# Barriers Confront Implementing Teachers' and Learners' Roles in Applying Communicative Activities

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## Abstract:

This theory-oriented paper attempts to highlight some critical issues related to the application of communicative activities in the classroom based on different roles implemented by teachers and learners. Initially, the paper introduces the communicative language teaching as an approach of teaching English as a foreign language. Then, it clarifies the roles of the teacher according to the CLT approach and how they are unlike the roles of the traditional teacher-centred approach where teachers are the main movers in the classroom. Then there is a clarification of the roles of the learner based on learner-centred approach and that students should be engaged in the activities and taken their responsibilities in the learning process. Furthermore, the paper explains how activities could be communicative and demonstrates types of communicative activities that can be applied in classrooms. After that, there are some barriers and difficulties that face the application of these activities in classrooms because of various misconceptions and misunderstandings of the use of the CLT. To present these barriers, there are examples of some studies conducted in different countries such as Thailand, Iran, Australia, China and Qatar. Finally, the paper concludes with suggestions and recommendations of the appropriate and suitable roles that teachers and learners should follow when applying the communicative activities.

*Keywords*: communicative activity, role of teacher, role of learner, barriers in application

العوائق التي تواجه المعلمين والمتعلمين في أداء أدوارهم عند تطبيق الأنشطة التواصلية

الملخص:

تحاول هذه الورقة البحثية النظرية تسليط الضوء على بعض القضايا الهامة المتعلقة بتطبيق الأنشطة التواصلية في الفصل الدراسي المبنية على أداء الأدوار المختلفة التي ينفذها المعلمون والمتعلمون في داخل

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الفصل الدراسي. في البداية، تعرض هذه الورقة تعريف لمنهجية تعليم اللغة التواصلي كطريقة لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. بعد ذلك توضح أدوار المعلم وفقًا لمنهجية التعليم التواصلي وكيف تختلف عن أدواره طبقا للمنهج التقليدي المتمحور حول المعلم والذي يعده المحرك الرئيسي في الفصل الدراسي. ثم هناك توضيح لأدوار المتعلم بناءً على منهجية التركيز على المتعلم وعلى أنه يجب إشراك الطلاب في الأنشطة وأن يتحملوا مسؤولياتهم في عملية التعلم. علاوة على ذلك، تشرح هذه الورقة كيف يمكن أن تكون الأنشطة تواصلية وتوضح أنواع الأنشطة التواصلية التي يمكن تطبيقها في الفصول الدراسية. بعد ذلك، هناك الحواجز والصعوبات التي تواجه تطبيق هذه الأنشطة في الفصول الدراسية وذلك بسبب المفاهيم الخاطئة المختلفة وسوء الفهم في استخدام الطريقة التواصلية. لعرض مثل هذه العوائق، هناك أمثلة لعدد من الدراسات التي أجريت في بعض البلدان مثل تايلاند وإيران وأستراليا والصين وقطر. وأخيراً تختتم هذه الورقة بسرد مقترحات وتوصيات للأدوار المناسبة والملائمة للمعلمين والمتعلمين التي يجب إتباعها في مثل هذه المواقف.

*الكلمات المفتاحية*: الأنشطة الاتصالية، دور المعلم، دور المتعلم، العوائق في التطبيق

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## 1. Introduction

The beginnings of foreign language teaching present educators' exploration of different approaches that aimed to meet the needs of language learners. Commencing from the late 19th century up to the 1980s, the history of language teaching shows progress leading to the realization that language teaching should be developed in line with the principles of authenticity, rationality, and communicativeness. The developments that occurred from the use of the Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Situational Language Teaching, Audio-lingual Method, to the CLT have raised realizations on how foreign language teaching ought to be. In sum, theorists have come to realize that holistic learning is essential, thus CLT covers the four language skills, involves individual, paired and group exercises, emphasizes student-centeredness, and touches on awareness of other cultures. These features make CLT the longest prevailing and most widely used approach to language teaching.

