COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN CAMBODIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: EFL TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

A thesis submitted by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on a study that examined the landscape of communicative language teaching (CLT) in higher education in Cambodia. It assessed how practitioners' beliefs about CLT influenced their practices and the challenges they faced in integrating CLT into English language teaching. The participants in the study were Cambodian EFL (English as a foreign language) university teachers, their supervisors (i.e. vice deans who also taught) and students who had English as a major. By employing a concurrent nested mixed methods design, the study collected data through semi-structured interviews, surveys and document analysis. The study found that, while interactive teaching activities were favoured, the teachers often explained grammar lessons in the native Khmer language and used instructional drills to reinforce learning. They defined CLT as a student-centred approach that promotes interaction among teachers, students and peers. They emphasised the benefits of CLT for key education stakeholders, including students, teachers and education institutions. Moreover, the leveraging of technology was found to be a common practice among the participants and was perceived to be beneficial for student learning. However, challenges were evident, including the students' inadequate English language proficiency and the teachers finding it difficult to implement CLT. Other challenges were inadequate continuing professional development (CPD) on digital technology, insufficient access to authentic teaching materials and other contextual barriers. To promote the effective implementation of CLT through enhanced CPD for teachers, the participants suggested that seven thematic categories were considered for improvement. The study offers practical directions for pedagogical approaches and policy development for English language learning in Cambodian higher education. The study acknowledges its limitations and suggests areas for future research to advance language teacher education and pedagogical approaches and sets the stage for creating more effective language learning environments for students in Cambodia and elsewhere.

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

I, Bunhorn Doeur, certify that the Thesis entitled *Communicative Language Teaching in Cambodian Higher Education: EFL teachers' beliefs and practices* is not more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. The thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Accreditation Committee of Cambodia
CLT	Communicative language teaching
CPD	Continuing professional development
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELT	English language teaching
ESL	English as a second language
ICT	Information and communication technology
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TEFL	Teaching English as a foreign language
TESOL	Teaching English to speakers of other languages
UniSQ	University of Southern Queensland

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Under the influence of various foreign powers, including Thailand, Vietnam, France, China and the United States, Cambodia has undergone several regime changes (Ayres, 2000). These political shifts and influences have dramatically altered the landscape of foreign language education in Cambodia, with the dominant language transitioning from French to Vietnamese, to Russian and, eventually, to English. English has now become the focus of foreign language learning for most Cambodian students at all levels of education; English is increasingly important in the workplace. Following the country's first election that was supported by the United Nations Transitional Authority Cambodia in 1993, Cambodia's accession to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 1999 and gaining full membership of this association in 2015, many expatriates, international companies and organisations moved to Cambodia and established offices in the country (Clayton, 2002a). Consequently, English emerged as the most widely used foreign language in Cambodia, which increased the demand for English language proficiency in business, communication, employment and education. This surge in demand placed significant pressure on universities to equip their students with the knowledge and skills required to attain high English proficiency.

After the fall of communism, including the destruction of education infrastructure by Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1978) and subsequent years of conflict and instability, the development of education and academia has been adversely impacted. Conversely, the influx of foreign aid and international influence has significantly dominated the reform of Cambodian universities, and language teaching practices. Consequently, English was officially introduced to Cambodia in the late 1980s (Clayton, 2002b). Since then, a variety of teaching methods and approaches have been explored and used in English language classrooms (Neau, 2003). The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) shifted, top

down approach, the policy from traditional methods, such as the grammar−translation method, to endorsing communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches (MoEYS, 2005), without clear direction, in a move that was driven by the need for economic development and enthusiasm for English language learning by Cambodian students. This historical and political backdrop underscores the complexities of implementing CLT in Cambodia, reflecting the need for enhanced teaching practices, especially in the application of CLT in the Cambodian university environment, where students majoring in English are trained to become English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers and skilled professionals in various fields. However, challenges persist, including a shortage of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for EFL teachers in Cambodia (Ros & Oleksiyenko, 2018), and limited teaching resources (Heng, 2014; Nhem, 2019). Because there are few CPD opportunities, teachers struggle to enhance their teaching capabilities, discuss challenges or share best practices in and outside their institutions, despite requirements by MoEYS that teachers improve their teaching capacity (MoEYS, 2019a).

In the Cambodian context, implementing CLT in English language teaching (ELT) at higher education institutions has proven to be a major challenge for many teachers, as indicated by recent studies (Doeur, 2022a; Heng, 2014; Nhem, 2019; Sreng, 2013; Sun, 2014). Common issues include teachers' limited proficiency in English, inadequate CLT training and logistical issues, such as time constraints and difficulties in developing communicative materials (Heng, 2014; Nhem, 2019). Students also face various problems, including lacking English language proficiency, finding it difficult to speak, lacking motivation and having poor grammar skills, which hinder their active participation in communicative activities (Heng, 2014). While methodological challenges (see Heng, 2014), unclear teaching guidelines, inappropriate assessment instruments and contextual challenges (see Nhem, 2019), including resource shortages and space constraints, have been reported by

local researchers (see Doeur, 2022a; Heng, 2014; Sreng, 2013; Sun, 2014), they provide only a general exposition of the complex challenges involved in implementing CLT in Cambodian EFL settings. Thus, there is still a gap in our understanding of how to effectively implement CLT in Cambodian EFL contexts. The present study aimed to bridge this gap by providing empirical evidence from the Cambodian higher education context, which can inform educational policy and teacher training programs on effective CLT integration.

The primary goal of EFL teaching in Cambodia is to foster students' communicative competence in English, which includes both receptive and productive skills according to Brown (2009), Chambless (2012), and Crawford (2004). Pedagogical approaches adopted by teachers have a substantial influence on students' language acquisition and application. Nevertheless, teaching methods vary according to individual teacher experiences or institutional curricula (Curtner-Smith, 1999; L. Li, 2013), which leads to inconsistencies. EFL teachers have varying beliefs, views and practices, which can significantly affect their teaching and students' learning outcomes (Gu, 2016; Richards, 1996; Zheng, 2013). Therefore, it is crucial to understand EFL teachers' beliefs and practices and EFL students' perceptions of their learning experiences, particularly in the context of CLT practice. Such an understanding is essential for improving EFL teaching and learning outcomes in Cambodia. Exploring the historical, cultural, and political factors that shape the Cambodian higher education system, as well as the unique challenges faced by local educators, can provide a comprehensive context for the implementation of CLT and contribute to more effective language education strategies in the region.

1.2 Research aims and research questions

This study aimed to investigate Cambodian university EFL teachers' understanding and implementation of CLT, the challenges they face in implementing CLT and the perspectives of Cambodian university students who were majoring in English on their English

language learning. To achieve these aims, the present study sought to address the following research questions:

1. What is Cambodian university EFL teachers' understanding of CLT?
2. To what extent do Cambodian university EFL teachers implement CLT in their teaching?
3. What challenges do Cambodian university EFL teachers face when implementing CLT at Cambodian provincial universities?
4. What are Cambodian English major students' perspectives on CLT?
5. What CPD opportunities do Cambodian university EFL teachers need to enhance their CLT practices?

1.3 Terms and definitions

CLT is an approach to language instruction that centres on interactions and which employs authentic materials or real-life situations as its core pedagogy (Richards, 2005; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This approach emphasises fostering communication confidence through student-to-student cooperation and oral practices (Canale & Swain, 1980). In CLT, the goal of communication is the fundamental means of teaching and learning.

Teacher beliefs refer to personal and professional constructs or understandings of teaching that can provide judgements and evaluations of education concepts or aspects. Teachers' beliefs can vary, depend on contexts and are shaped by teachers' experiences or education (Borg, 2003; Humphries & Burns, 2015; K. Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004). These convictions may vary, from being positive and reflecting a keen interest in a teaching approach, to being negative; regardless, these convictions influence the results of learning.

Teaching practices or teaching praxes refer to the applications and strategies teachers use to facilitate student interactions in the classroom. They may involve group discussions,

the use of interactive software and the incorporation of information and communication technology (ICT).

Student perspectives represent the various angles or viewpoints through which students perceive educational content. In the context of this study, perspectives pertain to how English major students view their learning experiences, the practices of CLT and their effects on students' motivation and engagement in English language learning (M. Chang & Goswami, 2011).

English major students are students who are deeply engaged in studying English language and literature at university. Their courses provide the means for gaining expertise in Core English, linguistics, cultural studies, literature studies and language teaching methodologies. Successful students obtain qualifications to become EFL teachers, translators or interpreters, or to pursue further studies in literature, linguistics or cultural studies.

Higher education, also referred to as tertiary or postsecondary education, provides academic degrees at the university level to prepare students for various professional roles.

EFL refers to the study of English in countries where English is not the primary language. For instance, the official language in Cambodia is Khmer and most Cambodians speak Khmer in their everyday lives, work and education. Students seeking to diversify their skills and knowledge for professional and educational purposes need to undertake English lessons, despite the limited value of knowing English for other purposes in society. In the context of this study, English is a foreign language.

Challenges represent barriers facing the effective implementation of a teaching approach. Language teachers face various challenges when they implement CLT, for example, the absence of an integrative curriculum and low motivation of students (Heng, 2014; S.-H. Huang, 2016; D. Li, 1998; Nhem, 2019; Noori, 2018). These challenges call for urgent and practical solutions, to enable the successful pursuit of CLT implementation.

Curriculum documents are formal records that outline the educational framework and content to be taught at a school or education institution (Cohen et al., 2010). These documents could be course syllabi, textbooks, teaching materials, assessment materials and teaching policies at Cambodian universities that accommodate the implementation of CLT in EFL classes.

ICT refers to electronic tools, applications, systems, devices, electronic resources and interactive software used for teaching, particularly in EFL contexts.

CPD is one of the ways practitioners maintain and improve their knowledge and skills through ongoing training and resources. CPD helps teachers who teach EFL to improve their knowledge of the subject area and to learn new techniques or methods for effective EFL instruction (Noori, 2018).

School culture refers to the shared beliefs, values, norms, and practices that shape the social and educational environment within a school. It influences how teachers, students, and administrators interact and engage with each other. In this thesis, school culture has been found to exert a limiting effect on how teachers shape the ways they implement teaching English through Communicative Language Teaching approaches.

Educational contexts refer to the environments where teaching and learning happen, including through school policies, in classrooms, within cultural norms, and across community influences. This thesis focusses on these factors within Cambodian provincial universities.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters and the main focus of each chapter can be summarised as follows.

Chapter 1 introduces the study's background, aims and research questions. It sets the scene by describing the research context, in which English is considered to be a foreign

language. It also outlines key terms and their definitions that are crucial to the understanding of the study. Overall, this chapter provides a foundation for the study reported in this thesis.

Chapter 2 offers a review of research and scholarly works on the topic of implementing CLT in EFL contexts, specifically in Cambodian higher education. The chapter also critically examines various studies that investigated EFL teachers' beliefs, practices, challenges and the benefits associated with CLT. In addition, it discusses the significance of CPD and ICT for enhancing CLT practices in EFL settings. By synthesising and analysing the findings of previous studies, the chapter aims to construct a theoretical framework that is anchored in cognition and sociocultural theories that are relevant to CLT implementation.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology employed in the study. It provides a rationale for adopting a concurrent nested mixed methods design, while also justifying its suitability and credibility. It offers an overview of the quantitative and qualitative research methods applied in this study. It also provides information on the participants, data collection instruments, data collection procedures and how the data were analysed. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter 4 reports the findings of the study, which emerged from the analysis of data obtained from interviews, surveys and relevant policy documents that served as resources for teaching and learning English. The chapter identifies key themes, patterns and insights that emerged from the study, thereby providing a nuanced understanding of the CLT practices of EFL teachers in the context of Cambodian provincial universities.

Chapter 5 discusses the results of the study and aligns them with the research questions and findings of previous research. The chapter delves into the effect Cambodian university EFL teachers' beliefs about CLT have and examines the extent to which these beliefs influence the implementation of CLT curricula in EFL classroom contexts. It also discusses the CPD opportunities that are required to support teachers if they are to effectively

use ICT in the classroom. In addition, it discusses the perspectives of Cambodian students who had English as a major regarding their experiences of learning English in the context of higher education in Cambodia.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by summarising the key findings of the study, acknowledging its limitations and providing implications for CLT practices in EFL higher education contexts in Southeast Asia. It also outlines potential avenues for future research. The thesis will now proceed to review the key literature on the major concepts of the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

This chapter reviews the literature on CLT and focuses on its foundational principles and characteristics, particularly in the context of EFL instruction. It also provides an overview of communicative competence and the various communicative activities of CLT. It then presents a literature review on the significant role of ICT and CPD in CLT and the role of language curriculum in CLT. The chapter also reviews previous studies on teachers' beliefs and practices of CLT in EFL contexts and the challenges associated with applying CLT in EFL settings. Subsequently, the chapter examines previous studies on students' perspectives of English language learning within CLT-oriented classrooms. Building on this foundation, the chapter presents an analysis of relevant theories, including a sociocultural theory of learning and teaching and a cognition theory guided by teachers' beliefs or understandings of CLT, followed by an explanation of the theoretical framework of the study reported in this thesis, thereby elucidating the necessity for new knowledge in this academic field.

2.2 Communicative language teaching in EFL contexts

This section provides an overview of CLT in the context of EFL education. CLT is an instructional or pedagogical approach that develops students' communicative competence in a target language and prioritises communication over linguistic accuracy. It encourages students to engage with the language in authentic, real-life situations. CLT emerged as a response to traditional, grammar-based approaches to language teaching, which are criticised for not adequately preparing students for real-world language application (Littlewood, 2007; Richards, 2005; Savignon, 2007).

As a result of the widespread adoption of CLT by language educators worldwide, a great deal of research has been undertaken on CLT in EFL settings. CLT has been shown to be effective for improving students' language proficiency and promoting engagement in the

language learning process (see Farooq, 2015; Toro et al., 2019). However, it has also been criticised (see Alamri, 2018), particularly regarding the need for grammatical accuracy in EFL environments (R. Ellis, 2006, 2009).

Furthermore, CLT is widely recognised as one of the most effective language teaching methods and has been adopted by education institutions globally (see L. Wei et al., 2018). Proponents of CLT (e.g. Littlewood, 1981; Mangubhai et al., 2005; Richards & Rodgers, 2001) argue that CLT has several advantages over traditional, grammar-based methods, such as promoting active engagement, encouraging authentic communication and improving students' confidence and motivation (Ostovar-Namaghi et al., 2022; Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak, 2021; Radosavlevikj, 2021).

Additionally, the concept of immersion language teaching, which requires students to consistently use the target language inside and outside the classroom (W. Huang et al., 2022; O'Dowd, 2020; Yoon, 2004), is considered one of the most successful strategies (A. Brown, 2021; Meniado, 2019). Immersion creates an environment that significantly improves language proficiency, confidence and motivation, a finding that is supported by A. Brown's (2021) study with adult learners of French and Arabic in American community language courses. This approach aligns well with the principles of CLT, for which authentic communication and practical language use are crucial. By encouraging students to apply the target language in various real-life situations, immersion language teaching reinforces the core ideas of CLT further. Both methods focus on practical language use and fosters language proficiency and students' confidence and motivation, thereby making CLT highly compatible approach in language education.

Moreover, many ESL (English as a second language) and EFL teachers, worldwide, use CLT to help their students communicate effectively in English, as reported by Mason and Payant's (2019) study in Ukraine, Teh's (2021) study in Malaysia and W. Wei and Yanmei's

(2018) study in China. Classroom interaction is essential for EFL instruction, to support students with their learning approaches and English communication skills (Kayi, 2006). CLT effectively combines the functional and structural aspects of language teaching, thereby allowing teachers to integrate language structures into practical language use (Dörnyei, 2009; Littlewood, 1981; Richards, 2005). However, the effectiveness of CLT and the role of teacher training in its implementation in EFL higher education, particularly in provincial Cambodia, remain under-researched.

In addition, Cambodian researchers have contributed significantly to understanding the unique challenges in implementing CLT within the country. For example, Heng (2014) explored the difficulties faced by Cambodian EFL teachers, highlighting issues such as limited proficiency in English and inadequate CLT training. Similarly, Nhem (2019) examined the contextual challenges, including resource shortages and space constraints, which hinder effective CLT implementation. Sreng (2013) discussed the logistical issues such as time constraints and difficulties in developing communicative materials, which are critical obstacles for Cambodian teachers. Additionally, Sun (2014) identified the resistance among students towards communicative activities due to their low proficiency levels and lack of motivation. These studies emphasize the need for enhanced teacher training programs and better resource allocation to support CLT practices. They also highlight the importance of addressing cultural and historical factors that influence language teaching and learning in Cambodia.

Moreover, CLT is also known as a strategy to improve the effectiveness of the learning process in EFL settings, through interactive language use (Farooq, 2015). By using CLT in preparation for debates or discussions, it facilitates a conducive environment in which students can absorb the target language unconsciously and naturally (Alamri, 2018). Tasks that are supported by authentic written and spoken texts in the target language provide

students with exposure to a wide range of contexts that promote their language learning, both within and beyond the classroom. For example, students can discuss their personal experiences with peers, which increases their ability to interact with one another and strengthens their vocabulary and comprehension of the English language (C.-W. Chang et al., 2010).

Furthermore, authenticity is essential for effective teaching and learning of English using CLT. Authenticity refers to using real-life, genuine language resources and stimulating natural language use in the classroom. For example, students can be tasked to engage in a group discussion using the target language, to plan an end-of-term picnic in their local areas, which will promote their language use in real-life communication (Richards, 2005). Such language improvement requires extensive language practice in real-life situations and thrives in an authentic learning atmosphere. The challenge lies in providing authentic materials or tasks that resonate with EFL students, especially when there is limited access to realistic resources and when suitable technology is not available. Another example of authenticity in language learning is using English textbooks and other reading materials, which present the language in a structured and organised form. However, listening to the language in real-life settings can be challenging, because it requires real-time speech processing and understanding nuance, such as intonation, pronunciation and connected speech.

While CLT is widely recognized for its emphasis on communication and practical language use, several scholars have highlighted its limitations. One major criticism is that CLT can sometimes prioritize fluency over accuracy, potentially neglecting essential structural components of language, such as grammar and syntax (Swan, 2005; Ellis, 2006). More recent studies have echoed these concerns, noting that an overemphasis on communication can leave learners with gaps in their grammatical knowledge (Thornbury, 2017; Ur, 2019). Additionally, some argue that the focus on communication may not

adequately prepare students for standardized tests, which often emphasize grammatical accuracy and discrete language skills (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2017). These critiques suggest that while CLT has many strengths, it must be integrated thoughtfully with other approaches to ensure a well-rounded language education.

In summary, CLT is an instructional or pedagogical approach that is rooted in language learning theory. It places communicative competence and practical communication at its core and prioritises these elements over mastering linguistic structures. CLT can involve strategies such as partial immersion in the target language, peer interaction and the use of authentic texts for language learning. CLT helps students to learn how to communicate in the target language, which is the primary purpose of language instruction. It encourages students to experiment with what they know and to learn from the mistakes they make. However, in the case of the Cambodian higher education EFL context, further research is needed to explore Cambodian EFL teachers' understanding of those foundational principles of CLT in their teaching and learning contexts to determine how they can provide effective feedback and support to enhance the language skills of students preparing to become English teachers or employees requiring English fluency. Previous studies have not addressed how potential challenges are being addressed when implementing CLT in Cambodian EFL higher education settings.

2.2.1 Principles and characteristics

According to Richards (2005)—a leading language theorist—the CLT approach is grounded in eight basic principles. The first principle centres on using tasks as an organisational strategy, focusing on fostering meaningful communication. This principle emphasises the importance of using language as a tool for communication in real-life situations, rather than purely for learning grammar and vocabulary. The second principle is promoting learning by doing. Through this principle, students are encouraged to use the

language in meaningful contexts and to engage in communicative activities that reflect real-world English language use. This principle of learning encourages students to develop their language skills more naturally and interactively.

The third principle refers to the need for teachers to provide rich and meaningful input and motivate students by exposing them to language that is engaging and applicable to their lives. The fourth principle is that CLT promotes the provision of comprehensible and elaborated input. The language input provided to students must be understandable, but complex enough to challenge and enable them to develop their language skills. The fifth principle relates to promoting cooperative and collaborative learning, fostering interaction among students, in pairs or small groups, for task completion and communication. This principle enables students to use their language skills in interactive and social contexts.

The sixth principle emphasises the importance of form in language learning, by teaching students to focus on language structure, including grammar and vocabulary, in common social and cultural contexts. The seventh principle emphasises the provision of error-corrective feedback and recognition, by offering students constructive feedback on their language use and encouraging them to identify and correct their errors. This principle is crucial for helping students develop their language skills.

The eighth and final principle relates to the significance of an affective factor in the learning process and creating a supportive and positive learning environment in which students feel comfortable and confident about their language use. This principle recognises language learning challenges and the importance of emotional support in the learning environment if students are to succeed.

In contrast to Richards' (2005) eight principles of CLT, Ma (2009) lists four communicative features of CLT: (a) an orientation towards efficient communication, (b) the portrayal of real-life communication, (c) the strategy of avoiding frequent error correction, to

promote fluency and (d) the contextualisation of grammar teaching to achieve communicative competence. These features complement the broader CLT principles of Richards that advocate for the use of language as a tool for communication and emphasises the function of language over form and the importance of creating an authentic communicative experience for students while they learn a language.

Desai (2015) explains the CLT principles by categorising CLT as an approach that is centred on the meaning of language and communicative functions, rather than a sole focus on linguistic structures. This perspective aligns with the core tenets of CLT, which prioritise communicative proficiency and suggests that language learning should extend beyond grammatical accuracy, to include the ability to use language effectively in various communicative contexts. The views of Ma (2009) and Desai (2015) align seamlessly with the principles of CLT, by underlining its comprehensive and communication-focused approach to language instruction.

With a CLT approach, the target language is used as a tool for classroom communication; it encourages teacher–student and student–student interaction and promotes situations conducive for communication. This approach creates a communicative environment in which students are encouraged to use the target language according to its functional aspects. As Larsen-Freeman (2000) argues, the target language is not simply a subject of study, but also a means of communication in the classroom. By applying this approach, teachers actively demonstrate how to communicate using the target language, with the intention to develop appropriate and fluent communication skills in their students.

The role of the teacher in CLT is to help students develop independence and responsibility for their language learning. This involves using a curriculum that emphasises language application in real-world situations, rather than focusing solely on grammar structure and vocabulary. The use of authentic materials and meaningful tasks is integral to

this approach, which aims to, as far as possible, minimise blending the native and foreign languages, as blending them can hinder the learning process (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). These principles underpin effective language learning by promoting natural and interactive language skill development. However, the specific efficacy of and responses to CLT of EFL students in higher education, including Cambodian English major students, remain uncertain.

2.2.2 Communicative competence

CLT is intrinsically tied to communicative competence, which refers to a language user's ability to convey and interpret messages effectively and appropriately in social interactions. Unlike traditional language teaching methods, CLT is designed to go beyond the teaching of grammatical rules and vocabulary lists and, instead, to focus on equipping students with the skills necessary for real-world communication. By engaging students in practical language use scenarios—such as conversations, discussions and negotiations—CLT aims to develop linguistic ability and sociolinguistic and strategic competencies that form the foundation of communicative competence. This approach ensures that learners are prepared to form correct sentences and use language effectively across various communicative contexts and to recognise and respond to linguistic cues, cultural norms and the nuanced dynamics of conversation.

Communicative competence refers to an ability to use a language effectively and appropriately across different communicative situations; clear and comprehensible English, in both speaking and writing, is emphasised. Communicative competence consists of linguistic, discourse, strategic, sociolinguistic, and cognitive competence (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995, 1997). There are discussed in turned.

First, linguistic competence is the foundational ability that underpins communication and necessitates a thorough understanding of the structural components of a language, such as syntax, morphology and phonology (Nelson, 1992). Grammatical competence is a vital

component of being competent in a language. Therefore, effective instruction in English grammar is imperative for developing these essential competencies and laying the groundwork for successful communication.

Second, discourse competence, a crucial component of communicative competence, pertains to the ability to create and comprehend verbal and written texts coherently and cohesively in various genres and formats. The language theorist Savignon (2001) suggests that this competence involves integrating different language structures to construct meaningful oral and written materials.

Third, as defined by Dörnyei and Thurrell (1991), strategic competence refers to the ability to recognise and resolve communication problems before, during and after they occur. Therefore, strategic competence enables a language user to manage their sociocultural, pragmatic and textual knowledge in different communication contexts; thus, ensuring clarity and effectiveness in interaction.

Fifth, sociolinguistic competence is another component of communicative competence. It encompasses knowledge of the social and cultural norms that govern language use in different settings (Aleksandrowicz-Pedich et al., 2003) and includes understanding the conventions, customs and practices that shape communication in the target language culture. This understanding includes recognising topics that may be prohibited or inappropriate to discuss solid political views in specific education settings. Demonstrating sociolinguistic competence involves thoroughly managing different communicative roles and adapting to various sociolinguistic settings (Canale, 2014; Lyster, 1994; Siegal, 1996). An example of adapting this is the variation in offering compliments: the language for complimenting a friend at a formal graduation ceremony is markedly different from that at an informal party at a friend's house.

Finally, the cognitive component of communicative competence entails a dual awareness: understanding the rationale behind certain language behaviours in specific communicative contexts and mastering the ability to perform these behaviours accurately (Hargie, 2016). Cognitive abilities are developed through observing and assessing others' communicative activities, analysing authentic language interactions and deciphering the underlying communicative strategies. EFL teachers play a pivotal role in this developmental process when they design instructional strategies that enhance cognitive competency (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Mulder et al., 2007). Teachers create learning opportunities that prompt learners and encourage critical analysis of discourse patterns and pragmatic nuances in authentic language use. This pedagogical approach encourages students to engage with language beyond its surface structure, fosters a more profound comprehension of its functional significance and enhances overall communicative capacity.

2.2.3 Communicative activities

Communicative activities are essential components of CLT in learning EFL, because they help students to develop accuracy and fluency simultaneously (Hendrickson, 1978; Laufer & Waldman, 2011). Other research (e.g. Kubota, 2018; Yashima et al., 2004) reports that participating in a foreign language through communicative activities has numerous benefits for language acquisition and communication skills. The benefits include improved oral proficiency, enhanced vocabulary retention, increased confidence in speaking and better comprehension of natural language use. Communicative activities engage students in applying linguistic structures and sociocultural norms and enables them to navigate real-life communication effectively. These activities foster a language learning environment that encourages students to understand language and to use it fluently and accurately in diverse social contexts.

Communicative activities include group discussions, role plays, storytelling and interviews. Group discussions and conversations are the most typical communicative activities in teaching EFL. These activities can be structured in a variety of ways to achieve a variety of goals, such as reaching agreement on a topic, exchanging thoughts about a phenomenon, or coming up with collective solutions (R. Brown, 1991; Canale & Swain, 1980; Nabei & Swain, 2002; Woodrow, 2006). Role play is another popular communicative activity in CLT (Irkinovich, 2022; Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018). Students could be instructed to act out various social scenarios and take on different roles, which provides them with knowledge about different social roles. The teacher sets expectations for their students' behaviour during the activities. Telling stories improves students' ability to communicate effectively in a foreign language. In language learning, students may be asked to write brief stories in the target language, share an event from their own lives and take turns recounting the narrative to other students (Armie, 2020; Hişmanoğlu, 2005; Richards, 2005). An interview is a helpful method of communication in foreign language teaching, as it encourages students to use their language skills in a one-on-one setting (Kamaliah, 2018; Kayi, 2006; K. Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). When preparing an interview session, the teacher selects relevant topics and questions that match the students' ability to communicate effectively on a specific topic.

CLT prioritises the use of communicative activities in the classroom, as a means of assisting students to acquire the target language. Engaging in these activities offers students numerous opportunities for interaction, which, in turn, dramatically helps their language development (Bejarano et al., 1997; Bordia, 1997). Moss and Ross-Feldman (2003) assert that students are more likely to retain information when they participate in relevant tasks presented in a dynamic learning environment. Various studies in the field of EFL, including those of Dewaele and Li (2020), Loewen and Sato (2018) and Settles et al. (2018) provide

evidence that communicative activities, such as group discussions, role plays, or interviews, are integral to the process of new language learning. These activities contribute to the development of reading and writing skills and can be implemented effectively in classroom settings. When communicative activities are effectively integrated, they can transform the English classroom into a safe, engaging and enjoyable environment, which is particularly beneficial for students who are struggling (Dewaele & Li, 2020). However, it remains unclear to what extent these activities prioritise communication over grammar and vocabulary skills, especially in the Cambodian context, where teaching has predominantly followed a grammar–translation method.

In CLT classrooms, the roles of students and teachers in EFL contexts are closely aligned and focus on developing communicative competence, rather than achieving grammatical accuracy. According to leading pedagogical theorists Richards and Rodgers (2001), CLT prioritises the development of communicative skills. They argue that students are negotiators when they collaborate with their peers to fulfil instructional objectives. This collaborative dynamic encourages student-to-student interaction, with immediate error correction not always being a priority (Savignon, 1987).

Richards (2005) emphasises that CLT enhances proficiency by engaging students in meaningful use of the target language in relevant contexts. Zambrano et al. (2019) also explains that CLT positions students as collaborators, by leveraging collective effort over individual effort or competitive activities to achieve objectives that would otherwise be unattainable. This collaborative model nurtures a sense of autonomy in learners, as they are prompted to navigate the language learning process through substantial interaction in the target language, which is supported by teacher facilitation. Ultimately, the goal is for students to attain linguistic competence independently, via a journey initiated and continually inspired by the communicative experiences provided in the CLT classroom.

The students serve as active agents in their educational journey, by connecting their learning process and the subject being studied, as posited by Antón (1999), English (2009) and Little (1995). The decision to engage in language study rests, ultimately, with students (Horwitz, 1985; Johnson, 1992); it necessitates a steady dedication and persistent effort (Coleman, 2021). In this process, students act as negotiators by mediating between their individual learning needs and the collaborative dynamics that unfold during the learning experience.

The incentive for language mastery is self-generated and students are driven by internal goals rather than outside pressures or manipulation (Vansteenkiste et al., 2018). Success in communicative language proficiency is predominantly achieved through direct contact with native speakers and surpassing the limits of traditional textbook-based learning. Motivated students intentionally engage themselves in communicative exchanges with other students and community members at large. Through the CLT approach, the priority is nurturing student independence and empowering learners to self-direct their language practice in and out of the classroom when they use the target language.

One way in which teacher and student roles are comparable is that they both need to engage in dialogues with one another. CLT aims to create a student-centred classroom, in which interaction is key to language learning. Rather than teachers playing the conventional role, this approach allows students to take on more active, sometimes even instructional, roles as knowledgeable teachers (Richards, 2005). Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Richards and Rodgers (2001) highlight teachers' roles in three primary functions: facilitating learning and communication, acting as non-directive facilitators rather than controllers and modelling acceptable communicative behaviour.

During lessons, a CLT teacher behaves more like a coach than a traditional teacher, by leading students' educational experiences while also offering support, conducting assessments

and engaging with students on a personal level. The purpose is to guide students through their learning journey and help them to recognise and learn from their mistakes so that they can progress. Through this facilitative process, teachers can identify students' challenges and develop solutions to address them; thus, smoothing the path for language learning.

The CLT approach distinguishes three distinct roles for teachers within the classroom: that of analyst, counsellor and group process manager (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). As analysts, teachers assess and adapt to each student's linguistic development needs. In the role of counsellor, teachers employ various communicative techniques, by balancing affirmation with constructive criticism, to support students in achieving their language learning objectives. This supportive stance extends to assisting students to develop initial language learning plans that are based on a detailed understanding of their unique language requirements. As group process managers, teachers are responsible for maintaining order in the classroom, by carefully monitoring and guiding student interactions. This involves making corrections and filling knowledge gaps, typically at moments when the focus shifts to accuracy. In this role, the teacher's responsibility is to orchestrate classroom dynamics to prioritise communicative fluency while laying the groundwork for subsequent attention to linguistic accuracy.

The CLT approach is designed so that students can communicate in a foreign language, which is the primary purpose of language instruction (Elmurodovna, 2021). CLT advocates for an education environment in which mistakes are anticipated and embraced as valuable learning moments. Students are assisted to develop proficiency across all language macro skills—speaking, listening, reading and writing—through engagement and interactive practices, which enables them to progress at a pace that suits their particular learning styles.

This technique shifts the teachers' function from that of a direct command teacher to that of a facilitator (Ju, 2013). In this facilitative role, teachers are tasked with creating an

environment that is conducive to communication that encourages student participation and supports the overall learning process (Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2005). Instead of merely presenting information, teachers guide students to explore and construct knowledge independently. Teachers provide a supportive framework, constructive feedback and the necessary guidance to encourage students to actively participate in their learning journey.

CLT prioritises the development of communication competence by placing it above rote learning of grammatical knowledge. With this approach, students are encouraged to communicate with one another, with teachers serving as negotiators who collaborate and fulfil instructional objectives. Students are guided towards linguistic competence through learning to use the language effectively through meaningful interaction facilitated by their teachers. The teacher's role is multifaceted: they create a student-centred classroom in which language can be learned unconsciously through interaction. As facilitators, teachers steer the learning process without imposing control over students and adopt their role as analysts, counsellors and group process managers. They assist students with specific language demands and facilitate the task-based negotiation of meaning between and among students.

While the dynamics of this approach in general language learning are well documented, the specific roles that Cambodian EFL students and teachers play in higher education, particularly in English major courses, are not as well understood. How students in such contexts are guided and supported in CLT classrooms remains an area that should be explored. The nuances of student–teacher interaction, the types of guidance provided and the overall efficacy of CLT in Cambodian higher education demand further inquiry.

2.3 The role of ICT and continuous professional development in communicative language teaching

The rapid evolution of ICT has significantly influenced a variety of disciplines, including the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). Lomicka and

Lord (2019), who are researchers in ICT, posit that the future of language learning and teaching hinges on fully integrating ICT into the curriculum. Such integration is necessary for advancing the field; language teachers need ongoing professional development and training to effectively utilise various technologies to improve students' language skills (Rusmiyanto et al., 2023; Son, 2018). An effective language curriculum, as proposed by Nguyen et al. (2014), should incorporate technology for interactive activities across all four macro skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Incorporating digital technologies into classroom activities has facilitated the integration of digital practices into the language learning curriculum. By introducing digital technologies, teachers and students are incentivised to embrace practices that improve their linguistic and communication skills. Teachers can utilise digital technologies to promote peer interaction, reflection, questioning, support and feedback among students, all of which are crucial for language development (Parvin & Salam, 2015). When they are used effectively, digital technologies can encourage students to think critically and act independently (Caena & Redecker, 2019; Mercer et al., 2019), as CLT requires students to communicate confidently with their peers from English-speaking backgrounds. Komol and Suwanphathama (2020) support the argument that digital technologies contribute to improving students' communication skills. Their study found that Thai high school students preferred using culturally integrated films, social media and mobile apps to improve their English.

In addition, digital technologies play a vital role in CLT in terms of access to authentic materials, interactive language learning platforms and communication tools that are aimed at transforming students into confident communicators in the target language. These technologies facilitate the use of communication tools, such as texting and email, for speaking and writing English. Developing critical thinking skills is essential if students are to communicate effectively (Van Laar et al., 2020). Digital technologies offer avenues for deep

thinking, including critical thinking and reflection (Blundell et al., 2020). This enables students to learn the target language and acquire the ability to conduct research and assimilate knowledge effectively (Yudha & Mandasari, 2021). These technologies can also alter how students recall and retain information they were exposed to in the classroom, including resources such as slide presentations, graphic organisers, e-book creations, video presentations, whiteboard apps and podcasts. The use of digital technologies has enhanced the efficacy of collaborative learning, which is a central aspect of CLT classrooms.

Kearney et al. (2020) report that Irish high school students found their smartphones valuable for discussing task-related challenges and solutions with their peers and expressing their perspectives. In addition to using English in the classroom, students in the study had opportunities to access course updates via platforms such as Facebook. These students were able to use English both inside and outside the classroom. Similarly, Metruk (2021) examined Slovak EFL students' attitudes to an English language learning app called ELLA. Metruk emphasises the need for EFL teachers to expand their understanding of smartphone applications for language learning. These studies highlight the important role of technology in supporting CLT.

In a similar vein, Abu-Ayfah (2020) conducted a study assessing the use of Telegram, a chat application, for English language learning by EFL college students in Saudi Arabia. The study found high engagement, with 82% of students using Telegram three to four times weekly and 65% using it for English language learning purposes. Remarkably, 66% of the students used Telegram for vocabulary study, with many reporting vocabulary acquisition through the app. Shirinbakhsh and Saeidi (2018) also found Telegram beneficial for practising reading comprehension. In their study, over 170 Saudi EFL students reported Telegram being an appropriate tool for developing speaking and listening skills (57.6%), learning grammar (67%) and learning English writing (56.7%). These two studies both emphasise the significant

role of digital tools such as Telegram and social media in developing language skills, which aligns with the primary focus of CLT.

Kalra (2017) also reports that third-year undergraduate students in Thailand found movies to be an effective medium for learning real-world English language and culture, which stimulated their enthusiasm for the real-world application of language skills. Similarly, Chaya and Inpin (2020) found that Thai university students preferred English language movies for improving their speaking and listening skills and thereby enhancing their communication and confidence. While these studies showcase the benefits of authentic language materials to support CLT, the specific digital technologies used by English major students at Cambodian universities who are learning EFL and the benefits derived from the technologies remain underexplored, which necessitates further research.

Alongside ICT, CPD is crucial for the successful implementation of CLT. Teachers need ongoing professional enrichment to enhance their CLT competencies (Guskey, 2002; Wijesundara & Jayamanne, 2021). Structured CPD, as suggested by Ji et al. (2022) and Kumar et al. (2022), can quickly cultivate a conducive learning environment. Harmer (2001) and Ur (2003) stress the need for formal CPD to involve in-service programs to support practical CLT application at higher education institutions (Cirocki & Widodo, 2019; Spilker et al., 2020). Such a program could be valuable, because it would enable teachers to apply what they have learned in the classroom while they remain adaptable to changes in the teaching process (Haug & Mork, 2021; Kidd & Murray, 2020).

Workshops and CPD sessions are indeed pivotal for teachers to develop and acquire the necessary skills and stay abreast of current aspects of the CLT approach (Joyce & Showers, 2003). These workshops often include diverse facilitators from various fields and provide comprehensive professional support (Albrahim, 2020; O'Leary et al., 2020). Peer cooperation in CPD programs is beneficial, as it enables teachers to learn from colleagues

who have more CLT implementation experience (Athawadi, 2019; Carnando & Nurlaily, 2020; Hobbs & Coiro, 2019; Philipsen et al., 2019). Furthermore, leveraging the expertise of teachers who assume leadership roles in CPD and adopting the 'Each One, Teach One' approach enrich the learning experience further (Phin, 2014).

The advent of digital technology in CPD has emerged as a transformative opportunity, by offering teachers access to up-to-date resources and collaborative platforms (Al-hawamdeh & Alam, 2022; Al-khresheh, 2022; Vadivel et al., 2021). In the Cambodian higher education context, integrating digital technology into CPD programs is crucial, because applying digital tools and platforms can empower teachers to access cutting-edge pedagogical resources. As the Cambodian higher education sector seeks to enhance the quality of instruction and meet the challenges of the 21st century, integrating digital technology into CPD becomes imperative.

