factors being the lack of motivation among students to learn the target language, their passive style of learning, resistance to participating in communicative activities, low confidence and preparedness in the classroom, and low-level proficiency. Lastly, there were challenges related to education policy and the educational system, where the biggest issues identified by teachers were overcrowded classes, classrooms with no audio-visual equipment, lack of materials for communicative activities, and an existing examination system that was unsuited to CLT. Also, the need for specific teaching materials, lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments, and incompatibility of western educational assumptions with the local context were established as CLT-related challenges hindering the successful implementation of CLT in Saudi Arabia.

Farooq (2015) distributed a questionnaire to a group of EFL teachers (N=100) to probe teachers' perceptions and practices regarding CLT and the impact of this on the communicative competency of students (N=10). Some of the key issues identified in the teacher perceptions were the lack of understanding of the basic principles of CLT and conflicting ideas of what the CLT approach entails. More issues were discovered concerning educational policies like large classes, lack of audio-visual aids, and lack of resources to develop communicative activities. It was also suggested that large classes inhibit teachers from carrying out CLT activities and the current

classroom structure is not supportive of pair or group work, which is essential in any CLT-oriented classroom. Another important challenge was identified as the lack of any need to use the target language in daily communication by students. During the observations, however, additional problems were detected. These ranged from students' low-level proficiency, chairs that couldn't be moved around and teachers providing explanations in the native language, to students' tendency to speak in the native language if a chance presented itself, and no attempts by teachers to use communicative activities.

Abaussain (2016) focused on exploring the challenges faced by Saudi English teachers in their teaching practice that stop them from fully implementing CLT and a communicative approach in their classrooms. To do so, questionnaires were distributed among state school English language teachers (N=45) and interviews were conducted with English language teachers, educational supervisors, and university lecturers (N=21) to probe the reasons for failing to successfully implement all aspects of CLT. The first of the various reasons was the teachers' teaching method, which was in line with traditional teaching instead of CLT, in which the dominant role in the classroom is that of the teacher, while students appear to have a peripheral role. As a direct consequence, opportunities for interactions between students were minimized, discreet skills with emphasis on grammar and translation were taught, the focus was placed on the final product of teaching instead of focusing on the process of teaching and learning, and instead of promoting cooperative learning, competitive learning was encouraged. The study suggests that the reasons for the abovementioned shortcomings in teaching conceal two broad factors: the institutional and situational factors like the contents of in-service training programs, examination purposes and classroom structure, and the socio-cultural factors such as the traditional role of teachers in Saudi Arabia, the behaviourist view of education, and the secondary status of English in the Saudi community due to the perception of "English as a threat" (Abahussain, 2016, p. 249) to the culture and identity of the country.

A study by Almohideb (2019) set out to investigate university teachers and students' perceptions of CLT approaches in teaching and learning English. In an attempt to identify the key reasons for the unsuccessful implementation of the CLT-oriented teaching approach in a university setting, the study also looked at perceived challenges for Saudi English teachers and students through interviews with language teachers (N=5), student questionnaires (N=100), textbook analyses, and classroom observations (N=12). This study found that teachers did use the CLT approach in their classroom, albeit a modified version known as the "post method approach". In such an approach, teachers adjust the way of teaching based on the needs of the students and the teaching context, instead of strictly adhering to a teaching method. Thus, teachers believed they were unable to teach communicatively in their classrooms, but classroom observations showed that they were utilizing a communicative approach in their classrooms. Secondly, teachers believed that they were unable to incorporate all the required skills into their teaching practice because they lacked the confidence to do so and because of their limited time, while the observations showed quite the opposite – teachers were successful in integrating the skills needed for developing students' meaningful language use, despite their opposing beliefs. The study findings further suggest that teachers' perceptions of obstacles in adopting CLT were to do with unified exams and

large classes, while students perceived difficulties in working together (collaborating) as the main obstacle because of their fear that pairing with a peer with weaker language skills would negatively affect their grades. Another key finding of the study was that the current examination system is "at odds with the purpose of teaching and learning English as a foreign language" (Almohideb, 2019, p. 173), which, as a result, makes teachers less likely to concentrate on the skills and knowledge that can be used in real-life situations, and more likely to focus on learning skills that are essential in the exams (Ahmad & Rao, 2012).