Up to now, practitioners show the applicability of CLT in the teaching of English. Aiming for the communicative competence of English language learners, many teachers have applied CLT, covering topics designed to develop communicative competence.

The unique roles assigned to the teacher and the student, further emphasize the appropriateness of CLT to the growing cultural diversity in many countries.  As an effect of globalization, problems associated with cultural diversity can be addressed not only by teaching a common language such as English but also by using an approach that pays importance to human expression, and not just the knowledge of language structure.  Therefore, given its benefits to learners, CLT still remains an ideal approach to teaching English  as a foreign language.

Even though the appropriateness of applying the communicative approach in English language teaching, there are many barriers and difficulties that face the teacher and the learner. First, because CLT is an approach consists of beliefs and concepts which might be misunderstood in the process of its implementation in the classroom. Second, applying the communicative activities in the classroom may not be easy for some teachers and the procedures to be followed may not be clear enough for others. Besides it is highly important to recognize whether the activities are communicative  or non-communicative.

## 1.1 Significance of the study

Although many adherents of the communicative approach and teachers who adopt teaching languages following the CLT in their classes, there are some difficulties and problems facing them in applying communicative activities in classrooms and misunderstandings of the use of CLT. This paper attempts to illuminate what are these misconceptions and provide some types of possible activities that can be applied in their classrooms. Also the paper is going to describe the appropriate roles of teachers and learners according to the CLT and when they can be implemented.

## *2. Identifying Roles of Teachers and Learners*

Basically, the CLT classroom gives emphasis to the role of the student in the learning process.  This means that unlike in a traditional classroom, the teacher is not the centre of instruction.  Rather, teachers act as facilitators (Larsen-Freeman 2007) to make learning easy, and the interaction more productive.  The teacher is not the prime mover or the source of information. Instead, he serves as a listener or monitor to assess, supplement, and monitor  learning  progress.

Making the students the centre of instruction, teachers assess the needs of the students. These include the kind of activities that will work with them, the strategies to make teaching more effective, and the rewards that would best motivate them to learn. Ideally, teachers should take time to get to know each student well, and vary assessment techniques to ensure interest and progress. According to Finocchiaro and Brumfit (2006), a teacher should have information about his students' different needs, including their linguistic and cultural needs and their learning styles. Richards and Rodgers (2001), suggest that after specifying such needs the teacher should hold group and individual sessions in order to cater for such needs.

Tudor (2005), suggests that in the learner-centered approach the teacher should select a teaching method on the basis of student experience and the socio-cultural context of learning. If these conditions are not met, the teaching may not be effective. Furthermore, teachers should be aware that there are individual differences among learners. Breen and Candlin (2000) insist that teachers should bear in mind that learners differ in their preferred learning styles. In this point, Tudor (2005 agrees with Breen and Candlin, suggesting that teachers should guide their students to different learning strategies and resources in order to help them with their learning both inside and outside the classroom.

According to Al-khwaiter (2001), the role of the teacher in a CLT classroom is completely different from their role in a traditional teacher-centered classroom. They are required to sacrifice part of their authority to give way to the students. As Breen and Candlin (2000) suggest, the teacher can help learners to communicate through organizing resources and assigning tasks in the classroom. Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that the teacher can foster communication by encouraging learners to paraphrase what they say to their partners.

Larsen-Freeman (2007) further explains that one of the major responsibilities of the CLT teacher is to establish key situations likely to promote communication. During the activity, he acts as an advisor, answering students' queries, and monitoring their performance. At other times he might be a co-communicator, a partner in a pair work, or a part of a group in a communicative activity (Littlewood2000).