The professional growth of teachers—a cornerstone for implementing a renewed curriculum—can also be significantly enhanced through CPD (Astuti & Lammers, 2017; Caena & Redecker, 2019). Collaborative CPD programs are designed to improve students' overall language learning performance and serve as a measure for evaluating teachers' professional progress. Despite advances proposed for CPD, how EFL teachers in Cambodian higher education access CPD, particularly regarding digital technologies, is not fully understood (Doeur, 2022b; Karamifar et al., 2019). It is imperative to establish clear guidelines to ensure that Cambodian university EFL teachers can engage effectively with and benefit from CPD opportunities.

2.4 The role of curriculum in communicative language teaching

The curriculum plays a crucial role in the education landscape and reflects the dynamic nature of contemporary pedagogical developments in education settings (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003). It offers a framework to guide teachers to stay up-to-date with emerging

strategies that meet the evolving needs of students, particularly to enhance communicative competence (Engelbrecht et al., 2020; Erstad & Voogt, 2018). By incorporating CLT principles, the curriculum ensures that students acquire the necessary competencies and become proficient communicators in real-world contexts (Drake & Reid, 2018).

In an era where digital literacy is essential, curricula require updates and revisions to embed digital technologies, which resonates with CLT tenets that advocate for authentic, interactive learning experiences (Lomicka & Lord, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2014). This integration supports the emphasis of a communicative approach on real-life language use, which fosters students' ability to navigate digital platforms as part of their language learning journey.

Furthermore, the curriculum plays a crucial role in shaping how content is delivered, by aligning with CLT objectives to balance teacher-led instruction and student autonomy. This balance sets a trajectory that neither overestimates nor underestimates students' abilities, which is crucial in a CLT approach, where students' active participation is vital (Hrivnak, 2019; Young, 2014). Because CLT prioritises student interaction and negotiation of meaning, the curriculum must crucially offer students access to challenging academic opportunities that enable them to refine their language skills across multiple domains.

Through its critical components, such as goals, methodologies, materials and assessment, the curriculum is a cornerstone of the effective implementation of CLT (Bahadir & Tuncer, 2020). It provides a comprehensive guide for teachers to implement CLT effectively, assess students' communicative competence and monitor their progress within a defined timeframe (Ydo, 2021). Moreover, it provides teachers with strategies for analysing and evaluating their students' development, to ensure consistency and quality in communicative language instruction (Khasawneh, 2022).

The curriculum is indispensable for teachers to administer CLT with precision and relevance. It outlines the education objectives and the means to achieve them and ensures equitable access to quality communicative language education. For Cambodian university EFL teachers, a curriculum enriched with CLT components can serve as the roadmap to cultivating proficient and confident English communicators, thereby aligning with global communication demands. Therefore, examining how CLT is integrated into the Cambodian EFL curriculum and establishing clear guidelines for its implementation is imperative for advancing English language education in Cambodia.

2.5 Teachers' beliefs and practices in communicative language teaching

Teachers' beliefs and their effect on instructional practices have garnered significant attention in language education (Borg, 2003; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019). This section reviews studies that shed light on teachers' beliefs and their alignment with CLT principles in different education contexts. Borg (2003) found that teachers' beliefs are influenced by various factors, including past experiences, cultural values, attitudes and emotions, which manifest through their actions and expressed attitudes. Researchers such as Adam et al. (2017), Mayer (2019) and Van Prooijen (2017) focused on the role of cognition in shaping these beliefs and their decision-making processes. By examining how cognitive processes, such as attention, memory and problem-solving, interact with teachers' beliefs, we can deepen our understanding of how these beliefs form and influence classroom practices. This approach has proven particularly effective in EFL teaching contexts. Previous studies in this area explored the complex interplay between teachers' beliefs, behaviours and attitudes. This study builds upon previous findings, by expanding the investigation into the relationships between EFL teaching and CLT implementation in Cambodian higher education.

Previous studies have found that school culture, teaching experience and access to additional materials significantly affect teachers' beliefs and practices. For instance, K. Sato

and Kleinsasser (2004) discovered that the culture of a school had a substantial effect on the beliefs, practices and relationships of teaching staff, as evidenced by qualitative interviews, observations and document analysis at a Japanese private school. Nishino (2008) used a questionnaire to collect responses from 30 English teachers at a Tokyo-based high school and found that a shift in education context was needed if CLT was to be used effectively. Later, Humphries and Burns (2015) found that, for four Japanese teachers, teaching experience influenced classroom tactics more significantly than the teachers' initial training. Furthermore, despite having new textbooks that supported CLT, most of their lessons were devoted to presenting Japanese grammatical structures.

Mustapha and Yahaya (2013) undertook a comprehensive case study that involved four EFL teachers at community colleges in Malaysia and used classroom observations of and structured interviews with both teachers and students. Their study underscores the paramount significance of several key factors for effectively implementing CLT in ELT contexts. Specifically, teachers' deep understanding of and attitudes towards CLT, in conjunction with their choice of instructional techniques and strategies, emerged as pivotal determinants of the successful application of CLT principles. While these findings offer valuable insights into the pivotal factors that influence the effective implementation of CLT, examining their applicability in the unique context of Cambodian EFL higher education is imperative.

The discrepancy between teachers' stated beliefs and their actual classroom behaviour has been documented by several studies. For example, Hos and Kekec (2014) used openended questionnaires and found contradictions between the ideas and behaviours of 110 teachers in Turkey. Such mismatches are common, because CLT requires students to modify their work continually. Anani Sarab et al. (2016) also discovered that teachers' attitudes and behaviours in Iran aligned with CLT principles concerning teacher responsibilities, language competency and teaching and learning goals. However, a lack of supplementary materials hindered their

adoption of CLT. Through a survey and classroom observations, Jamalzadeh and Shahsavar (2015) found correspondence between teachers' opinions and their actual use of CLT in the classroom. These findings underscore the complexity of aligning teacher beliefs with classroom practices in CLT. Consequently, it is essential to explore how these dynamics manifest in Cambodian higher education, to inform targeted improvements in language teaching methodologies.

The importance of examining teachers' attitudes, behaviours and cognitive processes to improve our understanding of instructional strategies and classroom activities is highlighted by M. M. Rahman et al. (2018), who conducted a case study of two ESL teachers at language schools in Bangladesh using qualitative semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and post-observation discussions. They noticed that the teachers' practices and claimed views were misaligned regarding error correction and the use of the local language. M. Sato and Oyanedel (2019) investigated grammatical belief conflict using a mixed methods approach that surveyed 498 Chilean secondary school teachers. They found that teachers supported traditional grammar instruction, even when they were teaching CLT classes.

These studies illuminate the significance of investigating teachers' beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and cognitive processes to improve our understanding instructional strategies and classroom activities. They underscore the need for a nuanced investigation in the Cambodian higher education setting, to ensure the effective implementation of CLT and improve language teaching methodologies. Consequently, comprehensive research that is tailored to Cambodian higher education is essential for unravelling the intricate dynamics of teachers' beliefs and their effect on CLT practices, which would ultimately advance the quality of language education in this context and beyond.

2.6 Challenges facing the implementation of communicative language teaching

Because it is rooted in the belief that language learning is at its most effective when it emphasises communication and interaction, CLT has gained widespread attention and adoption worldwide (Byram & Wagner, 2018; Chun et al., 2016; Saito & Plonsky, 2019). However, despite its theoretical appeal and pedagogical advantages, the practical implementation of CLT in EFL contexts is often fraught with challenges. These challenges stem from a complex interplay of cultural, institutional, pedagogical and logistical considerations (Bower et al., 2015; Zhu et al., 2018). This section delves into the multifaceted challenges teachers face when they attempt to integrate CLT principles in EFL classrooms.

For instance, many studies pinpoint various challenges and obstacles in different regions. For example, Karim (2004) identified obstacles in Bangladesh, such as inadequate resources, large class sizes, insufficient administrative support and traditional testing practices. Rahimi and Naderi (2014) found that Iran's education system, which is built on closed examinations and a top-down curriculum, was a significant impediment. For Taiwan, S.-H. Huang (2016) highlights issues such as inadequately skilled teachers, the absence of CLT in training programs, students' low proficiency and low student motivation. In Vietnam, Hien and Loan (2018) identified challenges facing the application of communicative instruction, including inefficient classroom management and standardised written tests. While these studies provide valuable insights into the challenges faced in various EFL contexts, it is important to note that we lack knowledge of the unique obstacles in Cambodian EFL higher education.

Moreover, research has also documented the difficulties facing the implementation of CLT in countries such as Saudi Arabia, as Al Asmari (2015) and D. Li (1998) report for secondary school EFL teachers. Noori (2018) reports similar challenges in Afghanistan, where teachers lacked awareness and exposure to CLT. Some teachers had never used CLT

before and mistakenly believed it did not include grammar teaching but focused only on speaking skills. The limitations of CLT across EFL settings in which students have limited practical exposure to English outside university courses, are also noted (Sahan et al., 2022; Wu, 2019). While these studies shed light on the challenges faced in Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Afghanistan, it is crucial to consider that the context of Cambodian EFL higher education may present unique difficulties.

Culture is another impediment to the implementation of CLT. Established in Western cultures such as CLT to improve students' English communication skills, local cultures or traditional classroom practices can hamper the successful application of CLT (Hoff, 2020; Zidny et al., 2020). In Cambodia, CLT is employed in lessons for students with English as a major and incorporates digital technology to facilitate foreign language learning. According to Nhem (2019), students and teachers have particular views about CLT, including views on the roles of students, error correction, grammar, teachers, the use of the native language and group work. Pair and group work are frequently used in the education context, during which students are required to discuss specific themes with one another in the target language, thereby applying CLT methods.

Furthermore, Heng (2014) reviewed studies on the challenges of implementing CLT in EFL settings. Challenges that were identified include broad factors related to teachers, students, the education system, methodologies and cultural aspects. In relation to teachers and students, these challenges include being unable to speak English, insufficient training in CLT, misconceptions about CLT, inadequate time and skills for designing communicative materials, low English proficiency and low motivation of students. Challenges associated with the education system include large class sizes, a shortage of resources and equipment, a lack of institutional support and the influence of traditional practice. Methodological aspects, such as unclear teaching guidelines, inappropriate assessment tools and uncertainty regarding

assessing students' communicative skills, were significant obstacles for EFL teachers attempting to introduce CLT. Cultural influences, combined with teacher quality, student engagement, class sizes, a lack of instructional materials and grammar-based assessment pressure, intensified the challenges faced by teachers.

While communicative activities in CLT are widely acknowledged for their benefits, their practical application, particularly in EFL contexts, faces significant challenges. M. Chang and Goswami (2011) highlighted several factors, including the size and setup of classrooms, noise levels, unreported and uncorrected mistakes and the dominance of certain students during group activities. Cheng's (1980) study found that, in a classroom of 48 students, the immobility of wooden furniture posed difficulties for group work, despite the proven success of this activity. Furthermore, the scarcity of teaching resources complicated the situation. Teachers often rely on group work and require access to suitable materials (Al Asmari, 2015; Anani Sarab et al., 2016; M. Chang & Goswami, 2011). Consequently, there could be a need for additional teacher training to ensure the effective utilisation of available materials (Akbari & Razavi, 2016). The literature on foreign language instruction offers a range of activity suggestions that are customisable for EFL classes, especially considering the abundance of authentic materials that can be leveraged in the classroom (Richards, 2005).

Historically, EFL teaching in Cambodia can be traced back to the 1970s, when the national government decided to enhance the English language skills of its citizens (S. Clayton, 2008; T. Clayton, 1998; Neau, 2003). EFL teaching transitioned from traditional teaching methods, which relied significantly on using English guidebooks for instruction, to CLT, as mandated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS, 2005). Unlike traditional methods, which are characterised by a reliance on linguistic structures or norms, CLT focuses on developing students' communicative abilities to communicate effectively in the target language (S. Clayton, 2008; Nhem, 2019).

Despite the official endorsement of CLT, its practical application in Cambodian higher education has not been explored extensively, particularly not outside major urban centres such as Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. Studies do not capture the complete picture of CLT adoption and effectiveness, particularly in the context of English major courses at provincial higher education institutions. This gap in research is what the current study sought to address (Doeur, 2022a; Heng, 2014; Nhem, 2019; Sreng, 2013; Sun, 2014).

Cambodian teachers report success with CLT in EFL classrooms, particularly for fostering students' communicative competencies. Teachers considered students' communication skills crucial in CLT and the teachers have enabled more students to learn and communicate in English with CLT than with other methods (Kustati, 2013). Teachers believe that CLT enables students to continually enhance their proficiency in English (Heng, 2014). However, CLT adoption has faced several challenges, particularly at Cambodian university EFL departments (Nhem, 2019). Traditional teaching methods still dominate EFL face to face education, even in CLT practice. The extent to which CLT is used is influenced by various factors, such as technology, curricula and whether the education context is test-oriented, as well as by students' classroom participation and interactions with technology integration.

Consistent with the principles and characteristics of CLT, effective language instruction involves imparting knowledge and facilitating learning. Imparting knowledge involves teachers teaching English vocabulary and sentence structures and demonstrating how to use them in real-life communication. Doeur (2022a) conducted an online quantitative survey with more than 300 Cambodian university EFL teachers to investigate their attitudes towards CLT. The study reveals a positive attitude towards CLT and a correlation with its use in their lessons. However, continuous training for teachers is essential for teachers to fully grasp and implement CLT principles effectively. Doeur (2022a) also identified a range of technical and policy-based obstacles that hinder the implementation of CLT, thereby echoing

Heng's (2014) identification of challenges related to teacher and student factors, the educational system, methodology and cultural variables.

Besides the recognised effectiveness of CLT in EFL instruction, implementing this approach in Cambodia has faced various hurdles, including inadequate classroom resources, insufficient classroom space, noise management issues and the potential for class dominance by certain students (Heng, 2014; Nhem, 2019; Sreng, 2013). These obstacles make it challenging for teachers to manage their classroom interactions effectively. For example, CLT requires significantly more space than traditional classrooms, so that students can engage in role playing and other communicative activities. Addressing these obstacles necessitates creative strategies, to foster an environment conducive learning, especially considering the limited research on the effect of these obstacles on English major programs in Cambodian higher education institutions.

2.7 Students' perspectives on English language learning

Understanding students' perspectives on English language learning is an essential aspect of language education research because it could offer valuable insights into the dynamics of the language learning process. Recognising students' perceptions and experiences of EFL learning is crucial for teachers, curriculum designers and policymakers who are seeking to enhance the effectiveness of language education programs. Recently, there has been a shift to valuing students' perspectives and adapting student-centred approaches, which has resulted in instructional techniques that align with students' perspectives on and attitudes towards teaching praxis (Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010), which was a focal point of this study.

Several studies investigated students' beliefs, perceptions and attitudes towards CLT. Abdullah and Shah (2016), for example, investigated beliefs, perceptions and attitudes concerning CLT held by secondary school students in Malaysia. They found that, while

students assigned a high value to CLT, they also required significant grammar development to succeed in national examinations. Gamble et al. (2013) surveyed university students at a private Japanese university and found that they held exceptionally positive attitudes towards CLT, particularly regarding classroom activities. However, while these studies shed light on students' positive attitudes towards CLT, it is essential to consider the broader implications of these perceptions for the effectiveness of CLT in diverse education contexts.

Chen et al. (2019) surveyed Taiwanese FEL university students to investigate their views on vocabulary learning applications with and without game-related functions. The group that used the gamified application significantly outperformed the other group in vocabulary retention, indicating that engagement and interactivity enhance learning outcomes. These applications also enabled teachers to direct language learning more dramatically than with traditional teaching approaches. While this study underscores the significant effect of gamified mobile learning applications, it also highlights the importance of considering the design and usability factors of such applications.

Ho's (2020) study examined the effectiveness of CLT in enhancing Taiwanese FEL students' communicative skills in an English for Tourism course. The findings demonstrate that CLT is a powerful tool for promoting English language learning, self-confidence and communication proficiency. This study provides valuable insights into the practical application of CLT in language teaching and offers pedagogical recommendations for language teachers to improve language learning outcomes.

In a similar vein, Rezalou and Yagiz (2021) found that Turkish EFL students had positive attitudes towards the communicative activities of CLT, the students attributed improvements to their speaking competence, self-confidence, classroom engagement and interaction with peers. The study highlights the importance of using communicative activities to encourage purposeful communication in language classrooms and suggests that language

teachers should consider incorporating these activities to improve students' attitudes towards using CLT. The findings of these studies underscore the significance of implementing communicative activities in language classrooms and offer valuable pedagogical insights for teachers who aim to enhance students' language learning outcomes and attitudes towards CLT.

İnceçay and İnceçay (2009) earlier conducted a survey and an interview-based study with 30 Turkish university students enrolled in EFL classes. The study evaluated the effectiveness and suitability of communicative and non-communicative activities in EFL classes. The findings highlight the need for EFL teachers to modernise and update their teaching methods. The study also found that grammar-focused examinations significantly hampered students' interest in communicative activities. This study underscores the importance of aligning teaching methods with contemporary approaches such CLT, which necessitates a shift in pedagogical practices to promote active participation and interaction among students in EFL classes.

Meanwhile, Alharbi (2021) investigated the influence of CLT on the communicative skills of female university students in Saudi Arabia. The findings reveal that almost all participants had a favourable view of CLT implementation. However, their inability to express themselves freely in English was indicated as a key hindrance. The study also points out that inadequate English proficiency and lack of motivation of language students were significant barriers to language learning. However, in spite of the positive view on CLT of female Saudi university students reported by Alharbi, it is essential to recognise that these positive perceptions might not uniformly reflect the views of the broader EFL student population, as individual contexts and experiences can vary significantly.

Komol and Suwanphathama (2020) conducted a survey-based study to investigate the perspectives and attitudes of 82 fourth-year students regarding CLT learning in an 'English in

Media' course in Thailand. The study found that students considered CLT classroom activities valuable for enhancing in-class learning and self-study; increased confidence and listening and speaking skills are reported. The study indicates, furthermore, that teachers played a crucial role in modelling practical classroom activities to improve learning environments. The authors suggest that universities could serve as training institutions to ensure that students can communicate fluently in English. However, it is essential to acknowledge that, while Komol and Suwanphathama's study emphasises the positive effect of CLT activities on students' confidence and language skills, individual student preferences and experiences may vary. Furthermore, the effectiveness of CLT may be influenced by various contextual factors.

Ngoc and Iwashita (2012) evaluated teachers' and students' perspectives on four CLT--related characteristics of Vietnamese universities. The study involved 37 EFL teachers and 88 pre-intermediate to intermediate EFL students. The results demonstrate that both groups held favourable opinions of CLT, with teachers expressing more positive attitudes regarding the significance of grammar, error correction and the traditional role of the language teacher as a knowledge transmitter. The study advocates for the need to redefine CLT to make it socially and culturally responsive to the Vietnamese environment and consideration of teachers' and students' perspectives. It emphasises that teachers should listen to their students, adapt their teaching practices to meet their needs and share their thoughts and perceptions about language learning. Nonetheless, it is essential to note that the study by Ngoc and Iwashita focused on the specific cultural context of Vietnam and its findings may not be widely applicable to all EFL contexts, which suggests that the application of CLT should be examined with local contexts and diverse perspectives in mind.

Overall, the above studies investigated the effectiveness of CLT for enhancing English language learning and report it having a positive influence on student confidence,

communication proficiency and classroom engagement in various countries. Despite the general success of CLT, several barriers, such as grammar-focused examinations, inadequate English proficiency, lack of motivation and traditional teaching practices, were identified. These insights highlight the need to adapt CLT and to tailor it to the cultural and social contexts of the students and, furthermore, underscore the need for language teachers to receive guidance in integrating digital technologies. Further study is required to effectively implement the CLT approach in EFL higher education and to ensure that pedagogical practices are enhanced to align with the demands and needs of contemporary education landscapes.

2.8 Teacher cognition and sociocultural theory

Merging teacher cognition with sociocultural theory provides a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of language teaching and learning, especially in the framework of utilising CLT. Cognition theory—an essential area of cognitive psychology—explores the mental processes that inform teachers' instructional strategies and practices. This discipline focuses on how individuals acquire, process and use information and offers crucial insights into teachers' conceptualisation of student learning and engagement in EFL settings (Kirschner et al., 2006; Lachman et al., 2015). Thus, cognition theory is instrumental for investigating EFL approaches such as CLT and supporting students to achieve their language learning goals.

Investigating teacher cognition is crucial for understanding teachers' internal thought processes, attitudes and beliefs, as these elements play an essential role in shaping their instructional strategies and practices. According to Borg's (2003) review of related studies, teacher cognition has a significant effect on their actions and influence what and how teachers teach in the classroom. This view is supported by research by Birello (2012), Buehl and Beck (2015) and Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017). Hence, understanding teacher cognition processes is

an essential component of designing effective education strategies and promoting positive learning outcomes, which are needed for CLT. While acknowledging that teacher cognition is necessary for effective teaching, it is not the only factor that influences positive learning outcomes in CLT. Other factors, including curriculum design, classroom resources and student engagement, also play significant roles in determining the effectiveness of CLT.

In applying cognition theory, initiating the learning process by encouraging students to actively identify problems, no matter how vague or complex the problems are, can be a powerful starting point. The role of the teacher is central in this approach; teachers play a key role in helping students navigate through real-world challenges and facilitating critical thinking and practical communication skills (W. Wei & Yanmei, 2018). By encouraging students to identify and tackle problems, teachers apply CLT principles that foster active engagement, critical thinking and effective communication. Such an educational endeavour requires teachers to possess a high level of cognitive ability and a deep understanding of the intricacies of the target language, including of the challenges students face while trying to acquire competency. In this context, the teacher's role is crucial, because the teacher guides students through authentic challenges and, consequently, the teacher role demands significant cognitive ability, a profound grasp of the target language and the difficulties students encounter during their language learning journey.

The cognition theory posits that a teacher's experiences as a language learner and subsequent classroom encounters play a pivotal role in shaping the cognitive foundation of their teaching approach. Their accumulated knowledge, along with their attitudes and beliefs, inform their instructional methods and highlight the cognitive tools that enable self-reflection and articulation of their pedagogical convictions and insights (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). CLT requires high cognitive engagement from both teachers and students and serves as a lens through which human behaviour can be examined and knowledge constructed. Achieving

success in CLT hinges on the application of cognition theory, particularly its emphasis on utilising personal and instructional experiences to develop a teacher's cognitive abilities. However, identifying and measuring a teacher's cognitive framework, especially that of Cambodian university EFL teachers, remains an ongoing area of research and are informed by the principles of cognition theory.

Conversely, sociocultural theory explores the profound effect of cultural beliefs, attitudes and practices on individual learning and educational experiences. It suggests that learning is an inherently social activity that arises from interactions with others and which is deeply embedded in specific social, cultural and historical contexts (Bonk & Cunningham, 2012; John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Vygotsky, 1987). This theory aligns with the tenets of CLT, which emphasises the importance of social interaction and language in the learning process. It encourages teachers to tailor their instruction to each student's knowledge level, to expand beyond their development level and foster growth and more extraordinary education achievement through carefully structured instruction. Teachers are encouraged to employ various strategies to facilitate language development, including providing hints, offering prompts and giving direct instructions (Aljaafre & Lantolf, 1994; Shabani et al., 2010). When students encounter challenges in learning a foreign language, the teacher must provide essential clues and scaffolding. This assistance should include providing specific prompts and guidance that enables students to comprehend the material and to progress towards achieving the lesson's goal (McLeod, 2008).

Sociocultural theory, furthermore, underscores the social nature of learning by positing that understanding language use in social contexts and interaction is essential. This perspective aligns with the core tenets of CLT, which prioritises integrating students' social environments into the learning process (L. Wei et al., 2018). CLT encourages active verbal engagement between students and teachers and aims to enhance communication abilities of

students. The theory, furthermore, posits that, to understand particular behaviours, one must consider the social context in which they manifest (Lantolf, 2000). Importantly, CLT includes more than the school environment; it extends to the broader social context wherein students interact and live. The community environment plays a pivotal role in language learning and influences students' proficiency in learning new languages (Kormos & Csizer, 2008; Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011). As a result, participation in social interactions is essential for cognitive advancement and development.

In addition, the sociocultural theory primarily emphasises the influence of an individual's immediate environment, rather than focusing solely on the individual. Linguistic theorists, including Bucholtz (1999), Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) and Kramsch (2014), place greater emphasis on the collective cognitive activities within social communities, thereby marking a shift from the traditional focus on isolated individual cognition. This theoretical pivot highlights the complexity of assessing the efficacy of the sociocultural framework in diverse classroom settings, mainly when students hail from varied social backgrounds. However, as students engage with each other over time, they tend to form cohesive social groups, which can, in turn, affect the cognitive process. In this context, the social interactions between students and teachers during the language learning process are deemed crucial, as they can significantly shape cognitive development (Antón, 1999; G. Ellis, 1996; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). This perspective positions learning as an outcome of collaborative activities and advocates for a pedagogical shift towards more interactive and community-oriented learning environments (Bennett et al., 2005; R. Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Nicol, 2010).

Integrating teacher cognition with sociocultural theory in the context of CLT, therefore, offers a comprehensive understanding of the teaching and learning process. While cognitive theory provides insights into the individual mental processes of teachers,

sociocultural theory adds the dimension of social and cultural influences on learning. This synergy suggests that learning is deeply influenced by cultural practices and social interaction, thereby emphasising the importance of language development through which learners can, with guidance, extend their capabilities. This aligns with the CLT approach, which prioritises social engagement and the role of language in cognitive development. However, applying these integrated principles in higher education, particularly regarding the influence of cultural beliefs on learning and the integration of such insights into teaching strategies, requires further investigation.

2.9 Theoretical framework

Effective communication is essential for students to learn a second/foreign language (Coyle, 2006; Richards, 2005). The principles and characteristics of CLT emphasise that authentic social interactions are fundamental to language acquisition (Illenberger et al., 2013). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory also supports this view by highlighting the role of social interactions in cognitive development and learning (Coyle, 2006; Ewing & Cooper, 2021; Herodotou, 2018; Illenberger et al., 2013; Richards, 2005; Shabani et al., 2010; Taber, 2020). Bates (2019) states that, 'Knowledge and interactions are created through social contacts with family, friends, teachers and classmates' (p. 19); however, in EFL contexts, such as Cambodia, opportunities for using the target language beyond the classroom are limited. Therefore, research is needed to examine how CLT can be implemented effectively in these contexts, particularly research that explores cultural tendencies towards silence and its effect on language learning and classroom participation (King, 2020; Liu et al., 2021; Nhem, 2019). This exploration is crucial for tailoring CLT strategies that can overcome cultural barriers and foster a more communicative and engaging learning environment.

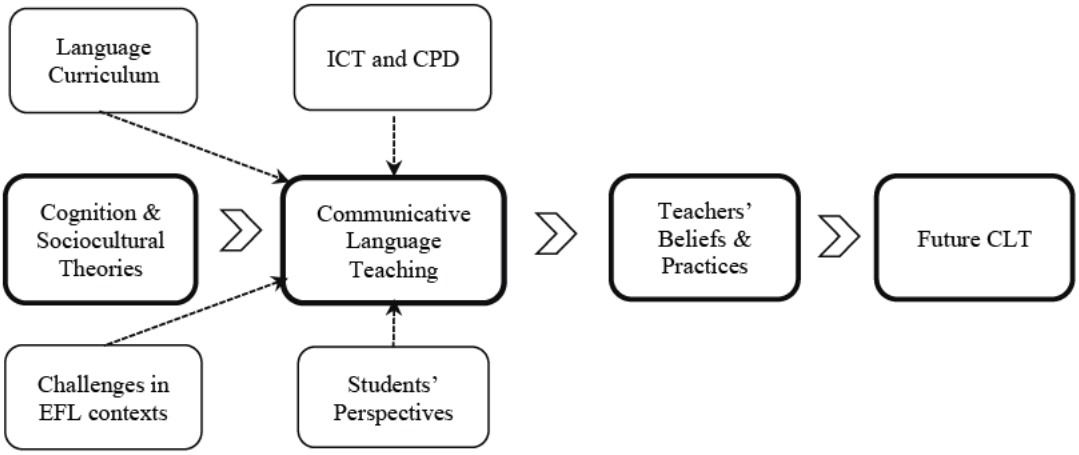
Teachers' beliefs, which are deeply rooted in their experiences and education backgrounds, play a significant role in shaping their instructional methods (Borg, 2003;

K. Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004). In Cambodian higher education contexts, where teachers typically enjoy a high degree of freedom regarding lesson planning and teaching methods and rarely undergo formal performance evaluations, such beliefs can pose notable challenges to the effective implementation of CLT (Doeur, 2022a; Noori, 2018). This literature review identified various challenges EFL teachers encounter in attempting to integrate CLT, particularly in the Cambodian context. It also looked into strategies to overcome these challenges.

The theoretical framework presented in Figure 2.1 serves as the foundation for this study. The framework conceptualises teachers' beliefs about CLT, based on cognition theory and teachers' implementation of CLT. Moreover, it postulates that sociocultural drivers of CLT affect teachers' and students' beliefs on teaching and learning processes and shapes teachers' teaching strategies and the extent to which they integrate CLT components. Addressing the challenges confronting fostering effective communication in English in Cambodia, this study examined various dimensions, including teachers' understanding of CLT, their access to professional development, cultural influences, teaching resource allocations, curriculum design, traditional national examination systems and policy guidelines. Additionally, it considered students' perspectives on classroom practices, curriculum efficacy and the potential role of ICT and teachers' CPD in language learning. This investigation aims to enrich the scholarly understanding of language instruction quality of the EFL programs in Cambodian higher education.

Figure 2.1

Theoretical Framework



2.10 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of CLT by delineating its principles and characteristics and emphasising the importance of communicative activities and the development of communicative competence. The chapter has also explored beliefs about the roles of teachers and their students in CLT and the effect of cognition and sociocultural theories on teaching and learning. It examined students' perspectives and the role of digital technology on effective English language learning. Furthermore, it explored the challenges associated with the deployment of CLT in the Cambodian EFL context. The significance of CPD, digital technology and the role of an instructional ELT syllabus were also discussed. Finally, the chapter presented the theoretical framework of the study, which illustrates the various factors that influence the adoption and application of CLT and teachers' beliefs and practices related to this pedagogical approach. Building upon this literature review chapter, Chapter 3 presents the methodology employed in the study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter presents detailed information about the methodology used in the study. The chapter begins by describing the overall research design and then offers a detailed account of the participants, including the strategies used to recruit them and their background and demographic information. Then, it presents the data collection instruments used in the study, including two distinct questionnaires, online interview questions and relevant curriculum and policy documents. It also describes the data analysis procedures, ethics approval process and the protocols that were established to ensure the validity and reliability of the research process.

3.2 Research design

The study employed a concurrent nested mixed methods design (Creswell et al., 2003), which involved several methods that are detailed in this chapter. The design allowed for the triangulation of data and enabled the simultaneous comparison and contrast of data derived from various sources, namely, surveys, interviews and documents. The researcher engaged in cross-validation of the results to identify patterns in the data. By using a mixed methods approach, the researcher sought to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, to reinforce results. The study aimed to gather pertinent information about CLT implementation from stakeholders' perspectives, specifically EFL university teachers, vice deans of English faculties and English major students at selected provincial universities (Universities A, B, C and D), which were anonymised to maintain confidentiality. Quantitative data were collected from two distinct questionnaires, one completed by teachers and vice deans of the English faculties (i.e. teacher questionnaire) and the other by English major students (i.e. student questionnaire). The faculty staff, including vice deans, provided insights about their understanding of CLT and its application. The students evaluated the effectiveness of existing

English curricula for preparing students for careers as EFL teachers and proficient English language communicators.

Qualitative data were collected with semi-structured online interviews that featured open-ended questions that enabled the researcher to ask further questions when necessary. These interviews were conducted with university teachers and vice deans from the selected universities.

3.3 Participants

3.3.1 Sampling

The study used a non-probability sampling method, specifically convenience and purposive sampling, to collect the necessary data (Campbell et al., 2020; Suri, 2011). This sampling technique was used to develop an early understanding of a relatively small and under-researched population of EFL teachers at four higher education institutions in provincial Cambodia (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012).

Participants were Cambodian university EFL teachers, vice deans and English major students, who were recruited in three stages. The first stage involved inviting the entire population of EFL teachers and certain vice deans of English departments at the selected provincial universities to complete an online survey. This phase encountered the challenge of COVID-19 restrictions, which limited physical classroom sessions, thereby reducing access to teachers who could complete the survey. Therefore, only those who were actively teaching the remaining lessons participated—approximately 70% of the usual number.

In the second stage, EFL teachers who had completed the survey and consented to further engagement were selected for semi-structured interviews. Purposeful sampling, a non-probability sampling method that does not use randomisation to choose a sample, was employed to ensure a representative sample was selected for the study. This sampling method

aimed to corroborate the survey results and gather specific insights related to CLT, including participants' qualifications and university teaching experience.

In this second stage, the study selected only teachers who met specific academic university requirements, such as holding the degrees Bachelor of Education (BEd) or Bachelor of Arts (BA) in TESOL or TEFL, or a Master's degree in a relevant field; they also had to have a minimum of three years of teaching experience in a university English major program. EFL teachers who did not meet these criteria were excluded. Vice deans were included to explore their perspectives on CLT from their own experiences with CLT implementation and the support and professional development they offered to teachers. These vice deans played a crucial role in teacher recruitment and support.

In the first and second stages, underrepresented female teachers was indeed a significant consideration. The primary reason for this imbalance was the actual demographic composition of the teaching staff in the selected institutions. During the sampling process, the researcher aimed to invite all EFL teachers in the English departments of the provincial universities to participate. However, the reality was that the majority of the teaching staff at these institutions were male. Consequently, despite efforts to ensure a diverse and representative sample, only one female teacher participated. This reflects the existing gender distribution within the academic environment rather than a selective or biased sampling approach.

The final stage involved selecting English major students with at least two years of experience in an English major program. Convenience sampling was used to select students who were easily accessible and who could complete a separate online survey. The survey focused on their responses to English language instruction and learning at their respective universities. They were asked to rate their satisfaction with the existing curricula and their relevance for preparing EFL teachers for classroom implementation of CLT. This approach

was chosen for its simplicity and efficiency, because the study did not require a representative sample.

EFL students in Cambodia navigate a distinctive set of challenges and opportunities in their English language learning experience. Their journey is influenced by a combination of traditional teaching methods and more modern, interactive approaches such as CLT. While many students appreciate the practical application of English that CLT offers, they often face obstacles like limited resources, large class sizes, and varying levels of English proficiency. Moreover, the strong emphasis on grammar and exam preparation within the Cambodian education system can sometimes overshadow the communicative aspects of language learning, leading to feelings of inadequacy in real-life communication situations. Despite these challenges, Cambodian EFL students remain highly motivated, viewing English proficiency as a critical pathway to enhanced job prospects and a promising future. Their persistence, coupled with growing access to digital tools and resources, continues to shape and enrich their experience of learning English in Cambodia.

3.3.2 Participants for the questionnaire

The first group of participants comprised Cambodian university EFL teachers and vice deans who participated in the survey. Table 3.1 provides the demographic information and teaching experience of the participants from the selected provincial universities in Cambodia. The majority were male (90%), with the most common age range being 30 to 49 years (89%). A significant proportion of the teachers (70%) possessed 6 to 15 years of teaching or instructional experience. The most frequently taught courses included Core English (80%), Writing (60%) and English for Specific Purposes (47.5%). Other courses taught included Speaking, Reading, Listening, Cultural Studies, Literature and Others.

Table 3.1

*Profiles of Teachers and Vice Deans in the Survey (*N = *40)*

Items	Category	*n*	%
Gender	Male	36	90
	Female	4	10
Age groups	20–29 years	3	7.5
	30–39 years	19	47.5
	40–49 years	17	42.5
	50–59 years	1	2.5
Years of experience teaching English at the university	0–5 years	11	27.5
	6–10 years	15	37.5
	11–15 years	13	32.5
	16–20 years	1	2.5
Courses taught	Core English	32	80
	Writing	24	60
	English for Specific Purposes	19	47.5
	Speaking	16	40
	Reading	15	37.5
	Listening	15	37.5
	Cultural Studies	13	32.5
	Literature Studies	12	30
	Others*	13	32.5

Note. *Others < 12: Teaching Methodology (4), Foundation of Education (3), Applied Linguistics (2), English for Business (1), Translation (1), Curriculum Design (1), Other (1)

3.3.3 The interview participants

The second group of participants were involved in online interviews and were 15 Cambodian EFL teachers and three vice deans at different universities in provincial Cambodia. Table 3.2 presents information about the 18 participants who were interviewed, identified by pseudonyms to keep their names anonymous as required by the human research ethics approval given for the study, along with their genders, affiliated universities, job titles, teaching experience and geographical location. The list is given according to alphabetical order of the assigned pseudonyms.

Table 3.2

*Profiles of Teachers and Vice Deans in the Interviews (*N = *18)*

Pseudonym	Gender	University	Position	Teaching experience	Location
Bopha	Female	University A	Vice dean	10 years	Siem Reap
Bora	Male	University A	Teacher	18 years	Siem Reap
Borath	Male	University A	Teacher	17 years	Siem Reap
Borin	Male	University A	Teacher	3 years	Siem Reap
Borith	Male	University A	Teacher	10 years	Siem Reap
Chiva	Male	University C	Teacher	3 years	Banteay Meanchey
Chivith	Male	University C	Teacher	17 years	Banteay Meanchey
Chivorn	Male	University C	Teacher	12 years	Banteay Meanchey
Dara	Male	University B	Teacher	6 years	Siem Reap
Darong	Male	University B	Teacher	3 years	Siem Reap
Dina	Male	University B	Teacher	7 years	Siem Reap
Dorin	Male	University B	Teacher	4 years	Siem Reap
Dymang	Male	University B	Vice dean	13 years	Siem Reap
Khelly	Male	University D	Teacher	11 years	Banteay Meanchey
Khemera	Male	University D	Teacher	15 years	Banteay Meanchey
Khemerath	Male	University D	Teacher	13 years	Banteay Meanchey
Khemerin	Male	University D	Teacher	16 years	Banteay Meanchey
Khunna	Male	University D	Vice dean	12 years	Banteay Meanchey

To maintain anonymity, the participants were assigned pseudonyms in the Khmer language, which are used consistently in the presentation of the findings. Of all the participants interviewed, 10 were from Siem Reap province and eight were from Banteay Meanchey province. Two-thirds of them (12 out of 18) possessed over a decade of experience of teaching English at the university level, while the remaining one-third (6 out of 18) had less than 10 years of teaching experience. Because of the gender imbalance of the study participants and the limited number of female teachers instructing English major classes, gender-based differentiation or analysis was not pursued.

3.3.4 Student participants in the student survey

The third group of participants comprised 58 English major students who responded to the student questionnaire. Table 3.3 provides demographic characteristics of these participants. A significant proportion (55.2%) were aged 21–25 years; 55.2% were female.

Most participants (93.2%) were enrolled at private universities, while the remaining 6.9% attended the same public university. In terms of when they started learning English, the majority (56.9%) commenced when they were aged between 12 and 15 years, and most of them gained confidence in using English after entering university (65.5%).

Table 3.3

*Profiles of Participants in the Student Survey (*N = *58)*

Item	Category	*n*	%
Gender	Male	26	44.8
	Female	32	55.2
	Total	58	100
Age group	18–20 years	12	20.7
	21–25 years	32	55.2
	26–30 years	12	20.7
	31–35 years	2	3.4
University	University A (Private)	20	34.5
	University B (Private)	15	25.9
	University C (Private)	19	32.8
	University D (Public)	4	6.9
Age when started learning English at school	Between 7 and 11 years	8	13.8
	Between 12 and 15 years	33	56.9
	16 years and after	17	29.3
Age starting to use English	Between 6 and 11 years	1	1.7
	Between 12 and 17 years	24	41.4
	18 years and after	33	56.9
Age when confident about using English	In junior high school	11	19
	In senior high school	9	15.5
	After entering university	38	65.5

3.4 Data collection instruments

The primary data collection tools of this study were two versions of an online survey questionnaire (one tailored for the academic participants—university EFL teachers and vice deans—and another for students). The second instrument was an online interview with academic participants. The questionnaires were delivered through the online survey tool of

the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ). Interviews were scheduled flexibly to accommodate the availability of teachers and vice deans.

3.4.1 Questionnaires

Online questionnaires, detailed in Appendix A (for academic staff) and Appendix B (for students), were distributed to provincial Cambodian university EFL teachers, vice deans and English major students via email and social media platforms/channels. During the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional face-to-face classes were prohibited because of requirements for social distancing. Thus, the online survey format was the most effective way to collect data during this period (Mishra et al., 2020). Teachers and vice deans were asked to rate statements concerning characteristics and principles of CLT and indicate how they used CLT in the classroom. The student questionnaire elicited ratings on a series of statements about students' learning experiences and their aspirations for better English learning results.

3.4.2 Teacher questionnaire

The teacher questionnaire, which was completed by both EFL university teachers and vice deans (who also taught), was adapted from Karim (2004) and was used to collect data on participants' understanding of CLT at provincial universities in Cambodia. The questionnaire contained 15 questions—three open-ended and 12 multiple-choice questions—and was divided into eight sections (see Appendix A).

Section A contained four questions regarding the participants' demographic details, including age group, gender, years of teaching experience and the English major courses they had taught in the last three years. This data aimed to aid in categorising the study variables and understanding factors affecting participants' comprehension of CLT principles, practices and CPD.

Section B consisted of two questions on participants' perceptions of communicative activities and overall CLT characteristics. In the first part of this section, 12 items relating to

communicative activities and traditional grammar activities were listed. Participants were asked to identify the communicative ones. In the second part, 15 statements were listed, and participants were required to evaluate them as True, Not True or Don't Know.

In Section C, the participants were asked to rate 18 statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1. No Difficulty to 5. Major Difficulty in relation to challenges they had encountered when they implemented CLT in their classrooms.

Section D, consisting of two questions, was designed to assess participants' general perspectives on CLT classroom practices and the present and future status of CLT in ELT in Cambodia. In the first question, the participants were given a list of 16 procedures or activities and asked to grade them, based on knowledge of they were in use in Cambodian higher education by indicating 1. Never, 2. Rarely, 3. Sometimes, 4. Usually, or 5. Always. The second question asked the participants to rate by circling their choice on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1. Not Successful to 5. Very Successful.

Section E probed the perceived importance of CPD in EFL teaching by asking the participants to prioritise 12 CPD areas on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1. Not Important to 5. Extremely Important.

Section F examined the significance and proficiency of ICT use by the participants. They were also asked to name specific ICT tools they had utilised in their lessons.

The final sections, G and H, invited participants to identify CPD needs for EFL teaching and to provide suggestions for implementing CLT in English major programs in Cambodia.

3.4.3 Student questionnaire

The student questionnaire was adapted from Savignon and Wang (2003, see Appendix B) to collect data from English major students. The questionnaire comprised three primary components over six sections, including a segment for biographical information. Section A

featured eight questions on the participants' demographic particulars, such as gender, age group, age when they started learning English, age when they started learning English in a private class or school, age when they started using English and age when they felt confident about their ability to use English. The final two questions of the section were open-ended, and asked participants to list the junior and senior high schools they had attended, as well as the university they were enrolled in at the time they completed the questionnaire.

Section B comprised 14 statements that probed classroom learning experiences and English classroom practices at their respective universities. Five statements were related to form-based classroom activities, while the remaining nine were about meaning-based classroom practices. One item addressed attitudes towards error correction and the final three items elicited responses about using ICT and social media platforms such as Facebook in lessons. The questions were answered with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1. Strongly Disagree to 7. Strongly Agree.

Section C of the questionnaire consisted of 39 statements that examined beliefs about English language learning in general. The initial questions were 39 items from Savignon and Wang (2003), to which 10 questions were added to cover items related to the use of ICT and ICT integration in lessons, as well as student's perspectives on the English major curricula. The first five statements pertained to classroom procedures centred on form and Statements 6 to 10 related to meaning-based practices. The eleventh item addressed attitudes about error correction. Statements 12 to 16 addressed beliefs about grammar-focused instruction, Statements 17 to 19 assessed beliefs about meaning-based instruction and Statements 20 and 21 looked into beliefs about error correction. Statements 22 and 23 were related to pronunciation, Statements 24, 25 and 28 addressed the significance of English and Statements 26 and 27 focused on perceptions of the relationship between language learning ability and intelligence. Statements 29 to 33 addressed students' impressions of the use of ICT

in lessons, while Statements 34 to 37 inquired about students' reactions to the English major curricula at their university. The final two statements, 38 and 39, assessed participants' preferences for speaking abilities at the native-speaker level.

3.4.4 Interviews

After participants had completed the questionnaire, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore how teachers described their methods and how they managed classroom communication, as well as the instructional aids and materials they employed and their expectations of students' learning outcomes. The interviews were conducted with 15 EFL university teachers and three faculty vice deans. The interviews served as a follow-up to the responses to the questionnaires and focused on the implementation of CLT and the participants' need for professional development to implement the approach effectively.

Interviews were chosen to gather data because they offered a tailored approach to data collection and allowed for efficiency and adaptability in questioning (Flick, 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2014) regarding the implementation of CLT with English major students in Cambodian universities. Participants' perspectives enabled the researcher to gain a better understanding of the views on and implementation of CLT in Cambodian EFL contexts. The researcher formulated additional questions to probe responses to the semi-structured questions further. These one-on-one interviews were conducted in English, video recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Because of COVID-19 travel and physical classroom restrictions, all interviews were conducted via Zoom.

The study relied extensively on semi-structured interview questions to collect and clarify qualitative data, which were also obtained from the survey questionnaire responses. This semi-structured interview format used a combination of open-ended and closed questions, which were frequently enriched with follow-up questions asking 'why' or 'how', to

acquire a deeper understanding of responses (Adams, 2015). In using this approach to collect data, the researcher did not adhere rigidly to a predetermined list of questions. Instead of a traditional question-and-answer format, the questions were more open-ended, to facilitate conversation and promote a two-way dialogue between the researcher and the participants. Interviews made it possible for participants to provide additional insight on specific questions (Leech, 2002). Interviews were guided by interview questions (see Appendix C) to examine the participants' experiences and maintain a predetermined course of action. It took between 35 and 60 minutes to complete each interview.

To ensure participants felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions, the researcher fostered a welcoming and non-judgmental environment throughout the interview process. This was achieved by employing open-ended questions, guaranteeing anonymity, and ensuring strict confidentiality of responses. Additionally, to address potential power imbalances and biases, the researcher maintained a neutral stance, actively listened without interruption, and used reflective listening techniques to validate participants' experiences. These measures were crucial in creating an atmosphere of trust and openness, thereby facilitating the collection of authentic and valuable insights during the interviews.

3.4.5 Curriculum documents

Documents relevant to research questions (Bryman, 2016) were examined and analysed. After receiving authorisation from the management of each participating university, electronic copies of various documents that related to the universities' policies on CLT, course syllabi, curricula, instructional materials, textbooks and assessments were examined and analysed. Additional policy documents were retrieved from the website of the MoEYS, including Education Congress reports (MoEYS, 2022, 2023), *Education Strategic Plan 2019−2023* (MoEYS, 2019b), Policy on Higher Education 2030 (MoEYS, 2014), policy and

strategy on ICT in education in Cambodia (MoEYS, 2004) and *National Standards for Institutional Accreditation* (ACC, 2015).

3.4.6 Reliability and validity

Data collection instruments and methodologies were carefully selected and employed to ensure a comprehensive and reliable data set for analysis of the findings, given that COVID-19 conditions prohibited any face-to-face observations in classrooms and interviews had to be conducted by Zoom. Questionnaires, semi-structured interview questions and curriculum-related document analysis were applied to triangulate the data sets. A concurrent nested mixed methods approach was used for data collection and analysis, to enhance the robustness of the findings. According to Bryman (2016), using both surveys and interviews yields more credible data about the phenomenon under study and more precise results than a single instrument. The study engaged multiple groups of participants, namely, university EFL teachers, vice deans and English major students, to ensure a diverse range of perspectives. The questionnaire design focused on clarity and inclusivity, featured both closed-ended and open-ended questions and employed straightforward language and instructions in English, to minimise the potential for misunderstandings. Additionally, although the questionnaires were pilot tested, it is important to consider that the length of the questionnaire could have led to participant fatigue, potentially affecting the quality of responses. To strengthen the reliability and validity of the viewpoint measurement, Likert scales were employed in both teacher and student questionnaires (Marsicano et al., 2020). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which measures the internal consistency, or reliability, of a set of survey items, was applied to the questionnaire data to determine the internal consistency of scores and to indicate the dependability of the data tools. According to Hair et al. (2019), a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 or above is regarded as an acceptable reliability indicator; 0.60 is acceptable for studies with small sample sizes. All variables in the questionnaire responses of teachers and students

received a reliability value greater than 0.5 (see Table 4.1 and Table 4.2), which indicates the suitability of the responses for further investigation.

Table 3.4 shows the Cronbach's alpha values for different item sets. The item set ELT Quality in Cambodia has the highest Cronbach's alpha value, at 0.895, which indicates a substantial internal consistency and reliability level for these items. Similarly, the item sets related to CLT professional development and understanding also have high Cronbach's alpha values, at 0.889 and 0.854, respectively. In turn, the item sets about CLT challenges and implementation have lower Cronbach's alpha values, at 0.778 and 0.559, which indicates comparatively lower internal consistency and reliability for these specific items. Overall, the findings suggest that the item sets related to ELT quality and CLT professional development and understanding are more dependable measures than those focused on CLT challenges and implementation.

Table 3.4

Reliability of the Teacher Questionnaire

Items	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
ELT quality in Cambodia	14	0.895
CLT professional development	12	0.889
CLT understanding	15	0.854
CLT challenges	18	0.778
CLT implementation	16	0.559

Table 3.5 shows the results of Cronbach's alpha for the student questionnaire, which evaluates the reliability of the instruments used to collect data on students' perspectives regarding learning and teaching English. For English major students' perspectives on English language learning, the Cronbach alpha value is 0.869, which indicates high reliability. The score for students' beliefs about teaching practices is lower, at 0.685, which suggests moderate reliability. By following the methodology outlined by Savignon and Wang (2003),

students' opinions on English language learning were divided into eight subsections: grammar-based, communication-based, ICT, English attitude, curriculum, intelligence, pronunciation and correction. Each subgroup has a Cronbach alpha value of 0.500 or higher, which indicate reliability of this data.

Table 3.5

Reliability of the Student Questionnaire

Items	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Perspectives about learning English	39	0.869
Beliefs about teaching practices	14	0.685
Perspectives by sections (39)		
Curriculum	4	0.777
Grammar-based	10	0.757
Technology	5	0.716
Communication-based	8	0.682
Intelligence	2	0.596
Attitudes towards English	5	0.584
Pronunciation	2	0.526
Correction	3	0.500

All questions related to CLT characteristics and classroom practices were incorporated into both the questionnaires and individual online interviews, to ensure instrument validity. The data-gathering instruments underwent thorough checking and validation by a research reference group and the supervisory team. The research reference group consisted of five experienced EFL teachers and researchers who had received the initial drafts of the instruments for feedback. Two members provided valuable suggestions concerning language use and the sequencing of the questions. After multiple revisions and consultations with the supervisory team, the questionnaires for teachers and students and the interview questions were deemed ready for administration. The researcher familiarised himself with the research context and facilitated contact and interaction to clarify any potential misunderstandings in the questions.

3.5 Data collection procedures

Before using the instruments for the study, a pilot study was conducted using a research reference group, to assess the efficacy of the instruments regarding comprehensiveness, clarity and representativeness (McKim, 2017). The questionnaires were emailed to five Cambodian researchers: one residing in Australia and four in Cambodia. They were requested to fill out the surveys; two of them provided constructive feedback. Based on their feedback, modifications were made to the sequence and wording of the questionnaire items, to enhance their relevance and conciseness for the participants.

After the modifications suggested by the participants of the pilot study, the questionnaires were distributed simultaneously to EFL university teachers, vice deans and students through various channels, namely, email and social media platforms such as Telegram and Facebook Messenger. The distribution included a link to the online survey tool of the UniSQ. Each questionnaire featured a consent box on the introduction page and participants took approximately 20 minutes to complete the questionnaires. The invitation package contained the participant information sheet (Appendix E), permission letter from the participant's university (Appendix F, Appendix G and Appendix H) and the human research ethics approval letter (Ethics No. H21REA036), which, according to UniSQ standards, are all required for all research involving people or their data. These documents aimed to inform the participants about the study objectives before seeking their participation.

Concurrently, interviewees who provided consent in the survey were contacted to arrange a suitable day and time for an interview. Once agreed upon, the interviews were conducted via Zoom and voice recorded for subsequent data analysis. Both surveys and interviews were completed within two months in 2021.

The decision to use English-only instructions in the questionnaire was based on ensuring alignment with the study's context, where university EFL teachers and students

regularly use English. This approach aimed to accurately reflect their language use and comprehension skills, maintaining consistency and avoiding potential translation discrepancies. Given the participants' expected proficiency in English, this method was deemed appropriate. While using Khmer could have increased accessibility, the focus on English ensured the reliability and validity of the data within the participants' actual linguistic environment. This limitation was acknowledged in the discussion, suggesting future research could explore bilingual approaches in questionnaires.

In addition, curriculum-related documents were gathered from the designated universities. After receiving authorisation from the management of each university, the researcher contacted the vice deans to request electronic copies of curriculum-related documents, course syllabi, textbooks and assessment materials. The researcher also requested for additional documents, such as teaching materials and student work samples, from interviewees, though these were not available. Other policy documents were sourced and retrieved from the website of the MoEYS, including Education Congress reports (MoEYS, 2022, 2023), *Education Strategic Plan 2019−2023* (MoEYS, 2019b), *Policy on Higher Education Vision 2030* (MoEYS, 2014), *Policy and Strategies on Information and Communication Technology in Education in Cambodia* (MoEYS, 2004) and *National Standards for Institutional Accreditation* (ACC, 2015).

3.6 Data analysis

The raw quantitative and qualitative data were subjected to separate analyses. Quantitative data from the surveys were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27. Qualitative data from the questionnaire components and interviews were processed with NVivo 12, while document analysis was performed manually.

SPSS 27 was used to analyse the online survey data provided by EFL teachers and English major students. The software facilitated data analysis in multiple formats and

provided graphical representations. The analysable data included descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha measures, which ensured comprehensive data exploration (Ong & Puteh, 2017). SPSS was chosen for its user-friendly interface, extensive features and flexibility in managing data sources, which makes it a reliable and efficient choice for researchers (Heck et al., 2013).

After the completion of data collection from teachers, vice deans and students, the analysis proceeded to develop population-representative conclusions about the investigated phenomenon (Hong et al., 2018). The questionnaire data, formatted for SPSS, were downloaded from the UniSQ Survey Tool. SPSS 27 was then used for quantitative data analysis and techniques such as factor analysis, reliability analysis, descriptive analysis (including frequency counts, means and standard deviations), multiple response analysis and correlation were employed. These analyses were aligned with the research objectives and questions.

NVivo 12 was chosen as the preferred program for analysing interview data because of its ease of use and applicability to unstructured text data. It played a crucial role in ensuring the accuracy of the acquired qualitative data. Another reason for using NVivo is its multilingual user interface and text analysis capabilities, also for English (Vallance & Lee, 2005). Its features, such as annotation and coding tools, data linking, visualisation options, media analytics tools and support for mixed methods research, were instrumental in the qualitative data analysis process.

The interview data gathered from the teachers and vice deans were transcribed and analysed using NVivo 12 to establish thematic categories and descriptions; this process is known as thematic analysis. It is a qualitative data analysis technique that identifies themes in the text by examining word meanings and sentence structures. This process was aimed at identifying how Cambodian university teachers implemented CLT and their expressed needs

for CPD regarding effective ELT teaching in EFL contexts. The intuitive approach of NVivo to thematic analysis involves importing Word-formatted interview transcripts, examining, organising and selecting pertinent information, applying codes and assigning them to appropriate categories or themes. These themes were then linked to the study questions, to facilitate data interpretation.

To ensure alignment with the study's objectives, the analysis concentrated solely on information directly related to CLT. Although interviews touched on various topics, only relevant details were included in the analysis, keeping the discussion focused on the research questions. This approach ensured that the analysis remained precise and directly applicable to CLT implementation, avoiding unrelated digressions.

In this study, document analysis, a method that scrutinises written materials, was also employed to extract a detailed description and explanation of the subject being researched. As outlined by Berg (2001), this approach involves a systematic review of various documents, including curriculum materials, textbooks, syllabi, assessments and policy documents. Specifically, five types of documents were analysed for this study: (a) faculty curricula, (b) a sample writing syllabus, (c) a Core English final examination, (d) a selected Core English textbook, and (e) relevant policy documents. These documents were electronically obtained from vice deans who were involved in overseeing English departments and the MoEYS website.

The analytical process involved a thorough examination of each document. The primary focus was conducting a content analysis to identify and evaluate elements and features related to CLT. This process involved scrutinising the documents for instances and representations of interactive or communicative-related activities and pertinent exam questions. The analysis sought to determine how these materials aligned with or diverged

from the principles of CLT, by paying close attention to how communicative approaches were embedded in the curriculum, teaching methods, assessment strategies and policy guidelines.

The documents were carefully scrutinised to assess the depth of CLT integration, focusing on how communicative practices were integrated within instructional materials and institutional policies. This methodical examination provided insight into the extent to which CLT principles were reflected in the educational documents used in the institutions under study. By analysing these documents, the study aimed to understand better how the theoretical aspects of CLT are translated into practical application within the Cambodian higher education context. Additionally, this analysis helped to identify potential gaps or inconsistencies in the implementation of CLT, which could inform recommendations for improving language teaching practices in the region.

In this mixed methods study, quantitative and qualitative analyses complemented and reinforced each other, by aligning with the research questions and enhancing data validity (Fetters et al., 2013; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Triangulation of findings from the quantitative and qualitative datasets is a key feature, with quantitative findings supporting qualitative insights for specific research questions and vice versa. Research Question 3, which is based on quantitative data, stood alone. This approach is commonly known as the triangulation of findings from different data sets (Noble & Heale, 2019).

The initial plan was to start collecting quantitative data through online surveys and to follow it by gathering qualitative data via online interviews to investigate teachers' understanding and implementation of CLT. However, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the simultaneous data collection of quantitative and qualitative data. The shift to online teaching increased teachers' workload, thereby influencing their survey participation and leading to the concurrent start of interviews. This concurrent data collection enabled the researcher to foster a closer rapport with participants. The entire process of data collection,

encompassing both surveys and interviews, was completed within nine weeks after survey distribution started. To complement these methods further, document analysis was employed as a third data source to reinforce the insights gained from surveys and interviews.

3.7 Ethics considerations

By following the UniSQ Human Research Ethics Committee regulations, this study adhered to the ethics criteria for research, was approved by the Committee (Approval No. H21REA036), which is documented in Appendix I.

Prior to data being collected, written permission was sought from the four provincial universities. Approval was granted under the condition that the researcher would discuss the survey with each participating teacher, vice dean and English major student at the respective universities to minimise disturbance. Subsequently, the researcher engaged with the vice deans to facilitate access to the teachers and students involved in the study. Then, the necessary preparations were made with the vice deans, teachers and English major students, including briefings on the details of the online surveys and Zoom interviews and accommodation of participants' preferences for audio or video recordings.

Participants' anonymity and privacy were protected by using pseudonyms and a coding system specific to the participating universities. Additionally, consent was obtained from teachers, vice deans and English major students, who were fully informed about the research by the participant information sheet (see Appendix E), which was made available before they participated in online surveys and interviews; this sheet included a disclosure that audio or video recordings of the Zoom meetings would be done for data analysis purposes. The teachers and vice deans provided their agreement for the interviews to be recorded. The participant information sheet clarifies that participants had the right to withdraw from the interviews and discontinue their involvement in the study at any point without facing

repercussions (see Appendix E). Establishing a positive rapport with the participants prevented them from withdrawing from the study.

3.8 Summary

This chapter presented the research design and provided information on the participants. The discussion entailed the selection and recruitment processes involved in engaging with EFL teachers, vice deans and English major students. The chapter also discussed data collection instruments, namely, two questionnaires, interview questions and related documents and highlighted their significance in gathering data. It also discussed the data collection procedures and data analysis adopted and emphasised the importance of reliability and validity in ensuring robust findings. The chapter also explained the ethical considerations and approvals obtained for conducting the research. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Overview

This chapter presents the results of the study. Section 4.2 offers data derived from the questionnaires and the interviews to gain information on teachers' understanding of CLT. Section 4.3 details data from both teacher and student questionnaires, alongside the interviews, to examine the implementation of CLT. Section 4.4 provides data from the questionnaires and interviews that outline the challenges facing the implementation of CLT and how teachers' understanding influences their implementation. Section 4.5 presents data from the student questionnaire, which focus on the perspectives of English major students on English curricula and classroom practices, their English learning experiences and their views on effective language learning strategies. Section 4.6 presents data from questionnaires and interviews and highlights the CPD required for teachers using CLT to teach English effectively. It reveals what teachers need to improve their teaching methodology if they are to achieve more interactive teaching and learning strategies. Section 4.7 presents data from document analysis. Finally, Section 4.8 summarises the chapter.

4.2 Teachers' understanding of communicative language teaching

This section presents data on the understanding of CLT of Cambodian university EFL teachers and vice deans. Subsection 4.2.1 details their understandings of CLT approaches as provided in their questionnaire responses, assesses the extent to which they grasped the fundamental principles and characteristics of CLT, along with their recognition of CLT activities and techniques and examines their familiarity with various instructional strategies. Subsection 4.2.2 presents the conceptualisations of teachers and vice deans regarding CLT and articulations of its benefits as expressed in interviews.

Some of the findings relate to broad aspects of English language teaching, that are relevant to teachers' understandings of CLT, particularly in the context of its practical

implementation. CLT does not operate in isolation; it is influenced by various factors within the broader landscape of English language teaching as they provide essential context and can influence teachers' understanding and use of CLT methodologies.

An understanding of the broader educational environment and challenges faced by teachers is crucial for a comprehensive analysis of CLT's implementation in regional universities to capture the complexities of the educational settings in which CLT is being applied.

In this section, teachers and vice deans are referred to as 'participants' in the presentation of results and the results from the questionnaire and interviews are laid out sequentially. The participants expressed their understanding of the elements of communicative teaching as outlined in two subsections: data from the questionnaire and data from the interviews. The first subsection comprises two frequency tables that report the results of the participants' responses to statements about the CLT approach and statements relating to CLT activities and techniques. The second dataset reveals what the participants contributed to the interviews regarding their understanding and explanations of CLT, as well as their views on the benefits of employing CLT in Cambodian university EFL classrooms.

4.2.1 Data from the questionnaire

The study reveals a diverse range of perspectives among participants regarding their understanding of CLT as an approach to ELT. Table 4.1 provides percentages for CLT understanding as rated by participants. Multiple-choice statements offered the options (1) True, (2) Not True and (3) Don't Know. Overall, most participants understood CLT as being student-centred and that it emphasised communication in English and prioritised fluency over accuracy. However, opinions different on whether CLT requires teachers to have high proficiency in English and a more profound knowledge of the target language culture

and the extent to which CLT relies on specific teaching approaches, such as traditional grammar instruction or group work.

Table 4.1

*Teachers' Understanding of CLT Approach (*N = *40)*

Items	True		Not true		Don't know	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
CLT is a student/learner-centred approach	37	92.5	3	7.5	0	0
CLT means teaching and learning strategies to communicate in English	36	90	4	10	0	0
CLT means teachers know how to use English in context	30	75	5	12.5	5	12.5
CLT emphasises communication in the target language (English)	30	75	7	17.5	3	7.5
CLT emphasises fluency over accuracy	29	72.5	7	17.5	4	10
CLT requires teachers to spend a lot of time preparing class activities	26	65	14	35	0	0
CLT relies heavily on speaking and listening skills	21	52.5	18	45	1	2.5
CLT requires teachers to have high English proficiency	16	40	21	52.5	3	7.5
CLT requires teachers to have a deeper knowledge of the target language culture	15	37.5	22	55	3	7.5
CLT means only developing spoken and written English and understanding it	15	37.5	21	52.5	4	10
CLT means not teaching grammar	8	20	29	72.5	3	7.5
CLT means only group work or pair work	5	12.5	32	80	3	7.5
CLT is designed for ESL classrooms, not for foreign language contexts where English is not spoken outside the classroom	4	10	30	75	6	15
CLT means teaching speaking only	1	2.5	39	97.5	0	0
CLT puts too much pressure on teachers	1	2.5	38	95	1	2.5

Most participants acknowledged that CLT is a student-centred approach (92.5%) and that teaching and learning strategies are aimed at encouraging communication in English (90%). A substantial portion of participants (75%) agreed that effective communication in English requires applying strategies in relevant contexts (75%) and 72.5% said that CLT favoured fluency over accuracy. About two-thirds of the participants believed that CLT

requires considerable preparation for class activities (65%), and more than half agreed that the approach relies on speaking and listening skills (52.5%).

However, opinions were divided regarding the necessity for high English proficiency of teachers (40%) and the need for deep knowledge of the target culture (37.5%). A minority of participants said CLT did not involve teaching grammar (20%) and 12.4% said instruction was limited to pair and group work. A small percentage agreed that CLT focuses solely on speaking skills (2.5%) and imposes excessive pressure on teachers (2.5%).

Overall, there was a broad consensus on specific aspects of CLT, such as its student--centric nature and focus on communication in English. However, opinions varied on the language proficiency, cultural knowledge and specific teaching methods required of teachers by CLT.

To gain a clearer insight into the various interpretations and applications of CLT by participants, Table 4.2 presents these differences in understanding as they pertain to ELT systematically. Table 4.2 shows the numbers and percentages of participants who preferred or favoured particular activities.

Table 4.2

*Communicative Activities and Techniques (*N = *40)*

No.	Activities	*n*	%
1	Having a debate or role play	35	87.5
2	Discussing a controversial topic in a group	35	87.5
3	Speaking in pairs	33	82.5
4	Describing a picture to a partner	25	57.5
5	Storytelling in front of the class	21	52.5
6	Going on the internet and joining a chat group	20	50
7	Writing an essay in English	15	37.5
8	Reading dialogues	10	25
9	Filling in the blanks	8	20
10	Grammar exercises	6	15
11	Looking up words in the dictionary	4	10
12	Doing a dictation task	1	2.5

Activities 1, 2 and 3, which involve interactive and communicative tasks, were the most popular among the participants. Out of 40 participants, 35 (87.5%) indicated that their activity preferences were debates, role plays and discussing controversial topics in a group.

Speaking in pairs (87.5%) was also notably popular among the participants, which shows a strong preference for collaborative speaking exercises. Describing a picture to a partner (57.5%) and storytelling in front of the class (52.5%) were moderately popular activities and this response indicates a moderate interest in oral presentation tasks. Activities involving technological engagement, such as going online to join chat groups (50%) and writing essays in English (37.5%), were somewhat less preferred by the participants.

Reading dialogues (25%), filling in the blanks (20%) and grammar exercises (15%) were activities that the participants indicated as used less often. Notably, looking up words in the dictionary (10%) and doing a dictation task (2.5%) were the least preferred activities among participants.

Overall, the results reflect an apparent inclination for interactive and communicative activities, such as debates, group discussions and pair work, which foster collaborative learning and emphasise speaking and interaction in language learning. In contrast, activities centred on individual exercises, such as grammar and reading and writing tasks were less favoured by the participants, which indicates a lower preference for less interactive language learning methods.

4.2.2 Data from interviews

4.2.2.1 Individual definitions of CLT

The participants in this study defined CLT in several different ways. Their definitions include a mode of teaching English primarily for communicative purposes and aiming to conduct lessons predominantly in English, while encouraging students to use English in their interactions. For example, two participants defined CLT as follows:

"CLT refers to teaching English in a communicative way, making sure to try their best to let students or learners interact with each other through the target language that the lesson provides." (Dara)

"CLT is to provide an opportunity for students to communicate by using or applying some ways, like working in groups or in pairs. Sometimes, it's like a game that teachers set for students to play in conversation or something like that." (Chiva)

Two other participants defined CLT as a new communicative approach to language teaching that incorporates interactions between students and teachers and allows students to communicate with their peers and teachers through group or pair interactions. Chivorn explained:

"CLT is a new way of teaching, or we teach the language in a communicative way and there are more interactions between the learners and teachers and the learners and learners themselves in the classrooms." (Chivorn)

Additionally, seven participants reported CLT as focusing on fluency in speaking skills and other macro skills (i.e. reading, listening and writing). Speaking and writing are productive skills that enable students to reproduce language verbally and in writing. Chivith emphasised that:

"CLT focuses on speaking proficiency and language skills such as four macro skills and subskills." (Chivith)

The teachers and vice deans defined CLT as a student-centric approach, according to which the English language serves as the means of instruction and a tool for interactive communication among teachers, students and peers. They also indicated that CLT has many benefits, and has positive effects on students, teachers and education institutions.

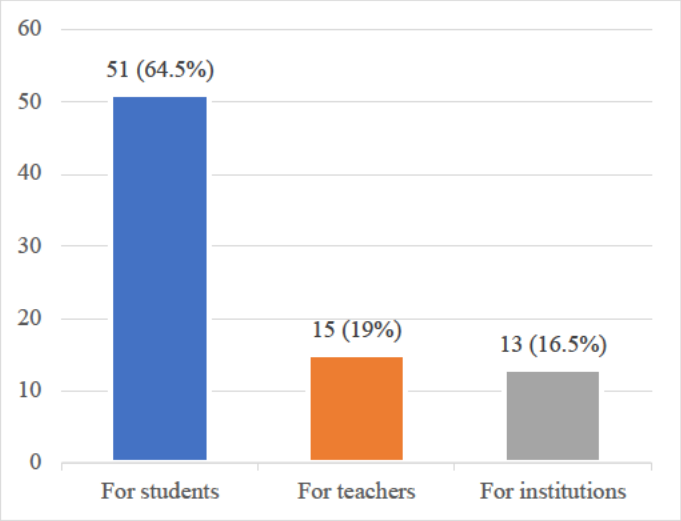
4.2.2.2 Expressions of benefits of CLT

The interviews with teachers and vice deans revealed the benefits of CLT in English major courses at Cambodian provincial universities according to three significant themes related to students, teachers and institutions. The analysis of interview data yielded 79 references to the general benefits of CLT (see Appendix K), along with an additional 548 codes relating to themes on the implementation of CLT, challenges faced during its implementation, English major students' perspectives on learning English at the university and the professional development needs associated with CLT use. These results are reported in Sections 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6, respectively.

Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of codes according to the benefits of CLT for students (n = 51, 64.5%), teachers (n = 15, 19%) and institutions (n = 13, 16.5%).

Figure 4.1

Benefits of CLT



Participants explained the substantial benefits of CLT for students by noting that it has a significant effect on building students' confidence to speak and communicate. The data suggest that students who used CLT for English language learning experienced various gains,

mainly through the interactive learning process that facilitated engagement with native English speakers. For example, Khemerin and Darong explained:

> "They [students] are interacting with each other from time to time every day means that they are building their confidence in using English and surely it is essential, it is an asset for their future work." (Khemerin)
>
> "One of the benefits is that they [students] feel more confident in communicating in English." (Darong)

In total 40% of the interview participants reported that CLT provides students with direct exposure to environments in which English is spoken, thereby explaining that real-life communicative experiences significantly improve language proficiency. The CLT approach exposes students to the target language, promotes enriched interactions with fluent speakers and fosters a more profound familiarity with English. As a result, exposure or immersion enables students to speak English more clearly and communicate more effectively. For instance, Bora stated:

> "Implementing CLT can help Cambodian students to speak English with other people more effectively." (Bora)

To emphasise that CLT helps students improve their speaking skills, Borin and Khemerin said:

> "They [students] can learn how to improve their speaking skills and they can use that speaking or target item of the lesson from a teacher with their real lives in a new environment. For example, when we go shopping, we can buy something. They know how to speak because they get used to speaking." (Borin)
>
> "So, I think it [CLT] benefits, can make them [students] improve their speaking fast?" (Khemerin)

Participants indicated that students develop several skills simultaneously in CLT -focused lessons. They described the CLT teaching approach as comprehensive and encompassing all the macro skills – speaking, writing, listening and reading – thus, producing well-rounded language learners. Additionally, they observed that students hone their teamwork abilities through the interactive nature of CLT sessions. For example, three participants stated:

> "CLT improves four macro skills, especially speaking … the learners do not learn only one skill. They can learn more than one skill. They don't study only grammar; it is about writing and speaking." (Dymang [vice dean])
>
> "CLT should be implemented at the universities of Cambodia because when students go to the universities, they have to do much work independently … students can benefit a lot. They will become an independent learner in the future and learn English by themselves." (Bora)
>
> "Because teachers assign them to work with different partners and classmates, so they get used to how to work with a team." (Borin)

Participants were, furthermore, in agreement that CLT improved students' speaking while enhancing critical thinking skills. They observed that students were more at ease about interacting with peers in class, readily engaged in discussions and made corrections when necessary. This process necessitates deeper cognitive engagement, because students must think deeply before speaking or writing in a second language. Bora and Borin shared similar ideas about critical thinking, which they identified as one of the significant benefits of employing CLT in higher education:

> "At the university level, students are educated to develop their critical thinking, so using CLT approach will help them [students] improve their level of thinking." (Bora)

> "About critical thinking, they do not only depend on the teacher and do not only copy every word and every idea from the teacher, but they can use their critical thinking because, in that CLT class, teachers would give discussions." (Borin)

Interviewed participants suggested that CLT is particularly beneficial for students with lower levels of English proficiency. They indicated that CLT begins with the fundamental aspects of the language and helps students to build their skills from the ground up. Participants emphasised the necessity of practice, by noting that consistent application is essential for language learning. This perspective was supported by explanations by two participants:

> "Even if they have a basic knowledge of English, we still apply CLT for high-level students but also low levels." (Chiva)

> "Secondary school level, CLT should be practiced. So that it's easier when they are at the university level." (Khemerin)

Participants agreed unanimously that CLT offers significant benefits to students by enabling interactive classroom sessions, which are crucial for active learning and self-directed error correction. They observed that CLT energises students and cultivates a sense of progress and pleasure in learning a new language. Additionally, CLT was praised for bridging classroom learning and real-life situations, which gave students a taste of authentic language use.

Despite these advantages, participants pointed out a crucial prerequisite for Cambodian students to reap all the rewards of CLT and become independent users of English who could communicate successfully. Starting at the secondary school level, there must be an early and consistent emphasis on interactive learning. This early initiation into active learning strategies is vital for developing the independence and engagement that are necessary for mastering communicative English.

Additionally, 19% of participants referred to the benefits CLT has for teachers. Participants reported significant benefits from using CLT in their English teaching practices. Primarily, they acknowledged improved communication with students, who became more accustomed to using English through routine classroom interactions. For example, Chiva believed CLT helps teachers and students communicate well. He said:

> "CLT is helpful for both teachers and students. They can communicate with each other well." (Chiva)

A key insight from the study was consensus among participants that using the native language Khmer as the medium of instruction for teaching English was counterproductive and hampered the learning process. Chivith, in particular, was adamant about the ineffectiveness of relying on the mother tongue at the university level. He argued against using Khmer for English language instruction:

> "It doesn't make sense to study a foreign language and you speak and use your language, Khmer, to teach the students, to explain to them." (Chivith)

The consensus among students was that English language use in the classroom is non-negotiable, considering students' motivation for learning English – whether for teaching, employment, business or further education. Borin expressed a directive for minimising the use of Khmer and maximising the use of English, by stating that:

> "Teachers not to use L1 or mother tongue in the classroom, or as little as possible, but instead focusing on using speaking activities or student centre." (Borin)

By doing so, students are encouraged to communicate, understand and use English effectively. Bopha, a vice dean, emphasised this view:

> "They learn English because they want to communicate to understand the thing that they want to learn." (Bopah)

This approach is predicated on the belief that immersion in the target language is essential for successful language learning.

Participants reported that their understanding and knowledge were significantly improved by using CLT. By engaging in the planning of teaching activities that required the use of English, they found themselves learning new things and gaining a deeper understanding of their roles as teachers. Chiva claimed that:

> "Teachers can enhance their understanding and knowledge more and more by using the methodology [CLT]." (Chiva)

Participants emphasised the need for well-crafted activities that facilitate interaction and language learning by students. They suggested that such activities should be designed to engage students and encourage them to delve into research as part of their lesson preparation. Khemera stressed the importance of structure and interaction in these activities:

> "Activities teachers produced need to be very well organised and interactive." (Khmera)

Khemera, furthermore, referred to the necessity for communication, by restating:

> "Activities require techniques to increase students' communication or interactions within their learning groups." (Khemera)

The participants admitted that using interactive activities, which engaged students in pairs or groups, enabled teachers to facilitate classroom dynamics more efficiently, thereby conserving time and energy. Chiva emphasised that:

> "Teachers just guide students, and it means that teachers do not need to spend much energy." (Chiva)

Likewise, Bopha, a vice dean, claimed:

> "But I believe it's beneficial and takes less time than just focusing on the rules and then on the practice, step by step." (Bopha)

The participants recognised the significant pedagogical benefits of employing CLT in English instruction. They confirmed the importance of English as the medium of instruction and communication in the classroom and emphasised its effectiveness in aiding students' understanding and practical use of the language. Additionally, they observed that CLT contributed to their own professional growth, because it enhanced their knowledge as they planned teaching activities and English use during the preparation and instruction phases. Finally, they reported that CLT enhanced classroom management, by encouraging student collaboration through interactive activities and reducing the need for extensive teacher facilitation.

Moreover, participants recognised that successful communication can be facilitated by leveraging technology outside the classroom, by offering students additional exposure and learning opportunities. Khunna, a vice dean, argued that formal English qualifications might become less critical in the future; he cited the accessibility of language learning through alternative avenues:

> "In the future, English qualification is unimportant because they can learn it elsewhere." (Khunna)

However, he affirmed the vital need for English proficiency in business, education and the workplace and proposed that the ability to communicate in English is paramount:

> "Learning enough English to communicate should suffice." (Khunna)

With this statement, Khunna acknowledged the benefits of communicative approaches that empower students to learn independently and improve their communication skills.

Regarding institutional benefits, 16.4% of participants identified benefits for institutions. CLT offers several benefits to universities, such as producing qualified teachers, enhancing teaching skills with additional practicum opportunities, building prestige for

institutions in job markets and using contextualised instructional materials that are tailored to students' environments.