## Methods

The following section will firstly provide an overview of Li's (1998) comprehensive framework for challenges regarding CLT implementation. This framework will then be used against the findings of the studies conducted in Saudi Arabia which we listed above, to see how this can help in organizing the challenges into meaningful categories and identifying key underlying issues with CLT implementation in Saudi Arabia. The framework enables us to organize diverse issues into four broad categories of challenges in relation to their nature: (1) teacher-related challenges; (2) student-related challenges; (3) policy-related challenges; and (4) CLT-related challenges. The paragraphs below provide a detailed description of each of the categories.

### *Teacher-related Challenges*

Li (1998) conducted an exploratory study to detect key issues with the CLT approach in South Korean schools and several main issues are put forward in this work in relation to the challenges teachers face in a CLT classroom. These are identified as follows: deficiencies in spoken English; deficiencies in strategic and sociolinguistic competence in English; shortage of training in CLT; very limited opportunities for retraining in CLT; and little time and expertise for developing communicative materials. Even though the teachers participating in the study thought their grammar, reading and writing skills were of a high level, they also believed that their abilities in English speaking and listening were not sufficient to successfully conduct communicative classes.

Another major obstacle to the successful application of CLT lay with teachers' deficiencies in strategic and sociolinguistic competence. Many teachers acknowledged that adopting the CLT approach may put them in a vulnerable position where they might not know answers to questions related to the sociolinguistic aspect of English, which, in turn, would make them lose the respect of their students. The lack of proper training or retraining opportunities in CLT also led to a "fragmented understanding" of CLT (Batawi, 2006, p. 27). Due to this, teachers are not confident in their CLT skills, which makes it extremely difficult and unlikely that they will adopt a communicative approach. Another key problem was teachers' misconceptions about CLT. Li (1998) found that "most classroom teachers do not fully understand the principles of CLT in practice" (Li, 1998, p. 688) and that many teachers believe CLT concentrates solely on fluency, while accuracy should be overlooked. This belief made them feel that CLT contradicts their personal beliefs about language learning. Lastly, teachers in Li's study pointed out that the

textbooks they have at their disposal are not adjusted to CLT and therefore they need to develop these activities themselves, but with their limited time and resources, this is often impossible.

### ***Student-related Challenges***

Another set of challenges was said to stem from students, and these are labelled as student-related challenges. Firstly, the study found that many students lacked the motivation to work on their communicative competence and they cared much more about their grammar competence than their communicative skills. Secondly, students were found to show significant resistance to the shift from the teacher-oriented classroom to the student-oriented classroom because they have become accustomed to the traditional classroom structure in which their role is much more passive and “the teacher is expected to give them information directly” while they take notes (Li, 1998, p. 691).

### ***Policy-related Challenges***

The third set of obstacles, according to Li, is related to difficulties regarding the educational system or policy-related challenges. One of the main issues detected in this category was class size. Many teachers stressed that these classes are too big and as such, it becomes extremely difficult to apply CLT activities, mostly because communicative activities and the close monitoring they require result in large classes becoming very noisy and difficult to manage. It has been noted that error-correcting strategies are negatively affected if the classroom is inordinately large as teachers have a hard time moving around to guide and monitor groups. The second issue relating to the educational system is said to emerge from the exam design since this reflects the traditional teaching and is designed to test the four skills - reading, writing, listening, and speaking, with a particular focus on grammar accuracy and, therefore, teachers are forced to spend considerable class time on teaching grammar.