The role of the students as the centre of instruction suggests active engagement during communicative activities. They dramatize, play roles, respond to their classmates' and teachers' questions, lead, create, and most of all, communicate their thoughts. CLT encourages students to be responsible

learners. This can be achieved by getting them to work together in pairs or groups, completing tasks assigned by the teacher, asking for clarification from the teacher, giving information to their classmates, and helping each other. Breen and Candlin (2000) state that during interaction in working together, students should be encouraged to take responsibility for the learning of the members of the group. They also should use the target language for communication. However, learners in monolingual groups may encounter difficulty with this recommendation, bearing in mind that it is much more natural to use the mother tongue. Learners also should be encouraged to negotiate meaning while reading texts and talking with the teacher (Legutke and Thomas 2005). Nunan (2005) states that learners should be helped to select learning strategies that suit them for language learning.

In terms of activities, Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that CLT employs a wide range of teaching and learning activities to help learners achieve communicative competence. Littlewood (2003) underlines the difference between 'functional communication' and 'social interaction activities'. According to him, tasks which allow learners to interact based on a given purpose are 'functional activities'. In contrast, tasks which allow them to interact without a specific purpose such as conducting a discussion, debating, doing role-plays, etc. are 'social interaction activities'.

As known, the syllabus design used for CLT is process-oriented, so learner roles have become process-oriented. Learners are subject to the processes of developing language skills needed to achieve communicative competence. In order to learn, one has to observe, interact, and assess oneself and others. The role of the teacher can be seen as both process and goal-oriented. On the one hand, driven by the goal to develop communicative competence, the teacher designs activities appropriate to the learners. On the other hand, to make students attain the goal, teachers guide learners during activities, taking note of areas for improvement and materials that may help facilitate the process.

As learners become an active part of the learning process, they are given ample activities for self-reflection. These activities are designed to help direct them towards the goal and motivate them at the start of the process. Self-assessment of goals such as why they need to learn the target language is established at the beginning. To gather this, learners are asked to answer questionnaires or checklists, which ask about their own assessment of their skills, their needs, and targets. These activities become the basis for instruction and assessment of goals at the end of the course.

The comprehensive nature of CLT in terms of rules, activities, and learning goals imply its use of a wide variety of teaching resources. First, text-based materials such as textbooks, journals, magazines, etc. are recommended for use. Secondly, authentic or realistic materials found in the classroom such as graphs, charts, bulletin boards, and maps could likewise be used to further situate the learner in the environment.

## 3. Communicative Activities

The language teacher can choose from a wide variety of language activities. Often, traditional activities only need modification to fit the CLT classroom. In order to satisfy the CLT qualification, activities should have three features namely, information gap, choice, and feedback (Morro, in Johnson and Morrow 2003). Information gap occurs when one communicator responds to another communicator in a communication situation with unknown previous information. Merely providing identified details such as the time or date is not considered a communicative activity. Instead, learners should perform a purposeful conversation, where two or more communicators participate in exchanging authentic messages, those that are neither memorized nor scripted, and is related to the topic of conversation. For instance, when one communicator inquires about the time, and the other provides the information, the exchange is not considered communicative because in such an instance, the required response constitutes memorized or familiar information.

Instead of limiting the communicators to a single answer, communication situations should provide choices to the participants. Questions should not constitute a limited answer such as those requiring a yes-no answer or specific data (e.g., name, address, nationality, etc.). Rather, they should instigate options and imply varied responses. Examples of which include higher level questions such as those that start with 'Why?' and 'How?

A communicator can evaluate whether the purpose of the activity has been achieved based upon the information received. If the addressee does not provide the desired feedback, the activity cannot be considered communicative. As such, CLT activities are comprised of at least a pair in order to satisfy the requirements.

Doff (2008) gives a list of some simple and controlled activities that teachers can use in large classes and without elaborate preparation. The aim of this is to provide teachers easy ways to help learners communicate with

each other in the classroom. Activities that provide only language practice are not interesting because there is not any authentic reason in asking the question, nor any requirement to listen to the answer. If there is a reason for asking these questions, then, they will be more interesting, i.e. there is a communicative need. When a learner knows information which another does not know, by hiding the information from other learners, teachers then can supply 'information gap' activities such as guessing games, information gap exercises for pair work exercises and activities where students get the chance to exchange personal information.