The benefits of CLT, such as producing qualified teachers, enhancing teaching skills, and building prestige for institutions, are integral to higher education teachers' beliefs about CLT in Cambodia. These beliefs reflect teachers' understanding of the broader impacts of CLT on educational quality and institutional reputation. By implementing CLT, teachers perceive that they can better prepare students for real-world communication, thereby improving teaching outcomes and contributing to the overall prestige of their institutions. This understanding is critical to comprehensively examining teachers' beliefs about CLT.

Participants pointed out that universities could enhance their reputations and national ranking by expanding their offerings to include specialised and general English courses and providing additional practical experience opportunities for students of English.

First, participants were optimistic that universities could improve their reputations by integrating specialised TEFL and general English courses into existing curricula, thereby enhancing students' competency. Borath explained this reasoning:

> "Additional courses are beneficial for students to become teachers of English, especially teaching methodology, assessment and evaluation, classroom management and applied linguistics … also courses those students learn to improve English proficiency or writing." (Borath)

Second, the participants believed that dedicating additional practicum hours would enhance teaching quality at universities. By extending the duration of communication language sessions and giving students chances to conduct interactive activities in authentic classroom settings, they could develop their language and teaching skills more effectively. For instance, Khelly was optimistic that such an increase in practicum time would lead to

future teachers receiving better training, as they would gain practical experience in authentic teaching sessions. He suggested:

> "We do not have enough practicum for students … so not to teach each other but teach actual classes in high school, so they can improve their teaching." (Khelly)

Third, the participants suggested that universities could improve their standing in the labour market by producing qualified graduates, thereby attracting employers recruiting prospective employees. They indicated that the prospect of employment would provide significant motivation for students to engage with EFL studies, thereby contributing to the enhancing the prestige of universities. Khunna, a vice dean, emphasised the importance of job prospects as a critical motivator for students, by stating:

> "You know the main motivations of students to study is their career, their employment." (Khunna)

In turn, the high-level competition gained by students who would be well prepared for working in sectors where English is used would reflect positively on universities. Darong provided their perspective on this matter:

> "They [teachers] need to show the students the results of hard work. For example, I can say a fresh graduate here in Cambodia. When they go to work for hotels and restaurants, you know they get a very low salary, say [US$]150 or [US$]160 or [US$]170, so it's less than the worker looks like the workers who are working for the garment factory." (Darong)

There was also a call for universities to develop and use teaching resources tailored to the Cambodian context, rather than relying solely on commercial English textbooks designed for students in English-speaking countries. For example, Khunna, a vice dean, elaborated:

> "The books that are from Western countries do not fit well because teachers do not have much time to plan the already made texts or activities. Therefore, they only use

what exists there in the books but do not invent other activities for their students to learn." (Khunna)

While CLT provides opportunities for students to use English in relevant contexts, universities derive limited benefits from textbooks designed for Western contexts where English is the prevailing language. Participants claimed Cambodian students would have more effective learning experiences with resources developed locally or designed for contexts similar to their own. Khunna stressed the value of contextually appropriate materials, by suggesting that:

"Other sources from other countries, as we talked about Cambridge, we talk about Oxford, but if take a look at that, we compared to the students, the context might be a little bit different." (Khunna)

Commercial Western textbooks may not align with the Cambodian setting, particularly in non-urban, provincial areas where this study is focused. Khunna further commented on this discrepancy:

"We experienced with the students that when we asked the student to talk about travel, they said, Do you go to university by bus? When we ask them to give examples, but there is no bus at our university, we will ask students to repeat what exists in the books. Would you like a hamburger? Do you like pizza? Do you need spaghetti? But is there any spaghetti in our region? No, there's not." (Khunna)

Overall, CLT offers several benefits to universities, such as producing better-qualified teachers, enhancing teaching skills through additional practicum opportunities, building prestige in job markets and using instructional materials contextualised for the students' environment.

In summary, the teacher participants in the interview understood and recognised that CLT provides numerous benefits for students, teachers and their universities. The discourse of

Theme 1 focuses on teachers' expressions of the benefits for students and reveals that CLT offers more advantages for students than teachers or institutions do. Through CLT, teachers noticed students increased their confidence in communication, had greater exposure to English-speaking environments, improved across all macro skills while enhancing their critical thinking. Their teamwork skills were encouraged by actively participating and learning collaboratively.

In Theme 2, the discussion shifted to the benefits for teachers. Participants claimed that CLT helps them communicate better with students, keeps teachers abreast of up -to -date teaching strategies and fosters creativity and dynamism in their teaching approaches.

The discussion culminated with Theme 3, which focuses on institutional benefits. Universities that adopt CLT stand to produce well-qualified teachers, could enhance teaching skills through additional practicum, bolster their standing in competitive job markets and align their teaching materials more closely with the contextual realities of their students.

4.3 CLT implementation

This section shows the effects of CLT lessons for students who have English as a major in Cambodian higher education. Three subsections emerged: The first subsection, 4.3.1, explores data from the questionnaire on the extent to which participants recognised principles and strategies as examples of CLT. The second subsection, 4.3.2, presents interview data in a detailed exploration of teachers' experiences with CLT; experience encompass the challenges and successes they experienced in integrating CLT in their classroom settings. The third subsection, 4.3.3, provides the students' perspectives and offer a comprehensive understanding of their experiences, perceptions and engagement with CLT activities.

4.3.1 Data from the questionnaire

Table 4.3 presents data on the extent to which the participants indicated whether the stated language teaching activities were interactive or less interactive, traditional or not

traditional and incorporating the use of technology or not. It shows the numbers and percentages of participants who answered Yes and No for each activity, which are examples of CLT activities they implemented.

Table 4.3

*Implementation of CLT (*N = *40)*

Items	Yes		No	
	n	%	*n*	%
Interactive activities				
Group discussion	40	100	0	0
Pair work	39	97.5	1	2.5
Calling on students to orally respond to any issue/topic	39	97.5	1	2.5
Listening to audio recording and answering questions	36	90	4	10
Simulations/role play	35	87.5	5	12.5
Games	32	80	8	20
Less interactive activities				
Reading and reporting from websites	26	65	14	35
Dictionary vocabulary exercises	26	65	14	35
Reading and reporting from newspaper	19	47.5	21	52.5
Traditional activities				
Grammar explanation	37	92.5	3	7.5
Translation	22	55	18	45
Drills				
Pronunciation drills	36	90	4	10
Reading aloud	33	82.5	7	17.5
Reading and reciting dialogue	32	80	8	20
Use of technology				
Use of digital technology	40	100	0	0
Use of social media (Facebook)	29	72.5	11	27.5

Most participants (between 80% and 100%) reported frequently using interactive activities, notably, classroom discussions (100%), pair work and oral engagement methods (97.5%, respectively) and listening to recorded scripts, followed by comprehension questions (90%). In addition, simulation/role plays (87.5%) and games (80%) emerged as popular

interactive activities employed by the participants. Grammar explanations were prevalent, utilised by 37 participants (92.5%), while 22 (55%) translated the grammar points into the Khmer language for their English major students. Interestingly, most of the participants (80% to 90%) employed various drills, including pronunciation exercises, reading aloud and reciting dialogues. Surprisingly, all the participants (100%) expressed that they were confident about using digital technology in their English lessons and a significant proportion (72.5%) used social media platforms, including Facebook, as part of their teaching methodologies.

The results of the questionnaire on the implementation of CLT shows that the participants used interactive activities and integrated technology in their teaching practices. They also confirmed the value of incorporating traditional and less interactive activities, such as repetition drills, into their teaching approaches. This suggests the necessity for a deeper investigation by a subsequent study to gather empirical data on the relative adoption of interactive versus traditional activities in EFL teaching contexts.

Mean scores and standard deviations (*SD*) were also computed for each category of activity, to identify the one that received the highest rating in conjunction with the frequency of CLT use. The *SD* values indicate the extent of variability in responses, with smaller *SD* values pointing to greater agreement among participants' opinions or experiences. Notably, the Drills category exhibited the highest *SD*, of 0.90, which signifies more significant response variability. Conversely, the Interactive activities category has the lowest *SD*, of 0.72, which indicates general agreement among the participants in relation to these activities.

Traditional activities demonstrate relatively greater consensus regarding their implementation (*SD* = 0.84). Less use of interactive activities and technology exhibited similar *SD* (0.81 and 0.79, respectively), which indicates less disagreement between these two

activity groups. The mean ratings provided by teachers, which range from the highest score of 5 to the lowest of 1, are detailed in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Means and Standard Deviations of Each Activity Group

Item group	Mean	*SD*
Interactive activities	3.58	0.72
Less interactive activities	2.86	0.81
Traditional activities	3.08	0.84
Drills	3.25	0.90
Use of technology	3.30	0.79

Using mean scores to convey CLT implementation provides insight into the collective opinions or perceptions of participants regarding various CLT aspects. These mean scores indicate the average rating (on a scale from 1 to 5) given by participants and showcases the frequency of implementation. Participants reported that interactive activities were the most frequently used, with the highest mean score (3.58), followed by technology (3.30), drills (3.25) and traditional activities (3.08). Less interactive activities, such as reading from websites and newspapers and vocabulary exercises, had the lowest collective mean score (2.86). Pair work and group discussions were the most favoured interactive activities, along with oral responses, simulated role plays and games. Technology was widely used and had a mean of 3.30. Technology was perceived as beneficial for students' learning and included tools and applications such as smart TV, LCD, YouTube, Google Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom and Telegram. Facebook was less frequently used, and participants such as Chiva, Kelly and Bora highlighted their preference for using Telegram, Google Classroom, Google Meet and Zoom for specific teaching purposes.

4.3.2 Data from interviews

To expose students to an English-speaking environment, the participants preferred giving instructions in English. They encouraged students to use only English as a form of communication in the classroom. For example:

> "When you use monolingual instruction using the language that they [students] are learning with them in class and when they interact with you, when they ask you questions or when you ask them questions, they have to respond to you, or they talk, discuss and chat with their friends. Expose them in English." (Chivith)

Participants also emphasised the importance of contextualising lesson content by either eliciting background information from students or providing relevant context themselves before presenting the topic content at hand. For instance, Khemera compared their own learning experience with their current teaching approach, as follows:

> "All teachers in old style started the lessons by giving lectures, but today I think when you start the lesson we come up with the background, you say, background information." (Khmera)

Bora asked questions when teaching grammar. He explained that:

> "For grammar lesson, I try to ask questions rather than telling them the rule. For example, I'm trying to teach them present perfect and past simple, the difference between the two tenses. For example, What did you eat yesterday? How long have you lived in Phnom Penh? We try to encourage students to speak or answer questions and we don't tell the students the rules like how the present perfect or the past simple is used." (Bora)

The participants acknowledged that adopting CLT in their classrooms involved offering students opportunities to use the language collaboratively in pairs, groups or with the whole class. For example, Chivith claimed that he provided numerous opportunities for their

students, yet they expressed uncertainty about whether their methods aligned strictly with the CLT approach, by remarking:

> "Even though I use the traditional teaching approach or direct instruction, I give more time to my students to work individually, in pairs or in groups. For example, we have one exercise with five to 10 numbers and then I get them to work in pairs to produce the answers together. Then in pairs like that but I did not know the concept of student-centred approach or communicating language teaching, but I applied myself." (Chivith)

In addition to providing students with plenty of time to practise, the participants took on the role of facilitators. They actively monitored their students' collaboration, guided peer interactions and provided corrective feedback when needed. For instance, Khelly described their role as a facilitator:

> "With CLT, we can give students a chance or time to work in groups, so teachers do the monitoring or listen to their mistakes. Then we can give feedback to students later." (Khelly)

The participants endeavoured to provide students with sufficient time to actively use English during their study. These opportunities involved asking questions that introduced background information or integrated grammar instruction. As facilitators, they guided student discussions and provided feedback to support learning. However, some participants voiced concern about overburdening students with tasks they viewed as teachers' jobs and suggested that students should not be expected to undertake duties typically performed by teachers. For example, Bora elaborated on this viewpoint:

> "For example, about vocabulary, I usually write down the vocabulary or keywords on the whiteboard and I explain again. Actually, we can use the students to check the meanings of the words or keywords and explain. But students will feel bored. Students

might think that why they have to be in the class because they have to check the vocabulary or the words by themselves. That's why I have to explain all the meanings of the words." (Bora)

The participants expressed their agreement in the interviews that English major students participated in classroom interactions in various ways and for different purposes. First, they noted that students were not only communicating but were also forging social interactions. Second, they observed students sharing opinions during discussions, in pairs or in larger groups. Third, they mentioned that even students who claimed to have insufficient knowledge of English managed to interact with peers in classrooms. Finally, it was highlighted that students tried to engage in activities despite potential barriers, such as limited exposure to English in high school, being unfamiliar with the culture, or shyness.

The participants explained that students learned to communicate in the classroom setting and built their social skills while interacting with peers. Chivorn repeatedly emphasised that:

"They [students] can communicate in English more effectively with their peers. Also, they can use the target language to speak with one another. One more thing is that they also improve social skills when they engage more often in the classroom." (Chivorn)

Participating in groups was seen as a crucial element of the learning process. It enables students to share their perspectives with peers, which provides another learning dynamic to traditional teacher-led instruction. This collaborative environment enabled even students with a basic level of communication to share their thoughts. For instance, two participants elaborated on this by stating that:

"The way they learn the language is multiplied. What do I mean by multiplying? That is sharing. OK, with CLT, students can share from one to another rather than accepting only from teachers." (Khemerin)

> "The courses of speaking and listening while we perform those with students. I've found their interest, even though they use broken language or Khenglish in the classroom, it's their favourite. They enjoy not only English itself, but they can also get common knowledge from outside, so I found they like it, they learn something." (Dina)

While students were often able to share their views during group or pair work, their contributions were sometimes limited by a lack of knowledge, because they had done insufficient reading in English. This obstacle was noted by Khemerin, who observed:

> "Most students do not like reading. While they don't like reading, they don't have ideas to speak, sometimes they want to speak, but they don't know what to speak about." (Khemerin)

Additionally, participants noted that students faced difficulties in understanding English texts, with Borith explaining:

> "When they read the texts in English, they still have some difficulty." (Borith)

English proficiency is necessary if students are to express ideas effectively and students often struggle to articulate their viewpoints because of limited language skills. This issue was echoed by two other participants, Chiva and Khelly, who shared related concerns:

> "Because they have a limited understanding of English when they are at a low level of English and cannot speak." (Chiva)

> "The problem is that the students themselves do not have enough ability or capacity to join or to attend the university; even at university nowadays, I teach level elementary level." (Khelly)

Participants observed that the learning methods employed in high school did not adequately prepare students for the university level, particularly for adapting to CLT

environments. Those new to CLT often find it challenging to maintain composure and communicate effectively in English. This perspective was shared by two participants:

> "Students have not been familiar with CLT since they were in their public high schools, or CLT is not practised effectively out there. Yeah, so when they come to university, it's somehow difficult for them to follow." (Khemerin)

> "When they [students] move to university life or experience the CLT class, it is tough for teachers to implement; we try to change their learning style, so very hard at first. For example, when I try to ask them to work in a group, they don't like or want to try to study in the group, or they don't want to be independent." (Borin)

When they transition to a new context at university, students often experience anxiety about making mistakes, which leads them to refrain from participating in speaking activities. This experience was described by two participants, who shared their observations on this phenomenon:

> "The second thing they are afraid of is making mistakes with wrong ideas or wrong answers; their classmates laugh at them, actually not." (Chivith)

> "They feel afraid of teachers and everything that they have really basic English." (Chiva)

The common cultural attitude towards 'shyness' was a major reason for students refraining from speaking up or sharing their opinions in the classroom. This was a common observation by the participants, with a few recounting similar experiences. For example, concerns related to this cultural tendency or norm were articulated by three participants who expressed that:

> "It can also be their own culture that is known as they are shy." (Chiva)

> "Culture, mindset, perception of our students and their behaviour, learning habit also, as you know, Cambodian people are shy." (Chivith)

"Even though they are not as shy as when they are in front of the other opposite gender, they are somehow talking about this or that, still limited, I can say." (Khemerin)

Regarding the implementation of the curriculum, the participants acknowledged the communicative nature of the curriculum and also revealed concerns regarding its length, by noting that it was challenging to cover fully within the allocated timeframe. This issue was highlighted by three participants in particular, who expressed their concerns:

"If I sometimes prefer to follow ideas, our lessons cannot go far. Yeah, and generally, at university, they have a schedule that we have to finish. OK, like for one semester, we completed six lessons, so we cannot just do what you need; we have to focus on everything, though. We pick up something that is the main point that you need to study." (Khemera)

"One example that is considered more about the CLT curriculum is how the writer created the coursebook … he tried to use more CLT with presenting new vocabulary. Then, the writer provided many techniques." (Borin)

"I can say the curriculum is good, but, in terms of the choice of books or materials, I can say the books are nice." (Borath)

The participants also acknowledged the overall quality of the curriculum, but recommended adjustments to better align it with the students' abilities. Borath remarked on the merit of the curriculum and emphasised that:

"I can say the curriculum is good, but …" (Borath)

Moreover, teachers encountered difficulties when they delivered the content, which, they believed, was sometimes too complex for the students. Khemerin stated:

"It's quite higher than the general one. OK, yeah? So sometimes a bit hard." (Khmerin)

Borath also commented on the curriculum's demanding nature:

> "The curriculum is so tough for them [students]. They don't understand when they read the books. They don't understand what the author is talking about—the content, the meaning. So, how can they learn when their English is still poor? How can they comprehend what they are reading?" (Borath)

In addition, the participants stressed that the assessment tasks were not sufficiently communicative, and that English was not a compulsory component of high-stakes national examinations. Interestingly, despite being reasonable in creating their assessment materials for subjects they taught, the participants still advocated for more communicative assessment materials. This apparent contradiction was acknowledged by two participants, who stated:

> "Every teacher needs to design one assessment for their students. We have the final assessment and yeah it is designed by the teachers. I would say that usually, it is less communicative with the assessment." (Chivorn)

> "When they speak or when they write or reproduce, not rote memorisation that sometimes you know some students copy and paste. Students try to memorise it and then write in the examination, so to me, I could be better. If the students' answers are exactly the same as the textbooks, lectures or slides I use in my teaching, I do not grade them high marks." (Chivith)

The participants also reported that the instructional materials that in use were outdated and in need of revision. This sentiment was echoed by Khunna, the vice dean, who affirmed this situation:

> "In terms of materials, as we are in a rural area, so our teaching material is quite outdated. Sometimes we have outdated books, and we don't have any things that can make the school more interesting. So, this is the issue that we face." (Khunna)

Additionally, the participants reported that the selected textbooks lacked clear illustrations of communicative strategies, which, consequently, required teachers to employ creativity in their instructional approaches. Borith provided an example of this, stating:

> "Not all about CLT. I need to adapt, make some changes and make sure that if some activities do not make students active, I make some changes. I want my students to be active in their learning." (Borith)

It is interesting that, while the participants were able to modify certain materials to ensure students remained active in learning, they often did not adhere strictly to the textbook content. Teachers were free to select materials they believed were more appealing to students, given that the textbooks were not sufficiently communicative to facilitate effective learning. Borin elaborated on this approach, explaining:

> "We don't teach the books but teach the students. So how can you make them reach their learning outcomes. because some textbooks are more about grammar−translation method or teacher centred?" (Borin)

A primary technique employed by the participants to assist students to become independent was applying supervised learning activities. They facilitated opportunities for students to do research in the classroom setting. Dara explained this method:

> "The activity I provided them to do on their own during the 20 minutes is I tend to provide harder activities for them to do. For example, I teach them how to do better reading for an article, like writing in a TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language] or IELTS [International English Language Testing System]. There is a sample in the book, but I let them search for better writing an article on their own. And then, I asked them to collect the work, which they found, put it into one place as a link and now it is all online, but before, they had to present it in class." (Dara)

The participants planned classroom interactions strategically by using pair or group work and allowing students to, initially, cross-check their responses with peers. This peer review was seen as a precursor to whole-class corrections. Chivorn elaborated further on this collaborative approach:

> "So, when they do the practices, they do it in pairs or in groups. Then, they can cross-check the answers and then discuss why the answer is the same or why not the same and then they can move on to check in the whole class." (Chivorn)

The use of established pedagogical methods, such as 'presentation, practice and production', 'presentation, practice and lesson', or a 'practice, revision and skill' lesson has become the norm among teachers in EFL classrooms. These frameworks provide a systematic approach to language instruction and promotes a gradual build-up from concept introduction to skill application. Khelly explained the implementation of these techniques:

> "PPL means presentation practice lesson. Present practice lesson means that, in new lessons for students, we can give them the new target item or do pre-teaching activities for the students. Yes, practice vocabulary is the PRS, which means practice, revision and skill that we focus on reading, writing or listening." (Khelly)

The participants often employed mini-activities as warm-ups or skill-builders before students embarked on the main activities to complete lesson tasks. These preparatory exercises served to prime students for more complex activities. Khemerin gave an example of how this strategy was applied, particularly in the context of a speaking lesson:

> "I play a short video for the students. Then, we assign them to work in groups. After that, we have some questions for them and let them discuss. After discussing, I ask one representative in the group to share their answers and what they find in their group discussion. So please share with the class if their answers differ from others and why?" (Khemerin)

Participants were granted the authority to either follow activities from the prescribed textbooks or implement activities they had designed themselves, basing their decisions on student interests and engagement levels with the textbook content. These flexibilities allowed students to say what they wanted to learn and what aligned with their preferences and interests. The teachers' adaptability was crucial for fostering an active learning environment. Borith provided an example of how students' choices can be integrated into the selection of learning topics:

> "Oh, sometimes I follow the textbooks, but sometimes I try to understand the students. If they do not want to learn the topic from the textbooks, I ask them to choose their own topic. Then they can share their own topic and I ask them to do more research about the topic to learn. Yes, so I ask them to have their own free choice now." (Borith)

Code-switching has emerged as a valuable technique for learning English in Cambodia, aligning well with the principles of the use of L1 to facilitate effective communication in L2 classes. Participants allowed students to switch between English and their native language, Khmer, to communicate their ideas better during discussions. This practice helps bridge gaps in understanding, making it easier for students to participate actively in communicative activities. Additionally, students were encouraged to use technological tools for translation purposes, which enhanced their understanding and communication. By integrating code-switching, teachers can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment that caters to the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students, thereby enriching the CLT experience. Borath emphasised the effectiveness of this approach:

> "They can use two languages in one, writing discourse, okay. By doing that, this can be communication because communication doesn't have to be about speaking right. You can communicate your idea. You can communicate what you think, okay, when

you are writing what you do when you're writing something about what you think. For me, this is communication already, okay, so I can see it works and it's fun. For example, I *Sralanh* you very much. Students don't know the word 'love', but I can guide them, for example. You also have a smartphone, and you have Google, so if you do not know the word *Sralanh*, why don't you ask Mr Google to help? Okay, so you can replace the word *Sralanh* with 'love'. This is an example of communication already. Even speaking, I think it works." (Borath)

The integration of technology into EFL classrooms at provincial universities in Cambodia is becoming a common norm, with its adoption primarily based on available technology types, their intended purpose and how they assist the communicative approach to teaching. The participants in this study used various kinds of digital technology, including Google Meet, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, Telegram, YouTube, LCD projectors, computers, Zoom and Moodle, to facilitate interaction and enhance the learning experience. This utilisation of technology in education was expounded upon by two participants, who explained their thoughts:

"I use some technology, but only sometimes, depending on the materials I have and the university's support. It can be YouTube. I show some videos related to the lessons. I apply Microsoft Teams and Zoom for teaching online during this era. I also sometimes use Google Meet, but mostly Zoom Google Meet. In the class, if I provide physical class, I use Microsoft PowerPoint and also YouTube to support my teaching." (Chiva)

"I have my laptop and then we have the LCD projector in the classroom. Every classroom has an LCD projector and an internet connection as well. I incorporate them a lot in my classrooms, like in one lesson. Another lesson usually has slide presentations and online games. Let students practise with their smartphones also

Kahoot, those online platforms that will help students well in the classroom." (Chivorn)

The participants employed different technologies with specific purposes of their choices. For example, Telegram was utilised to distribute quizzes, assignments or activities to students, which facilitated streamlined communication and efficient dissemination of instructional materials. Chiva provided further details on the use of this platform:

> "Oh, mostly I use Telegram to support. For example, if I have some quizzes, assignments or activities I need them to do and I send them via Telegram. Yes, we use Telegram to support our lessons." (Chiva)

Bora expressed a preference for using Google Meet for their classes, even though the platform lacked a screen sharing feature. Bora rationalised their choice by explaining:

> "Teaching using Google Meet is comfortable and we can see each other well. But the thing is, we cannot share other resources. For example, I want to explain the grammar lesson but need help with sharing. I can explain the grammar lesson, but it takes additional work to show them the whole thing, the whole pictures of the grammar lesson." (Bora)

The participants leaned towards using Moodle as a platform for administering various assessment tasks, including quizzes, exams and projects. This preference was the result of the capabilities of Moodle for managing and tracking student assessments. Borith explained the use of this learning management system by stating:

> "In the Moodle tools, we have many assessments, like quizzes, exercises, midterm exams, final exams, project papers and term papers. Students can go to that platform to take quizzes. I also use Moodle in my class and drop quizzes, exercises and topics for discussion. We still use that for students for other formative or ongoing assessments." (Borith)

For the completion of quizzes or participation in classroom activities, the participants highlighted the necessity of smartphones. Darong reported the importance of this technology for students to engage in the learning process:

> "The students need to use their mobile phones to participate in this kind of activity they need to compete. Who will win and who will complete its first? And who will get more points, so it's just like a kind of technology?" (Darong)

Technology promoted continuous engagement and interaction among students and between students and teachers and extended beyond physical classroom learning situations. It enabled students to ask questions and receive responses from teachers within designated groups created for particular classes. Darong provided an example of how this dynamic worked:

> "Besides teaching hours, if any students want to ask me something, they chat in the group. I reply and send some documents to them, and they ask me for something or for some documents. We're in a group. Okay, in the group and the university helps to create the groups and everything for the teachers, right?" (Darong)

Overall, the participants used technology to engage students and ensure continuity in the learning process, regardless of students' physical presence in the classroom. However, the extent to which each student participated with these technological platforms was not a focus of this study.

The active use of technology was found to support the objectives of CLT in various ways. First and foremost, technology complemented CLT, by enhancing its effectiveness rather than supplanting the traditional approach. Khemerath observed the supportive role of technology in this context:

> "Yeah, of course, you know it's a compliment, help each other, you know, as I mentioned, to make students able to communicate. Like the example I just mentioned,

the 10 most popular countries in terms of tourism, so the support from technology helps your students understand better. For example, YouTube shows La Vegas in the US and the Tour Eiffel Tower in France. You know they are able to understand each place well, so this is to build communication. This is to enable students to interact effectively, right?" (Khemerath)

Secondly, technology proved to be an efficient tool to assist teachers in setting up online video conferences, thereby significantly reducing the time and financial resources typically required for travel and accommodation. Bora highlighted the advantages of this approach to facilitating student-to-student communication:

"We also have a video conference, so students from different universities can meet each other online and discuss some particular topics. We have a few universities within the country, for example and a video conference, so all students are invited to join. Teachers are also invited to discuss a particular topic. For example, to discuss how to deal with the pandemic outbreak, so students from each university can discuss to find out the solution. This way, CLT can be implemented." (Bora)

Lastly, digital technology played a pivotal role in the implementation of CLT, by fostering student engagement and promoting independent learning. Darin explained how technology helped in this regard:

"Quizzes.com, which is a digital app, can engage students and teachers to practice CLT because the question is provided to them. Later, they answer and then they can check the answers independently. The mark is provided immediately, and we can discuss those errors or mistakes made by purpose with students. CLT will work even much better with digital or distant learning program is in this way because students have enough time to conduct their research." (Darin)

It is noteworthy that explicit references to CLT components were absent from formal documents provided to teachers. Nevertheless, the imperative for student communication was clearly emphasised by universities. However, the absence of written guidelines on CLT was a point of note among participants, which prompted comments on the necessity of such resources. Interestingly, the vice deans did not provide any specific comments regarding this absence, indicating a potential disengagement with the issue or a lack of awareness of its significance. Khemerin, a teacher, addressed this gap by stating:

> "Uh, it seemed to be that they don't require CLT. It's like they say it depends on the lecturer ... but we know that they recommend that we use it. We should follow that one [CLT] if possible." (Khemerin)

Khunna, who was serving as a vice dean, referred to the absence of written policies on CLT:

> "Actually, no policy on CLT, we just said that we want students to be able to communicate, but the teachers themselves will design the method." (Khunna)

Borath, a teacher, was not sure about the existence or accessibility of any formal policy on CLT and remarked:

> "So far, I can say nothing clearly stated, or if I forget somewhere, I don't know, but I know even it is already stated, but maybe it's somewhere on the kind of bookshelf or in the office, but not yet. So, in terms of policy, I can come up with a conclusion; there must be a policy somewhere about promotion. Okay, students should be able to communicate; let's say we provide the programme for this major. There must be expectations, but whether the practitioners, I mean the classroom teachers, are doing something in response to the expectations or not is still a doubt." (Borath)

Bopha, in the role of vice dean, supported the ideas expressed by her colleagues and emphasised the point by stating:

> "It's not precisely stated in the curriculum that the methodology should be like this and like that. It's how the teacher believes in the way they teach." (Bopha)

Despite the lack of formal policy documentation on CLT, the trend among participants was to use CLT in their teaching and attributing this approach to the quality of their training. Despite the expectation that universities with a focus on CLT would have clear policies regarding the use of English as the language of instruction, there were no established guidelines. This lack of policy creates an environment where teachers are left to navigate language use in the classroom independently, highlighting a gap between CLT principles and institutional support. This finding is common in Cambodian higher education, as previous research such as Heng et al. (2022) noted that many universities in Cambodia lack clear policies when it comes to research and professional development. Chivith asserted this practice by stating:

> "Our teachers are well trained; our teachers are professional and rich in teaching experience and have conducted a lot of research on communicative or student centre approaches. Our teachers use this [CLT] by ourselves. There are no teaching principles for all you know defined by the university. No policy saying that teachers of English have to teach English in English, speak English in class, explain in English, give instructions in English and get students to communicate or interact with teachers and their classmates in English. No rules, understand what I mean?" (Chivith)

In summary, the implementation of CLT, as revealed through the teacher questionnaires and interviews, demonstrates a mixed picture. Teachers generally acknowledged the value of CLT and attempted to incorporate interactive activities but faced challenges in practical application because of resource constraints and large class sizes. Findings from the interviews, furthermore, highlighted the need for more comprehensive

training and support regarding CLT methodologies. This finding indicates a gap between the appreciation of CLT principles and their effective classroom implementation.

4.3.3 Data from student questionnaire

This section presents the findings based on data from the student questionnaire, which was instrumental in capturing the students' perspectives on the implementation of CLT. The analysis of student responses serves a dual purpose: first, to assess the direct effect of CLT practices on students' language learning experiences and, second, to identify areas of the CLT components that may require refinement or additional support, as perceived by the students.

Table 4.5 shows survey findings based on data provided by university students regarding their English language learning experiences, which focus on interactive activities, traditional activities and the use of technology. It presents responses categorised as Yes, Not Sure, or No by the number and percentage of students' responses to each survey item.

Table 4.5

Classroom Practices of CLT (*N* = 58)

Items	Yes		Not Sure		No	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Interactive activities						
My teachers encourage us to speak in English without worrying about making mistakes	57	98.3	0	0	1	1.7
My teachers often design activities to have us interact in English with peers	55	94.8	3	5.2	0	0
My teachers often create an atmosphere for us to use English	54	93.1	1	1.7	3	5.2
My teachers often correct my errors in class	52	89.6	4	6.9	2	3.5
English teaching in my university is communication-focused	48	82.8	6	10.3	4	6.9
Our focus in class is communication and the teacher explains grammar when necessary	46	79.3	4	6.9	8	13.8
Traditional activities						
My teachers mainly explain the grammar rules and I practise them	48	82.8	3	5.2	7	12
English teaching in my university is grammar-focused	37	63.8	6	10.3	15	25.9
My teachers in university often ask us to do sentence drilling and repeat sentences after them	37	63.8	5	8.6	16	27.6
I rarely need to speak in the classroom	19	32.8	6	10.3	33	56.9
The language used in the classroom by my teachers is mostly Khmer	5	8.6	2	3.5	51	87.9
Use of technology						
My teachers use digital technology in class	48	82.8	6	10.3	4	6.9
I enjoy doing activities with digital technology in class	46	79.4	5	8.6	7	12
My teachers often use Facebook in teaching	1	1.7	3	5.2	54	93.1

In the Interactive activities category, most participants (98.3%) reported that their teachers encouraged them to speak English freely, without fear of making mistakes. The activities were designed to facilitate interaction among peers in English, thereby creating an English-friendly atmosphere. However, a small percentage (ranging from 0% to 5.2%)

responded with uncertainty, which could be attributed to unclear statements or personal preferences in reporting about their teachers.

Regarding the category of Traditional activities, most participants (63.8% to 82.8%) indicated their teachers used grammar-focused teaching and sentence drills, while a small percentage (12% to 27.6%) responded negatively to the items. In the Use of technology category, using Facebook for teaching was unpopular (1.7%), in contrast to positive feedback on teachers' use of digital technologies in general (79.4% to 82.8%).

According to student perspectives, interactive sessions were standard in English major classes. While responses confirmed that teachers implemented CLT, students were uncertain about the effectiveness of traditional teaching methods and technology integration. Opinions varied, with roughly half confirming the use of these activities and an equal portion having mixed views.

These results illustrate that, while students overwhelmingly perceive a supportive environment for English communication and a mix of teaching methods that emphasise communication, a substantial portion of participants indicated the prevalence of traditional, grammar-focused practices and few opportunities to speak; a significant portion reported the infrequent use of English in the classroom.

4.4 Challenges in implementing communicative language teaching

CLT is a widely recognised language teaching approach that prioritises communication in learning a language (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003; Ozevik, 2010; K. Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). Despite its proven effectiveness, its implementation in real classroom settings presents challenges for teachers, students and education institutions. This section presents results relating the third research question, which explored the difficulties encountered by Cambodian university EFL teachers when they implemented CLT, based on data from survey responses and interviews.

Survey results revealed that teachers encountered a range of challenges, including their own limited skills regarding utilising digital technologies, a lack of digital resources and inadequate proficiency in English. Students also faced difficulties, such as low levels of English proficiency and resistance to communication activities. Institutional challenges include traditional, grammar-based examinations, that teachers had undergone inadequate teacher training, insufficient CPD opportunities being available and a lack of support from the administration. Differences between EFL and ESL teaching contexts and disparities between Western and Cambodian educational practices emerged as significant barriers to CLT implementation in Cambodia.

Table 4.6 summarises the challenges faced by teachers, students and institutions in implementing CLT. The challenges are divided into four categories: teachers' challenges, student-related challenges, institutional challenges, and CLT challenges.

Table 4.6

Challenges when Implementing CLT (*N* = 40)

Challenges	No difficulty		Minor difficulty		Major difficulty	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Teachers' challenges						
Lack of skills to use digital technology in the classroom	3	7.5	28	70	9	22.5
Teachers' lack of target culture (English) knowledge	2	5	26	65	12	30
Teachers' limited use of digital technology and resources	4	10	25	62.5	11	27.5
Teachers' lack of sufficient spoken English competence	3	7.5	21	52.5	16	40
Time for teachers to prepare communicative materials	1	2.5	18	45	21	52.5
Teachers' misunderstanding of CLT features	4	10	13	32.5	23	57.5
Student challenges						
Students' low-level English proficiency	1	2.5	20	50	19	47.5
Students resist communicative class activities	4	10	24	60	12	30
Institutional challenges						
Not enough authentic teaching materials to use	3	7.5	25	62.5	12	30
Traditional grammar-based examinations	3	7.5	25	62.5	12	30
Not enough support from the administration	2	5	23	57.5	15	37.5
Inadequate teacher training in CLT approach	1	2.5	22	55	17	42.5
Insufficient professional development/training opportunities	1	2.5	22	55	17	42.5
Large class sizes	2	5	19	47.5	19	47.5
Lack of assessment instruments for communicative competence	0	0	17	42.5	23	57.5
CLT challenges						
The differences between EFL and ESL teaching contexts	3	7.5	30	75	7	17.5
The differences between Western education assumptions and Cambodian education contexts	1	2.5	24	60	15	37.5

4.4.1 Teachers' challenges

Teachers and vice deans in the EFL field in Cambodia reported six key challenges: that they had limited proficiency in digital technologies, inadequate access to digital technologies and resources, insufficient spoken English proficiency, inadequate knowledge of

the target culture, insufficient time for preparing communicative materials and a misunderstanding of CLT features. The details regarding these challenges are reported as follows.

4.4.1.1 Inadequate proficiency with digital technologies

Out of 40 Cambodian university EFL teachers, 70% reported experiencing minor difficulties using digital technologies in teaching because they lacked skills, while 22.5% reported it as a major difficulty. A mere 7.5% of the participants indicated that they had no difficulties using digital technology for English instruction.

4.4.1.2 Inadequate access to digital technologies and resources

Ninety percent of the participants indicated that they had limited use of digital technologies and resources for classroom implementation. A quarter of participants (27.5%) regarded this as a significant challenge, whereas the majority (62.5%) considered it a minor challenge. A small portion of the participants (10%) indicated that they encountered no difficulties whatsoever in using digital technologies and resources.

4.4.1.3 Insufficient proficiency in spoken English

There is a need to improve teachers' English proficiency in Cambodia further. More than half the participants (52.5%) indicated that their proficiency was at an inadequate level, while a smaller yet substantial proportion (40%) identified proficiency as a major difficulty. A minority of the participants (7.5%) reported no difficulties regarding their English competence.

4.4.1.4 Lack of knowledge of English cultural elements

Most teachers (95%) expressed a lack of knowledge of English cultures, which encompasses the diverse cultural practices, social norms, historical contexts, and values prevalent in countries where English is the first language, such as the UK and the US. Among the surveyed teachers and vice deans, a majority of 65% possessed a certain level of

familiarity with the culture. However, 30% regarded it as a significant challenge. Remarkably, a small fraction of the participants (5%) experienced no difficulties in relation to English cultures, which they could effectively integrate into their teaching practices. Understanding cultural nuances is crucial for effective language learning and teaching, as it enhances communicative competence and authentic language use.

4.4.1.5 Too little time to prepare communicative activities

The vast majority of the participants (97.5%) expressed the need for additional time to prepare CLT activities adequately. Approximately 45% of participants indicated that the time required for preparing CLT activities was a major challenge, whereas more than half of them (52.5%) considered the preparation of CLT activities to be highly challenging. Only a small fraction of participants (2.5%) did not experience difficulties regarding the time available to prepare CLT lessons. Interview data corroborated these findings. Certain participants perceived CLT to be a time-consuming approach and experienced pressure because of limited time for interactive sessions. For example, two participants claimed that:

> "I think, yeah, the main one is time-consuming. They take more time to prepare those materials or resources, perhaps. Then there is more time consuming and sometimes I don't have enough time to do that. Then I apply the lecturing style in the classroom rather than a communicative way of teaching. There is something to do more with time." (Chivorn)

> "Using CLT or focusing on CLT, it is a kind, a bit time consuming because, normally, if you use teacher-centred approach, because most of the time, we explain the lessons and students need to listen, but to be a facilitator, facilitated in CLT can be a little bit difficult because we have to find a good technique." (Dina)

4.4.1.6 Misunderstanding of CLT features

Surprisingly, over half the participants (57%) indicated experiencing major difficulties in understanding of some CLT features, while around a third (32.5%) acknowledged a need for a deeper understanding of these features. Interestingly, a small percentage of the participants (10%) had no difficulty understanding the CLT features. The interviews with teachers confirmed this difficulty and revealed that difficulties related to understanding CLT affected teachers' classroom instruction. Borath said:

> "But the problem is whether the teachers or the practitioners are well aware of those kinds of approaches, is still a question. So again, they may have misconceptions or misperceptions of the communicative approach." (Borath)

As reported, the participants found this challenge to be a particular problem, which weakened the implementation process. Specifically, they needed support with vocabulary instruction and pedagogical strategies. For example, two participants expressed that:

> "I have some problems, in particular when I try to teach vocabulary. Well, I feel that I don't really have an effective approach to teaching vocabulary, so usually, I explain the words. I sometimes have to do the translation." (Bora)

> "The techniques of some teachers are limited. They follow the old style from the past. They don't apply technology and they present most of the time during the lessons. They don't provide opportunities for students to speak it out or to work in groups or in pairs." (Chiva)

In summary, the participants encountered various challenges when implementing CLT with their English major students. These difficulties experienced by teachers and vice deans could stem from the quality of their initial CLT training and the practical experience they have had in implementing CLT.

4.4.2 Student-related challenges

The teaching staff participants reported several challenges English major students face in implementing CLT. First, nearly half the participants (47.5%) indicated that they experienced significant difficulties related to students' low English proficiency, which affected students' learning. In contrast, half the participants (50%) claimed that the low English proficiency of the students was a relatively minor difficulty. A minority of the participants (2.5%) reported no difficulty related to students' English proficiency levels.

Additionally, teachers reported that students were resistant to engaging in speaking during communicative activities: 60% of the participants considered it a minor issue, while about one-third (30%) regarded it as a major difficulty. The remaining participants (10%) encountered no such difficulties. These findings are consistent with the interview data. For example, three teachers asserted that:

> "The other issue, like, I think that the nature of the learners, some of them they still prefer like teacher-centred classroom. They prefer lectures more than doing other activities in the classroom like pair work or group work. When we apply CLT, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't work." (Chivorn)
>
> "Yeah, let's say some students are afraid and don't want to work with their other classmates, listen or want to listen to the teachers presenting the lessons. Some students feel like that. They don't want to speak it out because they are students. They don't need to say something. They just listen." (Chiva)
>
> "When we ask students to communicate or interact with each other, also with us in English, they have a strong tendency of refusal and even they reject, they refuse to speak in English. They have one common typical behaviour when they want to express themselves, when they want to say something, they are likely to express it in Khmer or mother tongue most often, until they are inspired and motivated." (Chivith)

Fear of making mistakes and low motivation to use English were also identified as student-related challenges. These factors limit students' creativity at the basic level of competence. For example, Chivith said:

> "They [students] are afraid of making mistakes when they speak or communicate their ideas or opinions." (Chivith)

Bora claimed that:

> "Sometimes their classmates, especially those who speak well, make fun of those who cannot speak well. So, when this happens, it discourages or demotivates other students from expressing themselves or speaking in class, as I noticed." (Bora)

Other challenges teachers encountered with their students included difficulties in relation to writing/grammar skills and mixed abilities relating to English proficiency. For example, Borith claimed:

> "I think students have issues or problems with writing. As I teach, I understand that their writing is limited, so they still have problems with writing." (Borith)

Darong raised the problem of students' grammar skills.

> "And the second is their grammar; around 50%, 60% or 70% of them are poor in grammar, so they could make some mistakes in nearly every line, every sentence." (Darong)

Three other participants emphasised the problem of students' variable abilities:

> "The issue is like something to do with the learners' language ability; some are good, some are middle and some are low in terms of language competency." (Chivorn)

> "Usually inside the class, we have slow learners and we have fast learners and some students already have some basic English knowledge." (Chivith)

> "The students have different levels. Students' knowledge is different. It can be another challenge when we allow the students to work in pairs or groups." (Dina)

Despite these challenges, teachers agreed that student participation is critical for the success of interactive classrooms. Cambodian English major students, who were traditionally dependent on rote learning, require high motivation and good English proficiency to achieve the best results from active class participation. The participants suggested that increased student interaction leads to more effective learning and broader career opportunities.

4.4.3 Institutional challenges

The participants pinpointed some institutional challenges that affect the effective implementation of CLT. A notable concern was lack of access to authentic teaching materials. Additionally, the use of grammar-based examinations posed a significant obstacle to adopting CLT at their institutions. While about two-thirds (62.5%) of the participants considered these to be minor challenges, approximately one-third (30%) considered them major challenges. For example, three participants elaborated on these challenges:

> "One more thing is the resources need to be more in terms of applying CLT, so the teachers need to spend more time designing activities or resources to support student learning in a communicative language classroom." (Chivorn)
>
> "Also, the teaching materials of teachers are limited." (Chiva)
>
> "The second problem is our teaching materials. So, for sure, we just now have speakers and DVDs. Sorry, LCD projectors, but still, like other materials, we cannot produce them. Maybe we do because we do not have. Just say we cannot afford to produce the materials. Yeah, uh, even though we still have our course books, some of those course books we adopt from any other materials, or we've filed the documents we bind into." (Khemera)

The participants identified other institutional obstacles that compromise the effectiveness of CLT. A primary concern was the need for more robust administrative support, encompassing financial backing, enhanced CLT-focused teacher training and

expanded opportunities for professional development. While slightly over half the participants (55%–57.5%) reported these issues as minor, a significant minority (30%–42.5%) viewed them as substantial difficulties. One of the vice deans repeatedly referred to the training that was on offer to the teachers, while no administrative or financial support was provided:

> "I would say yeah, the support is not really in the Faculty of Education … you can do what you want, but we cannot financially support you." (Khunna)

Despite this participant's enthusiasm to assist the teachers in the faculty, the effort seemed to go unappreciated because of other discouraging factors at this institution.

The issue of large class sizes was divisive: half the participants viewed it as a minor difficulty, while the other half considered it a major obstacle for interactive CLT and learning environments. This challenge is not unique to Cambodian universities as similar difficulties have been documented in other studies. For instance, Li and Baldauf (2011) and Wedgwood (2007) highlighted that large class sizes significantly hinder the implementation of CLT by reducing opportunities for meaningful student interaction and individualized feedback. To address this, some institutions have experimented with solutions such as peer-assisted learning, smaller group activities within larger classes, and the use of technology to facilitate interaction. However, these strategies often require additional resources and training, which may not be readily available in Cambodian universities. Furthermore, a significant majority (57.5%) identified the lack of assessment tools for communicative competence as a major challenge, which suggests a critical need for institutions to develop more effective communicative assessment materials. During the interviews, two participants remarked as follows:

> "One of the main issues is the large class size at the university. For example, there are many students in one class. It is difficult for teachers to apply CLT in the classrooms." (Chivorn)

"We got like the amount of the students that are many students. Example, in one class can be 50 students or something like this, or 40 students like this. Yeah, so it's a little bit hard sometimes." (Khemerin)

Technical challenges, such as insufficient digital technology, inadequate resources and the need for electronic libraries, were exacerbated by low internet speeds, which adversely affected the quality of language teaching and the implementation of CLT. Three participants stated:

"Internet speed is a problem, you know, sometimes the internet is tough to assign students to work in pairs or groups." (Bora)

"Can be LCD but not enough for all the classrooms and internet connection is not available all the time every room." (Chiva)

"One more thing is that the resources are not enough in terms of applying CLT, so the teachers need to spend more time designing activities or resources to support student learning in a communicative language classroom." (Chivorn)

4.4.4 Communicative language teaching challenges

The participants reported unique challenges associated with their EFL teaching contexts in Cambodia, which differ significantly from those the ESL environments for which CLT had initially been designed or conceived. They pointed out that Cambodian classrooms do not fully align with Western education assumptions, yet these discrepancies were deemed minor rather than major. Additionally, cultural differences were acknowledged as a substantial obstacle to implementing CLT in Cambodian classrooms. For example, two participants asserted that:

"One more thing is culture, about culture, as you know Cambodian culture, you are Khmer or Cambodian, no matter where you are when you are, with whomever, you are still Khmer, you are Cambodian, you're supposed to communicate in Khmer or

speak in Khmer. If you speak in English, they jest at you. People jest at you when you speak a foreign language, and they say you are proud, arrogant and elegant. For example, in Khmer we say *Jo*, like that, so our Cambodian people express their withdrawal from speaking English in public, even with their peers and classmates." (Khemera)

"The third thing, last but not least, is culture." (Khunna)

Finally, Khunna (a vice dean) concluded that:

"A freshman, girls and boys coming from high schools to the first year at university and then when the teachers ask them to work in pairs, somehow, they feel a little bit shy not wanting to sit close, face to face, something like that. That is one thing, maybe a culture." (Khunna)

The participants agreed that implementing CLT in Cambodia posed difficulties, because of specific cultural and contextual challenges. They realised that using CLT effectively requires an understanding of local cultures and education settings. They stressed that, to ensure its relevance and efficacy, CLT must be thoughtfully adapted to the local cultural and pedagogical landscape.

The challenges identified were twofold: reluctance of students to practise English openly, for cultural reasons and the misalignment between Western assumptions about education and Cambodian classroom settings. The participants underscored the need for a nuanced application of CLT that has been simplified for Cambodian students and their cultural ethos. This approach necessitates modifying CLT strategically to accommodate local education practices and societal norms. The study highlights the importance of considering cultural and contextual factors in implementing CLT in Cambodian academic settings.

4.4.5 Influence of teachers' understanding on their implementation of CLT

Various analysis methods were applied to establish the influence of the participants' understanding of CLT on the implementation of CLT in their teaching practices. The teachers' ages and years of ELT experience at the university were key areas that were analysed. The analysis compared age groups and years of teaching experience with the features of CLT, classroom practices and teachers' understanding of CLT (see Figures 4.2 and 4.3). The line graphs suggest a notable correlation between teachers' ages and their years of teaching experience in relation to the application of CLT. Notably, younger teachers with less experience in the field and those with extensive teaching experience show distinct patterns in their implementation of CLT.

Figure 4.2

Relationship Between CLT Implementation and Age Group

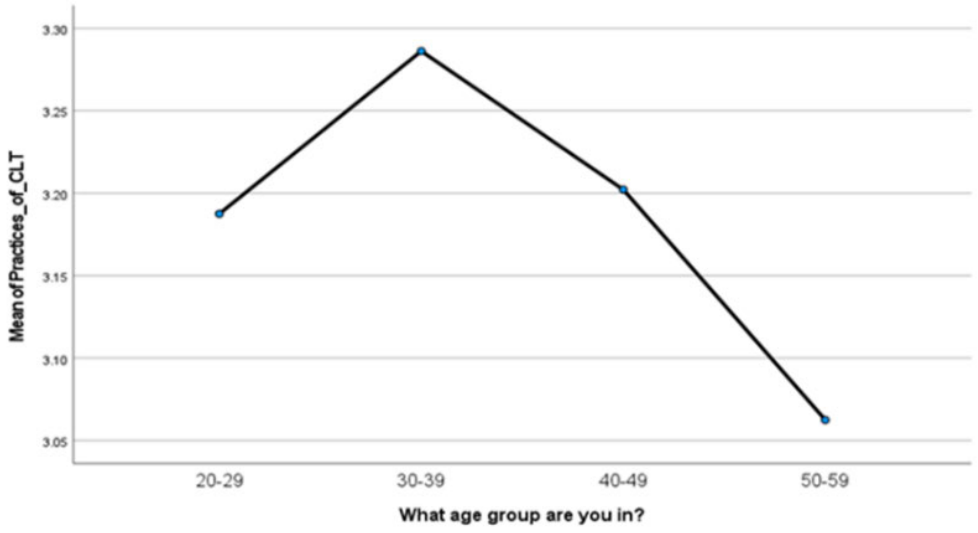


Figure 4.2 shows the mean scores of CLT implementation and indicates a relationship between CLT implementation and the participants' ages. Participants in the 30–39 years age group (Mean = 3.28) implemented CLT more often than their counterparts in other age groups. This trend suggests lower CLT use by members of the youngest cohorts, likely

because of their limited teaching experience, and among the oldest cohorts, possibly because they were less familiar with CLT practices. The 50–59 years age group demonstrated the lowest engagement with CLT (Mean = 3.15), which could be attributed to this group having received minimal CLT-focused training during their initial teacher education, in addition to fewer opportunities for ongoing professional development.

Figure 4.3

Relationship Between CLT Implementation and Years of Experience

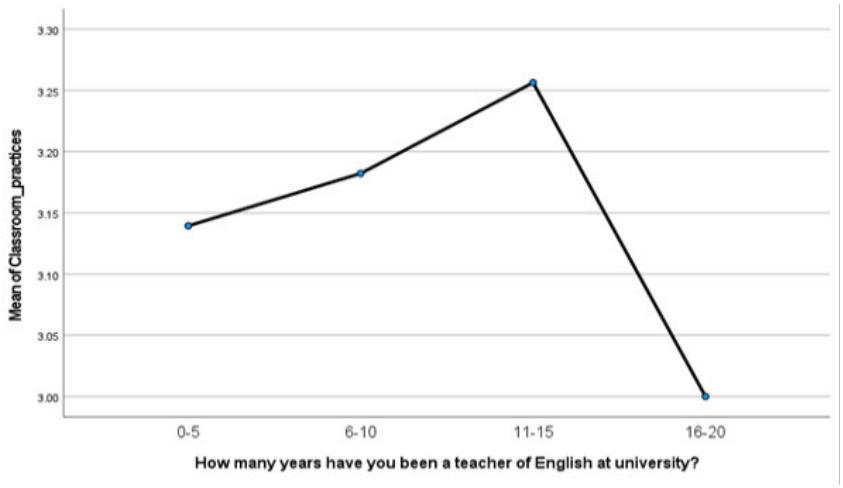


Figure 4.3 shows the mean scores correlating CLT implementation with years of teaching experience at the university level. It reveals that teachers with 11–15 years of experience were most likely to implement CLT, as reflected by the highest mean score—slightly above 3.25. Conversely, participants with 6–10 years of experience engaged in communicative sessions less often, while teachers at the start of their teaching careers conducted were least likely to present interactive sessions. Surprisingly, those with over 15 years of experience exhibited the least use of CLT. This finding suggests that teachers with more experience were more familiar with traditional teaching approaches and did not use CLT in their teaching.

In addition to age and experience, other factors were reported to affect CLT implementation, including the curriculum to which the participants were exposed during their own studies, their personal learning preferences and their motivations for pursuing teaching careers. These factors, which cover both the content and methods of instruction they had received, were found to influence their teaching practices. For example, Dara corroborated the influence of specific textbooks and teaching activities as follows:

> "Just the book itself was an old version at that time. But I had to admit that there were some cases I noticed that they still used the old techniques like writing words on the whiteboard and letting students copy and note them down in the notebooks. So, I find it boring to myself." (Dara)

Chivith shared a different, modern view on teaching methodologies, but confessed that some teachers still resorted to traditional rote learning techniques. He stated:

> "OK, the curriculum was modern and mostly applied students-centred approach, even not a communicative approach. Still, some lecturers use the traditional direct instruction approach because they are accustomed to it. We have deep roots in additional teaching methods giving direct instruction. That's why most of our teachers give direct instructions rather than apply the concept of student centre approach or communicative approach." (Chivith)

Khemerin reflected on their own experiences as an English student and shared observations about the teaching methods their teachers had employed, and added their own view:

> "Not only a teacher is common. Teachers talk all the time, but they like the main activities that they prefer us to do a lot of paperwork, group work, assignments and presentations. OK that he preferred to inspire the students. Just enjoy having time to share their ideas. OK come to respond not all the time by the teachers, not everything

> … When I was young, I went to school to learn English, but what the teachers taught me is like teaching by using a style like grammar or translation or something like the case, then just sitting, enjoying, watching the teachers write on the whiteboard, reading, I translate from the teacher like this I say that old style." (Khemerin)

Khemerin criticised the methods their teachers had used, implying that the students did not find them particularly effective for their own learning.

In turn, Khemerath emphasised the difference in technology use between the time they were a student and today, in spite of no significant shift in pedagogical approaches having taken place:

> "No, uh, it was different when I was a student because of technology. The way teachers taught then was just like from student to teacher, from teacher to student, with less use of technology, with less use of audio or video clips somehow, something like that, so it is still CLT. Still, somehow the way of using technology needs to catch up." (Khemerath)

Similarly, Borith appreciated certain teaching approaches while finding others less favourable:

> "But some teachers were very active and very interactive with students, but some teachers just provided handouts and put students in groups for discussion. It was case-by-case by the teachers, but mostly they were active and interactive because they helped me and had teacher assessments and evaluations, so we had to work hard." (Borith)

Communicative classrooms were a rarity for the participants during their English education, with some reporting that their teachers had primarily relied on the grammar−translation method.

To describe the teaching method their teachers had used, Borath explained that their English education had emphasised linguistic competence rather than communicative competence:

> "So, I can say a bit about the teaching methodology or the teaching methods used by my lecturers back then. During that time, I thought they were very good teachers, but after working as a teacher trainer or as a teacher, having gained better knowledge about teaching TESOL principles, I can say back then we mainly focused on the development of language skills, technically the linguistic competence, rather than the performance competence or communicative competence." (Borath)

This participant sought, independently, to conduct more interactive sessions with their students and trainees than they had themselves experienced as a student.

Several participants reported that their teachers had adhered strictly to traditional teaching styles during their English lessons. For example, two participants asserted that:

> "Because my lecturers used to teach me to lecture about lecturing style. They always used a grammar−translation method called GTM [grammar–translation method]. For example, when my lecturers asked my classmates and me to do group work or pair work, group presentation." (Borin)

> "At my time, um and I believe even after I graduated in 2000 or years after that, the teachers still follow the same curriculum that they put effort on, or they value teacher centre." (Bopha)

The EFL participants seemed to replicate the teaching methods they had been exposed to, without full awareness that their teachers had employed the grammar–translation method at that time. A more explicit acknowledgement of teachers' proficiency in conducting communicative classrooms would provide clarity on their teaching capabilities.

Clearly, the influence of participants' educational background on their teaching approaches is evident from their reflections on their English learning experiences. While some had had opportunities for independent or peer exploration, others were subjected to inactive learning environments that were dominated by lengthy teacher lectures. For example, Dara stated that he had had good opportunities for in-depth exploration:

> "I think an example of activities in groups or individual activities … and then let students explore from the course books on their own or do research on the internet."

Bora also made a statement that shared their own leaning experience:

> "I experienced the teacher centre, and I learned the teacher centre approach. I learned from the teachers, who just explained from the beginning until the end. I don't have a chance to ask questions." (Dara)

Chivith echoed this experience:

> "When I was young, I was isolated from the teacher and students just keep speaking, talking, copying from the whiteboard." (Chivith)

4.5 Students' learning experiences and perspectives

This section presents the perspectives of Cambodian English major students on their EFL learning experiences. The results reveal a strong preference by the students for interactive and communicative learning approaches. However, students faced several challenges, including limited access to technology, few opportunities to practise English outside the classroom and cultural barriers to speaking English in public. The students emphasised the importance of English proficiency for future career opportunities and expressed a desire for more authentic materials and opportunities for real-life English communication.

Table 4.7 presents the mean scores and *SD*s across different categories or aspects of English language instruction. These categories or aspects range from attitudes towards English and

communication-based activities, to curriculum content, technology integration, pronunciation focus, perceived intelligence, grammar-based activities and feedback mechanisms.

Table 4.7

Perspectives on Learning English (*N* = 58)

Categories	Mean	*SD*
Attitudes towards English	5.92	1.07
Communication-based activities	5.75	1.02
Curriculum	5.56	0.95
Technology	5.54	1.05
Pronunciation	5.17	1.29
Intelligence	4.87	1.51
Grammar-based activities	4.69	1.43
Correction	4.59	1.68

Table 4.7 displays the levels of agreement among English major student participants on eight key themes. The highest average agreement is for attitudes towards English (M = 5.92, *SD* = 1.07), which indicates a generally favourable outlook. Similarly, communication-based activities, the current curriculum, technology integration and pronunciation also received generally positive responses, with average agreement levels hovering around 5.5 out of 7. However, the views on intelligence, grammar activities and error correction show greater variability (M < 5.00). This variation suggests a broader range of perspectives on these topics, which could be attributed to potential misunderstandings of the survey questions, or misleading responses.

4.5.1 Attitudes towards English

The survey of student participants reveals a strong consensus on the importance of English proficiency for securing employment opportunities. There was a marked preference for American English over other language variants because America had strong influence in Cambodia between 1970 and 1975. However, given that the primary aim of learning English is to communicate effectively in diverse contexts, the emphasis on one particular variety

raises questions about its relevance. While American English may hold cultural and historical significance, the global nature of English as a lingua franca suggests that exposure to multiple English varieties could better equip students for international communication. The preference for American English, therefore, might limit students' adaptability and awareness of other English language use in many countries, equally pertinent in a globalized world.

Table 4.8

Attitudes Towards English Language (*N* = 58)

Attitudes towards English	Agree		Not Sure		Disagree	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Learning English is important for people in Cambodia	53	91.4	3	5.2	2	3.4
English is useful in getting a good job	56	96.6	0	0	2	3.4
English education should begin in elementary school	45	77.6	2	3.4	11	19
I wish to speak English like native speakers	55	94.8	2	3.4	1	1.8
I want to learn to use American English	55	94.8	3	5.2	0	0

The data presented in Table 4.8 indicate that the student participants generally held English in high esteem. A significant percentage (90.4%) acknowledged the important role of English in Cambodia and 96.6% perceived English proficiency as instrumental for future job prospects. Furthermore, 94.8% aspired to attain fluency comparable to that of a native speaker, particularly in American English. It is therefore evident that Cambodian higher education English teachers critically assess the necessity and practicality of goal-setting using their contexts of CLT to primarily aim for assisting students to develop their communicative competence rather than native-like proficiency. Additionally, about three-quarters of the participants (77.6%) advocated for the introduction of English language education at the elementary school level. These statistics reflect the participants' positive perception of

English as key to unlocking employment opportunities while underscoring the need to focus on effective communication skills over native-like fluency.

4.5.2 Communication-based activities

The survey offered insight into the student participants' perspectives on the role of communication-based activities in English language learning. Table 4.9 indicates a strong consensus among participants on the value of a supportive classroom environment for applying English in practical or simulated real-life scenarios.

Table 4.9

Communication-Based Activities (*N* = 58)

Communication-based activities	Agree		Not Sure		Disagree	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
It is important to use English in real-life or life-like situations	55	94.8	2	3.4	1	1.8
Teachers should create an atmosphere in the classroom to encourage interaction as a class or in groups	55	94.8	2	3.4	1	1.8
Languages are learned mainly through communication, with grammar rules explained when necessary	54	93	3	5.2	1	1.8
Learning English by using the language in communicative activities is essential to eventually master the English language	53	91.4	3	5.2	2	3.4
I believe making trial-and-error attempts to communicate in English helps me to learn English	52	89.6	3	5.2	3	5.2
A communication-focused language program often meets the learner's needs	52	89.5	3	5.2	6	10.3
Learning English is learning to use that language	50	86.1	5	8.6	3	5.2
A language classroom should be communication-focused	48	83	4	6.7	6	10.3

Approximately 95% of students agreed that having a supportive environment facilitates engagement in the communicative use of the language and facilitates effective grammar instruction. A similar proportion, around 90%, endorsed the importance of communicative activities for achieving proficiency in English. Furthermore, the same

percentage affirmed that programs that emphasise communication were instrumental in meeting their language goals and that trial-and-error attempts to communicate benefited the development of their English skills.

More than three-quarters strongly disagreed with the notion that English can be learned without practical usage. Overall, Table 4.9 demonstrates a strong preference for communication-based learning activities, which underscores the importance of interactive experiences in language education.

4.5.3 Grammar-based activities

The survey revealed student preferences for grammar-based activities in English language learning (Table 4.10).

Table 4.10

Grammar-Based Activities (*N* = 58)

Grammar-based activities	Agree		Not Sure		Disagree	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Grammar rules should be explicitly explained in class	52	89.4	5	6.8	1	1.8
The formal study of grammar is essential for eventual mastery of English	52	89.9	4	6.7	2	3.4
There should be more formal study of grammar in English class	49	86.5	5	6.8	4	6.7
I believe my English improves most quickly if I study and practise grammar rules	45	77.6	5	6.8	8	13.6
English learning through sentence drilling is effective	39	67.2	10	17.2	9	15.6
It is more important to study and practise grammatical patterns than to use English in an interactive way in the classroom	34	58.6	8	13.8	16	26.6
I believe Khmer should be frequently used in my English major class for my better understanding of the lessons	33	56.9	8	13.8	17	29.3
Learning English is about learning its grammar rules	28	48.3	7	22.1	23	39.6
I believe the more grammar rules one memorises, the better he/she is at using English	28	48.3	4	6.9	26	44.8

Most student participants (89.4%) agreed that explicit instruction of grammar rules and formal study of grammar are essential for mastering English. However, views diverged regarding prioritising studying and practising grammatical patterns versus using English interactively in the classroom. Interestingly, a significant portion of the participants (56.9%) advocated for the frequent use of the Khmer language for instructional purposes in English major classes to enhance understanding of the lessons.

4.5.4 Curriculum

Table 4.11 presents the distribution of agreement, uncertainty and disagreement of English major students regarding the suitability of their university's English major program and curriculum. Predominantly, students affirmed that the program meets their needs, and expressed their satisfaction with the curriculum. This satisfaction reflects the successful implementation of CLT principles within the program, as students recognized that the curriculum is adequate for preparing them for their future roles as competent teachers by emphasising communicative competence and practical language use.

Table 4.11

Curriculum (*N* = 58)

Curriculum	Agree		Not Sure		Disagree	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
English major program in my university meets my needs	54	93.1	3	5.1	1	1.8
Overall, I am fully satisfied with the English major program in my university	52	89.7	2	3.2	4	7.1
Current English major curriculum in my university is adequate for me to become a good teacher	51	88	6	10.2	1	1.8
English major curriculum in my university is effective	47	81	7	11.8	4	7.2

The majority of the student participants (more than 90%) acknowledged that the current English major curriculum at their university adequately meets their education needs. They also expressed a high level of satisfaction with the program and agreed that the curriculum is sufficiently comprehensive to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to become competent teachers. Overall, the consensus among the students was that the English major curriculum was effective in achieving its objectives.

4.5.5 Technology application

The findings show that students hold a favourable view the integration of technology into English language learning and that doing so enhances their learning experience.

Table 4.12

The Use of Technology (*N* = 58)

Use of Technology	Agree		Not Sure		Disagree	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Videos of real situations make learning English interesting	52	89.7	4	6.9	2	3.4
Digital technology helps me interact better with others in English	51	87.9	4	6.9	3	5.2
Teachers should use more technology-related activities in teaching	51	87.9	4	6.9	3	5.2
Digital technology should be used in English language teaching	49	84.5	7	12.1	2	3.4
Learning English with digital technology is effective	46	79.3	7	15.5	5	5.2

Table 4.12 indicates that most participants (89.7%) believed using videos of real-life situations and digital technology fostered a more engaging English learning environment and enhanced their interactional skills in English. Most of them (87.9%) were of the opinion that teachers should use more technology-driven activities in their teaching methods. While a minority of participants (15.5%) expressed uncertainty, the dominant view is that digital technology is a useful tool in English language education.

4.5.6 Pronunciation

Table 4.13 reports on participants' perspectives on the role of English pronunciation in their learning.

Table 4.13

Pronunciation (*N* = 58)

Pronunciation	Agree		Not Sure		Disagree	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
A person's clear pronunciation usually indicates good English	46	79.3	4	6.9	8	13.8
A good language learner usually produces English naturally	45	77.6	8	13.8	5	8.6

In general, the participants strongly agreed that good English pronunciation is indicative of their language mastery. They also associated their effectiveness or success in language learning with the ability to use English fluently and naturally. Furthermore, they acknowledged the importance of clear and natural-sounding English pronunciation as an essential aspect of language learning.

4.5.7 Intelligence

Table 4.14 shows students' opinions about the relationship between their intelligence and language learning.

Table 4.14

Intelligence (*N* = 58)

Intelligence	Agree		Not Sure		Disagree	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Good language learners are intelligent	42	72.4	7	12.1	9	15.5
Students who have good grades in other subjects are likely to be good English language learners	35	60.4	9	15.5	14	24.1

Although a substantial percentage (72.4%) of student participants equated their ability to learn English with intelligence, while 60.4% believed that attaining good grades in other subjects indicates the likelihood of excelling in English language learning of grammar. Such understandings by students are not the principles of CLT which teachers understood. Intelligence is not claimed to align with acquiring another language. Any alignment with knowledge of grammatical structures and examination results in English were not a consideration in this study.

4.5.8 Error correction

Table 4.15 presents participants' responses on how correction is addressed in their language learning experience.

Table 4.15

Error Correction (*N* = 58)

Error Correction	Agree		Not Sure		Disagree	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Teachers' need to address students' errors in class	53	91.4	3	5.2	2	3.4
The importance of avoiding mistakes in the process of learning English	32	55.2	4	6.7	22	38.1
Teachers' avoidance of correcting students' grammar and pronunciation in front of the whole class	23	39.6	4	6.7	31	43.7

Most participants recognised the importance of teachers addressing students' errors during class, with 91.4% in agreement, although a small proportion (5.2%) were unsure. Views on the necessity of avoiding mistakes while learning English were clearly divided: 55.2% agreed it was necessary to avoid mistakes, 6.7% were unsure and 38.1% disagreed that it was necessary. Furthermore, the practice of public correction of grammar and pronunciation received mixed reactions: 43.7% opposed this approach, while 39.6% supported it.

In summary, the results of the student questionnaire reveal generally positive learning experiences with the CLT approach. Students appreciated the interactive and practical aspects of CLT, by confirming that it enhanced their engagement and facilitated a more immersive language learning environment. However, some students expressed a desire for a more balanced approach that incorporates traditional teaching methods, particularly for grammar and vocabulary learning. Concerns were raised about the adequacy of CLT for preparing them for exams; they suggested that there was a gap between communicative activities and -exam focused learning traditionally prioritized in Cambodia. While CLT effectively improved students' communicative competence, and governments demand CLT approaches to teaching and learning, there is significant nmistmatch traditional examination assessments and the demands on teachers and students to be more communicative in English. Students were caught in the dilemma of needing a more balanced approach between examining English proficiency with grammar and vocabulary integrated naturally into English language use, rather than its current bilingual translation.

4.6 Continuing professional development

This section presents the findings of the teacher questionnaire and interviews in relation to CPD in CLT. This analysis aims to critically assess the efficacy of existing CPD initiatives or programs for equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills needed for CLT implementation. It also aims to capture their experiences and viewpoints regarding such initiatives or programs. This exploration is vital for gaining a nuanced understanding of the strengths of CPD and areas which need improvement, to guide improvements in professional development strategies that could support CLT approaches and make CLT more effective.

4.6.1 Data from questionnaire

The results of the teacher questionnaire identified three primary needs among teachers regarding CPD: self-improvement, pedagogy skills in CLT and digital technology

proficiency. Notably, self-improvement, especially in English language competence, with an emphasis on reading and writing in English, was deemed important by 87.5% of the participants. Professional development in CLT and pedagogy was rated as the second priority, with digital technology skills seen as the least critical, though still significant, with over 70% of the participants affirming the significance of each professional development domain.

Table 4.16 shows the perceived importance of various professional development components for English language teachers.

Table 4.16

CPD Needs of Teachers (*N* = 40)

Items	Important		Not Important	
	n	%	*n*	%
CPD on CLT/pedagogy				
CLT techniques	40	100	0	0
Preparing English language materials	39	97.5	1	2.5
Knowledge of language acquisition	38	95	2	5
Assessing students	37	92.5	3	7.5
Cultural knowledge of Western countries	30	75	10	25
Grammatical explanations in English	30	75	10	25
CPD on self-improvement				
English fluency	37	92.5	3	7.5
Practice of reading and writing in English	35	87.5	5	12.5
CPD on technology/digital technology				
Digital technology use in the classroom	33	82.5	7	17.5
Importance of digital technology	30	75	10	25
Video use in classrooms	29	72.5	11	27.5
Internet-based English instruction	28	70	12	30
Ability to employ technology	23	57.5	17	42.5
Social media (Facebook) as a teaching tool	20	50	14	35

CPD on CLT and pedagogy is unanimously valued, with 100% of the participants acknowledging the importance of CLT techniques. Close behind are the preparation of English language materials and understanding language acquisition, with 97.5% and 95% of participants, respectively, rating these aspects as necessary. Student assessment and cultural

knowledge of Western countries are also considered important, although a quarter of the participants do not view cultural knowledge as crucial.

In terms of self-improvement, English language fluency (92.5%) was assigned a high priority, followed closely by the practice of reading and writing in English, with more than 87.5% of participants finding these activities necessary.

The role of digital technology in CPD was also viewed as significant, yet it was not considered important as pedagogy for CLT and self-improvement areas. The use of digital technology in the classroom was essential to 82.5% of the participants. However, the perceived importance of technology declined when it came to acquiring the ability to employ digital technology (75%) and use social media (Facebook) for teaching, with only half the participants considering the latter important.

Overall, while foundational teaching skills and language proficiency were considered very important, using digital technology in CPD, although recognised as beneficial, was not considered imperative. This indicates that teachers prioritised pedagogical skills and personal language development over the integration of digital tools in teaching.

4.6.2 Data from interviews

The participants also offered their views on the required professional development in one-on-one Zoom interviews. The responses were categorised into seven key themes: training, facilities and support, technologies, resources, aspects related to administration and finance, curriculum and policies.

Under the training theme, several factors were identified as influential for the delivery and effectiveness of professional development at universities. These factors were the absence of structured professional development programs, the frequency and nature of classroom meetings, teacher satisfaction with current training modules and opportunities for teacher collaboration and knowledge-sharing. The professional development planning process, which

was characterised by low faculty engagement, reliance on individual initiative for professional growth and the specific training skills required by teachers also affected training quality. An analysis of these elements reveals their considerable effect on training results.

Moreover, the participants expressed a need for specialised training on various aspects, including assessment techniques; instruction in core language skills such as reading, listening and writing; and the application of CLT. For example, four participants insisted that:

> "We need training on how to teach reading in a more communicative way, then we can design a communicative assessment for students to do." (Chivorn)
>
> "You need to learn the principles and the activities of CLT; you must understand well before you apply it, you put it into practice or implement it in your real class." (Khemera)
>
> "Capacity building for teachers in terms of CLT and other approaches." (Khemerath)
>
> "I need more right now about how to teach using CLT with online classes … Also, teachers need to be trained on how to teach the syllabus, how to use CLT by inviting professors that are very skilful with CLT to train us in Cambodia." (Borin)

4.6.2.1 Facilities and support

The interview data shed light on the support systems at the participants' education institutions. This included resources for attending conferences, the infrastructure required for implementing CLT, methods to motivate student engagement and teams dedicated to supporting students with learning challenges. Participants reported that their universities provided fundamental support by providing a reliable internet connection, LCD projectors, air conditioning, ceiling fans, curtains and administrative services. For example, two participants indicated that:

"The support can be an internet connection, also LCD, sometimes they don't have enough LCDs, or sometimes internet connection and I use my hotspot sharing, but sometimes it's minimal connection." (Chiva)

"Ah, we never ask for any assistance, but the university has numerous facilities and equipment to help us perform teaching performance using CLT. For example, in a favourable classroom environment, air cons, fans and curtains create a motivative learning environment and they are equipped with LCD projectors and also internet service extension for us to access at any time because sometimes we use technology." (Chivith)

In contrast, a vice dean reported the absence of institutional support at their university, which suggests that such assistance may not be uniformly available at all institutions. The vice dean reported that:

"I can see that there is no support from the school [school of education]. They usually say that who introduce them [training] ask them. If I introduce it, they should ask me. Neither have the wi-fi or the lab for them, or something like that, but I think it needs to be made available." (Khelly)

Participants' opinions on institutional support for conference participation were mixed. Some confirmed that their institutions supported their attendance of conferences, which they found valuable for enhancing their understanding and implementation of CLT. Conferences provide a platform for teachers to share best practices, learn about the latest CLT methodologies, and network with peers, all of which are essential for refining their teaching strategies. However, an equal number reported a lack of support for such professional development activities, which limited their opportunities to stay updated with CLT advancements and collaborate with other educators. For example, Bora claimed that:

"My department supports teachers participating in the conference. For example, TESOL conference is one of the others. In case you want to be a participant, the department is going to give like 50% support to this conference, but if you wish to be a presenter, you know, at a conference like TESOL conference, the department is going give you full funds." (Bora)

Bora strongly believed that attending conferences was important for teacher professional development and elaborated on this by adding:

"Teachers should join the teaching conference, like TESOL conference. The conference from different speakers, from other countries that have a lot of experience in implementing CLT principles." (Bora)

Additionally, Borith made their stance clear by asserting:

"The school should have professional development, so teachers can learn, can share or maybe the school should have visiting professors to come and share. I want to learn something. I need colleagues who can work together and share. Sometimes they work individually, but do not share problems, success or experience, which is a kind of staff development." (Borith)

4.6.2.2 Technologies

The participants also listed other technological requirements for supporting teachers' professional development, including access to digital technologies and the internet. They also expressed the necessity for training to use these technologies. The following paragraphs clarify the specific technology challenges faced by the participants in their classroom contexts, starting with a significant demand for digital technology in Cambodian universities. For instance, Khunna asserted that:

"It's just like the kind of Moodle that you are using in Australia, and we requested the Ministry of Education in order to get Microsoft Teams, a licensed Microsoft Teams.

Yes, uh, we have seen that it works really well at other universities in Cambodia." (Khunna)

Borith pointed to the need for additional training on using Moodle:

"One more thing is that teachers are using the same Moodle, but I need more training. If there are new versions there because we might not use all items in that Moodle. You still have more items there." (Borith)

Another aspect of digital technology that emerged was the use of interactive games or applications on smart devices, which the participants identified as a vital component for their professional development. For example, Dorin reported that:

"I prefer more interactive games and technology apps. We can say a game that we can play to interact between teacher and students and then not only Microsoft Teams, but we need to find any other devices which can interact with students even better than just only seeing each other like sometimes students did not turn on their videos, so we don't know what they do, but at least if we got any digital games, any devices that should be considered to be a thing to engage students even much better and they feel interested in it should be good." (Darin)

The need for a more reliable internet connectivity at their universities was also identified; this shortcoming presented challenges to the effective integration of technology into teaching and learning processes. For example, Khemerath claimed:

"In terms of the internet, sometimes the internet service does not meet our needs. It can be slow and …. at the same time, you know, somehow, it's not working properly, the internet is not powerful." (Khemerath)

Similarly, Borath and Darong reiterated the issue of poor internet connection, which significantly affected students:

"The only challenge is the internet connectivity and from the student side. (Borath)

When I'm at a place where the internet connection is good, I think it's helpful. Still, some challenges because the students are not. They are not together, they are in different places, so some places need a better internet connection. So sometimes when I talked, they said no, I could not hear you. Sometimes when they asked me something, I could not hear them because the internet service was not good at their place. That's the problem, not from the teacher, but from the students." (Darong)

The participants were insistent that they needed more comprehensive training in technological tools, including Google Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom and Moodle, to enhance their teaching methodologies. For example, Chiva and Bora stated:

"I think I still need some training from the university, mostly something related to technology, I'm really limited on that." (Chiva)

"Yeah, I want to learn more about how to use Google Classroom and how to use Zoom in an effective way because we usually use Zoom or Google Meet to talk to students. We also need students to do tasks, so if we can be trained to use the functions of those technologies, it is going be helpful for teachers to keep students working online." (Bora)

Borin referred to the importance of involving technology experts in delivering training sessions on the effective use of technological tools:

"Yeah, the school should invite professional guest speakers dealing with the technologies to share the best they are using now in the world in terms of education for online classes. If it's Moodle or Google Classroom so, what is very good now in the world, especially for developed countries?"

4.6.2.3 Resources

The study findings indicate that resources encompass both online resources for teaching and learning and physical resources for classroom use. For example, Khemerath requested that their university provide teachers with online resources for teaching purposes:

> "Another support is resources. Resources here are somehow related to online resources, if the university is able to do something like getting resources for teachers." (Khemerath)

The participants expressed the need for resources that could make their instruction more engaging and effective. The provision of the necessary resources for professional development emerged as a critical factor, notably to support the implementation of CLT. This feedback included a call for further support regarding physical resources, such as textbooks and teaching materials, to enhance teachers' instructional capabilities. For example, Khemerath emphasised the need for sufficient teaching resources:

> "At the same time, teachers need to have adequate teaching resources in line with the CLT approach, as well as learning resources available for students." (Khemerath)

Chivith demanded that universities should increase investment in resources and expressed dissatisfaction with the current situation, which often required teachers to bear the cost:

> "University needs to invest, not teachers. Some universities do not invest even in textbooks, but teachers themselves do it." (Chivith)

The necessity to provide resources to teachers was even more important for the implementation of CLT. For instance, Borin stated:

> "What is more about CLT is that it would be hard for the teachers to use CLT in the class because universities need to provide more teaching materials and teaching aids … I think the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport should provide more on what

that teachers or student can benefit from CLT method. For example, it should provide some teaching materials to public universities like flashcards, scissors and any other things, papers, colour papers and other equipment." (Borin)

4.6.2.4 Aspects related to administration and finance

University administration and finance departments were considered essential for facilitating financial and administrative aspects of professional development. Specifically, administrative support was considered crucial for the paperwork required once the participants sought to pursue their studies or training overseas. For example, Khunna claimed that:

"If teachers request to study abroad, we help them to facilitate the administrative work and encourage them to go abroad. Previously some of our teachers have been selected to study language teaching in Singapore and Thailand." (Khunna)

Few universities, however, offered their teachers financial support for professional development. Even if their teachers were outstanding, several universities failed to provide promotion and financial incentives, as confirmed by a statement by Bopha:

"The dean should also help to encourage, or maybe even from the finance department you know who does a great job, there should be a promotion or increase even $5 or something like that. It's motivation. You know how anyone will try something difficult when the salary is still the same." (Bopha)

4.6.2.5 Curriculum

Involving teachers in the process of collaborative planning of curricula for English major programs was seen as advantageous. To elucidate this point, Khunna provided insights from experience at their institution:

"So, for a language we will have different kinds of techniques and now we are just working with the teachers in order to develop the course book, we need to change the

coursebooks. When the teachers developed the course books, they need to find out what are the teaching techniques and what are their teaching goals in order to help the students. We also help the teachers in order to work to develop curriculum as well as to evaluate the curriculum." (Khunna)

Dymang reconfirmed the importance of a multifaceted approach to curriculum development, by emphasising that it should be a collaborative effort:

"Curriculum development must involve experienced lecturers, professors, industries and graduates." (Dymang)

Regarding the flexibility of the teaching curriculum, the participants reported that they were permitted to supplement their teaching activities to serve student's interests, which could serve as a replacement for the prescribed textbooks. Borith, for instance, mentioned in relation to one of their courses that:

"For Advanced Conversation, I only follow a little from the textbook because I have to design my way based on the students' interest. So, I design the curriculum as well to meet their interest." (Borith)

4.6.2.6 Policies

Policies refer to the set of guidelines or official documents that inform the teachers about lesson preparations, teaching strategies and maintaining educational quality. Participants reported a need for policies that ensure the recruitment of competent and motivated students into the English programs. For example, Khunna expressed a strongly belief that universities should recruit qualified students:

"I think that we should start with student recruitment … our pride is about equality. If we want to focus on quality, we have to focus on students. When we can select good students, then we will have a good teacher. Because sometimes teachers feel so bored teaching students [with] deficient knowledge." (Khunna)

The absence of a policy specifically aimed at motivating the teachers was also noted. Khunna highlighted this deficiency:

> "We can say motivations are string attached; it means that if you want to motivate the teachers, what the teachers will have … OK, so we can say that you will be promoted if you do this and if you do that." (Khunna)

Participants also referred to the absence of policy regarding the implementation of CLT. Chivith addressed this absence:

> "The universities should set in their policies that in order to implement our curriculum successfully, in order to achieve the goal and objectives of our curriculum, we need to use CLT in our teaching. Teachers apply CLT in our teaching." (Chivith)

Bora agreed that CLT was effective in helping student communication and emphasised the importance of having a supportive policy:

> "We better implement CLT in Cambodian universities because students have enough ability to communicate. They have enough language and English proficiency in communicating to listen. In particular, they can communicate more effectively and become great students." (Bora)

In instances where teaching policy mandates the use of CLT, it is crucial to clarify consequences for a failure to use CLT, to ensure adherence. In cases where teachers do not abide by the policy, disciplinary measures may be necessary. Chivith underscored this point by stating that:

> "When it becomes a policy and then our teachers will apply, as you know, when something is a policy, it is a law or regulation. Law is possible whether you want it or not; you need to comply; you need to respect it because there is punishment when you break the law … Policy starts from policy, but when the university sets it as policy, you need to be ready to train your teachers." (Chivith)

In summary, the analysis of CPD in CLT, based on teacher questionnaires and interviews, reveals areas of professional development that teachers prioritised, which focused on English language proficiency, CLT-related pedagogies and digital technology. Notably, teachers emphasised improving their English language skills, particularly in reading and writing, because they believed such skills were crucial for the effective implementation of CLT. Although they acknowledged a need to develop their digital technology skills for teaching further, they did not prioritise it to the same extent as improving their English language proficiency and CLT-related pedagogies. The findings indicate a shortcoming in structured CPD programs and pointing out an urgent need for more training in CLT approaches, assessment techniques and core language skills. Furthermore, support for CPD varied among institutions, ranging from encouraging conference participation to providing resources, which highlights the inconsistencies in support.

Moreover, the findings stress the importance of robust support systems at institutions, including technology, administrative support and policies that encourage CPD engagement by the teachers. Demands for more comprehensive training in digital tools and better access to both physical and digital teaching materials to enhance educational practices were also evident. The need for more administrative and financial support, the opportunity to do collaborative work on curriculum planning and development and the implementation of clear policies that emphasise CLT practices were seen as imperative for enhancing the CPD environment for CLT implementation. These insights highlight the need for more CPD efforts with the intention to provide teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills and support for their successful adoption of CLT, thereby improving educational outcomes and teacher satisfaction with CPD initiatives.

4.6.3 Correlation between CPD required and years of teaching experience

The study also examined the relationship between the volume of professional development required by teachers and their tenure at the university. This was done to understand how teaching experience affects the need for ongoing professional development of teachers.

Figure 4.4

Correlation Between CPD Required and Years of Teaching Experience

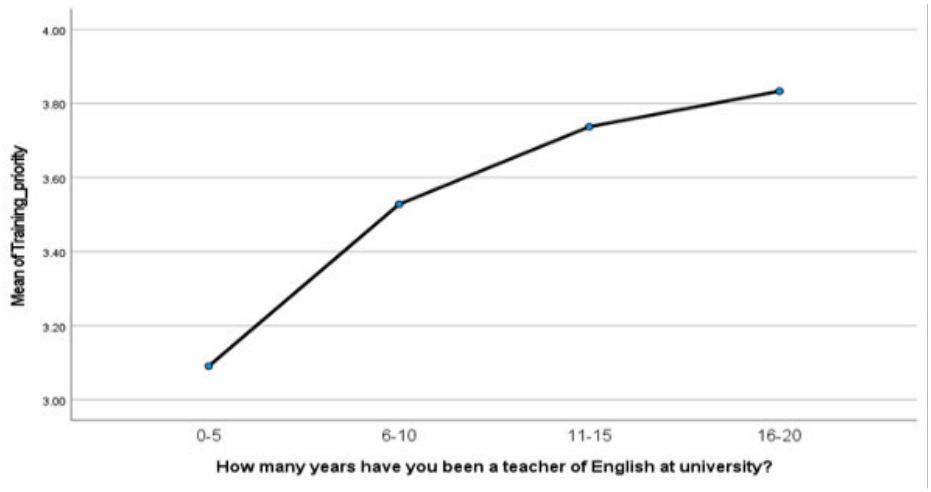


Figure 4.4 shows an interesting trend regarding teachers' professional development needs in relation to their teaching experience. According to the data, novice teachers with less than five years of experience reported the lowest need for professional development (Mean = 3.10). As their teaching experience increases, so does teachers' need for professional development; teachers with six to 10 years of experience registered a higher need for professional development (Mean = 3.6). This trend continues, with the most experienced teachers, those with the longest teaching tenure, indicating the greatest need for professional development (Mean > 3.8).

The ascending mean scores of training priority across the experience range sugguest that, while teachers might not have started with solid CLT training, they recognised the need

for further training and support while they gained more experience. This finding may reflect the evolving demands of teaching, whereby more experienced teachers recognise the necessity of updating and expanding their skills, particularly in areas such as CLT and integrating technology into their teaching practices, for which they might have had limited initial training. The findings underscore the importance of CPD for ensuring that teachers remain adept at implementing CLT and integrating technology into education, regardless of the stage of their career. Professional development of the kind teachers find valuable is crucial to their use of effective CLT methodologies, which allow them to adapt to new educational tools and resources, thereby enhancing their ability to foster communicative competence in their students.

4.7 Document analysis

The purpose of the document analysis undertaken as part of this study was to complement and contextualise the findings obtained from the questionnaires and interviews. By analysing relevant documents, such as curriculum materials, textbooks, syllabi, assessments and policy documents, the study aimed to uncover the institutional and curricular frameworks that support or hinder the implementation of CLT. This analysis was essential for understanding how CLT principles are embedded or addressed in formal educational resources and guidelines. It provided a deeper insight into the systemic support and challenges faced in practising CLT, revealed discrepancies or alignments between theoretical CLT principles and their practical application in education settings.

The sample curriculum of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Language at University D articulated a broad vision, namely, to prepare graduates in North-West Cambodia with ‘high social morality’ to contribute to national development. However, the language skill component of the faculty mission is ambiguously articulated and lacks specificity on whether it pertains to the Khmer language or foreign languages; it is devoid of any directive about

communicative ways to learn or teach language. For example, the policy broadly states the objective to ‘Build up students’ knowledge, skills and practices in language so that they can compete successfully in the labour market’. That curriculum outlines five goals to achieve this mission. Goal 2, for example, states that the faculty should ‘deliver instruction in English for students in University D to meet their communicative, academic and professional needs’. This statement is relevant to the features of CLT, which focus on equipping students with English language skills that are essential for effective communication in their academic studies and professional work. However, the absence of any explanation about the instructional approaches leaves it unclear whether the faculty understood or practised CLT.

Goal 3 states that the faculty should ‘provide teaching staff with the opportunity for their professionalism support communicative language learning for professional communication skills’. The faculty aims to offer support to its teachers to improve their communication skills and become qualified teachers in the contemporary teaching world. While the intent to bolster communication skills is apparent, the curriculum falls short of outlining the features of communicative language learning or professional communication standards.

Similarly, according to Goal 4, the faculty aims for its members to participate in research and development. However, it fails to provide clear guidelines for teachers’ participation in research and pedagogical innovation. Goal 5 indicates that the management aims to provide teachers with resources through various professional development channels, including workshops, seminars, conferences or consultancies. However, the pathway to accessing these resources or their relevance to CLT remains unclear.

While the curriculum aligns with the overarching vision and mission of the institution, by offering four undergraduate language programs and several non-degree courses, it does not explicitly provide detailed instructions on teaching approaches such as CLT. Teachers are left

to independently craft syllabi, design teaching activities, develop lesson plans and prepare exam papers from preselected or internally developed texts. Therefore, clear evidence for communicative teaching practices, structured professional development and access to teaching resources are imperative for the faculty's educational strategies.

4.7.1 Course syllabus and assessment

The sample Writing Course syllabus (see Appendix J) provides a detailed overview of the language skills required of students and is tailored explicitly to and specifically designed for academic essay writing across various genres, including process, expository, comparison/contrast and argumentative essays. It is structured to develop these skills through practices such as paraphrasing and summarising. It includes clearly defined learning outcomes, such as understanding key terms and correctly citing sources in academic writing. The course structure is presented methodically, with initial sessions transitioning from 'paragraphs to essays' and introducing 'essential components of an essay,' while assessments involve tasks such as 'students analysing a sample essay'. However, the syllabus does not provide any guidelines for how the class teachers should administer each area of focus or assessment.

In turn, the sample test of Core English seeks to test students' understanding of key terms and passive forms of grammar used in the course. The test items (see Appendix K) exemplify grammar testing. For example, Excerpt 1 below contains two vocabulary questions in multiple-choice format and requires rote memorisation of -ed pronunciation. In addition, Excerpt 2 shows how the passive voice is formed using the auxiliary verb 'to be', with past participle verbs (e.g. I was driven to the airport). The two excerpts do not suggest an assessment grounded in a communicative approach, thereby missing the opportunity to evaluate language proficiency in meaningful and real-world contexts. This absence

underscores a potential mismatch between the objectives of the syllabus and the evaluative measures that could effectively gauge communicative competency.

Excerpt 1: Vocabulary test (15 points)

"The vocabulary test has two sections. No. 1 has 15 multiple-choice questions with four given response choices each, for example 'Chris is quite … He doesn't talk about his personal life much.' A. gentle, B. reserved, C. polite, d. stubborn. No. 2 has 42 phonetic endings. Given three sets of phoneme examples for verb endings with -ed (unvoiced, voiced and schwa /ə/) respond accurately to 42 verb endings in -ed, e.g. walk, walked."

Excerpt 2: Grammar test (15 points)

"(i) Identify sentences from 10 sample sentences and mark 'P' to those that can be converted to passive, e.g. Someone will drive you to the airport.

(ii) Convert seven sentences and write them in the passive, e.g. They have sold their car to pay their debts."

The assessment methods outlined in the analysed documents do not encompass higher-level communicative tasks, such as in-depth discussion, debate or critical responses. Specifically, the exam paper on Core English lacks components for assessing speaking and listening skills, which are vital for achieving the primary objectives of the course, of developing the four macro skills essential for English major students.

In the reading comprehension section, which is worth 15 points, students engage with a 200-word text (without a reference to the source) and answer 16 questions. While 10 of these are straightforward wh-word questions (e.g. What is China urging people not to do?) that merely assess surface-level comprehension, the remaining six ask for personal opinions (e.g. How worried are you about coronavirus?). The direct nature of wh-word questions makes them less challenging, as answers can be directly found in the reading passage. The

opinion questions, though communicative, are overly broad and disconnected from the passage, as they rely more on personal reflection than critical analysis of the content.

The writing section, also worth 15 points, prompts students to compose an argumentative essay on 'Reading Books'. However, the task, which asks students to discuss the main benefits of reading and promote it among their peers and family, falls short of fostering argumentation or debate. It steers students towards outlining advantages rather than engaging in a balanced argument against the stated benefits. Furthermore, the broad nature of the topic, which focuses on persuading others to appreciate reading, aligns more with descriptive, cause and effect or persuasive writing, rather than true argumentation.

While the sample course syllabus and exam paper incorporate some CLT components, they fall short of providing the instructional processes for these communicative skills, which leaves considerable discretion to teachers. The sample assessments primarily evaluate understanding of key terms, in isolation, while failing to engage students in interactive language application. These materials do not sufficiently prove whether teachers thoroughly understand CLT features or how effectively they implement these elements in their teaching.

4.7.2 Textbook

An analysis of the Core English textbook, *New Headway Intermediate Student's Book,* was undertaken. This textbook was selected by the university management or the dean of the language faculty and aims to develop language skills of first-year students and enhance their confidence in using English. The textbook is structured for a year-long course across two semesters comprising six units each (totalling 45 hours or 30 sessions of 1.5 hours each) and provides a suite of predesigned activities. Each unit consistently offers grammar, vocabulary, everyday English and skills development in reading, speaking, listening and writing.

Regarding speaking skills, one sample activity is a class survey (page 9), for which students engage in face-to-face interviews with peers using preformulated questions, such as

Are you interested in any sports? and Does music play an important role in your life? Students answer these questions about themselves, add two additional questions of their own and then pair up for interviews. The final step involves sharing their own and their partners' answers with the class. While this survey facilitates interaction, it limits students to guided questions, thereby diminishing opportunities for creative or spontaneous communication.

One sample task for writing skills involves correcting an informal letter (page 103). Students analyse a letter from Kati to her English friend, Stephanie, marked with errors and symbols to denote types of mistakes. They answer questions about the letter and use it as a foundation for writing a similar letter. This task is more focused on proofreading than communicative writing. Additionally, the task effectiveness heavily relies on the teacher and the outlined process omits crucial elements, such as peer correction, teacher feedback and guidance on identifying error types in students' writing.

While the *New Headway Intermediate Student's Book* aligns with the faculty goal of developing language proficiency, its methodology leans towards structured and rote learning, rather than fostering creativity or communicative skills. Though well-intentioned, the activities may fail to fully engage students in dynamic language use and effectiveness hinges largely on the instructional approach employed by teachers.

4.7.3 Policy documents

The study also analysed several MoEYS-related documents for guidance on CLT, including the Education Congress report 2023 (MoEYS, 2023), the *Education Strategic Plan 2019–2023* (MoEYS, 2019b), the *Policy on Higher Education Vision 2030* (MoEYS, 2014), *Policy and Strategies on Information and Communication Technology in Education* (MoEYS, 2004) and *National Standards for Institutional Accreditation* (ACC, 2015).

The "Education Strategic Plan 2019-2023" in Cambodia lacks emphasis on CLT for teachers. While the plan focuses on general teaching standards, curriculum development, and

digital education, it does not explicitly incorporate CLT principles. This omission suggests that current teacher training may not fully prepare educators for effective communicative methodologies. To enhance English language instruction, it is crucial to embed CLT principles into professional development and curriculum reforms.

The Education Congress report (MoEYS, 2023) provides statistics for all education levels in Cambodia but lacks instructional guidance. Similarly, the *Education Strategic Plan 2019–2023* lays out a five-year roadmap for education improvement that is aimed at enhancing the quality of teaching and learning but falls short of specific guidelines for CLT implementation. For example, while Strategy 1.2 asserts the goal to 'Improve capacity in teaching, learning and research through the development of higher education partnership quality programs', it does not detail the approaches or specific teaching methods to be employed.

The *Policy on Higher Education Vision 2030* focuses exclusively on higher education and sets broad goals such as 'To develop a good governance system and higher education mechanisms that ensure qualified students have an opportunity to access quality higher education programs which respond to the needs of socio-economic development and labour market'. Objective 3.2. states, 'To improve the quality of learning, teaching and research systems to provide students with knowledge and skills needed in the labour market and contribute to national development'. However, clear directions for teaching, especially in terms of CLT, are not articulated.

The *Policy and Strategies on Information and Communication Technology in Cambodia* (MoEYS, 2004) provides an overview of the situation regarding ICT at all education levels in Cambodia. The document identifies ICT as an essential component of higher education, noting that:

> "The change to a market economy since 1993 has facilitated the growth of private higher education establishments of varying size and quality. Some popular courses are ICT-related subjects, foreign languages and business. These colleges are urban and have good ICT facilities and internet connection."

The policy states that ICT is in a growing demand. Therefore, ICT courses are established in private higher education institutions alongside other courses, including foreign languages and business. The policy indicates that private higher education institutions or colleges have been well equipped with ICT facilities and internet services. However, it omits details on how these facilities have assisted teachers to teach in communicative ways, or the ways forward for ICT integration in public higher education institutions.

Furthermore, the *National Standards for Institutional Accreditation* sets forth minimum requirements for staffing and professional development, by emphasising the need for quality teachers and CPD. It mandates adequate teaching and learning facilities, such as 'library, laboratories, computer rooms, textbooks, journals, the internet and others', as outlined in Standard 6. However, it does not provide specific pedagogical guidelines—not for CLT approaches either.

In summary, while the MoEYS documents provide higher education leaders with guidance on governance, management, planning and operations, including criteria for teacher qualifications and professional development avenues, they lack concrete instructions on employing communicative teaching methods. This leaves a gap for teachers who seek to implement CLT effectively in their classrooms.

4.8 Summary

This chapter presented the study results, based on the data collected from questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. It started by explaining the results related to how EFL teachers and vice deans (who also taught) understood CLT. Data from the teacher

questionnaire and interviews reveal that they understood the essential features and techniques of CLT well. They offered various definitions of CLT and acknowledged that it benefits students, teachers and institutions. Then, the results pertaining to CLT implementation, gained from the questionnaire and interviews, were presented. The results confirm that teachers implemented CLT in their teaching, even though they acknowledged that traditional teaching approaches had practical benefits for their students. English major students, through their survey responses, affirmed that their teachers used CLT. Student participants expressed satisfaction with the current curriculum and appreciated the integration of technology in their learning process.

The chapter also presented the multifaceted challenges relating to implementing CLT and affecting teachers, students and institutions. These challenges encompass aspects such as resource constraints, curriculum limitations, assessment practices and policy implications. The findings shed light on the complexities and obstacles encountered in implementing CLT. Furthermore, the chapter discussed the influence of teachers' understanding of CLT on their instructional performance, by highlighting the connection between the significance of CPD and pedagogical skills and knowledge of CLT.

The chapter further provided English major students' perspectives on their English learning experiences and how effectively they were learning English. It is important to note that much of the data collected from students tended to focus more on teaching practices than on their own learning experiences. This reflects the focus on teacher understandings of CLT and its implementation. Future research might more closely examine student agency of their own learning and focused response to CLT as it was presented in the classes. It is un-characteristic of post-colonial learning environments like Cambodia to focus on the way higher education students learn English. Despite this finding, the feedback provided by students does highlight both strengths and weaknesses of current English language

instruction, which enables the development of a more student-centred and effective learning environment.

Finally, the chapter presented the results regarding CPD avenues that facilitate effective CLT implementation in the English major curriculum. The findings emphasise the need for comprehensive CPD schemes that encompass training, access to facilities and support, integration of technology, making resources available, providing administrative and financial support, curriculum development and policy enhancements. The chapter also reported results of the analysis of the curriculum, course syllabus, assessment practices, textbooks and policy documents and offered insights for future research and pedagogical improvements in CLT implementation. Chapter 5 discusses these results in relation to the literature on the topic.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the results of the study presented in Chapter 4. It provides a comprehensive discussion of the implementation of CLT in Cambodian university EFL contexts. Aspects related to implementation include the understanding of CLT of Cambodian university EFL teachers and vice deans and the main challenges they face when they implement CLT. Contrasts and comparisons with other EFL teaching contexts, in Asia and elsewhere were reported in the review of literature, Chapter 2. In this chapter, the CPD needs of Cambodian university EFL teachers are discussed, as are the perspectives of Cambodian English major students on their EFL learning experiences. The chapter also scrutinises the effect of the absence of formal guidelines for CLT implementation in the Cambodian EFL context and draws comparisons with studies undertaken elsewhere. By examining these aspects, the chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of CLT implementation in Cambodian university EFL settings, by highlighting areas that need improvement to enhance ELT and learning practices that relate to EFL higher education in teacher training and professional development elsewhere in Asia.

5.2 Understanding of communicative language teaching of Cambodian English as a foreign language of university teachers and vice deans

The study found that Cambodian university EFL teachers and vice deans understood that the primary focus of students is on the instructional process, and they appreciated that their teaching approaches could assist students to develop communicative competence. This belief system aligns with insights from the literature, which suggest that teachers' interpretations and pedagogical decisions are informed by their own experiences, cultural contexts and personal beliefs (Borg, 2003; Mayer, 2019; M. M. Rahman et al., 2018). Borg explained the significant role of these factors in shaping teachers' beliefs. The findings of this

study confirm those of Borg (2003) which stated that teachers' unique experiences and belief systems could influence their understanding of CLT principles.

The academic teacher participants' recognition of the importance of fluency and communicative competence is aligned with established CLT principles highlighted by the literature (Birello, 2012; Buehl & Beck, 2015; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). This endorsement affirms that Cambodian higher education CLT classrooms are conducive to improving fluency, with accuracy being refined once fluency has been achieved. This approach by teachers prioritises fluent communication as the primary objective and is supported by the work of researchers such as Al Hamdani (2013), Alamri (2018) and Andreou and Galantomos (2009). This perspective reinforces the essence of CLT, which is to foster fluent English language use.

The teachers' understanding of the integral role of various CLT activities in CLT--based EFL contexts, such as debates, role plays and group work, supports the findings of other studies (Anani Sarab et al., 2016; Hos & Kekec, 2014; Jamalzadeh & Shahsavar, 2015). The current study's findings underscore that CLT is not solely about conversational fluency, but also grammar structure. This dual focus requires a balanced pedagogical approach that combines the development of fluency with the precision of accuracy, as acknowledged in the literature (Richards, 2001, 2005; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This insight contributes to a nuanced understanding of CLT, affirms its comprehensive nature in language education, indicates a commitment to CLT practices by Cambodian higher education professionals.

The participants recognised the benefits of CLT in enhancing student confidence, language skills and critical thinking, which is consistent with the findings of M. M. Rahman et al. (2018) and M. Sato and Oyanedel (2019), and reinforcing the narrative of the role of CLT in promoting comprehensive student development. This study also supports the claim

that CLT contributes to teachers' professional growth and enriches their communication and facilitation skills and language proficiency, as documented by Anani Sarab et al. (2016) in Iran and Hos and Kekec (2014) in Turkey. The collective insights from these studies affirm the transformative potential of CLT, which extends its capacity to advance student learning and teacher professional development.

The participants in this study believed that CLT conferred benefits on their universities by producing qualified EFL teachers and enhancing students' proficiency as future English teachers. This perspective is consistent with other research that investigated the institutional advantages of CLT (Anani Sarab et al., 2016; M. M. Rahman et al., 2018; M. Sato & Oyanedel, 2019). However, the findings of this study are contextually specific to the Cambodian higher education classroom context and may not be directly generalisable to other contexts where English learning extends beyond the classroom into the broader community, which is a focus of English major programs.

Cambodian academics understood that as teachers they were not overwhelmed by extensive CLT activity preparation—findings that are aligned with findings of previous studies. Specifically, Johnson and Golombek (2011) found that teachers recognised the necessity to do careful planning and preparation to facilitate the successful deployment of CLT in lessons.

Although the current study corroborates the findings of previous studies on teachers' understanding of CLT (Anani Sarab et al., 2016; T. Rahman, 2015), it also highlights unique discrepancies in the Cambodian context. Notably, there is a mismatch between teachers' stated beliefs and their actual classroom behaviours, there are challenges related to the implementation of CLT and a persistent presence of traditional teaching methods in Cambodian EFL classrooms. It is crucial to recognise the importance of examining teachers' attitudes, cognitive processes and the various factors that influence their practices. The

findings related to Cambodian university EFL teachers and vice deans suggest that they have a clear understanding of CLT and its potential benefits, which indicate a positive perception and prospects for its future implementation in higher education settings. Nevertheless, to ensure the continued successful incorporation of CLT in classroom instruction, there is a need for sustainable support and professional development that is tailored to address the challenges encountered in the Cambodian educational environment.

5.3 Implementation of communicative language teaching in Cambodian EFL university context

Several essential aspects relating to the implementation of CLT in the Cambodian university EFL context emerged. First, the Cambodian university EFL teachers used interactive activities extensively, which reflects a focus on the student-centred and communicative approaches inherent in CLT. This finding is congruent with that of L. Wei et al. (2018), who undertook studies in various Asian contexts, including China. The teachers created opportunities to use the target language in authentic contexts by guiding students to engage in interactive activities. This underscores the progressive adoption of the CLT approach in Cambodian higher education and reflects a commitment to fostering practical language skills through dynamic classroom engagement.

The present study revealed a nuanced approach to language teaching by Cambodian university EFL teachers, who, while adapting the communicative and student-centred principles of CLT, continued giving grammar explanations and translating. This dual strategy suggests that teachers understand that a blend of new and familiar teaching methods may be necessary to address their students' varied learning preferences and needs. Such a hybrid approach aligns with the dynamic nature of language instruction. It reflects the pedagogical flexibility recommended by Kumaravadivelu (2006), who acknowledges the practicality of integrating traditional and modern teaching practices. This strategic balance underscores the

complexity and adaptability of CLT implementation in the Cambodian higher education context.

In the second place, the pervasive presence of technology in language classrooms is a standout feature of the contemporary CLT approach, as reflected in the widespread adoption of digital tools by Cambodian university EFL teachers and vice deans. This integration is in line with global educational trends that promote enhancing interactivity and access to diverse language resources, which supports similar findings by European and American studies (Karamifar et al., 2019) and Japan (Stockwell, 2010). Platforms such as Facebook and Telegram have been found to foster collaboration and engagement and offer students valuable opportunities to use authentic language resources and real interactions (Ruschoff, 2016). This integration of technology in the EFL context is not only indicative of a progressive pedagogical shift, but also resonates with successful outcomes reported in other regions, such as Saudi Arabia (Abu-Ayfah, 2020) and Thailand (Komol & Suwanphathama, 2020), thereby affirming the role of digital media in advancing language proficiency and interactive learning.

In addition to the identified knowledge gap regarding the use of technology in modern education, Cambodian teachers used various technological tools, including Google Meet, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, Telegram, YouTube, LCD projectors, computers, Zoom and Moodle to implement CLT and achieve student learning goals. This diverse technological repertoire emphasises the importance of integrating ICT in language teaching—a strategy that aligns with the broader education push for CPD to enhance tech efficacy in teaching. Similar to previous studies that emphasise the importance of CPD in the use of technology in education (Ohlin, 2019; Williams et al., 2022), the findings of this study advocate for targeted CPD programs that fulfil the specific needs of Cambodian university EFL teachers. Such initiatives would be instrumental in effectively empowering teachers to harness these digital platforms and foster dynamic, interactive and student-centred learning environments.

Furthermore, this study found that Cambodian university EFL teachers and vice deans had a distinct preference for employing English in instructional directives, thereby creating what they perceive to be part of an English-rich learning environment. This approach aligns with the tenets of the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1987), which emphasises social interaction and active language use in learning. By consistently using English for classroom instructions, teachers promoted students' exposure to the target language—an essential aspect of language learning. Additionally, the teachers' initiatives to facilitate language practice among students through peer interactions, vigilant monitoring and corrective feedback support the sociocultural perspective that posits that cognitive development is a consequence of social interactions. As argued by Scott and Palincsar (2013), this perspective asserts that the learning process is fundamentally a social endeavour through with cognitive growth is achieved through collaborative and communicative activities.

Cambodian university EFL students responded positively to interactive activities and indicating a preference for dynamic teaching methods. This proclivity corroborates other studies, which highlight the importance of student engagement and active participation in language learning (R. Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Moreover, the students' receptivity to traditional teaching methodologies and the incorporation of technology suggests accepting diverse instructional approaches. Such a balanced amalgamation of interactive and conventional pedagogies reflects a pragmatic approach to language instruction. It resonates with the sociocultural perspective of shared activity and the merits of collaborative learning environments, as Nicol (2010) discusses.

The findings of this study reinforce the importance of integrating sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1987) and the tenets of CLT (Littlewood, 1981; Richards, 2005; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Savignon, 1972, 1976, 1987, 1991, 2001, 2007) in the context of English language education. The present study highlights the importance of interactive activities, the

coexistence of traditional and modern teaching practices, the crucial role of language immersion in the classroom and the significance of aligning teaching methods with students' preferences and engagement levels. Additionally, the study acknowledges the increasing trend of incorporating digital technologies into language education, which is in alignment with language education practices (Ohlin, 2019; Williams et al., 2022). These insights point to the necessity of further exploration into how sociocultural factors and teachers' beliefs influence learning outcomes and the effectiveness of teaching strategies in higher education, particularly in EFL contexts.

The widespread adoption of digital technology and social media platforms in Cambodian university EFL classrooms represents a distinctive trend that extends beyond the general acknowledgement of the role of technology in language classrooms as discussed in the literature (Caena & Redecker, 2019; Lomicka & Lord, 2019; Mercer et al., 2019). This study also underscores the use of digital tools, including Facebook, by Cambodian university EFL teachers, which indicates the crucial role of these tools in facilitating CLT implementation and achieving learning objectives. Moreover, the study reveals that Cambodian university EFL students had a positive attitude about incorporating technology in their instructional practices, which emphasises their inclination towards interactive and technologically supported learning experiences. These insights provide valuable empirical contributions to the discourse on CLT implementation in higher education EFL contexts, particularly at Cambodian provincial universities and underline the dynamic relationship between traditional pedagogies and contemporary digital tools in language education.

5.4 Key challenges facing implementation of communicative language teaching in the Cambodian context

This study found that teachers, students and institutions faced several challenges in implementing CLT in Cambodian university EFL settings. The challenges include deficits in

digital literacy and pedagogical understanding, particularly for integrating technology in teaching methodologies. This lack of skills severely constrained teachers' capacity to effectively weave digital tools into their instructional repertoire. Moreover, the difficulty of achieving an immersive experience in the target language culture, accompanied by limited digital technology facilities and resources, hampered teachers' efforts to exploit the full potential and promise of CLT. These impediments are consistent with findings reported by the literature (Richards, 2005), which highlights the need for communicative teaching competencies and resources in Cambodian English major programs. Such challenges are not unique to Cambodia; they have been exposed in the academic environments of Afghanistan (Noori, 2018), Bangladesh (Karim, 2004), Iran (Rahimi & Naderi, 2014), Malaysia (Mustapha & Yahaya, 2013), Saudi Arabia (Al Asmari, 2015), South Korea (D. Li, 1998), and Taiwan (S.-H. Huang, 2016). In these countries, shortages of skilled teachers and insufficient educational resources similarly impede the successful implementation of CLT.

The study reports the universal recognition by teachers of the importance of technology in education, including the types of digital technology platforms teachers can use in their pedagogical practices. Despite this recognition, teachers faced substantial barriers, including a lack of skills to effectively use these technological tools and limited availability of resources, which hampered the optimal implementation of CLT. This finding is aligned with the challenges identified in the education landscape of Bangladesh (Karim, 2004) and Taiwan (S.-H. Huang, 2016), where similar resource deficits and a lack of technological tools were among the key challenges (Zidny et al., 2020). Additionally, Cambodian university EFL teachers and vice deans expressed that their spoken English was deficient, which directly affected their ability to establish an authentic English-speaking environment in the classroom. This finding is consistent with findings of research conducted in Malaysia, which found that teachers' CLT knowledge or their attitudes towards CLT were deemed crucial for its

successful implementation (Mustapha & Yahaya, 2013). In both contexts, teachers' spoken English proficiency plays a vital role in creating an environment that is conducive to communicative learning for students. The Malaysian study identified that without adequate proficiency and a positive attitude towards CLT, teachers struggled to effectively engage students in meaningful communication, thereby hindering the establishment of an immersive language learning environment. A similar parallel with my research in Cambodia suggests that improving spoken English proficiency among teachers is essential for fostering successful CLT practices.

The study found a gap in participants' knowledge of English-speaking cultures, which emerged as a barrier to incorporating cultural elements in language instruction. This finding corroborates recent work by Hoff (2020) and Zidny et al. (2020), who emphasise the need for cultural adaptability in teaching methodologies. Their work underscores the significance of incorporating students' cultural backgrounds, values and preferred learning styles, in addition to providing culturally relevant situations in the learning materials for students to learn effectively.

The study also shed light on participants' misconceptions about the nature of CLT. Concern can be expressed about the constraints imposed by too little preparation time, which affects the design and implementation of communicative activities. Although teachers and vice deans did not believe significant preparation time was necessary for CLT lessons, they reported having too little time to prepare communicative activities; this was a significant challenge to implementing CLT and reflects a disconnect in their understanding of the demands of CLT. This issue of time constraints and packed schedules has been consistently identified as challenges associated with CLT implementation, as documented in other studies conducted in Cambodia by Heng (2014), in Vietnam by Hien and Loan (2018) and in Malaysia by Mustapha and Yahaya (2013).

The results of this study indicate that English major students in Cambodia encountered notable challenges while engaging with CLT. Prominent among these were their low proficiency in English and general resistance to speaking, which were also identified as significant difficulties in similar education contexts. These challenges have been recognised as remarkable barriers to active participation in CLT-oriented activities (S.-H. Huang, 2016; Mustapha & Yahaya, 2013). Furthermore, students reported feeling apprehensive about making mistakes, having low motivation, experiencing difficulties writing and having mixed abilities in English proficiency and inadequate grammar skills. These challenges are consistent with the broader literature on CLT implementation, which emphasises the importance of creating strategies to bolster student motivation, enhance their writing skills and cater to a range of proficiency levels of language mastery (Heng, 2014; Mustapha & Yahaya, 2013).

Institutional challenges emerged as a significant factor that influenced the implementation of CLT in Cambodia. The need for authentic teaching materials, administrative assistance, financial support and specialised teacher training in CLT approaches were identified as crucial factors for successful implementation. These challenges resonate with findings of studies conducted in other EFL contexts, which highlight the importance of comprehensive institutional support, adequate resources and CPD, to empower teachers to implement CLT approaches effectively (Karim, 2004; Mustapha & Yahaya, 2013).

Implementing CLT in Cambodia faces specific challenges related to cultural obstacles and misalignment with Western assumptions about education, where English is used as the first language such as the UK and the US. Challenges arise because the educational practices and pedagogical approaches in these contexts may not always align with the local educational and cultural norms in Cambodia. Cultural factors have been recognised as significant impediments to the implementation of CLT, given that its approaches may not always align

with local education and cultural contexts. This finding is consistent with research conducted in various settings and that emphasise the need for CLT to be contextualised and adapted to conform to local cultural and educational conventions (Hoff, 2020; Zidny et al., 2020).

This study reveals that teachers' understanding profoundly influences the implementation of CLT. Factors such as teaching experience, education background and exposure to different teaching methods during language studies significantly influence how teachers adapt CLT in their lessons. Teachers with extensive teaching experience tended to implement CLT less frequently, which highlights a demand for more CPD opportunities focused on CLT. Additionally, teachers with a background in more traditional teaching methods were found to incorporate these methods in their teaching practices. These findings correspond with previous research that emphasises the importance of teachers' knowledge, attitudes and teaching practices for the effective implementation of CLT (Al Asmari, 2015; Mustapha & Yahaya, 2013), thus, confirming the assertions made by Borg (2003). Implementing CLT in Cambodian university EFL settings also faced various pedagogical and infrastructural challenges. Teachers encountered challenges related to spoken English proficiency, which were compounded by time constraints and misconceptions about the tenets of CLT. Students, on their part, faced difficulties with low proficiency levels, resistance to speaking and apprehension about making mistakes, alongside a lack of motivation and poor writing skills. Institutional challenges included shortages of authentic teaching materials, limited administrative assistance, insufficient financial support and a gap in CLT-focused teacher training. Cultural discrepancies exacerbate the obstacles of aligning CLT with entrenched education norms. These challenges must be addressed to provide tailored training, allocate necessary resources and establish supportive policies that are conducive to the successful implementation of CLT in Cambodian higher education and similar contexts.

The study contributes new knowledge by providing academic insight into the challenges and barriers faced in Cambodian university EFL settings, with the particular role of technology plays in enhancing CLT. It highlights an imperative for teachers to acquire and refine digital technology skills, highlighting how these skills can significantly augment the effectiveness of CLT by facilitating more interactive and engaging language learning environments. The study calls for attention to be paid to enhancing support structures, including robust resource provision and institutional support. The study also emphasises the significant influence of teachers' spoken English abilities and their pedagogical perceptions, which are shaped by their educational experiences, on the practical implementation of CLT. Moreover, it highlights learner-specific challenges, such as limited language proficiency and psychological barriers to active participation. By delineating these multifaceted constraints, the study furnishes invaluable insights for education stakeholders to optimise language teaching and learning approaches in Cambodian university EFL settings.

5.5 Cambodian English major students' perspectives on learning English as a foreign language

This study explored students' perspectives on and attitudes towards English language learning in Cambodian provincial universities, particularly in relation to the implementation of CLT. The favourable disposition of student participants towards the English language relates to its perceived significance and the anticipated benefits it could yield for their job prospects. This sentiment is consistent with findings by Abdullah and Shah (2016) in Malaysia, where secondary school students placed significant value on CLT and recognised the importance of grammar development for success in national assessments. Gamble et al. (2013) observed similarly positive attitudes towards CLT among Japanese university students, particularly concerning engagement with classroom activities, which highlights students' firm convictions about the benefits of CLT approaches. These findings highlight the universal

appreciation among students for the role of CLT in language learning and its relevance for their academic and professional futures.

The study reveals that Cambodian university EFL students strived to attain near-native fluency in English, specifically in American English, which is indicative of the global prestige of English and the aspirational value students assign to native-like proficiency. In parallel, there was a clear advocacy by participants for the early introduction of English education in Cambodia, with a suggestion to start playful and immersive language learning as early as elementary school, rather than deferring until the fourth grade. This finding is consistent with the research of Chen et al. (2019), who describes the positive effect of gamified mobile English learning applications on the vocabulary learning outcomes of Taiwanese students. Furthermore, advocacy for early English education resonates with an emphasis on establishing a conducive classroom atmosphere and engaging in communicative activities for compelling language mastery, as evidenced by Ho's (2020) study with Taiwanese EFL students. The participants' viewpoints reflect a broader recognition of the pivotal role that early and engaging educational experiences play in language learning.

The findings of the study also reveal that, while students acknowledged the value of grammar-based activities for English language learning, they preferred interactive classroom activities that employ the language communicatively. This dual preference suggests an appetite for a pedagogical approach that balances grammar teaching with communicative language use. This finding supports research by İnceçay and İnceçay (2009) at a Turkish university, which identified a need for updating teaching methods to foster communicative engagement. The present study, furthermore, illuminated how the persistence of grammar-focused examinations can dampen enthusiasm for communicative approaches, especially when examinations prioritise traditional, authoritarian forms of academic English teaching. These insights reinforce the call for instructional innovation that integrates

communicative practices without sidelining the foundational role of grammar in language proficiency.

The majority of English major students surveyed in this study expressed satisfaction with the English major program provided by their university, which indicates that the current curriculum is in line with their educational needs and objectives. These responses show that the participants perceived that their program sufficiently fulfilled their need to obtain the necessary skills to become competent English language teachers. However, this positive assessment requires further research, into the specific components of the curriculum that contribute to garnering such approval, as well as an investigation into students' perceptions of what contributes to effective language teaching methodologies. Further research in these areas could elucidate the curriculum features that are most beneficial for nurturing competent English teachers and identify areas for potential improvement.

The student participants in this study recognised the enhanced appeal and interactive quality of English language learning through videos that depict real-life situations and digital technology. This perspective is consistent with the findings of Komol and Suwanphathama's (2020) study in Thailand and Rezalou and Yagiz's (2021) research in Turkey, who highlight students' positive perception of CLT classroom activities and their contributions to improving confidence, as well as enhancing listening and speaking skills. These studies, conducted in diverse EFL contexts, collectively emphasise the importance of integrating technology-related activities in language teaching and indicate a growing recognition of the role of technological tools in enriching the English language learning experience.

The student participants in this study emphasised pronunciation—a crucial aspect of language proficiency—and the ability to speak like a native English speaker as indicators of successful language learning. This finding confirms the significance of pronunciation skills in language learning, as evident in Ngoc and Iwashita's (2012) study in Vietnam. These

researchers also emphasise a specific need to adapt CLT to the local context by considering the students' unique perspectives and linguistic needs. This approach underscores the necessity of customising language instruction to ensure relevance and effectiveness to specific cultural and educational settings.

The student participants in the study notably associated their ability to learn English with intelligence. This finding suggests that they perceive success in learning a foreign language as reflecting their intellectual capacity. Such an association between language learning and intelligence carries important motivational implications. The belief that language proficiency reflects cognitive ability is an intrinsic motivator that could propel students to engage more deeply in their language learning endeavours. This intrinsic motivation is rooted in the notion that their achievements in language learning affirm their intellectual identity, thus, fostering a strong commitment to continuous improvement and mastery in language learning.

Cambodian English major students recognised the importance of teachers addressing grammar and pronunciation errors as crucial for their language development. However, their preferences leaned towards private or individualised correction methods, rather than public correction in front of their peers. This scenario was particularly pronounced concerning the importance of avoiding mistakes during learning, where students expressed various concerns and reflected different attitudes towards error correction. This finding indicates that teachers need to adopt appropriate error correction strategies that are aligned with students' preferences and promote an environment conducive to learning and that emphasises support over mere error avoidance. A nuanced approach to error correction, one that encourages continuous improvement while accommodating students' comfort and confidence in the language learning process, is pivotal. This finding contributes significantly to the discourse of EFL education, by expanding our insights into EFL students' experiences and perspectives.

The present study's findings extend the existing body of literature on student attitudes towards CLT and their perceptions of practical language learning approaches. The study emphasises the importance of considering students' perspectives, refining teaching practices and incorporating technological tools in language education to enhance engagement, interactive learning and language proficiency. Further research is needed to explore the assimilation of CLT in higher education EFL settings and to develop supportive strategies to help teachers to effectively implement CLT approaches.

5.6 Professional development needs of Cambodian university teachers of English as a foreign language

The study found three areas for which Cambodian university EFL teachers and vice deans seek professional development: self-improvement, contemporary pedagogy that focuses on CLT approaches and the use of digital technology in language teaching. These educators acknowledged the need for CPD, particularly to enhance their language skills for facilitating effective instruction. This need echoes research in a variety of contexts, by Harmer (2001), McCargar (1993) and Ur (2003), which highlight teachers' call for CPD in communicative ELT. To address these needs, it is essential to provide targeted training and support in CLT approaches and digital technology applications, to enhance teachers' teaching skills and promote students' language learning.

The study highlights the importance of improving English reading and writing practices, by recognising these competencies as fundamental to effective language teaching in modern education settings. This finding reinforces the vital role of language skills development in enhancing communicative competence and instructional abilities. Teachers' focus on improving reading and writing skills is in line with CLT principles, which emphasise meaningful interaction in classroom settings. The participants identified the refinement of CLT techniques as an essential aspect of their professional development, which reflects a

broader consensus on the critical nature of these practices for promoting meaningful communication in the language classroom (Harmer, 2001; Ur, 2003). This collective focus on both language skills and CLT techniques illustrates the integral relationship between language proficiency and the implementation of effective language teaching practices.

The interview results of the study emphasise the significance of training, support and technology, as crucial elements of CPD for Cambodian university EFL teachers. These findings corroborate findings reported in the literature, which emphasise the necessity of training in assessment methods, pedagogy for diverse English language skills, practical CLT implementation enhanced by digital tools and sustained institutional support to help teachers keep abreast of integrated practices for interactive language learning in higher education. When the findings of this study are aligned with other research that highlights the importance of training for teachers' instructional advancement (Cirocki & Widodo, 2019; Spilker et al., 2020), this study provides more nuanced insights into specific CPD domains, such as targeted training, robust support structures and technology integration tailored to the Cambodian context. Additionally, the study affirms the call of the literature for comprehensive support systems, which encompass conference participation and student assistance, thereby reinforcing the critical role of support system in education development (Hobbs & Coiro, 2019; Philipsen et al., 2019).

The results of the study also confirm the importance of digital technology in CPD, particularly in the context of the transformative effect on education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The sudden transition to remote and online learning highlights the indispensable role of digital technologies for ensuring continuity of education. Participants' acknowledgement of the need for CPD in digital literacy reflects a growing awareness of the significance of digital tools for maintaining effective teaching practices amidst unprecedented challenges. As the pandemic exposed the vulnerabilities of traditional education methods, the

imperative to weave digital technologies into the fabric of the delivery systems of education models became clear. This study's findings resonate strongly with the current education climate, where effective application of digital tools has emerged as a pivotal component of providing uninterrupted and high-quality learning experiences, which means that further training and support in the domain is required.

The study corroborated the literature that advocates for teachers to develop digital literacy and learn to leverage technology to enhance language instruction (Lomicka & Lord, 2019). Integrating ICT tools can enhance peer interaction, critical and creative thinking and teamwork in language education (Parvin & Salam, 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic has, furthermore, underscored the urgency of possessing the digital proficiency needed to navigate language classrooms effectively. When the education landscape shifted abruptly to remote and online learning, the importance of technology for maintaining education continuity became clear. Teachers and vice deans expressed a desire for CPD in digital technologies, which reflects their urgent response to online teaching modalities and highlights the necessity for teachers to be adept at using digital platforms and to effectively incorporate them into their pedagogy, to ensure engaging, uninterrupted and high-quality educational experiences. This study, thus, calls for a reinforced commitment to CPD, to ensure that teachers are equipped to meet the demands of an increasingly digital learning environment.

The results of the study reveal a relationship between the volume of teaching experience of Cambodian EFL teachers and their perception that they needed professional development. Experienced teachers indicated a more substantial need for professional development to adapt to changes in teaching approaches, which corroborates Phin's (2014) observations at Cambodian educational institutions. Conversely, less experienced teachers wanted less professional development, which was attributed to the recency of their formal teacher training. This divergence in professional growth needs through targeted and

differentiated professional development opportunities indicate that teachers' needs evolve through various stages of their professional journeys. This concept resonates with Guskey's (2002) emphasis on CPD as an activity that focuses on sustained learning, collaborative engagement and alignment with classroom practice. Similarly, studies such as that of Haug and Mork (2021) reveals the importance of CPD for promoting twenty-first-century skills in Norway and Wijesundara and Jayamanne's (2021) examination reports that higher education teachers in Sri Lanka needed CPD to tackle teaching problems. These insights contribute to an academic understanding of the CPD landscape and advocates for nuanced, experience-based CPD pathways that cater to the diverse developmental needs of teachers in the field of EFL.

The results of the study also illuminate the critical role of digital technology in enhancing CLT classrooms. The participants highlighted the transformative potential of technology in modern language teaching and learning and advocated for comprehensive training to harness its effectiveness. This focus on technology integration aligns with the evolving nature of pedagogy, by emphasising the need for teachers to embrace digital resources to enrich language learning experiences. The findings resonate with the larger education narrative that positions technology as an indispensable tool, reinforcing its significance in cultivating interactive learning environments and facilitating the development of a broad spectrum of linguistic skills. Therefore, it becomes imperative for education institutions and teachers to embrace and leverage digital technologies to advance pedagogical methodologies and foster comprehensive language proficiency.

In addition, the study highlights two significant professional development needs identified by higher education English language teachers. First, there was a marked emphasis on self-improvement as a crucial area for professional development. This unique perspective of Cambodian teachers underscores their recognition of the fundamental role of improving

their language skills to enable them to do effective ELT. Second, the study brings to the fore the necessity for teachers to effectively incorporate digital tools in their classroom teaching practices. This distinct emphasis on digital technology as an integral part of professional development reflects a progressive shift and crucial advancement in the field of EFL in higher education.

5.7 Lack of guidelines for implementing communicative language teaching in the Cambodian context

The analysis of the sample curriculum and related documents indicate the significance and challenges of curriculum development in EFL settings. Adjustments to curriculum must reflect the evolving demands placed on students, as pointed out by Engelbrecht et al. (2020) and Erstad and Voogt (2018); however, these analyses often overlook the limitations and gaps in higher education in developing Southeast Asian regions.

The curriculum reviewed in this study lacked clear guidelines and resources for delivering English instruction, particularly for facilitating communicative language learning and enhancing communication skills. The absence of prerequisite tools and explicit directives for teachers exacerbated difficulties they experienced in delivering effective instruction at the university level. The lack of clear guidelines left teachers struggling to implement CLT approaches and provide engaging and interactive learning experiences, which often necessitated reliance on their resourcefulness to create engaging and interactive learning experiences. This deficiency in guidance not only hindered the consistent application of CLT principles but also contributed to varying levels of instructional quality across institutions.

Furthermore, the lack of explicit guidelines for administering and assessing key curriculum components, notably in the domain of writing skills across various academic essay genres, indicated a gap in instructional support in Cambodian provincial universities. The study adds to the research of Bahadir and Tuncer (2020) in Turkey, by highlighting the

importance of a well-structured curriculum that guides teachers to select appropriate teaching methodologies, learning materials and assessment strategies. The shortage of clear guidelines may cause challenges in the effective monitoring of student progress and for tailoring teaching instruction to address the individual education requisites of students. This gap in curriculum structure could potentially hinder students' ability to achieve the communicative competence required for their future professional roles.

The textbook analysis further revealed fa lack of communicative activities, real-life contexts and student interactivity, which is the consequence of the absence of clear guidelines for the communicative approach. Pedagogical scholarship consistently emphasises the importance of incorporating real-life contexts and promoting student discourse as catalysts for effective language learning. The absence of such elements in the textbook suggests a discrepancy between the desired communicative approach and its pragmatic implementation in the curriculum. This disconnection highlights a critical area in need of attention for curriculum developers aiming to align teaching materials with the principles of CLT.

Moreover, the study found that the assessment materials primarily focused on isolated grammar use, thereby echoing challenges similar to those faced by teachers in Uzbekistan, where antiquated materials and techniques persist in the curriculum (Mansurovich, 2022). Assessments in higher education must reflect students' communicative competence and make it possible to gauge progress during their academic journey, particularly in fields where graduates are expected to exhibit advanced English proficiency.

The analysis of policy documents pertaining to ELT in Cambodia revealed a conspicuous absence of clear guidelines for the communicative approach, insufficient resources for teachers and scant opportunities for professional development. This lacuna regarding comprehensive guidelines, resources and support indicates a significant shortfall in assisting with effective curriculum implementation. The absence of such critical elements in

policy documentation meant there was a gap in the support for developing teachers' capabilities and promoting effective English language instruction in the Cambodian higher education context.

In summary, the analysis of the sample curriculum and related documents, highlighted a stark deficiency in current and well-structured curricula that provide clear guidelines, resources and support for teachers. The identified limitations and gaps in the analysed documents emphasise the imperative for improvements in curriculum development and implementation, to enhance instructional quality and meet the evolving needs of students and society in Cambodian higher education.

5.8 Summary of discussion

This chapter discussed the complexity of the multifaceted understandings of CLT in provincial Cambodian university EFL settings. It offered a representative sample of the needs for ELT and learning in the provincial higher education sector in Cambodia. By exploring the understandings of CLT held by Cambodian university EFL teachers and vice deans, the chapter examined their perspectives and interpretations, which provide a comprehensive overview of diverse understandings of CLT in this EFL context. The findings shed light on variations in the conceptualisation and understanding of CLT, and thereby highlight the implications of its effective implementation.

The chapter focused on the way CLT is implemented in Cambodian university EFL settings. It examined the strategies, techniques and activities teachers leveraged to integrate CLT principles to their teaching practices. Through data collected via questionnaires, interviews and document analyses, the chapter provided valuable insights into the practical aspects of CLT implementation, including exemplary practices and comparative reflection drawn from studies in the field. Additionally, it identified the key challenges faced in implementing CLT and compared these challenges with those reported by other research

studies. These challenges included institutional factors, classroom management issues and language proficiency barriers. A thorough understanding of these challenges is crucial for effectively addressing and overcoming them to promote successful CLT implementation.

The chapter, furthermore, explored the perspectives of Cambodian English major students on their learning experiences with EFL. By considering students' attitudes, preferences and experiences, the chapter provided a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of CLT in meeting students' language learning needs. This investigation stands in marked contrast to other studies, which, when studying challenges facing the implementation of CLT in EFL contexts, concentrated predominantly on teachers' perspectives. The findings highlight the pivotal role of students' perspectives in the successful implementation of CLT and emphasise the importance of aligning teaching approaches with students' expectations.

The chapter also investigated the professional development needs of Cambodian university EFL teachers and pinpoints the specific areas of enhancement and training that are crucial for the successful application of CLT. This study identified teachers' needs for ongoing professional growth to align with broader educational trends and underscore the necessity for strategic pedagogical reforms. By highlighting local requirements in relation to global education practices, the chapter advanced the dialogue on EFL pedagogical instruction, by advocating for a systematic embrace of CLT for pedagogical efficacy and success.

Lastly, the chapter underscored the deficits regarding clear, structured guidelines for implementing CLT in Cambodian EFL contexts. It highlighted the absence of comprehensive frameworks and recommendations that are tailored to the unique challenges and characteristics of the Cambodian EFL educational system. This gap emphasises the significant contribution of this research to filling this critical void, thereby providing a foundation for the development and improvement of CLT practices in Cambodian EFL settings. Chapter 6 will conclude the thesis.

5.9 Conclusions

The key results of the study are based on an integrated approach to the understanding of CLT by higher education practitioners in provincial Cambodia. The study assessed the comprehension and application of CLT by Cambodian university EFL teachers, examined the influence of CLT on their pedagogical methods and evaluated the challenges and preferences related to CLT compared with traditional teaching approaches. The study also identified crucial elements of CPD that are necessary for the effective implementation of CLT. It also explored English major students' perspectives on English and their interaction with CLT in relation to their learning. Through this integrated approach, the study shed light on the pivotal role of CLT in enhancing ELT and learning in Cambodian EFL classrooms.

The understanding of CLT of Cambodian university EFL teachers was found to be significant. Their insightful recognition of CLT was that it is student-centred and that communicative competence must be nurtured. This perspective extends our fundamental knowledge of CLT principles into higher education settings where EFL is taught for teacher preparation, which has, to date, received little attention. Furthermore, university teachers' understanding of a variety of CLT activities, such as debates and role plays, coupled with their acknowledgement of the necessity of a balanced approach that integrates fluency and accuracy, highlights the profound efficacy and applicability of CLT in EFL education contexts.

Regarding CLT implementation, Cambodian university EFL teachers demonstrated an understanding of CLT principles. This was evident in their use of interactive activities and ICT in language classrooms. Their adoption of a balanced approach that combined traditional methods and CLT catered effectively to meeting learners' diverse needs. Additionally, the positive response by students to these interactive activities and ICT use confirmed the significant role of student engagement and preference in English language learning. This

alignment of teaching practices with student interests confirms the importance of adaptability and responsiveness in contemporary language education.

Despite the positive aspects of CLT adoption in Cambodia, several challenges and barriers were identified in relation to its implementation. These were teachers' lack of ICT skills, deficiencies in teachers' spoken English competency, time constraints and prevailing misconceptions about CLT. Students were challenged by low proficiency levels and a reluctance to engage in speaking activities. Moreover, institutional constraints, including limitations regarding communicative resources and inadequate support, impeded the effective implementation of CLT further. These challenges highlight the need for comprehensive strategies to address pedagogical and infrastructural gaps in CLT practices in Cambodian higher education.

The study highlights the importance of incorporating students' perspectives on English language learning in teachers' CLT practices, the need for CPD in CLT and ICT integration. Insights garnered from students provided invaluable feedback on CLT implementation, student engagement and students' English language learning outcomes. These perspectives are instrumental in informing curriculum design and shaping instructional strategies, thus, fostering a more student-centred approach to language learning. This alignment between students' views and teaching methodologies is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness and relevance of English language learning programs.

The study reveals that Cambodian university EFL teachers identified three key areas of CPD that could benefit the implementation of CLT. These areas are self-improvement, mastery of CLT techniques and proficiency in ICT for ELT. The teachers emphasised the importance of enhancing their language proficiency to improve their teaching effectiveness and to foster students' language skills development. They also expressed a need for regular CPD that focuses on the practical application of CLT techniques and the effective utilisation

of ICT tools in language instruction. These findings underscore the importance of targeted professional development that equips teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge for successful CLT implementation in EFL settings.

The students' positive response to the current EFL curriculum and classroom practices validated the CLT implementation reported by the teachers, thereby emphasising the significance of students' attitudes towards CLT. The interactive components inherent in CLT were instrumental in encouraging student engagement in an English language learning journey. This engagement fostered and improved communication skills and bolstered credibility in the job market, particularly in sectors where language proficiency is valued highly. This alignment of curriculum and teaching methods with student preferences highlights the effectiveness of CLT for enhancing students' overall learning experience and future career opportunities.

The analysis of the sample curriculum and related documents revealed a lack of clear guidelines and communicative resources for implementing CLT and delivering interactive English instruction in Cambodian university EFL contexts. The absence of support and guidance posed significant challenges for teachers regarding the effective implementation of CLT and providing their students with engaging learning experiences. Well-structured guidelines and communicative resources are needed to enhance CLT instruction and improve ELT practices in Cambodian university EFL settings.

Overall, this study offers a contemporary and illuminating perspective on implementing CLT in higher education EFL settings. It underscores the vital role of CLT principles in reshaping pedagogical approaches used by Cambodian university EFL teachers. Their deep comprehension of CLT, accompanied by their adept application of a variety of CLT activities and a balanced approach to fluency and accuracy, highlights the robust efficacy and adaptability of CLT in EFL education contexts. The positive outcomes of CLT

adoption, as evidenced by enhanced student engagement and preferences, underscore the importance of aligning teaching methodologies with the needs and interests of students. Nevertheless, challenges such as limited ICT proficiency, low spoken English competency and misconceptions about CLT persist, necessitating targeted professional development initiatives. Moreover, students' perspectives emphasise the significance of incorporating their viewpoints into curriculum design and instructional strategies. Furthermore, the dearth of clear guidelines and communicative resources for teaching underscores the pressing need for structured support and guidance to enhance CLT instruction of EFL at Cambodian universities. In sum, this study presents valuable insights and recommendations to the Applied Linguistics, TESOL and TEFL communities, by emphasising the transformative potential of CLT and its continued relevance for fostering effective, student-centred language learning experiences in EFL higher education settings.

5.10 Implications

The findings of the study have several implications. Central to these is the pivotal role of teachers, which emphasised the need for quality higher education programmes for English major students. The actions of the academy should prioritise teaching language norms and promoting language usage and communication skills. Addressing the current limitations in classroom practices necessitates that universities take the initiative to lead the development of CLT-focused programs that are targeted at pre-service and in-service teachers. Such programs would ensure that teachers are well equipped to integrate interactive sessions into their classrooms successfully.

Additionally, the study brings to light the significant effect of the physical arrangement of classrooms for facilitating CLT principles. Classroom layouts that facilitate pair work and small group discussions are crucial for creating an environment conducive to

interactive language learning. This aspect of classroom design, which is often overlooked, plays a pivotal role in enhancing the effectiveness of CLT approaches.

Collaboration among key stakeholders, including the MoEYS, curriculum developers and EFL teachers, is essential for delivering language instruction effectively. This collaborative approach extends not only to curriculum design and implementation, but also to evaluating teachers' performance. By creating a continuous improvement and feedback culture, this collaboration aims to enhance the quality and proficiency of language communication. Central to this process is the role of CPD, which is a critical component of refining teachers' competencies and improving classroom practices. Through CPD, teachers are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to benefit students and raise the overall quality of English communication locally and globally.

The implications of this study extend well beyond the Cambodian context and offers valuable insights for policymakers and teachers in diverse EFL settings. Positive attitudes of teachers and their understanding of CLT validate its potential as a practical language teaching approach. This recognition provides a model for other regions that are exploring effective language teaching strategies. Moreover, the study underscores the significant role of ICT integration, student engagement and CPD for CLT implementation, which is aligned with global education trends that advocate for technology and interactive language education strategies. The study also highlights the importance of considering students' perspectives and preferences in EFL education. It emphasises the need for pedagogical approaches that are tailored to student needs and which centre on interactive and technology-enhanced strategies to optimise learning outcomes (Benson & Reinders, 2011).

This study emphasises the critical role of teachers in enhancing CLT practices. Significant improvements in ELT can be achieved by placing teachers at the forefront of education initiatives, optimising classroom designs to facilitate interactive learning and

fostering collaboration among key stakeholders, such as education institutions, curriculum developers and the MoEYS. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of embracing student perspectives in the learning process. Collectively, these strategies contribute to the advancement of ELT and learning, not just in the Cambodian context, but on a global scale.

5.11 Limitations

The study has several limitations.

First, the sample size and scope of the study were limited to the selected universities in two Cambodian provinces, Siem Reap and Banteay Meanchey. This geographical constraint means that the findings did not fully capture the perspectives of all EFL teachers and English major students across Cambodia. Moreover, focusing on a specific subset of the population (English major programs) could introduce selection bias and potentially exclude the viewpoints and experiences of other relevant groups in the EFL teaching community in Cambodia as a whole.

The study tackled the broad concepts of beliefs in relation to CLT and its implementation, which might have led to a general and somewhat surface-level exploration of these complex and multifaceted topics. The broad scope of the study may have stood in the way of a deeper, more nuanced analysis of specific aspects of CLT practices, teachers' beliefs and the varied ways in which CLT is operationalised in different education settings.

Second, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly restricted international travel and the presence of researchers, teachers and students in physical classrooms, thereby making data collection more difficult. Classroom observations and face-to-face interviews were not possible. As a result, the study relied on online self-reported data provided by Cambodian university EFL teachers and English major students. While efforts were made to ensure the validity of responses through video interviews, the absence of direct observation remains a limitation.

Thirdly, female teachers were underrepresented in the current study. A future study would benefit from examining the inevitable dilemmas for teachers and learners of the agency they both have in the process of English language learning and teaching in the Higher Education sector which demands a communicative approach. Any later study might also find a change in the demographic of female to male teachers. This study provided the contemporary reality in Cambodia.

Finally, the surveys and interviews were conducted exclusively in English, without providing Khmer translations. This language barrier could have affected the participants' understanding of the questions, potentially leading to hesitancy or misunderstanding, especially among participants who might have been more comfortable expressing their thoughts and experiences in their native language. A response bias might also be a limitation, as the participants could have provided overly optimistic responses because of cultural norms of politeness in Cambodia.

5.12 Future directions

The findings of the study suggest the following future research directions:

First, there is a need for research to investigate the most effective training methods to assist EFL teachers to utilise, adapt and supplement the CLT approach. Such studies would provide benefits to the field of language teacher education. Additionally, understanding the challenges that inexperienced teachers face while they are implementing CLT would be valuable for enhancing ELT practices.

Second, while this study focused on EFL in higher education, further research is needed to explore CLT implementation in Cambodia's primary and secondary schools. Conducting comparative studies across different levels of education could provide valuable insights into the applicability and implementation of CLT across English language learning environments.

Third, it is important to extend the methodology and topic of the current study to include other Cambodian universities, sectors, programs and faculties, as it could significantly enhance the generalisability of the results to a broader Cambodian context. By evaluating and reviewing the existing English major curriculum, specifically through CLT or other contemporary teaching approaches, the study could improve the teaching outcomes and curriculum development in the region.

Fourth, future research could explore the factors that influence teachers' beliefs and behaviours regarding CLT adoption. Examining the cognitive processes, experiences and cultural influences that shape teachers' understanding and practices of CLT could provide valuable guidance for CPD offerings. Furthermore, investigating institutional policies and the level of support for CLT adoption could shed light on key facilitators and barriers that educational institutions face in promoting ELT practices.

Fifth, future research could explore the factors that influence students' positive attitudes towards interactive teaching practices and ICT integration in language learning. Investigating sociocultural factors, learner preferences and beliefs in language learning could inform the design of effective language education strategies. Longitudinal studies assessing the long-term effect of CLT on language proficiency and communication skills could offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of CLT in real-world education settings.

Sixth, it is vital that research explores specific strategies and interventions to overcome the obstacles and barriers in CLT implementation. Comparative studies across EFL contexts could provide further insights into effective practices and necessary adaptations. Investigating the effect of teachers' understanding of and attitudes towards CLT on language learning outcomes could contribute significantly to the development of targeted CPD for EFL teachers. Such research could provide valuable guidance for optimising CLT implementation and enhancing the overall quality of language education.

Seventh, another avenue for future research is to develop complete guidelines for CLT implementation in Cambodian EFL contexts. These guidelines could relate to relevant resources, assessment materials and CPD opportunities for teachers. Evaluating the effectiveness of updated curriculum and guidelines for promoting CLT and enhancing language instruction outcomes is essential to ensure the practical effectiveness in EFL contexts. This focus could ensure that the guidelines are theoretical and practically effective in improving teaching and learning practices in EFL settings.

Eighth, future research could investigate how extracurricular activities, such as language clubs, cultural exchange programs, and conversation groups, influence university students' language learning. Examining the role these activities play in enhancing language learning and fluency could offer valuable insights into how they complement formal classroom instruction and contribute to students' overall communicative competence and language proficiency.

Nineth, future research could build on these findings by integrating both constructivist and sociocultural theories to examine how sociocultural dynamics—such as teacher-student interactions, community influences, and cultural practices—affect learner autonomy and language learning outcomes in the Cambodian context. By exploring how learners construct knowledge through social interactions and personal experiences, future studies could offer a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between individual cognitive development and the broader social environment. This combined theoretical approach would not only complement the current study's insights into CLT implementation by educators but also provide a more comprehensive perspective on language learning processes in post-colonial educational settings.

Overall, the study reported in this thesis stands as an examination of Cambodian EFL teachers' beliefs and practices of CLT and it integrates theoretical insights, methodological

sophistication and empirical data to expand our understanding of a complex area. From the literature review, through the methodology, to the analysis of the results, the study traverses the terrain of EFL teachers' beliefs and practices of CLT, to reveal confirmatory evidence of established theories and findings that challenge the status quo. Its contribution extends beyond academic discourse and has implications for teaching and learning EFL and CPD by suggesting a bridge between theory and real-world application. In highlighting the significance of its findings, the study also delineates potential directions for future research. It can serve as a pivotal reference for future explorations and inspire continued innovation and inquiry in the field of TESOL.

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APPENDIX A: TEACHER SURVEY

Cambodian University Teachers' Beliefs in Communicative Language Teaching

This project is being undertaken as part of the Doctor of Philosophy (UniSQ Graduate Research School).

The purpose of this project is to explore the beliefs of teachers who are teaching an English major syllabus at provincial universities in Cambodia, and the extent to which they implement Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in teaching. The project also seeks to identify the support English teachers need in order to teach communicatively and to investigate the English major students' perspectives on learning English at university. In order to understand the whole context of current teaching and learning within Cambodian higher education, the project is also to investigate secondary documents including English major curriculum, textbooks, teaching materials, exam papers.

The Researcher requests your assistance because you are a university teacher and have taught the English major syllabus for a period of time. Through this teaching experience, you can share the beliefs and understanding you hold about features of CLT. Please also be notified that you might be selected for a subsequent interview so that you can further share about the extent to which you have implemented the CLT features and the support you require for your teaching within the English major program.

Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H21REA036

Welcome to the Survey!

There are 15 questions in this survey.

Consent to Participate

All information collected will be treated confidentially. The questionnaire is to be completed anonymously. It will take you about 20 minutes to complete this survey.

Please click on the 'I Accept' button below to give your consent to participate in the survey.

I Accept □

Biographical Details

1. What age group are you in?

□20-29 □30-39 □40-49 □50-59 □60 and over

2. What's your gender?

□Male □ Female □ Other

3. How many years have you been a teacher of English at university?

□ 0-5 □ 6-10 □ 11-15 □ 16-20 □ 21-25 □ 25 and over

4. What type of courses have you taught in the past three years?

□ Speaking □ Reading □ Writing □ Listening

□ English literature □ Core English □ Cultural studies □ English for Specific Purposes

□ Other _____

Features of CLT

5. Which of the following do you think are communicative techniques?

□ Filling in the blanks

□ Looking up words in the dictionary

□ Writing an essay in English

□ Having a debate or role-play

□ Discussing a controversial topic in group

□ Reading dialogues

□ Going on the Internet and joining a chat group

□ Speaking in pairs

□ Doing a dictation task

□ Storytelling in front of the class

□ Grammar exercises

□ Describing a picture to a partner

6. Please read these statements about Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach and for each statement check one box that represents your understanding.

CLT is student/learner-centred approach.

□ True □ Not true □ Don't know

CLT means learning of strategy to communicate in English.

□ True □ Not true □ Don't know

CLT means knowing how to use English in contexts.

□ True □ Not true □ Don't know

CLT means developing only spoken and written English and understanding it.

□ True □ Not true □ Don't know

CLT emphasizes fluency over accuracy.

□ True □ Not true □ Don't know

CLT emphasizes communication in second language. (L2)

□ True □ Not true □ Don't know

CLT relies heavily on speaking and listening skills.

□ True □ Not true □ Don't know

CLT requires teachers to have high English proficiency.

□ True □ Not true □ Don't know

CLT means only group work or pair work.

□ True □ Not true □ Don't know

CLT requires higher knowledge of target language culture.

□ True □ Not true □ Don't know

CLT means not teaching grammar.

□ True □ Not true □ Don't know

CLT means teaching speaking only.

□ True □ Not true □ Don't know

CLT puts too much pressure on teachers.

□ True □ Not true □ Don't know

CLT requires a lot of time to prepare class activities.

□ True □ Not true □ Don't know

CLT is basically for ESL classrooms, not for a foreign language context where English is not spoken outside of classrooms.

□ True □ Not true □ Don't know

Teachers' Challenges When Implementing CLT

7. The following are reports that other EFL/ESL teachers have experienced adopting CLT. Rate the following as your experience adopting CLT in Cambodia?

Please rate by ticking the level of difficulty for each of the statements below:

1. No difficulty 2. Minor difficulty 3. Manageable 4. Unmanageable 5. Major difficulty

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) Inadequate teacher training in CLT approach.

k) Lack of assessment instruments for communicative competence.

l) Limited use of technology and resources.

m) Lack of skills to use technology in classroom.

n) Insufficient professional development/training opportunity.

o) Not enough support from administration.

p) Teachers' misinterpretation of CLT.

q) The difference between Western educational assumptions and Cambodia educational context.

r) CLT is very different from a traditional Cambodian classroom context.

s) Cambodian classroom culture limits students' active engagement.

Classroom Practices

8. Please indicate which of the following classroom procedures you currently use as part of your English language teaching: (Please circle a rating)

1 Never 2. Rarely 3. Sometimes 4. Usually 5. Always

a) Grammar explanation	1	2	3	4	5
b) Group discussion	1	2	3	4	5
c) Pair work	1	2	3	4	5
d) Translation	1	2	3	4	5
e) Dictionary vocabulary exercises	1	2	3	4	5
f) Simulations / role play	1	2	3	4	5

g) Reading and reporting from websites	1	2	3	4	5
h) Reading and reporting from newspaper	1	2	3	4	5
i) Reading aloud	1	2	3	4	5
j) Pronunciation drills	1	2	3	4	5
k) Games	1	2	3	4	5
I) Listening to audio tape and answering questions	1	2	3	4	5
m) Calling on students to orally respond to any issue/topic	1	2	3	4	5
n) Reading and reciting dialogue	1	2	3	4	5
o) Use of digital technology	1	2	3	4	5
p) Use of social media	1	2	3	4	5

9. Please indicate your opinion about the current quality of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Cambodia in each of the following areas? (*Please circle a rating*)

1. Not successful 2. Somewhat successful 3. Successful 4. Very successful 5. Extremely successful

Reading speed	1	2	3	4	5
Cultural understanding of English countries	1	2	3	4	5
Read English textbook/newspaper	1	2	3	4	5
Oral fluency	1	2	3	4	5
Exam success	1	2	3	4	5
Preparation of ELT teachers	1	2	3	4	5
Reading comprehension	1	2	3	4	5
Speak with native English speakers	1	2	3	4	5
Vocabulary knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
TOEFL/IELTS preparation	1	2	3	4	5
Effective teaching material	1	2	3	4	5

Ability to use digital technology	1	2	3	4	5
Rich digital technology availability	1	2	3	4	5
Convenient and equipped classroom	1	2	3	4	5

Teacher Training Priority in Cambodia

10. What do you think are priorities for teacher training in Cambodia to develop quality English Language Teaching (ELT)? (*Circle one*):

1. Not important 2. Somewhat important 3. Important 4. Very important 5. Extremely important

Need for more training of teachers in:

- fluency in English	1	2	3	4	5
- practise reading and writing in English	1	2	3	4	5
- CLT techniques	1	2	3	4	5
- cultural knowledge of English countries	1	2	3	4	5
- grammatical explanations of English	1	2	3	4	5
- use of video in the classroom	1	2	3	4	5
- knowledge of language acquisition	1	2	3	4	5
- assessing students	1	2	3	4	5
- preparing English language material	1	2	3	4	5
- using the internet to teach English	1	2	3	4	5
- using digital technology in the classroom	1	2	3	4	5
- using social media in teaching	1	2	3	4	5

Digital Technology

11) How do you rate the importance of digital technology to enhance students' communication skills?

□Not important □Somewhat important □Okay □Important □Very important

12) How do you rate your skills of using digital technology in your teaching?

□No skill □Beginners □Moderate □Intermediate □Advanced

13) Do you have an experience in using digital technology in your teaching? If yes, what kinds of technology did/do you use? If no, why not?

_____

Training Required

14) What technical skills do you think you need to teach English more communicatively?

_____

_____

Suggestions

15) Do you have any suggestions on how to better implement CLT in Cambodian English major classes? Please comment below.

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for taking your valuable time to participate in this survey.

APPENDIX B: STUDENT SURVEY

Cambodian English Major Students' Perspectives on Learning English at University

This project is being undertaken as part of the Doctor of Philosophy (UNISQ Graduate Research School).

The purpose of this project is to explore the beliefs of teachers who are teaching an English major syllabus at provincial universities in Cambodia, and the extent to which they implement Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in teaching. The project also seeks to identify the support English teachers need in order to teach communicatively and to investigate the English major students' perspectives on learning English at university. In order to understand the whole context of current teaching and learning within Cambodian higher education, the project is also to investigate secondary documents including English major curriculum, textbooks, teaching materials, exam papers.

The Researcher requests your assistance because you are an English major student and have learned English for a period of time. Therefore, you can share the observations and beliefs you hold about the learning experience you have exposed to within the English major program at university.

Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H21REA036

Welcome to the Survey!

There are 9 questions in this survey.

Consent to Participate

All information collected will be treated confidentially. The questionnaire is to be completed anonymously. It will take you about 20 minutes to complete this survey.

Please click on the 'I Accept' button below to give your consent to participate in the survey.

I Accept □

Biographical Details

1.What's your gender?

Male □ Female □ Other □

2. What age group are you in?

18-20 □ 21–25 □ 26–30 □ 31–35 □ 36–40 □ Over 40 □

3. When did you start learning English at school?

Before I was 7 □ Between 7 and 11 □ Between 12 and 15 □ At 16 or after □

4. When did you start using English?

Before I was 6 □ Between 6 and 11 □ Between 12 and 17 □ At 18 or after □

5. When did you feel confident in using English?

Before I started primary school □

When I was in primary school □

When I was in junior high school □

When I was in senior high school □

After I entered university □

6. What junior and senior high schools did you attend?

_____

7. Type the name of your university here.

_____

English Practices in the University Classrooms

8. Please rate the following statements.

1. English teaching in my university is grammar-focused.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

2. My English teachers in university often ask us to do sentence drilling and repeat sentences after them.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

3. The language used in the classroom by my teachers is mostly Khmer.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

4. My teachers are mainly explaining and practicing grammar rules.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

5. I rarely need to speak English in the classroom.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

6. English teaching in my university is communication-focused.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

7. My teachers often design activities to have us interact in English with peers.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

8. Our focus in class is communication, but the teacher would explain grammar when necessary.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

9. My teachers encourage us to speak English without worrying of making mistakes.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

10. My teachers often create an atmosphere for us to use English.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

11. My teachers often correct my errors in class.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

12. My English class is often fun when doing activities with technology.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

13. My teachers always use social media when teaching.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

My beliefs about Learning English

1. Learning English is learning its grammar rules.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

2. English learning through sentence drilling is effective.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

3. I believe Khmer should be frequently used in my English major class for my better understanding of the lessons.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

4. I believe the more grammar rules one memorizes, the better he/she is at using English.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

5. Opening one's mouth to practice speaking in the classroom is not essential for English learning.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

6. A language classroom should be communication-focused.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

7. It is important to practice English in real-life or real-life like situations.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

8. Languages are learned mainly through communication, with grammar rules explained when necessary.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

9. I believe making trial-and-error attempts to communicate in English helps me to learn English.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

10. Teachers should create an atmosphere in the classroom to encourage interaction as a class or in groups.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

11. It is important for teachers to correct students' errors in class.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

12. The formal study of grammar is essential to eventual mastery of English.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

13. I believe my English improves most quickly if I study and practice the grammar.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

14. There should be more formal study of grammar in English class.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

15. It is more important to study and practice grammatical patterns than to practice English in an interactive way in the classroom.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

16. Grammar rules should be explicitly explained in class.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

17. Learning English is learning to use the language.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

18. Learning English by using the language in communicative activities is essential to eventually master the English language.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

19. A communication-focused language program often meets the learner's needs.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

20. I believe it is important to avoid making errors in the process of learning English.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

21. Teachers should correct students' pronunciation or grammatical errors in class.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

22. A good language learner usually pronounces English naturally.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

23. A person's good pronunciation usually indicates good English.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

24. Learning English is important for people in Cambodia.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

25. English is useful in getting a good job.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

26. Good language learners are intelligent.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

27. Students who have good grades in other subjects are likely to be good language learners.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

28. English education should begin in elementary school.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

29. Digital technology should be used in English language teaching.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

30. Digital technology helps me interact with others in English language learning better.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

31. Video is very interesting in learning English from real situations.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

32. Teachers should use more technology-related activities in teaching.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

33. Learning English with digital technology is effective.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

34. I wish to speak like English native speakers.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

35. Would you like to learn to use American standard English?

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree

Thank you for your valuable time participating in this survey.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (TEACHERS)

This interview is mainly composed of open-ended questions addressing various issues related to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach to teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in the Cambodian university context. Participants in the interview will be provided with a copy of questions before the interview.

The researcher will ask follow-up questions based on the analysis of university English teachers' responses to the previously administered online questionnaire. Some further questions may also emerge in the course of the interview depending on the interviewees' responses to the interview questions.

All participants have the right not to answer any question(s) that they feel uncomfortable with and may withdraw at any time from the study.

1. Tell me about yourself. How did you become an EFL teacher? Why did you choose this profession?
2. When and where were you trained as a teacher of English? What did you enjoy when you were a trainee?
3. What problems are you aware of regarding English language teaching at university in Cambodia?
4. What issues, if any, do find from your classes or from your own teaching of English major students?
5. In your own words, what do you think Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is? Do you know what the principles of CLT are? Would you briefly elaborate them?
6. How do you feel about using CLT in your classroom?
7. In your view, what can CLT contribute to English language teaching in Cambodia?
8. Do you think that it is possible for you to adapt the principles of CLT in your teaching? If so, how would you accomplish that? If no, why is it not possible?

9. Do you have any difficulties when you use CLT in your classroom? If yes, what are the difficulties? If no, why not?

10. Do you think those difficulties can be overcome? If yes, how and to what extent?

11. Do you feel that students in Cambodia benefit from CLT? If yes, how? If not, why not?

12. Do you use digital technology in your language teaching? If yes, what kind of technology do you use? If no, why not?

13. What professional development/training in the use of digital technology would you find useful for your teaching?

14. How do you think digital technology can be used for CLT in the Cambodian context?

15. Are you given any professional development opportunities for retraining? If yes, what are they, how often are they made available, and how useful they are? If no, why not?

16. What teaching methods and approaches did you experience as an English language learner?

17. Do you have any suggestions for improving EFL teaching at university in Cambodia? If yes, what are they?

18. Finally, is there anything else you would like to say about English language learning for students at university in Cambodia or about your profession as a teacher of English?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (VICE DEANS)

Hello Mr/Ms _____

My name is Bunhorn Doeur. I am conducting a research to explore (a) how Cambodian English teachers/lecturers engage in research activities, (b) what value they give to research, and (c) what influence their engagement in research.

Before we begin the interview, let me tell you that the interview would last around 40-50 minutes and I would like to audiotape the interview so that I can listen to it later for my analysis. If you don't mind being recorded during the interview, can you sign this consent form? I also want to assure you that your personal details will not be revealed to others. It means that your identity will be kept secret. The recording is for research purposes only.

Now let's begin the interview (Note: start recording if the interviewee agrees to be audio-recorded)

This interview is mainly composed of open-ended questions addressing various issues related to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach to teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in the Cambodian university context. Participants in the interview will be provided with a copy of questions before the interview.

The researcher will ask follow-up questions based on the analysis of university English teachers' responses to the previously administered online questionnaire. Some further questions may emerge in the course of the interview depending on the interviewee's responses to the interview questions.

All participants have right not to answer any question(s) that they feel uncomfortable with and may withdraw at any time from the study.

1. Tell me about yourself. How did you become a dean/vice dean?
2. When and where were you trained as a teacher before becoming a dean/vice dean? What did you enjoy when you were teaching at university?

3. What problems are you aware of regarding English language teaching in Cambodia?

4. What issues, if any, do find from your faculty or from your own teaching of English major students?

5. What do you understand Communicative Language Teaching is?

6. How do you feel about implementing CLT in your institution/faculty?

7. In your view, what can CLT contribute to English teaching in your institution?

8. Do you think that you know principles of CLT? Would you briefly elaborate them?

9. Do you think it's possible to adapt the principles of CLT in EFL classes? If yes, how would you accomplish that? If no, why is it not possible?

10. Do you have any difficulties when attempting CLT in your institution/faculty? If yes, what are they? If no, why not?

11. Do you think those difficulties can be overcome? If yes, how? If no, why not?

12. Do you feel that students in Cambodia benefit from CLT? If yes, how? If no, why not?

13. How do you think digital technology can be used for CLT in the Cambodian context?

14. Is there any digital technology available in your faculty or institution? If yes, what digital technology do you have for teachers to use? What professional development/training in the use of digital technology do/will you offer to teachers for adopting a CLT approach?

15. Do you offer professional development opportunities for teachers to retrain or for workshops of CLT? If yes, what are they, how often do you offer them, and how useful for teachers do you think?

16. What forms of support, if any, do you have available for teachers to implement effective CLT? What other support does your faculty or institution plan to offer in order teachers can teach more communicatively?

17. Do you have any suggestions for improving EFL teaching in your institution/faculty? If so, what are they?

18. Finally, is there anything else you would like to say about English language learning for students at university in Cambodia or about your professional teaching English or about your faculty?

APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

University of Southern Queensland

UNISQ Research Project

Teacher Questionnaire

Project Details

Title of Project:	**Communicative language teaching in Cambodian higher education: EFL teachers' beliefs and practices and EFL students' perspectives**
Human Research Ethics Approval Number:	H21REA036

Research Team Contact Details

Researcher Details

Mr Bunhorn Doeur
Email: [redacted]
Mobile: [redacted]

Supervisor Details

Associate Professor Ann Dashwood
Email: [redacted]
Telephone: [redacted]
Mobile: + [redacted]

Associate Professor Jeong-Bae Son
Email: [redacted]
Telephone: [redacted]

Description

This project is being undertaken as part of Doctor of Philosophy (UNISQ Graduate Research School).

The purpose of this project is to explore the beliefs of teachers who are teaching an English major syllabus at provincial universities in Cambodia, and the extent to which those teachers implement Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in teaching. The project also seeks to identify the support English teachers need in order to teach communicatively and to investigate the English major students' perspectives on learning English at university. In order to understand the whole context of current teaching and learning within Cambodian higher

education, the project is also to investigate secondary documents including syllabi, textbooks. Policies on using CLT, teaching materials or students' work samples, and exam papers.

The Researcher requests your assistance because you are a university teacher and have taught the English major program for a period of time. Through this experience, we believe that you can share the beliefs and understanding you hold about features of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Please also be notified that you might be selected for a subsequent interview so that you can further share about the extent to which you have implemented the CLT features and the support you require for your teaching of the English major program.

Participation

Your participation will involve completion of an online questionnaire that will take approximately 20 minutes of your time.

Questions will include your personal background, but no name will be collected. Some questions are designed as multiple-choice questions (MCQ) and others are statements with Linkert-scale option as responses. To answer the MCQ you can choose more than one item, all those that best fit your understanding of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). For the Linkert-scale statements, choose the specific number that you think best describes CLT in terms of importance, frequency, success or challenge. A few questions at the end require you to share in writing your experience of using digital technology, what technical support you require to teach communicatively, and suggestions to want to offer to teach interactively.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. You may also request that any personal biographical data collected be withdrawn and confidentially destroyed. If you do wish to withdraw from this project or withdraw data collected about you, please contact the Researcher (contact details at the top of this form).

Your decision whether you take part, do not take part or to take part and then withdraw, will in no way impact your current or future relationship with the University of Southern Queensland or your current university. Keep a copy of this sheet for your information.

Expected Benefits

It is expected that the outcome of this project may directly benefit you as a teacher from the findings regarding appropriate support for your teaching at university. It might also benefit the English major program for both the training of pre-service teachers, retraining of in-service teachers and benefits to English major students to become confident in effective communication for education and employment.

Risks

In participating in the questionnaire, there are minimal risks in relation to the time you are giving to the project and the possible concern you have about releasing your understanding and opinions in relation to teaching, your beliefs, your implementation the features of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) within your university setting. The Researcher has already gained permission from your university so that you can share your knowledge. The collected data will not personally identify you as you are one of several participants. To minimize these risks additionally, data will be accessed by only the Researcher and his supervisors, not your current university and be stored at UNISQ, securely password protected.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law.

For participating in this online survey, you are kindly advised that:

- The information will be collected with anonymity in order for analysis
- The information collected might be used for any other related research project in the future
- Only the Researcher and his supervisors will have access to the information, not any other people.

The participants' data will be made available for future research purposes (whether for similar projects only or for full unspecified use) and the data will be stored and shared as non-identifiable in a secured password-protected folder on UNISQ's One-Drive.

Should you wish to obtain a copy of the result of the project you can do so by writing an email as listed on the top of this information sheet above to the Researcher.

Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely as per University of Southern Queensland's Research Data Management policy.

Consent to Participate

Completing the questionnaire is accepted as an indication of your consent to participate in this project, and you will need to click on an 'I Accept' button on the first page of the online questionnaire to give consent to participate in the project. All information collected will be treated confidentially. The *questionnaire is to be completed anonymously*.

Questions or Further Information about the Project

Please refer to the Researcher Contact Details at the top of the form if you have any questions or to request further information about this project.

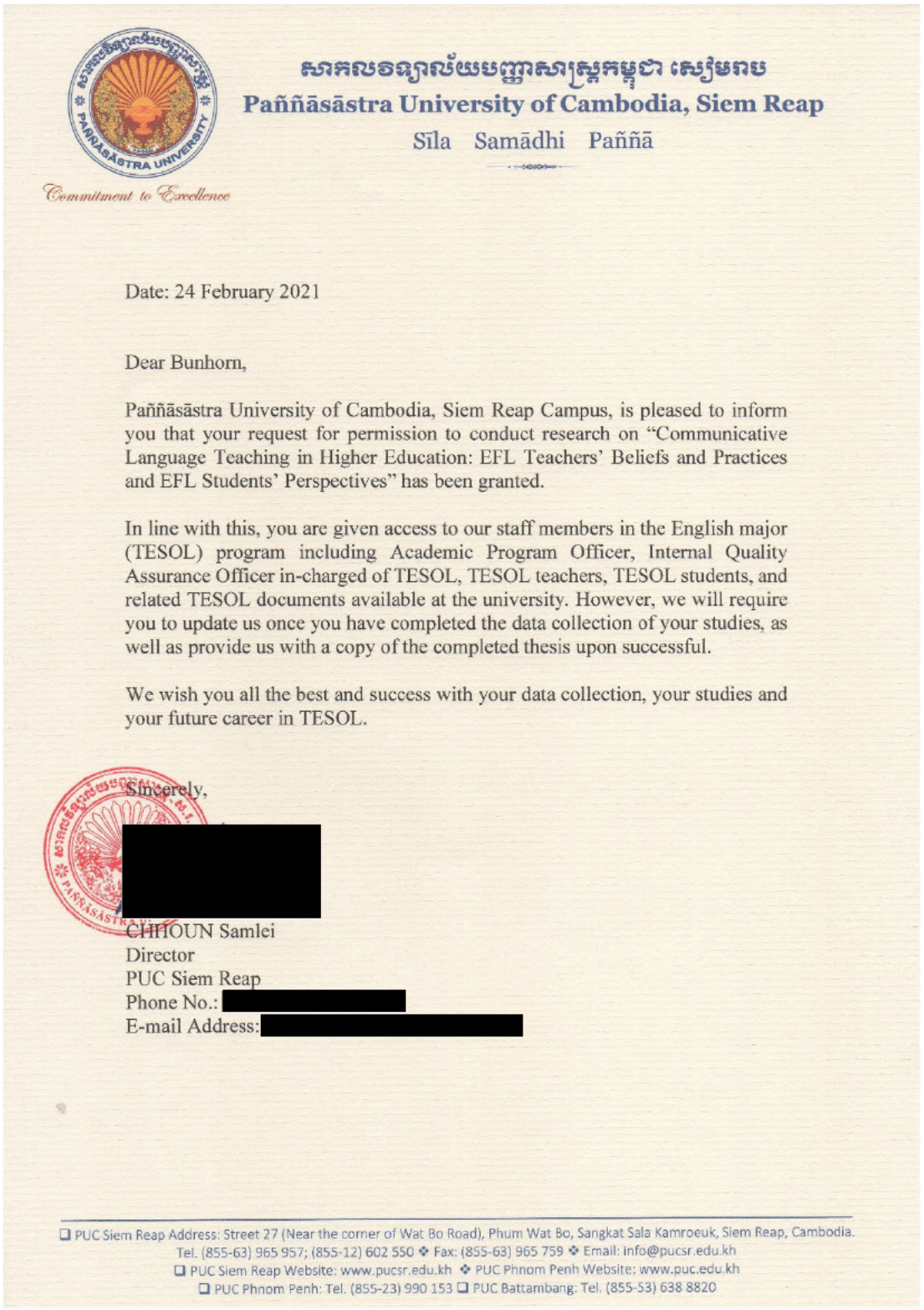
Concerns or Complaints Regarding the Conduct of the Project

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project, you may contact the University of Southern Queensland Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics on

+61 7 4631 1839 or email researchintegrity@UniSQ.edu.au. The Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an unbiased manner.

Thank you for taking the time to help with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.

APPENDIX F: PERMISSION LETTER (UNIVERSITY A)



សាកលវិទ្យាល័យបញ្ញាសាស្ត្រកម្ពុជា ស្ទឹមរាប
Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia, Siem Reap
Sīla Samādhi Paññā

Commitment to Excellence

Date: 24 February 2021

Dear Bunhorn,

Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia, Siem Reap Campus, is pleased to inform you that your request for permission to conduct research on "Communicative Language Teaching in Higher Education: EFL Teachers' Beliefs and Practices and EFL Students' Perspectives" has been granted.

In line with this, you are given access to our staff members in the English major (TESOL) program including Academic Program Officer, Internal Quality Assurance Officer in-charged of TESOL, TESOL teachers, TESOL students, and related TESOL documents available at the university. However, we will require you to update us once you have completed the data collection of your studies, as well as provide us with a copy of the completed thesis upon successful.

We wish you all the best and success with your data collection, your studies and your future career in TESOL.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

CHHOUN Samlei
Director
PUC Siem Reap
Phone No.: [redacted]
E-mail Address: [redacted]

❑ PUC Siem Reap Address: Street 27 (Near the corner of Wat Bo Road), Phum Wat Bo, Sangkat Sala Kamroeuk, Siem Reap, Cambodia.
Tel. (855-63) 965 957; (855-12) 602 550 ❖ Fax: (855-63) 965 759 ❖ Email: info@pucsr.edu.kh
❑ PUC Siem Reap Website: www.pucsr.edu.kh ❖ PUC Phnom Penh Website: www.puc.edu.kh
❑ PUC Phnom Penh: Tel. (855-23) 990 153 ❑ PUC Battambang: Tel. (855-53) 638 8820

APPENDIX G: PERMISSION LETTER (UNIVERSITY B+C)

ព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា
Kingdom of Cambodia
ជាតិ សាសនា ព្រះមហាក្សត្រ
Nation Religion King

សាកលវិទ្យាល័យប៊ីលប្រាយ
Build Bright University
លេខ: ០៤០៧ /២១ ស.ប.ប.

Dear Bunhorn,

Build Bright University, North-West Regional Campus, received your request for permission and has a great pleasure to inform you that it is granted for you to conduct research on "Communicative Language Teaching in Higher Education: EFL Teachers' Beliefs and Practices and EFL Students' Perspectives" at our two campuses of Siem Reap and Banteay Meanchey within the region.

In line with this permission, you will gain access to our faculty members in the English as a foreign language major (TEFL) program including dean or vice dean, lecturers of English, English major students, and relevant documents available within the English faculty at the university. However, we will require you to update us once you have completed the data collection of your research, as well as provide us with a copy of the completed thesis upon successful.

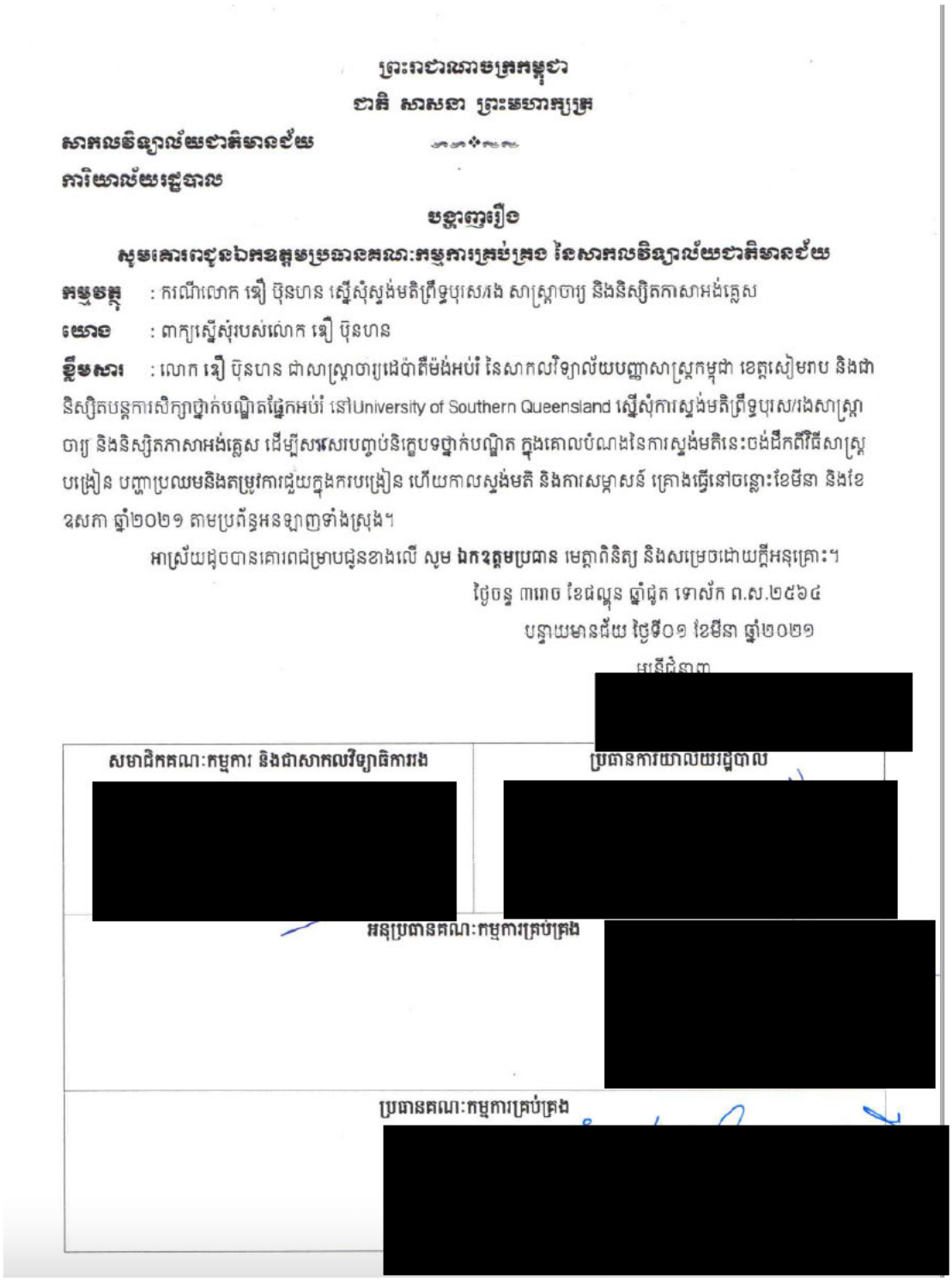
We wish you all the best and get successful in data collection for your PhD journey ahead.

Siem Reap, 03 March 2021
Sincerely Yours,

[redacted]

Assoc. Prof. (Dr.) MEUK Kimsroeun
Regional Director of North-West Campuses, (BTB, SR & BMC)
Director of Build Bright University, Siem Reap Campus
Mobile Phone: [redacted]
E-mail Address: [redacted]

APPENDIX H: PERMISSION LETTER (UNIVERSITY D)



ព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា
ជាតិ សាសនា ព្រះមហាក្សត្រ

សាកលវិទ្យាល័យជាតិមានជ័យ
ការិយាល័យរដ្ឋបាល

បន្ទាញរឿង

សូមគោរពជូនឯកឧត្តមប្រធានគណៈកម្មការគ្រប់គ្រង នៃសាកលវិទ្យាល័យជាតិមានជ័យ

កម្មវត្ថុ : ករណីលោក ឌឿ ប៊ុនហាន ស្នើសុំស្នងមតិព្រឹទ្ធបុរសរង សាស្ត្រាចារ្យ និងនិស្សិតកាសាអង់គ្លេស

យោង : ពាក្យស្នើសុំរបស់លោក ឌឿ ប៊ុនហាន

ខ្លឹមសារ : លោក ឌឿ ប៊ុនហាន ជាសាស្ត្រាចារ្យដេប៉ាតឺម៉ង់អប់រំ នៃសាកលវិទ្យាល័យបញ្ញាសាស្ត្រកម្ពុជា ខេត្តសៀមរាប និងជានិស្សិតបន្តការសិក្សាថ្នាក់បណ្ឌិតផ្នែកអប់រំ នៅUniversity of Southern Queensland ស្នើសុំការស្នងមតិព្រឹទ្ធបុរស/រងសាស្ត្រាចារ្យ និងនិស្សិតកាសាអង់គ្លេស ដើម្បីសរសេរបញ្ចប់និក្ខេបទថ្នាក់បណ្ឌិត ក្នុងគោលបំណងនៃការស្នងមតិនេះចង់ដឹកពីវិធីសាស្ត្របង្រៀន បញ្ហាប្រឈមនិងតម្រូវការជួយក្នុងការបង្រៀន ហើយកាលស្នងមតិ និងការសម្ភាសន៍ គ្រោងធ្វើនៅចន្លោះខែមីនា និងខែឧសភា ឆ្នាំ២០២១ តាមប្រព័ន្ធអនឡាញទាំងស្រុង។

អាស្រ័យដូចបានគោរពជម្រាបជូនខាងលើ សូម **ឯកឧត្តមប្រធាន** មេត្តាពិនិត្យ និងសម្រេចដោយក្តីអនុគ្រោះ។

ថ្ងៃចន្ទ ៣រោច ខែផល្គុន ឆ្នាំជូត ទោស័ក ព.ស.២៥៦៤
បន្ទាយមានជ័យ ថ្ងៃទី០១ ខែមីនា ឆ្នាំ២០២១

[redacted]

សមាជិកគណៈកម្មការ និងជាសាកលវិទ្យាធិការរង [redacted]	**ប្រធានការិយាល័យរដ្ឋបាល** [redacted]
អនុប្រធានគណៈកម្មការគ្រប់គ្រង [redacted]	
ប្រធានគណៈកម្មការគ្រប់គ្រង [redacted]	

(English translation)

Kingdom of Cambodia

Nation Religion King

******

National Meanchey University

Administration Office

Request Justification

His Excellency, Head of Managing Committee of National Meanchey University

Objective: The request of Mr Bunhorn Doeur for surveys of English teachers and English major students, and interviews with dean/vice dean and English teachers

Reference: Request Letter of Mr Bunhorn Doeur

Content: Mr Bunhorn Doeur, a senior lecturer at Education Department of Pannasastra University of Cambodia, Siem Reap province, and a PhD candidate at the University of Southern Queensland, requested to survey English teachers and English major students, and to interview dean/vice dean and English teachers in order to write a PhD thesis. The surveys and interviews aim to investigate the teachers' beliefs and implementation of communicative language teaching, problems faced, and support required for their teaching, and students' perspectives about learning English at university. The surveys and interviews are planned to be conducted online between March and May 2021.

As informed above, please His Excellency check and approve accordingly.

Banteay Meanchey, 01 March 2021

Research Officer

Signed, Ith Soben

Member of Committee and Vice Rector

Should include a confirmation letter

from the host university.

Signed,

Head of Admin Office

Please His Excellency Head

Checked and approved.

Signed, Or Yarath

Deputy Head of Managing Committee

Agreed with research officer

Please check and approve.

Signed, Sorn Senghuk

Head of Managing Committee

Approved but must cooperate with research office

and follow research ethics.

Signed

APPENDIX I: HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER

From: Human.Ethics@UniSQ.edu.au

Subject: [RIMS] UNISQ HRE Application - H21REA036 - Expedited review outcome - Approved

Date: 25 March 2021 at 1:15 pm

To: [redacted]

Cc: [redacted]

Dear Bunhorn

I am pleased to confirm your Human Research Ethics (HRE) application has now been reviewed by the University's Expedited Review process. As your research proposal has been deemed to meet the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), ethical approval is granted as follows:

UNISQ HREC ID: H21REA036

Project title: Communicative Language Teaching in Cambodian Higher Education: EFL Teachers' Beliefs and Practices and EFL Students' Perspectives

Approval date: 25/03/2021 Expiry date: 25/03/2024

UNISQ HREC status: Approved

The standard conditions of this approval are:

a) responsibly conduct the project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments made to the proposal;

(b) advise the University (email:ResearchIntegrity@UniSQ.edu.au) immediately of any complaint pertaining to the conduct of the research or any other issues in relation to the project which may warrant review of the ethical approval of the project;

(c) promptly report any adverse events or unexpected outcomes to the University (email: ResearchIntegrity@UniSQ.edu.au) and take prompt action to deal with any unexpected risks;

(d) make submission for any amendments to the project and obtain approval prior to implementing such changes;

(e) provide a progress 'milestone report' when requested and at least for every year of approval;

(f) provide a final 'milestone report' when the project is complete;

(g) promptly advise the University if the project has been discontinued, using a final 'milestone report'.

The additional conditionals of approval for this project are:

(a) Nil.

Please note that failure to comply with the conditions of this approval or requirements of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018, and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2007 may result in withdrawal of approval for the project.

Congratulations on your ethical approval! Wishing you all the best for success!

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to make contact with an Ethics Officer.

Kind regards Human Research Ethics University of Southern Queensland Toowoomba – Queensland – 4350 – Australia Email: human.ethics@UniSQ.edu.au

APPENDIX J: WRITING SKILL SYLLABUS

II. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to develop academic writing competency and proficiency of undergraduates at a high-intermediate level. The course enables students, first, to prepare and organize their writing based on typical academic writing conventions such as coherence, cohesion, unity and completeness; then, to understand how important it is to collect relevant data and information from various sources to write successful essays; finally, to write process essays, expository essays, comparison/contrast essays, argumentative essays, paraphrase and summary effectively.

III. COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES (CLOs)

Upon completion of this course, students will:

CLO1 : have developed an in depth understanding of key terms underlying academic writing

CLO2 : demonstrate an ability to write academic essays of different types

CLO3 : have practiced citing sources and writing references.

IV. COURSE CONTENT AND MODE OF DELIVERY

Sessions	Theme/Chapters	Areas of Focus	Assessing Student Learning
1	**Course Orientation**	a) What is writing? What does writing involve? b) Writing is both a means and end c) Giving feedback on writing d) Assessing writing	• Inquiry-based/elicitation
2	**Chapter 1: Introduction to the Essay**	a) From paragraph to essay b) Briefing on the three main parts of an essay	• Students analysing a sample essay
3		a) Lecture on how to write introductory, body and concluding paragraphs	• Practices on identifying key elements of an essay • Task #1: Writing an Essay
4		a) Corrective feedback on writing task #1	• Peer- and self- assessment
5	**Chapter 2: The Comparison and Contrast Essay**	a) Nature of comparison and contrast essays b) Organizational patterns of comparison and contrast essays c) How to write "thesis statement" for comparison and contrast essay	• Pre-teaching assessment • KWL chart
6		a) Reviewing grammar structure for comparison/contrast essay b) Practices on analysing a comparison and contrast essay	• Practice exercises • Task #2: Writing a Compare/Contrast Essay

7		a) Corrective feedback on writing task #2	• Peer- and self- assessment
8	**Chapter 3: The Classification Essay**	a) What is the classification essay? b) Classification Essay: subject, classification principles, number of categories, category names c) Writing thesis statement for the classification essay	• Pre-teaching assessment • KWL chart
9		a) Reviewing correlative conjunctions and articles for classification b) Practices on analysing the classification essay	• Practice exercises • Task #3: Writing a Classification Essay
10		a) Corrective feedback on writing task #3	• Peer- and self- assessment
11	**Stop and Check I**	a) Key terms/concepts b) Analysing essay	• Take-home exam
12	**Chapter 4: The Process Analysis Essay**	a) What is a process essay? b) How to write thesis statement for a process essay c) How to organize a process essay	• Pre-teaching assessment • KWL chart
13		a) Reviewing adverbial clauses of time reduced to participial phrases b) Practices on analysing process essay	• Practice exercises • Task #4: Writing a Process Analysis Essay
14		a) Corrective feedback on writing task #4	• Peer- and self- assessment
15	**Chapter 5: Cause-and-Effect Analysis Essay**	a) What is cause/effect essay? b) How to write thesis statement of a cause/effect essay c) Organizational patterns of a cause/effect essay	• Pre-teaching assessment • KWL chart
16		a) Reviewing transitions used to write cause/effect essay b) Practices on analysing cause/effect essay	• Practice exercises • Task #5: Writing a Cause and/or Effect Essay
17		a) Corrective feedback on writing task #5	• Peer- and self- assessment
18	**Chapter 6: The Argumentative Essay**	a) Purpose for writing argument b) How to write thesis statement for an argumentative essay c) Organizational patterns of an argumentative essay	• Pre-teaching assessment • KWL chart
19		a) Briefly reviewing coordinating and correlative conjunctions, subordinate clauses, and transitional signals	• Practice exercises
20		a) Practices on analysing argumentative essay	• Task #6: Writing an Argumentative Essay
21		a) Corrective feedback on writing task #6	• Peer- and self- assessment
22	**Stop and Check II**	a) Key terms/concepts b) Analysing essay	• Take-home exam
23	**Review for Final Exam**		
24	**Final Exam**	a) Key terms/concepts b) Analysing parts of an essay c) Writing an essay	

V. REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED RECOURCES

- **Required textbook:**

Smalley, R. L., Ruetten, M. K., & Kozyrev, J. R. (2006). *Developing Writing Skills: Mastering the Essential Skills Through Instruction & Practice*. Learners Publishing Pte Limited.

- **Recommended readings:**

Duigu, G. (2009). *Essay writing for English tests*. NXB Tổng hợp Tp. HCM.

McClain, M., & Roth, J. D. (1998). *Schaum's quick guide to writing great essays*. McGraw Hill Professional.

Savage, A., & Mayer, P. (2006). *Effective academic writing: the short essay*. Oxford University Press.

Shields, M. (2010). *Essay writing: a student's guide*. Sage.

Warburton, N. (2006). *The basics of essay writing*. London: Routledge.

Zemach, D. E., & Rumisek, L. A. (2003). College writing: From paragraph to essay.

VI. ASSESSMENT SCHEME

Assessment Items	Weighting (=100%)	Addresses CLO(s)
1) Quizzes	10%	CLO1&CLO2
2) Terms papers	60%	CLO2&CLO3
3) Final Exam	30%	CLO1&CLO2
Total	**100%**	

VII. SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS

In order to pass the course, students must complete every task item. Assignments should be submitted on the date due. A late submission may be accepted if accompanied by a sufficient reason and evidence. A late submission without these will lead to score deduction of 5% for each day the assignment is late.

VIII. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY AND FEEDBACK

Students are expected to join the Zoom meetings on a regular basis. This is because participation through attendance is an important and significant component of learning design. Not only is this relevant to the gaining of knowledge and skills appropriate to this particular subject, but it also applies to your degree as a whole. From my experience, there is a significant link between a student's attendance/participation, and the quality of their learning outcomes demonstrated by the submitted assignments.

All students enrolled in this course will have an opportunity to provide feedback on the course or professional practices of the course convenor throughout the term via the administrative personnel, Mr. Mok Siengvon, Tel: [redacted] E-mail: [redacted] or via course satisfaction survey to be delivered at some time during the course.

IX. AUTHORITY OF THIS COURSE OUTLINE

Any change to the information contained in Section IV (course content/delivery), and Section VI (Assessment) of this document will only be made by the instructor. Any individual student who believes him/herself to be disadvantaged by a change is encouraged to discuss the matter with the course instructor.

APPENDIX K: CORE ENGLISH ASSESSMENT

ឥណ្ឌាសា: General English (Interchange 1)

I. Vocabulary (10 pts)

Match these words with their definitions	
1. accountant **2.** cashier **3.** flight attendance **4.** website designer **5.** server **6.** tutor **7.** usher **8.** caregiver **9.** pilot **10.** musician	**A.** someone who is skilled in playing music, usually as their job **B.** a person who flies an aircraft **C.** someone who looks after a person who is young, old or ill **D.** a man who shows people where they should sit, especially at a formal event such as a wedding or at a theatre or cinema **E.** a teacher who works with one student or a small group, either at a British college or university or in the home of a child **F.** person who provide food and drink **G.** a person who designs websites **H.** someone who serves passengers on an aircraft **I.** a person whose job is to receive and pay out money in a shop, bank, restaurant, etc **J.** someone who keeps or examines the records of money received, paid and owed by a company or person

Write your answers here

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
J									

B. Complete the questions with Do or Does. (10 pts)

a- _____ you like dogs?

b- _____ your mother like dogs?

c- _____ a dog like to run free?

d- _____ Fred train dogs

e- _____ dogs like children?

f- _____ your neighbors have a dog?

g- _____ we feed a dog once a day?

h- _____ they take the dog to the vet regularly?

i- _____ I have to take the dog for a walk?

j- _____ children like to play with animals?

C. Insert "so" or " because" (10 pts)

1. I'm tired		I'm going to bed.
2. We lost the match		the other team had better players
3. My sister is a bit fat		she loves eating chocolate.
4. That restaurant is very expensive		we will go somewhere else.
5. You should stop smoking		you have a terrible cough
6.I didn't get the job I wanted		we can't afford the new TV
7. There is nothing on television tonight		let's rent a DVD to watch.
8. I didn't see mum this morning		she had to leave so early
9. I hate this music		let's listen to something else
10. My favourite colour is yellow		I will wear this dress a lot.
11. I am 180 cm tall		I sometimes hit my head on low doors.

III. Writing (20 pts)

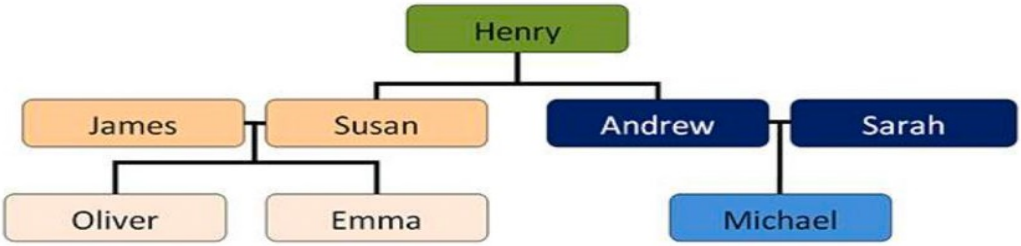
Please write a short essay of 250 words about your daily activities or the daily activities of someone you know.

Marking criteria:

- Use present simple
- Capital letters
- Spelling

II. Grammar (20 pts)

A. ***Look at the family tree and choose words from the box to fill in the blank***. The first one is already done for you as an example. **(10 pts).**



a. Aunt	b. sister	c. sister	d. father	e. grandfather	f. uncle
g. father	h. mother	i. brother	j. cousin		

1. Oliver is Emma's ***brother***_____.
2. Andrew is Michael's_____
3. Emma is Oliver's _____
4. Sarah is Michael's _____.
5. Henry is Emma's _____
6. James is Emma's _____.
7. Andrew is Emma's _____.
8. Michael is Oliver's _____.
9. Susan is Michael's _____
10. Susan is Andrew's _____