### ***Challenges related to the Communicative Language Teaching method***

The last set of challenges is associated with the very nature of CLT and the manner CLT has been implemented around the world. Li (1998) puts forward the idea that there is a qualitative difference between teaching EFL and ESL and puts forward the idea that CLT is not compatible with the EFL context because the transfer of CLT to an EFL context inevitably creates conflicts with the “social, cultural, and physical conditions of the recipient countries” (Batawi, 2006, p. 29). The source of this conflict does not, however, stem from the methodology itself, but from the educational policies that govern how CLT is implemented and the fact that language teachers tend to adopt rather than adapt CLT (Batawi, 2006).

### **Findings**

This section will report on the findings of the paper. In other words, it will list the findings derived from organizing the five studies and their findings into the three categories: (1) policy-related challenges, (2) teacher-related challenges, and (3) student-related challenges, while CLT-related challenges were excluded from the analysis but will come into play in the discussion section of the paper. This was done in hope of shedding more light on these challenges and finding possible routes for improvement.

From the four studies that were explored, policy-related challenges were extracted and these include all the challenges that can be tackled by the Ministry of Education in various direct or indirect ways, and although they directly affect teachers' work, they cannot be directly addressed by the teachers, but instead, the concrete actions by the government are required. The most frequently mentioned issue was the discrepancy between the CLT aims and the existing exam system since CLT is focused on developing communicative skills that can be utilized in real life, while the current exams are testing students' grammar accuracy. Another important factor was overcrowded classes that made the implementation of communicative activities impossible since the teachers couldn't maintain the quality of teaching and take advantage of pair or group work. Classrooms with no audio-visual equipment and with chairs fixed to the floor were also mentioned as these represented physical obstacles to the successful implementation of CLT. Another key issue detected was low-quality in-house development programs for teachers, as well as textbooks that were not necessarily adjusted to the CLT approach. This, combined with large classes and limited time to develop their communicative activities, often puts teachers in a helpless position in which they are expected to deliver communicative activities, but are not provided with suitable textbooks or necessary training to develop these themselves. Further, even if the problem of their training is removed, the problem of their workload remains.

Teacher-related challenges seen in the four studies are obstacles that arise from the teachers themselves and therefore, the responsibility of resolving them is mainly in their hands. These were largely ascribed to a lack of understanding, and frequently to conflicting ideas about basic CLT principles, although this is closely related to insufficient and poor-quality training programs offered to the teachers. Another variation of this problem is labelled as teachers' misconceptions about CLT, mainly their confusion about the focus of the communicative approach and how the effect that approach has on students' grammar and oral skills. A paucity of confidence in the teaching methods they are usually utilizing in the classroom was also closely related to the same issue of non-existent or low-quality training and development programs. It was further noted that teachers' approaches were often more in line with the traditional teaching where the teacher has a dominant role and students take a passive role. Another obstacle was recognized in the teachers' attempts to switch to their native language, especially in cases where providing detailed explanations was necessary, as well as placing the focus on developing discreet skills and promoting competitive instead of cooperative learning. Deficiencies in their English language proficiency were also noted as a challenge, and although this was perhaps more of an individual issue, the support of the system is crucial nonetheless. The fear of losing the respect of their students was another limiting factor, partly related to other abovementioned challenges, and partly to the role of the teacher and how this role is perceived by the students and wider society.

Student-related challenges were numerous and one of the most frequently mentioned was low-level proficiency. It is important to note, however, that some studies that found this to be an issue were conducted with cohorts that started learning English in their seventh grade. The latest educational reform that was introduced in 2021 lowered this age and students now start learning English in their first grade, which could mean that if the same studies were conducted among students of the same age in a few years' time, this may not be atop the list of challenges anymore.

Another challenge was students' passive learning style and resistance to communicative activities because of their fear of less proficient peers negatively affecting their grades. Further important factors were low confidence and low motivation for learning the language, and the absence of a real need to use the language outside the classroom. Of course, these factors are not isolated, but instead, they work together so that a student with lower proficiency will have little or no self-confidence and therefore will not want to participate in communicative activities and will fear for their grades. Further, since there is no need for the target language in their daily communication, they will not be motivated to learn the language or change their circumstance. Indeed, their passive learning style will rob them of the feeling of responsibility for their progress and hinder their ability to see potential in themselves because of their dependence on the teacher as the only source of knowledge.

