

Investigation of the Application of Communicative Language Teaching in the English Language Classroom – A Case Study on Teachers’ Attitudes in Turkey

Abdullah Coskun (Abant Izzet Baysal University, Bolu, Turkey)

E-Mail: abdullahenglish@gmail.com or: coskun_a@ibu.edu.tr

Phone: +903742541000 ext: 2833

Abstract

This qualitative study aimed to reveal whether teachers’ classroom practices overlap with their attitudes towards certain features of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) such as pair and group-work activities, fluency and accuracy, error correction and the role of the teacher. Before conducting an open-ended questionnaire with two teachers of English teaching a group of intermediate students to reveal their attitudes towards CLT, the researcher had observed each participating teacher’s lesson for an hour during which they cover a speaking warm-up, a listening extract and grammar presentation with its practice. The findings have indicated that there is a discrepancy between teachers’ classroom practices and the attitudes they expressed. The major challenges in the implementation of CLT from both teachers’ perspective are found to be large class size, traditional grammar-based examinations and the little time available to prepare communicative materials.

Key words: *CLT, attitudes, classroom practices.*

1 The Study

1.1 Background

In the long-standing search for the so-called perfect method in ELT (English Language Teaching), many approaches have been developed. Among these approaches, CLT has found its place as far as the English teaching curriculum, education policy statements, course books and teacher education programs in the world are concerned. Focusing on today's changing ELT context and the increasing trend towards CLT, Brown (1994) draws attention to the importance of real-life communication, generating unrehearsed language performance out of the classroom, developing linguistic fluency and facilitating lifelong language learning. Brown (1994: 245) also lists some of the core features of CLT as follows:

1. Classroom goals are focused upon in all the components of communicative competence; they are not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.
2. Language teaching techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, and functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Linguistic structures do not represent the central focus but rather aspects of language which enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.
3. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times, fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.
4. In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts.

Similar to Brown, Yang and Cheung (2003) argue that CLT puts emphasis on purposeful and meaningful activities, the use of authentic elements, the use of extra materials used besides textbook activities, the avoidance of mechanical drills in pair or group work activities, and the diversity of activities. Richards (2006) draws attention to the goal of language learning with an emphasis on communicative competence. For him, the goal of language learning is to know how to use this language for a range of different purposes and functions. Relevant questions are how to vary the use of language according to setting and participants, how to produce and understand different text types and how to maintain communication despite the limitations occurring in the speaker's knowledge of the foreign language.

Among the features of CLT focused upon by various researchers as indicated above, some common features, such as pair and group work, fluency and accuracy, error correction and the role of the teacher make up the focus of this study. These features of CLT will be briefly discussed - with an emphasis on their advantages to provide a theoretical background to the current study which aims at revealing whether teachers' classroom practices overlap with their attitudes towards these features.

1.2 Pair and Group-work Activities

One of the most important features of CLT is pair and group work by which students can learn from each other. Thompson (1996) suggests that with pair and group work, students can produce a greater amount of language output than they would produce in teacher-centered activities. Students' motivational level is likely to increase. They have the opportunity to develop fluency without any pressure coming from their teacher. Activities requiring pair and group work give learners a safe opportunity to test ideas before actually speaking out in public and lead to the presentation of more highly developed ideas. In addition, such activities help learners complement each other in terms of knowledge and skills, which results in greater success in the framework of task-based processes. Students' sociolinguistic competence is also improved as these activities enable learners to negotiate meaning and to solve problems in various socially demanding situations.

1.3. Fluency and Accuracy

Fluency is another important aspect of CLT. Fluency is the natural language use which occurs when a speaker gets involved in meaningful interaction and it is developed by creating classroom activities in which students negotiate meaning, use communication strategies and correct misunderstandings. On the other hand, activities featuring accuracy aim at the production of correct linguistic utterances. Differences between activities focusing on fluency and those focusing on accuracy have been summarized by Richards (2006) as follows:

Activities focusing on fluency

- Reflect natural language use
- Focus on achieving communication
- Require meaningful language use
- Require the use of communication strategies
- Produce language which is not predictable by nature
- Seek to link language use to context

Activities focusing on accuracy

- Reflect classroom-based language use
- Focus on the production of correct linguistic utterances
- Practice language out of context
- Practice small samples of language
- Do not require meaningful communication
- Keep the choice of language under control

Related to fluency and accuracy, two instruction types characterized by the focus-on form (contextualized) and the focus-on-forms (contrived) approach should be explained. Al-Magid (2006) refers to Long (1991) defining the former as the instruction which draws learners' attention

to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication (Long 1991 in Ellis et al. 2003:150).