## 3.1 Guessing Games

As described by Doff (2008), one kind of guessing game involves using a simple picture showing people engaged in some activity. The teacher tells the learners about it without showing it to them. They try to find out what the picture looks like by asking questions and the teacher's answer is only 'Yes' or 'No', but he can help them by giving hints. When learners have a clear idea of the picture, it can be shown to them. Hiding the picture gives students authentic reasons to ask questions, i.e., a need to find out. Although the teacher controls the activity, the students ask questions that they want to ask, not ones the teacher tells them to ask. Doff (2008.) describes three examples of guessing games as follows:

(1) *Guess the Picture*. In this activity, one student leader holds a picture but does not show it to the class. The other students try to guess what is on the picture as the leader describes what it is. This way, the leader demonstrates an ability to describe while the others show an ability to comprehend and think in parallel to the leader's line of thought

(2) *Guess the Sentence*. In this activity, the teacher presents a sentence on a piece of paper or card. Without showing it to learners, the teacher may write the fundamental structure on the blackboard, e.g. I went to (…….) to do (……..). By asking questions, students deduce the correct sentence, e.g. Did you go to the club? …Did you play football? …etc.

(3) *Mime*. In miming activities, one student mimes a specific activity while others guess the name of the activity, e.g., 'You are mending a puncture'… 'You are changing a light bulb,'…etc.

There are two different ways of organizing guessing games. Essentially, it is better for the teacher to stay away and let students control the activity. The technique of having one student in the front while others do

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the guessing gives more students a chance to construct questions. However, such activities may be disruptive of other classes. In large classes it might be difficult to involve all the students. Therefore, it would be best to have a minimal number of students at a time, one acting as the leader while others do the guessing. The other technique is to have two students at the front, one holding a picture showing it to the class and the other trying to guess, while the rest of the class is responding in chorus. The whole class is involved in a more organized activity and it might be a helpful technique for a large class. Furthermore, guessing games can be prepared with small-group students. The teacher provides a sentence or a picture to one student in each group, and others try to guess it.

One advantage of guessing games is that they are ideal for either small or large groups. As mentioned above, small groups are easier to manage while large groups are more fun and active.

## 3.2 Information Gap Exercises

According to Doff (2008), many communicative activities are designed to be done by students working in pairs. In order to generate a communicative need, different information is given to two students. The activity can work in various ways: one student has to find out what information the other student has, one student tells the other one the information he has, or both students have different information and they tell each other. For example, students sit in pairs. Student X is a customer with a shopping list. Student Y is a shop assistant and has a price list of items in the shop. Without looking at each other's lists, student X tries to buy the things on his list, e.g. X: Have you got any milk? ...Y: Yes, I have. …X: How much is it? ...Y: 80c a liter. This could be done without any preparation by the teacher. Students could prepare their own lists in the classroom or do it for homework before the lesson.

## 3.3 Exchanging Personal Information

Other easy and interesting types of communication activities in the classroom, Doff (2008) explains, is students to inform each other about their own lives, interests, experiences, etc. There is an authentic 'information gap' when students talk about themselves, because every student has something a little different to tell. Learners can be divided into pairs and take it in turns to ask questions and make notes about their partner's lives, not their own. When they have finished, each learner may be asked to tell what his partner

does. Here, students are truly communicating, trying to find out things from each other that they did not know already, and which they need to know. Teachers can design similar activity by suggesting suitable topics such as what people like and dislike, what makes people scared, or their experiences or opinions.

## 4. Barriers in Application

Beginning from its conception in the 1970s, CLT has been the most widely used, the most effective (Thompson 2000). This is due in part to the practical application of real-life situations, and the "diverse set of uncontroversial procedures" concerning CLT. However, according to Savignon (2004), the complexity of the approach and its openness to the inclusion of methods and tasks to help learners achieve communicative competence make it impossible to "describe [or design] typical classroom procedures for CLT" (ibid.). The syllabi prepared by CLT proponents such as Hymes contain only a gist of the possibilities offered by the CLT approach. Proponents can only do so much by suggesting procedures for implementation. Following this idea, it is not surprising that many teachers are misled in their attempts to apply CLT. Although it is in diverse exploration of an approach that new concepts and improvements occur, educators should be on the lookout for misconceptions regarding the use of CLT to make sure teachers are on the right track.

A number of studies present teachers' misconceptions on the use of CLT (Jin, Li & Singh 2005; Rao 2002; Nazari 2007; De Segovia &Hardison 2009; Orafi& Borg 2009; Thompson 2000). Many teachers claim that they use CLT, yet investigations show their noncompliance with the precepts of the approach. In fact, many of them appear unaware of the principles of the approach and its difference to other non-communicative approaches. There are those who show awareness of CLT and the need to implement it, yet oppose the application due to some misconceptions they hold against it (Thompson 2000). Others are reluctant to use the approach due to relevant factors such as lack of resources, class size, students' inability to comprehend or their resistance, etc. (Orafi& Borg 2009).

Thompson (2000) identifies four common misunderstandings on the use of CLT. Along with these, he offers explanations why such misconceptions have come about. For him, these misconceptions are the very reasons why many teachers disagree or do away with the use of CLT.

Meanwhile, they may also be the same reasons why others, especially earlier educators have preferred the approach.

One of the misconceptions, Thompson (2000) identifies is the thinking that the use of CLT means not teaching grammar. CLT proponents have been very clear in their disagreement to the teaching of structure in isolation, and the use of grammar-based approaches. This results in disapproval of language teachers who prefer their students to gain understanding of how language works. Some find the teaching of structure inevitable to make a meaning clear. In a study conducted by Orafi& Borg (2009), the authors noted Libyan teachers' implementation of the Grammar Translation Method despite syllabus requirements to implement CLT. Teachers stressed the importance of teaching grammar due to the fact that many testing systems put heavy weight on grammar and structure. Likewise, Jin et al. (2005) describe how some teachers in China have lost their enthusiasm for using CLT due to the grammar content of national college entrance examinations. There is great pressure on the part of the teachers in preparing students for college entrance exams and other national examinations they will take after college. Thus, the need to teach grammar cannot be put aside.

To address the first misconception, Thompson (2000) explains that CLT does not prohibit the teaching of grammar. Only, it should be done inductively. The ideal view is that students themselves discover structures and initiate the discussion. The teacher should not design the lesson in such a way that students will feel obliged to construct sentences based on certain grammatical structures and rules as with the Grammar Translation Method. Instead, communicative activities should lead them to inquire about language issues. Only when students raise questions regarding structure, can a shift to a grammar lesson be appropriate. As such, the teaching of grammar becomes incidental and sometimes nonexistent. To address the issue of nonexistence, teachers should develop among students the sensitivity to express meaning using correct syntax. This can be done by monitoring them closely, and clarifying grammar-related issues when necessary.

For some, monitoring students closely could mean extreme vigilance during exercises, hence defying the concept of CLT. Monitoring for learners' mistakes can hamper learners' confidence, thus making it difficult to make them express themselves. To adhere to the principles of CLT, teachers should strike a balance between monitoring for mistakes and giving

learners some flexibility to allow freedom of expression. This solution leads to two other misconceptions on the use of CLT.

Thompson (2000) mentions that another misconception on the use of CLT is the heavy expectation on the part of the teacher. Ideally, adhering to the principles of the CLT Approach requires the teacher to design lessons with a number of authentic communication practices, which challenge communicative competence in a variety of scenarios. In addition, teachers are required to monitor learners' communicative competence during exercises, which implies keen attention from the teacher from the planning to the performing stage. Moreover, teachers are tasked to provide each learner with narrative assessments at the end of each activity or unit; because it is only through this that they can determine progress. Knowledge level tests such as identifying a verb for the subject or using the correct pronoun for an antecedent are not close to the CLT Approach. Instead, oral practice and communication scripts or essays are what CLT requires. These assessments, although they present the real competency skills of the learners, are a lot more difficult and time-consuming to check than grammar-based tests. In this regard, a heavier weight is put on the teachers' shoulders with the use of CLT than with grammar-based approaches.

To address this issue, Thompson (2000) comments that although teachers are really expected to play a big role in the development of communicative competence, learners remain the focus of instruction. Their roles are equally great compared to the teachers. In every learning situation, they are expected to perform oral exercises, comprehend and react to reading materials, write manuscripts, interact with others inside and outside the classroom, and assess their own competence. Unlike students in grammar classrooms who are dependent on practice sentences that their teachers ask them to analyze, students under CLT share the load more with their teachers. As such, teachers and learners work in partnership to achieve the goal of communicative competence.

Another misconception arising from the need to achieve a balanced instruction is that CLT is limited to paired exercises, which in turn implies the overuse of role playing. Thompson (2000.) elaborates on this issue by saying that to assess communicative competence, there is always a need to do pair work exercises, but this does not always mean asking the learners to do role-playing. Instead of just assigning roles to students, Thompson argues that they should be given the chance and time to decide for themselves, what situation and role to take. Also, paired teams can work on problem solving,

grammar exercises, argumentation, simple discussion, etc. The key therefore is a variety of activities designed to maximize learners' participation in the process.

Still another misconception among teachers is that CLT is limited to teaching speaking. Thompson (2000) explains that this misconception arises from the fact that CLT was derived from approaches that gave importance to speaking skills. However, he also explains that CLT is not limited to speaking but also works for the overall competence of the person in the target language. Suffice to say, it includes listening, reading, and writing skills. Listening easily comes along with speaking strategies, while reading and writing go hand in hand as learners write manuscripts or reflection papers based on what they read.

Several other misconceptions on the use of CLT can be traced in some countries where CLT is made compulsory. In Libya, Orafi& Borg (2009) observed considerable differences between syllabus intervention and classroom instruction. Teachers identified certain factors affecting implementation, such as class size, lack of resources, student resistance, lack of time to prepare, among other factors. To add, teachers were neither involved during the design phase of the intervention, nor were they given ample orientation on the use of CLT. During classroom observations, Orafi& Borg noted that teachers did more of the talking, supplied answers to questions intended for students, and made no use of pair work or group exercises. They were also skeptical of the use of the target language for instruction due to the students' inability to comprehend and limited vocabulary.

In Thailand, De Segovia &Hardison (2009) noted the failure of teachers to implement CLT in their classrooms despite the National Education Act of 1999, which mandates the use of learner-centered approaches such as CLT "to meet the needs of globalization" (p.154). Problems identified by teachers included inadequate resources, insufficient training, English proficiency of teachers, and professional support. One supervisor also stated that the principles of CLT are not suitable for teaching English to their students. These skepticisms erased the possibility of fully implementing CLT. Evidently, teachers did not apply CLT in their English classes. Instead, they resorted to the Audio-lingual Approach, as teachers asked learners to repeat after them, recite sentences individually or in chorus, and sing songs. The Direct Method was also employed, as teachers gave direct commands, which students had to follow or demonstrate physically.

Similar to other studies, grammar rules were often emphasized during discussions, giving consideration to entrance examinations that students take when they graduate from secondary school. Also, teachers used their native language as the medium of instruction due mainly to comprehension issues and teachers' lack of confidence in their own English proficiency. One teacher expressed the fear of passing on to students her own errors, which made her prefer the use of the native language when teaching.

In Iran, Nazari (2007) observed how teachers' concepts of communicative competence did not coincide with the definition given by Hymes and other CLT proponents. When asked, teachers admitted giving importance to forms and structure more than the ability to comprehend and use the language appropriately. This showed their inability to make distinctions between "good and narrow meanings of communicative competence" (p.207). Moreover, teachers were found to be confused between CLT and grammar-based approaches. Although they used English more frequently, most of their utterances were mechanical in nature. In particular, a cross between the Audio-lingual and Direct Methods was made as teachers required students to memorize dialogues, use vocabulary deductively in sentences, explain functions of certain words in sentences, and substitute words in a given sample sentence. Activities were mostly sentence-level and structure-focused, giving no means for contextual and interactional exercises.

To add, little evidence of conformity to CLT was established with one teacher asking students to read the material then requiring them to summarize orally what they had read. However, while students recited, the teacher avoided giving comments and correcting errors to allow free flowing of ideas and to promote confidence. This suggests that, there is potential among Iranian teachers to implement the CLT correctly. With proper training and time, it is not impossible for its education system to progress foreign language teaching reforms through the implementation of CLT.

In sum, it appears that teachers in the above mentioned studies made little use of CLT due to their lack of training and misconceptions regarding the use of CLT. Most of them employed grammar-based methods and oral drills, which did not really promote communicative competence but rather gave students a wrong impression of how they should go about learning a new language.

In another setting, Mangubhai et al (2005) noted the disparity in conceptualizations between Australian teachers and experts on the principles of CLT. The investigators found that interviewed teachers maintained some

of the misconceptions suggested by Thompson, such as teaching less grammar and putting more emphasis on teachers' role. In particular, interviews revealed more misconceptions related to the teacher's role, including acting as a disciplinarian, tolerating foreign cultures, and doing more teacher talk. Surprisingly, another misconception arose regarding materials for instruction, particularly using overhead projectors most of the time.

In the study conducted by Rao (2002), the author presents preferred language activities of some Chinese college students. The subjects identified activities that they felt were most helpful for their improvement in English. Results showed that students preferred a combination of both communicative and non-communicative strategies; however, a preference was expressed for the latter. To ensure validity, students whose competence in English ranged from poor to good were identified as subjects. Statistically, it was noted that said subjects preferred more non-communicative than communicative strategies or activities. In this consideration, the above mentioned study concludes that for Chinese students whose environment is not English-speaking by nature, the combination of communicative and non-communicative strategies is most suitable.

While the conclusion made by Rao (2002) is helpful in reaching a decision regarding the use of CLT in non-English speaking countries, consideration should likewise be given to other studies which identify other factors affecting the interest of learners. Al-Ansari & Lori (1999) note a number of studies establishing correlation between competence in learning a foreign language and motivational factors. Studies made by Feenstra, Spooky, Gardner (cited in Al-Ansari & Lori 1999) determined that students' desire and motivation to learn correlated with good grades received in foreign language studies. Moreover, learners' motivation was influenced by social factors including parental support (Gardner & Lambert, cited in ibid.). Considering such, while it is true that approaches to language learning affect learners' motivation, attitude and motivation are also significant factors affecting learning and hence communicative competence in a foreign language.

This suggests an alternative interpretation of the conclusion reached by Rao (2002). The decision to select non-communicative or communicative strategies should not be based on individual preference but should be considerate of other factors. In particular, socio-cultural factors such as family, school environment, and friends should similarly be investigated to

learn whether preferences of students are controlled by such motivational or socio-cultural factors.  Furthermore, unless learners receive the same exposure to CLT and non-CLT approaches, we cannot be sure that they have accurate and common concepts of the approaches.  Therefore, it is recommended for all of the students to undergo CLT and non-CLT language interventions first before giving them the chance to decide which strategies they prefer.

In relation to investigating factors affecting the implementation of CLT, Al-Khwaiter (2001) investigated the use of CLT by public school teachers in Qatar.  In his study, Al-Khwaiter observed that despite over 20 years of CLT in Qatar, the present system still does not adhere to the principles of the approach.  In fact, the learning system still employs the earlier methods, such as Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, and Audio-lingualism.  Teachers have not even implemented Situational Language Teaching, which is closest to CLT.

Moreover Al-Khwaiter describes that most of the exercises provided to students were designed for rote learning and memorization.  Most of the teachers observed required students to copy notes from the board, memorize religious verses, and translate words or sentences from the native language to English.  This is despite availability of resources and implementation of CLT.  Overall, while the education system aspired to CLT in teaching English as a Foreign Language, several factors hindered success, namely the lack of funds to afford new schools and teachers, inadequate teacher training, low professional standards and skills of teachers and negative attitude toward the teaching profession on the part of the teachers themselves(ibid.).

The last problem cited, that is, teachers' negative attitude toward the teaching profession relates further to socio-cultural factors.  During interviews, teachers cited the lack of academic freedom as a major factor affecting instruction and implementation of CLT.  They described in particular how 'investigators' (another term for observers or supervisors) roamed around the school to maintain "quiet and controlled classrooms" (ibid.).  With these investigators around, classes were prohibited from making noise, even productive noise such as that which may occur during interactional activities.  One teacher said that with CLT activities, students tended to "behave disruptively" (ibid.), making it more advisable to adopt other approaches that did not require interaction among students.  Another teacher questioned CLT strategies in terms of allowing students to decide

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activities on their own.  He mentioned that this would only make them noisy, and would end up not accomplishing anything.

In line with socio-cultural factors affecting CLT implementation was the argument that parents emphasized the value of competition and not cooperation among their children.  With its working principle of understanding learners' difficulties to target communicative competence, CLT was deemed to be not in accord with the cultural values of the Qataris. Also, like in other countries such as China, Iran and Libya, Qatar national and college entrance exams evaluated students' knowledge of structure and grammar of the English language. Considering this, it was difficult for individual teachers to take the lead in shifting to CLT.

## 5. Conclusion

As indicated by Littlewood (2000), the teacher can potentially play a less dominant role than a student in the communicative language classroom. The teacher can play many different roles in Communicative Language Teaching, including that of a prompter, an organizer, an assessor etc (Harmer, 2005).

According to Littlewood (2003), the teacher can play many different roles in Communicative Language Teaching, including that of a co-communicator which means that the teacher is not extremely passive and played the role of co-communicator. Larsen-Freeman (2007) states that the teacher can play many different roles in Communicative Language Teaching, including that of an interlocutor, as a facilitator in setting up communicative activities and as an advisor during the activities.

It can be concluded that students should not keep silent and should engage in class discussions, depend on themselves to discover the knowledge, have a chance to speak English in class, and students should listen to their peers in group work or pair work tasks rather than just using the teacher as a model. It is in accordance with Karavas (2000) that each student should have a chance to speak English in class and students are expected to take on a greater degree of responsibility for their learning.

Student's role must be active and they should get a chance to use authentic materials to transfer language learning to language practice and should be given many chances to participate in the class. The students take responsibility of learning and the teacher can actually see the students performing. Richards (2006) advises that students have to listen to their peers

in group work or pair work tasks rather than just using the teacher as a model. Further, it can be concluded that the students' performance can be assessed in every class continuously and not just in the end written examination. This creates a better environment for learning. It builds self-esteem, confidence and a sense of achievement. Students-centred teaching produces lifelong learners.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that according to the CLT approach, the intention behind learning is acquiring communicative competence that makes the students able to use the language in different contexts. Larsen-freeman (2007) adds that Communicative Language Teaching makes use of real-life situations that require communication or interaction. Further, CLT gives students a chance to develop their speaking skills as well as developing confidence and interest in interacting with other people and learning about other cultures as it uses real life situations. For English as a foreign language, it is expected to promote communicative activities as one of the basic language skills to develop among students.

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