### Discussion

When looking at the findings, it becomes apparent that the challenges of CLT implementation in Saudi Arabia recorded through empirical research in the past two decades were numerous. The challenges related to the current education policies are something that could be tackled by the Ministry of Education where they could work together with schools or school representatives to ensure smooth two-way communication.

Further implementation of policies that would limit the number of pupils per class would enable teachers to fully utilize all communicative teaching methods without sacrificing the quality of teaching. Moreover, adjustments to the current exam system should be made so that what is being tested in these exams is aligned with the skills that are being developed as a part of the CLT approach. This, for instance, could entail language use in a meaningful context instead of testing isolated grammar accuracy. Another obstacle that could be tackled by the government is the chairs that could not be moved around in many classrooms, and this meant that teachers could not adopt the prescribed classroom dynamic in which students are encouraged to work together and learn from each other, rather than each working for themselves. This, together with ensuring proper audio-visual equipment in every classroom, is something that the government could tackle with a heavier investing cycle in education as this is (almost) purely a matter of financial nature. Another issue that the government should be able to help with is making sure that there are plenty of in-house training opportunities for existing teachers as well as ensuring the high quality of these programs. Better quality of the training programs would also lead to a better understanding of the CLT approaches and methods by the teachers. These training programs should also place particular stress on explaining the difference in their role in the traditional classroom versus the CLT classroom and equip them with skills needed to maintain students' active role when they show tendencies to be passive in the classroom. Furthermore, it would be useful if these programs were designed in such a way that enabled teachers to improve their English proficiency and therefore, get rid of their fear of losing face. Improved English proficiency and confidence in their English would also minimize the need for teachers to switch to their native language when explaining something of particular complexity. Given the timeline of this study, students' low proficiency will most likely be less of an issue in the coming years owing to the latest reforms related to the age of starting learning English. Students' passive learning style can be counteracted with earlier

mentioned teachers' readiness to adapt their teaching style to the needs of the classroom while their fear of negative influence from their peers could be avoided if they knew that the exams will test them in skills that are communicative in nature and not purely grammar-oriented. Lastly, the need for the English language outside the classroom should become apparent to students largely by itself if the global market continues to move in the same direction it has been moving in the past two decades.

As mentioned before, the studies that were conducted in the past twenty years offer valuable insight into the issues of CLT implementation in Saudi Arabia, and this paper tried to synthesize them in a way that helps to see the causal relationship among these challenges. It also provided some suggestions on how to tackle these stating that the starting point could be in pursuing the government to implement the necessary changes.

### **Conclusion**

It is important to note that the issues put forward by this paper are not limited to the Saudi Arabian context. As can be seen in the first part of the paper, similar problems were noted in South Korea where the government also tried to implement CLT. This partly supports Batawi's (2006) notion that the challenges of CLT most probably do not stem from the CLT methodology itself, but rather from the educational policies that govern how CLT is implemented and the fact that language teachers tend to adopt rather than adapt (Li, 1998) CLT. This paper tried to put forward the idea that it is (mostly) the government that can help teachers in their attempts to successfully implement the CLT instead of copying what is prescribed by the CTL as they require support in both direct (in-house training opportunities) and indirect (heavier financing) way. This is easily identified when the challenges of CLT implementation in Saudi Arabia are organized in the way used in this paper.

Moreover, although this paper has looked at the challenges to CLT in Saudi Arabia by using Li's (1998) thorough framework and analysing each set of challenges separately, it is important to stress that these factors never appear in isolation. In reality, it was found that they often enforce each other, and what directly causes one set of issues will often indirectly cause another. These connections are often not apparent, and therefore this paper has attempted to use a systematic approach to analyze these challenges to uncover any hidden causal interaction between them. As was seen, many policy-related challenges have had a causal effect on teacher-related issues, while these have had the same effect on student-related challenges. When looking at these findings, a cyclical pattern seems to emerge that reinforces the notion that only with a systematic approach can we hope to successfully and permanently tackle these issues.