On the other hand, Long highlights that the focus-on-forms approach requires teaching grammatical structures discretely without meaningfully contextualizing them as in grammatical syllabi. It is also important to note that the focus-on-forms approach is similar to the Grammar-Translation Method whose aim is to teach L2 grammar by using a set of grammatical rules in contrived forms.

Another important point to be considered when it comes to fluency in the communicative classroom is the use of students' mother tongue. The consensus in the research is that English should be the primary medium of instruction and that the use of L1 should be limited and selective (Atkinson 1993: 2).

1.4. Error Correction

Error correction is another point to elaborate on as far as CLT is concerned. Earlier methods emphasized error correction while the communicative approach attaches more importance to communication. Since the birth of CLT, errors have been regarded as natural phenomena in the process of learning English. Practising too much error correction is, however, considered as a way of discouraging students from speaking the language. As Larsen-Freeman (1986) points out, students may have limited linguistic knowledge, and may still be good at communication when

errors of form are tolerated.

Another issue is the source of error correction. Instead of teachers' explicit correction of errors, De Bot (1996: 554) underlines the importance of pushing learners to produce correct forms themselves after some corrective clue so that they can establish meaningful connections in their brains. In this way, remembering the self-corrected form will be much easier for learners. As pointed out by Vigil & Oller (1976), encouraging students to produce the language rather than explicitly correcting them is believed to be more favorable in terms of their interlanguage development because language production consolidates the cognitive connections in the mind. Allwright & Bailey (1991: 107) also recommend that learners be provided with ample time and opportunities for self-repair.

1.5. The Role of the Teacher

Along with CLT, the role of the English teacher has changed as well. Breen and Candlin (1980) explain teachers' roles in connection with CLT as follows:

1. Facilitator of the communication process among all the participants in the classroom and their activities.
2. Independent participant within the learning-teaching group.
3. Organiser of resources and a resource him/herself.
4. Guide in the context of classroom activities.
5. Researcher and learner.

Brown (1994) also touches on the role of the teacher as one of the important considerations in the CLT and suggests that this role be that of a facilitator and a guide, but not an all-knowing bestower of knowledge. He also attracts attention to the importance of autonomous learning by pointing out that students should be given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an understanding of their own styles of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning. In other words, students should be the managers of their own learning process (Larsen-Freeman, 1986).

1.6 Purpose of the Study

As reviewed in the following section in relevant literature, there seems to be a mismatch between English teacher attitudes to CLT and the implementation of this approach in the classroom. This study is to observe two English teachers' lessons and to analyze their attitudes towards CLT to determine to what extent the latter are reflected in their classroom interaction. If a mismatch occurred, the reasons perceived behind this mismatch are investigated. Considering the purpose of this study, the research questions have been formulated as follows:

1. What are teachers' attitudes towards certain features of CLT?
2. Do teachers' attitudes towards CLT reflect their actual classroom practices? If they do not, what are the challenges teachers face in adopting CLT?

2 CLT in Theory and Practice

In terms of the gap between English teachers' attitudes towards CLT and their classroom practices, Karavas-Doukas suggests that CLT seems to have brought innovation on the level of theory rather than on that of teachers' actual classroom practices. He makes further comments as follows:

the few small-scale classroom studies that have been carried out seem to suggest that communicative classrooms are rare. While most teachers profess to be following a communicative approach, in practice they are following more traditional approaches' (Karavas-Doukas 1996: 187).

There is a relevant number of other studies proving this discrepancy between attitudes and classroom practices in different contexts. Among many these yielding contradictory results between actual classroom practices and attitudes towards CLT, Bal (2006) did a study at five different Turkish Public Primary Schools with twenty English teachers. He found that even though teachers are aware of CLT in terms of theoretical aspects and hold positive attitudes towards CLT, they do not actually use important features of CLT in their classrooms. Moreover, common constraints like insufficient use of authentic materials, teachers' lacking practical knowledge,

grammar-based national syllabuses and large classroom sizes were found to be the factors preventing teachers from implementing CLT in Turkey.

A contradiction between teachers' attitudes and classroom practices was also found in Karavas-Doukas' (1996) study. He observed 14 Greek English language teachers' classroom practices and found that although these teachers held favorable attitudes towards CLT, their classroom practices differed significantly from the principles of the communicative approach. Teachers showed a tendency towards following an eclectic approach, a combination of both traditional and communicative approaches in their lessons. The lessons were mainly teacher-centered and showed explicit focus on form. Pair work activities were found to be used in two classrooms, but group work activities were never applied.

In brief, observations showed that few classes were genuinely communicative. Most of them were teacher-centered with little interaction among pupils. In some cases, teachers may try to apply CLT, but cannot do so due to certain constraints. Hui (1997) suggests some contextual factors that might lead to the mismatch between attitudes and classroom implications. He lists five general constraints:

- economic constraints: The implementation process of CLT is very difficult because appropriate materials and adequate equipment to be used in the classroom are not always available in some contexts
- administrative constraints: Through the communicative approach, some administrators might grade teachers in terms of how active they were while they were teaching. However, they may neglect the participation of students. They may even impose materials on teachers which are not communicative.
- cultural constraints: Culture is very influential on the success of CLT in a particular context. For example, CLT does not mean much for learners holding cultural assumptions, such as depending on the teacher, sitting silently, taking teachers' words for granted, while it might work miracles with a group of extraverted, attentive, competitive, autonomous learners.
- the student population: The number of students in the classroom plays an important role in the realization of CLT and it is difficult to deal with CLT in large classrooms as CLT requires a learner-centered teaching approach.

- teachers' academic ability: Without the required background, training and positive attitude, it is difficult for a teacher to teach a class communicatively.

In addition to all these constraints, there is the "test factor" in that teachers are generally under considerable pressure to teach students what they will be tested for in traditional standardized tests.

There have been many studies in different settings focusing on the contextual reasons why CLT may be preferred but cannot be applied in the classroom. In a study carried out in Vietnam, for example, Lewis and McCook (2002, cited in Karim, 2004: 25) investigated the lack of uptake of communicative language teaching principles amongst teachers. They used journal entries written during ongoing in-service workshops to collect data from 12 Vietnamese high school teachers of English. The journals showed that they tried to apply new ideas, but also used the traditional norms valued in their educational system, which reveals that they could not avoid local educational theories totally despite their willingness to implement CLT. In addition, Ellis (1994, cited in Karim, 2004: 26) studied whether the communicative approach was appropriate in Vietnam. It was found that one of the pressing issues in using a communicative approach in Vietnam was the teachers' adherence to tradition. This was justified by two traditional realities: the cultural reluctance of the Vietnamese to challenge written words, and the focus on grammar-translation in the examination system.

In short, as CLT is a western idea born in Europe and having been spread around the world, and its application may be challenging because of teachers' attitudes towards CLT and some contextual factors mentioned above by Hui (1997). Therefore, it would be fair to suggest that not only teachers' attitudes and beliefs about CLT but also the contextual factors should be taken into consideration prior to or along with the introduction of CLT. The author agrees with Savignon (1991: 273) who thinks that in order to understand the discrepancy between theory and practice, teachers' views should be investigated. Finally, if the objective is a proper implementation of CLT, the first thing to be done is to change teachers' attitudes towards CLT from negative to positive.

3 Data Collection

Certain features of CLT - pair and group work, fluency and accuracy, error correction and the role of the teacher - were formulated as statements in the observation checklist (Appendix A) adapted from Al-Magid (2006: 122) and as an open-ended questionnaire (Appendix B) so as to assess to what extent classroom practices and attitudes overlap each other. In addition, in case of a mismatch between practices and attitudes, a set of difficulties faced in adopting CLT was formulated by means of questionnaire statements (Appendix C) developed by Karim (2004) for the justification of this mismatch.

In order to maintain inter-rater reliability, two observers, one of whom was the researcher, ranked each participating teacher on the observation checklist and content-analysed their response to the open-ended questions. The checklist was applied together with note-taking of teachers' in-class behavior. This instrument was designed to validate teachers' attitudes towards CLT by comparing whether what they said was consistent with what they actually did in the classroom with regard to the important features of CLT mentioned in the background of the study section. The checklist contained some of the important features of CLT (e.g. minimal use of L1 and providing form in context) and was used to evaluate teachers' on the basis of these criteria by indicating whether they applied these common features of CLT. Observers also took notes of how these features were applied in the classes observed.

The use of the third instrument, i.e. a questionnaire including some of the challenges which occur in the implementation of CLT, was planned in case of a mismatch between teachers' attitudes towards CLT and their classroom practices. The data collected by means of the two instruments mentioned above revealed such a mismatch, and participants were asked to rank the challenges given (e.g. large class size) on a scale which covered the alternatives "no problem", "manageable problem" and "major difficulty".

The participants of the current study were two male teachers of English with teaching certificates from ELT departments. Teacher 1 had been working as an English teacher for 2 years. His classroom included 27 intermediate students. Teacher 2 had been a teacher of English for 18 years. There were 26 intermediate students in his

class. The reason for selecting these two teachers and their classrooms for this study was to keep student variables - like the number of students in their respective classes, students' age range (18-21) and their level of English proficiency - the same. Selecting these teachers with different years of teaching experience was also intended to test the following working hypothesis:

Teachers agree with the idea of CLT, but they do not apply these ideas to their classroom settings no matter how long they have been teaching.

To observe teachers' classroom practices, both teachers in different classrooms at the same level covered the first two pages of a unit in the intermediate students' course book of "Success" (McKinley and Hastings, 2007). The unit starts with a speaking warm-up about some of the pictures of different advertisements. In this part of the unit, students were asked to work in pairs and answer the questions about the advertisements using the given words like *nutritious*. The second part, which was covered by both teachers, was a listening activity in connection with the same pictures. In this activity, seven statements were given and students were asked to listen and match these sentences (e.g. *It doesn't go stale for a week*) with pictures. The following listening activity also required students to match given adjectives, like *revolutionary*, with the pictures. The next part provided some commercial slogans, some words of which were underlined (e.g. *We are famous for using only the best*), and students were asked to put the underlined words next to the grammatical explanations given in the box (e.g. adjective+prepositions: famous for). Afterwards, there was a fill-in-the blank type of grammar exercise which was followed by a task of rewriting the respective sentence with a similar meaning. The last part of the unit which was covered during the observation was a pair-work activity requiring students to make up true sentences about their lives.

4 Data Analysis and Findings of the Study

As for the data analysis of the open-ended questionnaire, content analysis was applied, with similarities and differences in students' answers being found in order to identify themes and develop categories. The data collected through the questionnaire

fell into four themes which were pair and group work, fluency and accuracy, error correction, and the role of the teacher in the classroom. Each one of these will be discussed below from the perspectives of both participants (*T1* standing for Teacher 1 and *T2* standing for Teacher 2).

In this part of the study, the research question “Do teachers attitudes towards CLT reflect their actual classroom practices?” will be answered on the basis of a comparison between the author’s field notes and the classroom observations focusing on teachers’ actual teaching styles with respect to their attitudes towards certain features of CLT which are related to pair and group-work, fluency and accuracy, error correction and, finally, the role of the teacher. The findings, as presented in detail below, indicated that there was a discrepancy between teachers’ classroom practices and their attitudes towards all these features. The questionnaire of major challenges in the implementation of CLT, which was used in case of the mismatch between attitudes and classroom practices, also yielded useful results. It was found that large class size, traditional grammar based examinations and the lack of time to prepare communicative materials were the main difficulties which were encountered when CLT was used in the classroom. Below are the findings collected through observation checklists and questionnaire.

4.1 Pair and Group work

The general question to reveal teachers’ attitudes towards pair and group work is “What do you think about the use of pair and group work activities in the classroom?”. Both participants seemed to think positively about such activities. While the first teacher drew attention to its advantages in terms of stress, self-confidence and social skill, the other mentioned the challenges he faced when he first started using pair and group work, and expressed his positive attitude towards it with the passage of time after setting rules about how to conduct such activities. However, both teachers seemed to be less concerned with involving students in the work in the form of pairs or groups. Instead, they preferred a teacher-initiated question and answer format in which they either allowed volunteering students to talk or called on individual students despite the course book instructions which encouraged pair and group work. Below the attitudes and observation notes expressed by each teacher are quoted:

T1: Attitude

I think that these activities are very useful for students as we can both save classroom time and involve more students in the task. If students raise their hands and speak one by one, it means that we are wasting most of the classroom time. If we can educate our students starting from the first lesson to work in pairs or groups, they can share their knowledge, complement each other and feel less stressed as the teachers pressure is away during such activities. I personally try to do almost all activities in our course book pair or group work activities.

T1: Observation

The first part of the unit, grammar and listening, is a kind of warm-up including questions about some advertisements the pictures of which are displayed, and students are asked to work in pairs to answer related questions. However, the teacher initiates questions to the volunteering. It seems to me that there are only three students dominating this part of the lesson. No pair or group work has been observed.

T 2: Attitude

I believe that students learn from each other more than they learn from the teacher. Some people say that they also learn wrong things from each other, but I think that is also a positive experience. Whenever I use pair or group activities, my students attend the lesson and understand the subject much better. As I'm aware of this fact, I try to use these kinds of activities. In my first attempts to use such activities, I really had difficulty in controlling the class, because there used to be too much noise. However, as time goes by, I have learnt to set up the rules in order to keep things under control.

T 2: Observation

It has been observed that the teacher calls on certain students to speak about what they see in the pictures on the first page without leaving any time for pair-work as written in the instruction for the activity. He keeps on asking the questions mostly to students sitting in the front and seems to neglect students sitting at the back. No pair or group work has been observed.

4.2 Fluency and Accuracy

In this section, a number of questions will be addressed under the umbrella terms *accuracy and fluency*. First, teachers' attitudes towards the importance of these two terms as well as the terms "contrived forms" and "contextualized forms" will be focused upon. In addition, teachers' attitudes towards the use of L1 in the classroom will be revealed.

Considering their answers in the questionnaire, it would be fair to say that both teachers hold the idea that fluency is more important although they seem to agree that accuracy and fluency complement each other. In addition, they argue that students should be given the chance to contextualize what is learned in the classroom.

As for the use of their mother tongue, while the first teacher followed an *English only* approach, the other teacher seemed to favor putting a balance between the use of L1 and L2. Despite all their positive views about fluency, their classroom practices seemed to contradict their attitudes as they skipped some of the fluency activities or allocated little time to meaningful contextualization of the covered structures during the lesson. It would also be true to say that they resorted to Turkish too much during the observed lesson. Below are the expressed attitudes and classroom practices about this section.

T 1: Attitude towards fluency and accuracy

In my opinion, fluency has a crucial importance. Students shouldn't be ashamed of talking in English and should consider English as a language they can communicate in, not as a lesson they have to learn. Thus, a teacher must encourage the students to speak fluently and give them the opportunity to speak to each other by preparing activities of speaking. Otherwise, just by doing the grammar correctly, the students become successful in writing and testing; and the purpose of English, being able to communicate in English, cannot be accomplished. Therefore, both of them are necessary for English learning, a teacher should be able to give importance to both of them without totally ignoring the other.

T 1: Attitude towards contextualized forms

I believe that languages are not learned in a vacuum. Therefore, not only forms but also vocabulary should somehow be contextualized. Anything could be a context. Sometimes a picture is better than a million words, for example. It would be better if the students created the context. This will make their learning experience more memorable. I remember learning a lot of new vocabulary by putting things into context, which has something to do with my life.

T 1: Attitude towards the use of mother tongue

My philosophy of teaching is "the more students are exposed to the language, the better it is for them". Exposure is one of the key terms in ELT. I believe in the merits of speaking English all the time. Maybe, with Turkish, you can explain an unknown word or a grammatical structure more easily, but if you do so in English, it is more permanent in students' minds. For example, I attended a private language school including native-speakers only when I first started learning English and

even in the cafeteria, nobody could speak Turkish. Nobody could understand you, anyway. If somebody had uttered a word of Turkish in or outside the class at school, there would have been some sort of punishment. I think that each classroom should carry these features even at a basic level. I was a beginner student when I first attended classes at the language school and I remember learning a lot from these native speakers.

Teacher 1: Observation

The teacher seems to give more importance to accuracy by observing his long presentation of the grammar focus of the lesson that was verb + prepositions (*succeed at*), adjective+ prepositions (*good at*), infinitive and gerund. He taught these structures in contrived forms without contextualizing the structures in meaning-based activities. He skipped the short explanation of the verb patterns in the course book and wrote a long list of verbs under each category of verb patterns by translating each word verbally. It was also observed that the students got bored while the teacher was writing all the structures on the board during this presentation, which took about 40 minutes. It was also observed that the teacher discussed the grammar exercises offered in the textbook with volunteering students. It is also important to note that the activity of asking students to contextualize some of the structures by making sentences that are true for them (activity 7) was not focused upon. At the end of the lesson, the teacher assigned students to memorize all the verb patterns in the lists for the next lesson. It had been observed that before the warm-up discussion session about the advertisements in the book, the teacher translated every single new word to be used for the discussion. In addition, he mainly used Turkish to explain the grammatical structures.

T 2: Attitude towards accuracy and fluency

I would emphasize fluency because that is why people learn languages. Imagine that a person knows all the grammatical structures correctly, but cannot come up with a proper sentence while talking to a foreigner in English. Of course, we cannot totally ignore accuracy, but at least, we should give more importance to fluency by setting a good example with our fluent English. Especially, with an intermediate group of learners, fluency should come first. I mean, when they were beginners, I remember giving more importance to accuracy.

T 2: Attitude towards contextualized forms

They help students relate the activity with their real lives. This will make them remember the language focus more easily. I mean, when students personalize and visualize the materials, this is better than bombarding students with useless activities that have nothing to do with real life. For example, after teaching students how to write a letter to a pen friend, we need to find a real friend to practice what they have learnt. During a conference at which the presenters talked about the advantages of authentic activities, one of the them gave the example that after teaching how to ask and answer questions on the phone, the best realistic scenario to practice English was to assign students to apply for a bank account by calling a Turkish bank and pressing the button for English.

T 2: Attitude towards the use of mother tongue

I force myself and encourage my student to stick to English. Actually, I try to balance them, because if you force students to speak English all the time, they get bored. They should use it as *they* want, not as the teacher does. When you don't force but encourage them, they will speak English voluntarily. What I mean by encouraging students is to give them the awareness that learning a foreign language means to get into communication by using the language, and the only way to be able to do so is to use it not only inside the classroom but also outside.

T 2: Observation

The teacher put the explanations about the verb patterns, offered in the textbook, onto the blackboard by adding some more verb patterns from another source. After the presentation that took about 25 minutes, he distributed a fill-in-the-blank type handout to each student to practice the structures. Students completed the exercises in a very short time as I think they did not even bother to read the sentences as they did not need to understand the sentence to fill in the blanks. They looked at the list on the board and wrote the infinitive and the gerund forms of the verbs in the sentences which did not seem to be meaningful at all. As a piece of homework, the teacher asked students to do the related exercise in the textbook. In terms of the use of L1, it was observed that nearly all the lesson was conducted in Turkish except for the warm-up speaking and the listening activity.

4.3 Error Correction

In this section, teachers' attitudes towards selective error correction will be discussed in addition to their attitudes towards the source of error correction, such as self-, peer-, or teacher-correction. Their attitudes reveal that both of them hold the idea that only major errors should be corrected, and self-correction seems to be the favorable correction type for both teachers. However, when it comes to error correction in the classroom, immediate and explicit correction of almost all errors by the teacher was observed in both teachers' lessons.

T 1: Attitude toward selective error correction

Errors are OK in my class. I like students talking and making mistakes more than students just sitting there and doing nothing. I think that only major errors which stop communication should be corrected. I mean, if the sentence is somehow understandable, I would not correct an error. That is the same thing when we speak with a foreigner. They do not interfere in our English when they get the message. Or imagine a baby coming up with incorrect utterances in his mother tongue and

being corrected by his parents all the time. It would most likely stop speaking. Similarly, if we do not want to discourage our students from speaking English, we should avoid overcorrection. I think we mostly fail in error correction, which leads to the well-known excuse of most of the learners in Turkey for not speaking English "I can understand English, but cannot speak it".

T 1: Attitude towards the source of correction

First, the student should be given the chance to self-correct him/herself. If this is not possible, peers should be given this chance by asking questions to the whole class like "There is a problem in the sentence. Who can correct it?". If the answer is still not produced, the teacher should do something as the final option as I believe that students' autonomy is the most important issue in language teaching.

T 1: Observation

Out of the eight errors which occurred during the observation, six were grammatical errors and the remaining two were pronunciation errors. Except for a grammatical error explained by the teacher on the board by providing some kind of metalinguistic clue and self-corrected by the student, the teacher explicitly and immediately corrected all of the errors.

T 2: Attitude towards selective error correction

It really depends on the individual lesson and the errors which occur. If the main goal of the lesson is to teach the simple past tense, students' utterances containing incorrect past forms of verbs or the wrong pronunciation of the *-ed* ending should be corrected. Generally speaking, I can say that teachers should be selective in correcting errors.

T 2: Attitude towards the source of correction

I think if we have enough time, we should enable our students to self-correct themselves by giving them enough waiting time and some kind of clue about what the error is. I believe that spending time to think about an error to sort it out will be difficult both for the teachers, who are generally impatient to get an answer, and for students, who do not want to spend all their time and energy to deal with an error. In other words, self-correction is a painful process but as the saying goes, "no pain, no gain"

T 2: Observation

Out of twelve errors committed by students, only two were pronunciation errors while the rest were grammatical ones and apart from two of the grammatical errors, the teacher corrected all the errors explicitly.

4.4 The Teacher's Role

In this section, teachers' attitudes towards the role of the teacher in the classroom will be discussed. For the first teacher, the role of the instructor is that of a "leader" showing desperate students the way to help them sort out the problems they encounter in the classroom. By using the metaphor, "teaching them how to fish", the teacher seems to put the emphasis on student autonomy. Similarly, the second teacher writes that the role of the teacher should be that of a "guide". Despite all these positive attitudes towards the role of the teacher in a communicative classroom, both teachers seem to dominate the classroom situations by initiating nearly all the questions and by following lecture-style teaching.

T 1: Attitude towards the role of the teacher

The teacher should be the leader. As one of my teachers used to say, students are like desperate people lost in the jungle and our job is to show them the way. We can only show them the way; we are not supposed to take them all the way out of the jungle. They should discover the exact path for themselves. It should be like "teaching them how to fish" not "giving them the fish". For error correction, for example, we should not explicitly correct our students. We should give them time to help themselves correct their errors. We should also be motivators by displaying enthusiasm in the classroom. I believe that if we do so, our students' motivation will rise. If students are motivated enough, they can learn by themselves. I think that this is the point we all have to reach. I guess even a word like "Well done!" can turn a hopeless student into an active participant.

T 2: Attitude towards the role of the teacher

In a communicative classroom, the teacher shouldn't be just the one who stands in front of the board and teaches. The teacher should communicate with the students and let them communicate with each other. As it is said, he or she must be a "guide" for them. If it is the teacher who always talks in a classroom, there won't be any effective learning there. Of course, students will learn something, but they cannot transfer this to real life and to real communication. For this reason, teachers should be aware of the fact that they are not teaching just grammar, but a language. English isn't a subject like maths or science which can be learnt through formulae. Our first duty as English teachers is to provide them with a second language which they can use in their lives.

T1 and T2: Observation

It was observed that both teachers dominated classroom situations by initiating all the discussions, by lecturing grammar with little interaction with students, by providing nearly no opportunities to contextualize what was learned and by controlling not only the activities but also who would speak

when (calling on students or choosing among volunteers). There was almost no active interaction among students and the teacher did most of the talking.

4.5 Challenges Faced in Adopting CLT

Considering the above-mentioned mismatches between attitudes and classroom observations regarding pair and group work, fluency and accuracy, error correction and the role of the teacher, it will now be necessary to address the second part of research question 2, which was “Do teachers’ attitudes towards CLT reflect their actual classroom practices? If they do not, what are the challenges teachers face in adopting CLT?” To justify this mismatch between attitudes and practices, teachers were asked to rank some of the difficulties they faced in the implementation of CLT on the scale of “no problem, manageable problem and major difficulty”. It was found that both teachers ranked the same challenges as the major difficulties: large class size, traditional grammar-based examinations and the little time to prepare communicative materials. Their perceptions about these challenges were observed as well. As for the challenge of class size, it was observed that, during the period of observation, there were 27 students in one class and 26 in the other. Regarding the proficiency exam, it was observed that there were 5 sections – listening comprehension, speaking, reading comprehension, writing and structure -, and the weight of the structure section made up the half of the total assessment. In addition, teachers did not have extra time to prepare communicative activities as they taught 30 to 35 hours a week.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

This case study overlaps with existing research (cf. chap. 2) yielding a discrepancy between teachers’ attitudes towards CLT and their observed classroom behavior. For instance, both teachers favored pair and group work by mentioning their advantages, but when it came to actual teaching, they seemed to ignore course book instructions like “work in pairs” or “work in groups” and forwarded questions to the whole class. They either called on students or did the activities with the help of volunteering

students only. As for fluency and accuracy, although they thought that fluency, the use of the target language and contextualized grammar teaching should be emphasized, their classroom behaviors revealed just the opposite. They allocated most of their classroom time to the “lecturing” of grammatical structure, mostly in Turkish, by skipping some of the fluency-based activities. The way they presented grammar in contrived forms without a meaningful context also seemed to be far away from the basics of CLT.

Whereas both teachers held positive attitudes towards selective error correction and self-correction, they seemed to have a “zero-tolerance” approach to errors and immediately corrected almost all error themselves as they occurred. Finally, the teachers interviewed drew attention to the importance of teachers’ guidance and students’ autonomy in terms of the role of the instructor; it was observed that they dominated the lesson by transmitting their own knowledge, by initiating classroom interaction and by following a one-way teacher-student interaction.

Both teachers taking part in this study may want to have a communicative class and try to implement CLT. However, due to some constraints, such as their large class size, traditional grammar-based examination and their lack of time to prepare communicative activities, they cannot reflect the way they apply CLT to their actual teaching situation. If the lack of CLT implementation cannot be explained with these challenges, some individual factors might have influenced the result of this study. Teachers may also hold misconceptions about CLT and think that they implement it in their classrooms although they actually do not. Another reasonable justification of the mismatch between attitudes and practices is the one Karavas-Doukas (1996) mentions. She claims that the reason behind the theory and practice about CLT is that teachers' existing attitudes and beliefs were widely neglected before introducing CLT.

The present study is limited to two EFL teachers’ attitudes towards CLT and their actual classroom practices. As studies of this kind may reveal different findings in different contexts, there is a need for further contextual research, especially for the purpose of justifying possible reasons why attitudes are often not reflected in the classroom setting. Further studies will pave the way for finding those factors which prevent the adoption of CLT in actual teaching. In the study, for example, it was

found that traditional grammar-oriented examination, the large class size and the lack of time to prepare CLT activities were the reasons behind the lack of CLT features in the classroom situation. Therefore, for CLT to be practiced in the classroom, it can be suggested that the type of questions in the proficiency exams and the high weighting of structure sections in the context of the four skills change and that the number of students be reduced as some 30 students do make up a large classroom. Finally, teachers should teach fewer hours so as to have enough time to develop extra materials. Despite such contextual limitations of its classroom use, CLT will, as Richards (2006) claims, continue to be the major general language teaching methodology for certain years to come.

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Appendix A: Classroom Observation Checklist

	Yes	No	Field notes (related comments)
1. Provides learners with activities that have to be carried out in pairs or groups.			
2. Provides contrived forms.			
3. Provides forms in context.			
4. Minimal use of L1			
5. Corrects selected errors.			
6. Tolerates learners' errors.			
7. Encourages learners to correct each other's errors.			
8. Encourages learners to self-correct themselves			
9. Dominates classroom situations			
10. Monitors classroom situations.			

Appendix B: Open-ended Attitude Questionnaire

This open-ended questionnaire includes open-ended questions dealing with your attitudes towards some of the important features of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Please try to give detailed answers.

1. Age:
2. Your qualifications:
3. Your work experience:
4. What do you think about the use of pair and group work activities in the classroom?
5. Which one do you think English teachers should emphasize in class: fluency or accuracy? Do you think teachers should provide contrived forms or selected forms in context? Do you think teachers should mostly speak English in the classroom?
6. What do you think about selective error correction? Who should correct students errors, student him/self, peers, the teacher? Why?
7. What should be the role of the teacher in a communicative classroom? What do you think the major responsibilities of teachers are?

Appendix C: Questionnaire about Challenges in Adopting CLT

The following are some challenges that other EFL/ESL teachers had in adopting CLT. Have you come across these difficulties or do you think they might be difficulties for you in adopting CLT in your classes? Try a scale (*circle one*), how much of an issue is: (1: no problem, 2: manageable problem, 3: major difficulty)

	1	2	3
a) Teachers' lack of sufficient spoken English competence			
b) Teachers' lack of target culture (English) knowledge			
c) Teachers' little time to prepare communicative materials			
d) Students' low-level English proficiency			
e) Students resist communicative class activities			
f) Not enough authentic teaching materials to use			
g) Traditional grammar-based examinations			
h) Large class size			
i) The differences between EFL and ESL teaching contexts			
j) Lack of training in CLT			
k) Lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments			
l) communicative competence			
m) Lack of support from administration			
n) Teachers' misinterpretation of CLT			
o) Unsuitability of Western educational assumption in Asia			
Other/s (indicate).....			