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Ahmed Alharbi was born in Saudi Arabia in 1984. He received his bachelor's degree from University of Hail in 2010 in the major in teaching English. The master's degree was received in 2014 from the University of New England in Australia in the major of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. Currently, he is studying PhD in Glasgow university in the United Kingdom in major related to Communicative Language Teaching implementation in Saudi Arabia.

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## Appendices

Table 1: Key findings of the studies to date

| Author | Policy-related challenges | Teacher-related challenges | Student-related challenges | CLT-related challenges |
|--------|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
|--------|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Farooq (2015)     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- overcrowded classes</li> <li>- unsuitability of CLT in the existing exam system</li> <li>- non-availability of audio-visual aids</li> <li>- lack of assessment instruments to assess communicative competency</li> <li>- classroom structure that does not encourage group or pair work (fixed chairs)</li> </ul>                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- insufficient time for developing CLT materials</li> <li>- lack of materials for communicative activities</li> <li>- insufficient knowledge of CLT principles</li> <li>- lessons that were given in a combination of English and native language</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- students' low-level proficiency</li> <li>- lack of motivation among students</li> <li>- no need to use the target language in daily communication</li> <li>- low confidence</li> </ul>                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Al Asmari (2015)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lack of resources for communicative materials development</li> <li>- large classes</li> <li>- lack of audio-visual equipment</li> <li>- no appropriate materials for communicative activities</li> <li>- unsuitable examination system</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- misconceptions about CLT</li> <li>- inadequate training</li> <li>- few opportunities for development</li> <li>- lack of knowledge of English culture</li> <li>- lack of appropriate use of English in context</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- passive style of learning</li> <li>- resistance to participating in communicative activities</li> <li>- lack of motivation to learn English</li> <li>- low-level proficiency</li> <li>- low confidence and preparedness for CLT</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the need for specific materials for teaching</li> <li>- non-suitability of western educational assumptions in the local context</li> <li>- lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments</li> </ul> |
| Batawi (2006)     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- textbooks do not stress real communication</li> <li>- unable to incorporate additional materials due to a limited amount of time</li> <li>- large classes that make communicative activities impossible to use</li> <li>- grammar-based exams that force teachers to teach what is tested in the exams</li> </ul>                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teachers' deficiencies in the English language</li> <li>- low knowledge of the target culture</li> <li>- lack of confidence with the students</li> <li>- lack of sufficient knowledge of CLT principles</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- low language proficiency of the students</li> <li>- passive style of learning</li> <li>- accustomed to traditional teaching style</li> </ul>                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Almohideb (2019)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- topics in textbooks do not reflect students' interests</li> <li>- requirements to stick to the prescribed textbook</li> <li>- intensive workload for students</li> <li>- time constraints that force teachers to avoid the interactive method (related to large classes)</li> <li>- washback effect due to exam system</li> <li>- lack of time</li> <li>- teaching load</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mismatch between teachers' perceptions of their teaching style and their actual teaching style</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- students are reluctant to participate in group or pair activities due to fear of being pulled down by their less proficient peers</li> </ul>                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Abahussain (2016) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- low-quality in-service training programme for teachers</li> <li>- classroom structure</li> <li>- focus on exam performance</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- preference for traditional methods (grammar-translation method and audio-lingual method) over CLT methods</li> <li>- reluctance to try the CLT approach</li> <li>- misconceptions about CLT</li> <li>- avoidance of oral skills teaching</li> <li>- gaps in educational psychology and EFL pedagogic content</li> <li>- teachers employ traditional teaching methods, which lead to competitive learning</li> <li>- the traditional view of education</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |