



Original Research

The Status, Challenges and Prospects of Communicative Language Teaching in East Wollega Zone, Ethiopia

Derara Daba*, Zeleke Teshome & Ebisa Bekele

Department of English Language and Literature, Institute of Languages Study and Journalism,
Wollega University, Ethiopia

Abstract

A communicative language teaching-based curriculum was introduced in Ethiopia 30 years ago, although the expected and actual outcomes differ. This research sought to understand the present, challenges, and prospects of communicative language instruction in a few secondary schools in Ethiopia's East Wollega Zone. To achieve the purpose, three core research questions and a mixed-methods survey study methodology were created. EFL teachers were carefully sampled from nine secondary schools for the study. Through interviews, classroom observations, and questionnaires, teachers provided information. Converging mixed-methods technique was used to collect data simultaneously. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze questionnaire data in SPSS 20. However, classroom observation data was transcribed and described by watching teachers. The interview data was also categorized, transcribed, and arranged by reoccurring topics. Every study question was triangulated due to analytic design. Thus, the study found that communicative language education was rare in the area. Writing notes and having students stay silent while you explain were teaching and learning activities. Communicative language teaching was hindered by educators, students, college admission exam washbacks, and educational institutions. EFL teachers should obtain theoretical and practical communicative language instruction training to promote student communication.

Article Information

Article History:

Received : 16-01-2022

Revised : 27-02-2022

Accepted : 28-03-2022

Keywords:

Status, Challenges, Prospects & Communicative Language Teaching

*Corresponding Author:

Derara Daba

E-mail:

deraradaba@gmail.com

Copyright © 2022 STAR Journal, Wollega University. All Rights Reserved.

INTRODUCTION

The need for effective English language communication skills across the globe, along with learners' deficient communication abilities, has led to the introduction of

communicative language instruction, grounded in the philosophy of language for communication (Brown, 2007; Gul, 2016; & Judy, 2007). In an effort to enhance both the

communicative capacity of students and the practice of teaching English as a foreign language in general, Ethiopia implemented a curriculum centred around communicative language teaching in 1994. According to the policy, English instruction should follow the fundamentals of communicative language education, and activities should be planned to encourage communication among students (MoE, 1994).

The English language textbooks and syllabuses have been updated in accordance with the policy to help students practise the language as much as possible by providing about equal emphasis to each English language competence. The nation's secondary school English language textbooks have undergone revisions and improvements to better facilitate student communication. The textbooks have been improved by taking into account different tasks that can be completed alone, with a partner, or in a group, and by allocating about similar amounts of time to each language skill.

Nonetheless, local studies revealed that Ethiopian secondary schools continue to maintain their traditional teaching methods. In addition to providing their students with infrequent opportunities to converse in English, EFL teachers continue to teach English using teacher-centered techniques (Adinew, 2015; Birhanu, 2012; Habtamu & Mendida, 2022; Tadesse, 2008). Even with the advent of textbooks focused on communicative language education, learners' communicative English language abilities have not significantly improved. The youngsters' ability to communicate is occasionally getting worse. According to the current researcher, the issue arises from a lack

of focus on the contextual obstacles that prevent communicative language training from being implemented. The only things that have changed are the curricula and textbooks; the contextual issues that impede the use of communicative language instruction have not. This indicates that the environment in which teaching and learning occur is not being considered.

Putting EFL courses into practice is a difficult process, even more so in Ethiopia because English is only utilised in instructional settings. It is influenced by several things. For instance, due to their vague understanding of the aims and tenets of communicative language instruction, the majority of EFL teachers who taught English as a foreign language were unable to put it into practice. The educators lacked sufficient pre-service or in-service training in the application of communicative language instruction. Because of this, the researcher is driven and concerned to look at the state, difficulties, and future of communicative language instruction, particularly as it relates to EFL teachers in secondary schools in East Wollega Zone, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia. As a result, the following research queries must be addressed:

1. *How much do secondary schools use communicative language instruction?*
2. *What contextual issues make it difficult to apply communicative language teaching?*
3. *How might the application of communicative language instruction be strengthened?*

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Research Design

The next step is to construct an appropriate research design after the fundamental research questions have been established and the research variables have been operationalized. Consequently, a descriptive survey research strategy was used for this study. Researchers can confidently extrapolate their findings to different groups because to this research approach (Creswell, 2012). Moreover, it is perfect for hybrid research methodologies such as the current one (Creswell, 2012; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). It supports the development of hypotheses, forecasts, and generates concepts for more research in the field of study. Lastly, the comparative and contrast analysis of study results with prior findings, reports, and archives is encouraged by this research design (Black, 2002; Creswell, 2012; Marczyk et al., 2005).

Data collection and analysis were conducted using a convergent mixed-methods methodology. After being gathered concurrently, the quantitative and qualitative data were examined independently. A questionnaire was used to gather the quantitative data, which was then analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The semi-structured interview and classroom observation methods were used to gather the qualitative data, which was then analysed using theme identification and narrative, respectively. The purpose of the textbook study was not to address one of the research objectives, but rather to determine whether or not the textbooks adhere to the fundamentals of communicative language education. To obtain a comprehensive view of

the findings, the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data was followed by triangulation, refinement, validation, and comparison.

Selection of the Research Sites

Only the East Wollega Zone in Ethiopia's Oromia Regional State was used as the research site. There are two primary reasons why the zone was chosen as a study area. The first reason was that the teachers' problems with implementing communicative language teaching were evident in the feedback gathered from the secondary school EFL teachers in the zone through a series of community service engagements and formal or informal classroom observations. The second reason was that the zone is within Wollega University's catchment area, and the university works to improve society in a number of ways, with education serving as the cornerstone. As a result, nine secondary schools in the zone were chosen to serve as study sites: Arjo Gudetu, Balo, Bekumsa Biya, Burka Jimata, Gatama, Haro, Homi, Jangir, and Wama Adare.

Data Sources

Primary data was gathered from a sample of EFL teachers at the secondary schools that were the subject of the study in order to improve the validity and reliability of the research. A questionnaire, in-class observations, and teacher interviews were used to gather data. To obtain preliminary information regarding the textbook preparation process, a textbook analysis was also conducted. Furthermore, scholarly works such as research papers, reports, articles,

scholarly summaries, abstracts, proceedings, and other literature were reviewed in order to locate the arguments in the context of other scholars' viewpoints and to justify the significance of the study, rather than to be used as primary data sources.

Participants of the Study

The study's participants were EFL teachers working in secondary schools in the East Wollega Zonal Administration, specifically those teaching grades 11 and 12. For the study, nine secondary schools were chosen at random. As a result, 72 EFL teachers participated in the survey overall. To learn more about the teachers' backgrounds, demographic profiles were collected. As a result, six(6) of the teachers were female and sixty-six (66) of the teachers were male. The English majors were all of the teachers. Regarding their credentials, 41 of them held a B.A. in English, and 31 of them held an M.A. in TEFL.

Sampling Techniques

For this study, four sample strategies were used to choose participants. First, East Wollega Zone was chosen on purpose because the present researcher had seen the scope and gravity of the issue being studied. In addition, the zone is inside Wollega University's catchment region, for which the university makes every effort to guarantee high-quality instruction. Second, the study's nine districts in the zone were chosen at random. Next, a random selection was made of one secondary school from each district included in the sample. Third, a thorough selection process was used to choose the EFL teachers who

would answer the questionnaire. Fourth, for the purpose of conducting interviews and classroom observations, four secondary schools were chosen at random among the nine secondary schools.

Instruments of Data Collection

The kind of data collection tool to be employed is frequently determined by how a researcher formulates the fundamental research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2017). As a result, the current researcher used interviews, questionnaires, classroom observations, and textbook analysis as data gathering tools. Many participants were surveyed via a questionnaire. Data on EFL teachers' use of communicative language teaching in the classroom were gathered through classroom observation. Three observations were conducted on a total of twelve EFL teachers at the four secondary schools previously mentioned. Every observation session was captured on audio and then transcribed. In order to gather information regarding the teachers' use of communicative language teaching, the difficulties they encounter, and their possibilities for the future, a one-on-one interview with 12 instructors was also undertaken. The purpose of the textbook study was not to address any research issues; rather, it was to gather preliminary data regarding the textbooks' compliance with the fundamentals of communicative language teaching.

Data Analysis Techniques

The type of data that needs to be gathered determines how it should be analysed and understood (Dawson, 2007; Walliman, 2011).

Descriptive and inferential statistics were thus used to evaluate the data gathered via the questionnaire. However, by paying close attention to what teachers did in the classroom, the data gathered through observation was recorded and recounted. The information gathered from the interviews with EFL teachers was transcribed, coded, and categorised according to recurring themes or patterns. As a result, a thematic analysis and interpretation were conducted. The printed and published works were also examined using meta-analysis, which compares and contrasts the findings of earlier research with the findings of the current study to determine how similar or dissimilar the results are.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The extent to which communicative language teaching was implemented

"To what extent is communicative language teaching implemented in secondary schools?" is the article's first research question. The main goal of this study topic is to investigate how much secondary school EFL teachers used the fundamentals of communicative language instruction in English classes. Thus, information regarding the teachers' self-reported classroom implementation was gathered using 45 items that contained seven major principles (constructs) of communicative language teaching. The items were presented as a five-point Likert scale of frequency, ranging from never (1) to always (5). The self-reported replies from the teachers are summarised in the following table. Because a Likert scale was used to collect the data, it was not continuous. It was therefore

changed. When data does not match the normalcy assumptions, a researcher has several options, according to Field (2013) and Pallant (2010). The most popular option is data transformation. If the researcher has a good sample size (more than 30 participants), SPSS will accept small violations of the assumptions of descriptive and inferential statistics when data is converted. Consequently, the greatest mean score for five questions on a five-point Likert scale is 25, and the lowest score is 5, based on the Karavas-Doukas (1996) attitude scale measure. The midpoint for a five-likert scale for the scholar is 15, despite the fact that it is challenging to ascertain the midpoint because many respondents are unsure when their agreement scale is neutral regarding specific issues. This principle was also applied to the analysis of the data for this investigation. The grand mean of the items within the thematic areas indicated in Table 1 is used in this subsection to present the outcomes of the EFL teachers' adoption of communicative language teaching. Using the English language for instruction and conversation is one of the fundamental tenets of communicative language teaching, however learners may use their mother tongue in moderation. As a result, seven items were given to the EFL teachers in secondary schools to indicate how they use the English language for communication and instruction. Thus, in EFL classrooms, teachers who reported using the English language as a medium of instruction and communication had a mean score of 22.43. According to this research, when teaching English, almost half of the EFL teachers utilised it themselves. The observation of the classrooms also demonstrated that the majority of the teachers

were proficient in instructing and communicating in English. Despite the one-way nature of their instruction and communication, they did a fair job of illuminating the subjects being discussed for their students. Nonetheless, the current researcher had a suspicion that the teachers' awareness of being watched might have

contributed to their constructive use of the English language in the classroom. In the absence of classroom observers, that might not occur in the classrooms on a regular basis. Some of the lecturers appeared more animated while utilising the language, maybe as a result of realizing they were being watched.

Table 1

EFL teachers' responses to the implementation of communicative language teaching

Themes (Principles)	No. of cases	No. of items	Mini	Max	Mean	SD
Usage of English as a medium of instruction	72	7	17	28	22.43	2.161
Ensuring participation of students	72	7	11	26	19.67	2.149
Integration of English language skills	72	6	11	23	17.57	2.599
Emphasis of fluency over accuracy	72	6	12	25	18.65	2.253
Tolerance of learners' English errors	72	6	12	22	18.04	1.909
Contextualization/localization of the activities	72	6	13	30	23.90	3.944
Roles of EFL teachers	72	7	14	31	21.39	3.231

Another tenet of communicative language education is ensuring students' active engagement in English classes by providing chances and activities that encourage meaningful communication. Accordingly, the EFL teachers answered seven questions about how frequently they communicate with their students. Subsequently, it was determined that the items' grand mean score was 19.67, which was less than the mid-point score of 21. This demonstrates how infrequently EFL teachers facilitate conversation among their pupils. Due to their resistance to participation in English language exercises, the teachers stated that they rarely got their students to communicate. Since they could only speak

English in a classroom setting, their lack of proficiency in the language caused them to exhibit feelings of unwillingness.

Another fundamental tenet of communicative language instruction is the teaching and acquisition of English language skills through integration. As a result, the EFL teachers were asked to rate how frequently they used language integration in their instruction and learning of the language. Given this, the mean score responses from the teachers were calculated, and the result was 17.57, which is marginally below the average of the mid-score (18). It appears that when teaching English, most teachers did not incorporate language proficiency. It was stated

that the given score alone simply demonstrated the integration of speaking and listening abilities. When the professors spoke or gave explanations in the classroom, the kids, according to the teachers, paid attention. Since more than two language skills can be integrated, a simple integration of speaking and listening skills is insufficient.

The teachers were also urged to focus on the complementing idea of communicative language education, which places more emphasis on fluidity than accuracy. As a result, the teachers were asked how often they encouraged their pupils to use trial-and-error learning as a teaching and learning method to communicate in the English language. The grand mean, based on the responses, was 18.65, which is quite close to the mean score of 18. It is clear from this data that some EFL teachers instructed their students to speak English more fluently. Discrete item replies from the teachers, however, revealed that they instantly corrected their pupils for any mistakes they made in order to help them become flawless English language learners. They held that grammar should be corrected when students make mistakes because it is the foundation of teaching and learning the English language. Even while both are beneficial to foreign language teaching and learning, fluency—or the ability of learners to communicate in an acceptable manner in English—is regarded as being more significant than correctness. Prioritizing fluency over accuracy forces students to communicate by making mistakes and learning from them. Six items were also given to the EFL teachers in secondary schools to rate how often they correct their pupils' English language errors when they try to

communicate. The teachers' responses had a grand mean of 18.04, indicating that they frequently corrected their students' English language faults outright. The findings of the observation in the classroom also demonstrated that the teachers gave their students explicit corrections. For instance, one teacher quickly and even in a depressing manner corrected a few pupils' attempts. When a pupil made a mistake, he responded, "Eenyutu akkasitti si barsiise? Are you okay, hinjijjiiramnee? Who gave you this instruction? Have you not yet undergone change? The student's face quickly became pale. The error-correcting attitude of these lecturers discourages pupils from attempting English-language communication any longer. This finding is at odds with the perspective of communicative language instruction, which accepts and even celebrates students' mistakes as natural ways of teaching and learning the language.

In order to help their students communicate in English more effectively, the EFL teachers were also given six questions to answer about how they had contextualised or localised the activities in textbooks or teacher-made activities to their own experiences. Their mean score for their responses was thus 23.90, which is almost "often." This suggests that rather than focusing on facilitating students' ease of communication, most teachers contextualised or localised textbook exercises or teacher-made activities to their students' actual circumstances. The teachers stated that in order to teach and explain the English language to their pupils, they made use of examples that were relevant to the learners' everyday situations.

Regarding their roles in English classes, the EFL teachers were also questioned. In keeping with this, seven things were given to the teachers to represent the various functions they had in English classes. As a result, their responses had a grand mean score of 21.39, which is close to the frequency scale for "sometimes." Thus, it appears that in English classrooms, teachers occasionally take on the roles of facilitator and guide. Nonetheless, the professors' specific reactions include of handing out notes, requiring pupils to duplicate the notes, and providing examples to clarify the notes. In the classroom, the teachers saw themselves as the primary knowledge providers.

In order to get the EFL teachers' opinions about their experiences implementing communicative language teaching in the classroom, open-ended questions were also asked of them. The questions' elements were created with the fundamental communicative language teaching ideas in mind, which are anticipated of EFL teachers when they instruct English in classrooms. As a result, the questions brought up issues with guaranteeing student involvement, assigning students to groups or pairs, connecting the activities to the learners' everyday lives, incorporating language skills, prioritizing fluency over accuracy, accepting mistakes made by the learners, using the English language as a medium of instruction or communication, and the roles of teachers.

The primary methods for gathering information about the state of communicative language instruction in the research area were classroom observations and interviews. It was discovered that the majority of EFL classrooms used teacher-centered teaching

strategies. Teaching was only thought of as conveying, showcasing, or elucidating the topics covered in conversations. It was the teachers' routine to write notes and provide explanations. In addition, because grammar and vocabulary were more suited for lecturing students, the professors prioritised teaching these subjects above the other subjects. Seldom did the pupils get the chance to speak with one another in English. In English classrooms, there was very little interaction between the students and the teachers as well as between the students themselves.

After going over the textbooks again, the researcher made sure the lessons were taught in the same way as the teachers had when they observed the students in the classroom. The textbooks began each lesson with brainstorming questions, opinion expression, solo presentations, pair or group work, role plays, and other start-up questions, in contrast to the teachers' lesson presentations. During the interview, the teachers were questioned about why this discrepancy occurred. They responded that although there were issues preventing them from carrying out the lessons as intended, the exercises in the textbooks are crucial in helping their students build their communication ability. The issues concerned students, educators, the school environment, the washback consequences of college entrance exams, and CLT itself.

It appears that there was a discrepancy between what the teachers did in the actual classrooms and what the textbooks were supposed to teach. The textbooks for the students were created with the fundamentals of communicative language education in mind. They were created with exercises aimed at encouraging students in grades 11 and 12 to

communicate using a variety of English language proficiency levels. But the professors only covered vocabulary and grammar that they believed would be tested on university entrance exams. It appeared that the focus of English language instruction had shifted from helping students become more proficient communicators to helping them do well on college admission tests.

Contextual Challenges that hinder the Implementation of Communicative Language Teaching

The replies displayed in the above table indicate that one of the issues preventing EFL teachers from implementing communicative language education as well as feasible had to do with the teachers themselves. The seven items' grand mean was 20.62, nearly matching the midpoint (21). This demonstrates that, in part, the inadequate application of

communicative language training was the fault of the teachers. about the discrete item answers, the educators concurred that there was a deficiency in ongoing professional development and in-service training about the application of communicative language teaching. A thorough grasp of the principles and practices of communicative language instruction was lacking. Consequently, the educators favoured teacher-centered pedagogies such as lectures over communicative language instruction.

Through interviews, it was also determined that the teachers' theoretical and practical understanding of communicative language education was lacking. The teachers perceived teaching and learning of communicative language as limited to oral or speaking abilities. As proof, the following passage was pulled from the interview:

Table 2

EFL teachers' responses for the contextual challenges

Themes (Constructs)	No of Cases	No of Items			Mean	SD
			Mini	Maxi		
EFL Teacher-related Challenges	72	7	14	26	20.62	2.178
Student-related Challenges	72	6	12	30	25.33	4.415
School Context-related Challenges	72	6	18	30	24.92	4.232
Exam Wash back-related Challenges	72	6	6	30	24.00	5.697

"Communication," in my opinion, refers to speaking or conversing in English. It is a method of instruction where students attempt to learn a subject like English by saying it aloud. In the classroom, they can converse with teachers and students about greetings, introductions, directions, storytelling, shopping, calling, dialling, telephoning, and other topics. It is evident from the excerpt

above that the EFL teacher saw communicative language education as a means of imparting speaking abilities. Speaking skills instruction and learning are linked, according to the teacher, to communicative language teaching. The lecturers skipped over speaking skills and focused on grammar and vocabulary since they thought speaking abilities were not really evaluated in

university entrance exams. Even though the abilities are interconnected, they held that grammar is the foundation of teaching and learning English and should be learned more than the other language skills. Because of this, the teachers' implementation of communicative language education was flawed.

Additionally, a few educators contended that they were instructing students in English in a manner similar to that of high schools and colleges. According to the professors, they attended seminars at universities to learn the English language. They were handed notes by their instructors on slides or the chalkboard, which they had to memorise before taking the test. Their current teaching methods were impacted by this incident, and they were unable to include their students in conversation. The majority of the sessions saw during the observation of the classroom demonstrated that the teachers' primary focus was on giving lectures on language objects related to grammar and vocabulary, rather than facilitating student interaction. The behaviourist philosophy of teaching and learning had an impact on the instructors, who saw themselves as sources of knowledge with the responsibility to convey, show, and explain the language objects to their students.

Other barriers to the adoption of communicative language education were issues with learners. As a result, the teachers were questioned about whether or not the difficulties were associated with their students. A grand mean score of 25.33 (more than agree) was displayed in the outcome. The use of communicative language education was hampered by circumstances pertaining to the learners. The first and most important issue that the EFL teachers brought up time and

time again has to do with the students. The professors made a compelling case that the students believed that learning and teaching could only happen when they sat down to listen to their lecturers and converse in silence. The majority of the pupils were kept mute while their English language professors repeatedly asked them questions, according to the observation made in the classroom. They were unable to actively participate in their own education. Without paying enough attention to what they are studying, the pupils just sit there in the classroom. It was clear that the interviewer had said the following:

There are certain issues that make it difficult for me to engage in communication as a student. The primary issue is the inadequate English language proficiency of my pupils. When I give them communication exercises, they refuse to take part. It would be hard for them to communicate in English. They don't use English to communicate. When I teach them, they beg me to speak to them in their native dialect.

The teachers' application of communicative language teaching in the classroom was impacted by the students' inadequate command of the English language. Regarding the aforementioned teacher, when given activities, the students' proficiency in using the English language was lacking. Rather than discussing the activities in English, they searched for their teacher to interpret the issue under discussion into their mother tongue. Because of this, the teachers found it challenging to use communicative activities with students who speak English as a second language.

Additionally, the teachers were questioned about whether or not the school environment,

which facilitates learning and teaching, had an impact on the way communicative language instruction was implemented. As a result, it was determined that the respondents' mean score was 24.92, which is higher than the normal mean score of 18 and nearly as likely to agree. This demonstrates how the implementation of communicative language education was impacted by elements associated to the school context, such as teaching resources (such as reference books, audios, and videos) and classroom layout (such as student seats). In summary, a major obstacle to the adoption of communicative language teaching was a lack of access to educational materials. Borg (2003) and Harmer (2003) emphasised the importance of school resources such as audiovisuals, movies, language labs, and other authentic materials in communication-based instruction, supporting this finding.

The majority of teachers who participated in the interview stated that a shortage of textbooks was their biggest concern. This posed a significant issue, particularly for the instruction of reading comprehension in the classroom. There weren't many textbooks in the hands of the pupils; they were only available in the library. The majority of the observation sessions in the classroom also demonstrated that nearly every kid in every classroom under observation did not have a textbook. While a result, rather than having pupils copy directly from their textbooks, the professors were watched while they completed every activity in the book on the whiteboard. Abbadi (2018) provided evidence to support the claim that secondary school English language textbooks were in short supply in educational institutions. He went on to say

that the fundamental tools used in the classroom to practise language input are textbooks. Aside from textbooks, there were not enough reference books, recordings, films, or other real resources to help with the application of communicative language instruction. Another element connected to the educational atmosphere was the sheer number of kids in the classrooms.

It is also clear from the current researcher's teaching experience that active learning is simpler to implement when teaching a small class than when teaching a large one. Despite the difficulties, huge class sizes are nevertheless inevitable in Ethiopia due to a lack of funding for the construction of additional classrooms, the provision of basic school infrastructure, and the hiring of skilled teachers. In light of this, EFL teachers ought to make every effort to facilitate as much communication with their students as they can.

The free promotion of students to the next grade level is another aspect of the school context that some of the questioned instructors mentioned as a barrier to implementing communicative language teaching. The teachers brought up the fact that some principals of the schools had ordered them to award secondary school pupils no less than 50%, or a failing grade. This indicates that some teachers were compelled to award pupils a passing grade by their respective school principals. Because of this, the pupils became negligent and hesitant to be accountable for their own active learning. The pupils did not devote enough time to learning the English language as a conversational language because they knew they would pass. Some secondary school teachers said that, despite their pupils'

improper attendance, few grade 12 students take the university admission exam. According to several teachers, the school principals wanted to elevate every kid to the next level in order to create a great impression of their institution. In certain schools, the physical aspects of the classroom, such as the seats available to students and the amount of work assigned to EFL teachers, also had an impact on how communicative language instruction was implemented. Six days a week, including morning and afternoon shifts, the teachers were required to educate, with an average weekly workload of 25 to 40 students. Furthermore, the teachers said that they were rushing to finish the textbooks—particularly the grade 11 material—instead of spending their teaching and learning time having conversations with the students. It suggested that instructors occasionally focused just on teaching and learning to finish the textbooks. As a result, the aforementioned issues with schools made it difficult to introduce communicative language instruction in secondary schools.

In addition, the EFL teachers were questioned on how communicative language teaching methods and practices were impacted by the washback effect of university entrance exams. Consequently, the replies' grand mean was 24.00, which is equivalent to agreeing. In response, the teachers said that instead of focusing on helping their students improve their communication skills, they taught them in a way that would help them pass the university entrance exam. They assessed their pupils' grasp of vocabulary, grammar rules, and certain reading comprehension skills. What is evaluated on the test and what is intended by the texts are not aligned. Both the

students' preferred learning style and the teachers' methods of instruction were impacted by the structure and content of the university entrance exam. Grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension make up the majority of the components of the Ethiopian university entrance exam, while the textbook assigns roughly equal weights to each language skill. The structure and substance of Ethiopia's university entrance exams influenced both the teaching strategies used by educators and the learning preferences of their pupils. Grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension make up the majority of the exam's material, even though the textbooks assign roughly equal weight to each language skill. Teachers are therefore more likely to focus on teaching and mastering language topics that regularly come up on exams.

Positively, I do not teach communicative language using the activities contained in the textbook. These days, good student results are what matter to the education office, directors, parents, and students. In other words, it has nothing to do with how proficiently they speak English. It makes little sense for kids to apply to universities if they don't get decent scores. If a large number of pupils fail the admission exam, I will be downgraded to a lesser grade. I won't receive anything like matriculation or more schooling.

The excerpt above demonstrates how the preparation for the Ethiopian university admission exam affected the teacher's methods of instruction. It appears that the goals of the university entrance exams and the texts are not aligned. With an emphasis on grades 11 and 12, the Ethiopian English language textbooks provide a fairly equitable

distribution of all skills. Despite being highlighted in textbooks, speaking, listening, and writing abilities are not evaluated in the admission exam. The instructor contended that he disregarded these abilities because test scores—rather than the degree to which students' communicative competence has developed—are the primary concerns of parents, educators, and school administrators in the modern day. If pupils receive high marks, the instructor will be recognised and given more responsibility. Instead of the conversational skills that students were supposed to learn, the examination results were used to determine the success of the students.

Some EFL teachers believed that the communicative language teaching methodology itself presented the fifth obstacle to the adoption of this approach. The educators expressed skepticism regarding the usefulness of communicative language instruction in their particular educational setting. They held that teachers who use English as their first language and students who use it as a second language can both benefit from communicative language instruction. They contended that because there are no role models for English language usage nearby, kids have little opportunity to interact in the language outside of the classroom. Put simply, one of the barriers to the students' development of communicative competence is their lack of exposure to the English language in the classroom.

Things to be done to implement communicative language teaching

It was found that the EFL teachers' perceptions of communicative language

instruction were erroneous and contradictory. Consequently, since instructors play a crucial role in putting the current generation of communicative-based textbooks into practice, careful consideration should be paid to their understanding of communicative language teaching. Employees ought to receive ongoing in-service training and development concerning the practical and theoretical facets of teaching communicative languages. The teaching strategies that EFL instructors employ should encourage interaction and communication in the English language classroom. They ought to genuinely care about the communication proficiency of their pupils in the English language. They should offer as many communicative activities as possible to the kids. Additionally, they ought to excite and motivate their pupils to love and cherish communicative English language instruction.

The Ministry of Education ought to regularly assess how communicative language instruction is being implemented to make sure that teachers are following the textbooks' instructions. The introduction of communicative language instruction was significantly impacted by the washback effects of the university admission exam. Therefore, integrated performance assessment—which evaluates students' skills in speaking, writing, listening, and reading in an integrated manner—should be taught to EFL teachers.

The fundamentals of communicative language teaching should guide the planning and implementation of pre-service and in-service training for English language teachers. It is advised that they give EFL instructors chances to connect theory and practice. The results of this study may not apply to other zones and areas of the nation because the

participants came from a single zonal government. To ensure that the study is thorough, more research on EFL teachers in secondary schools—both public and private—is advised. For the betterment of the implementation of communicative language teaching, all parties involved in education—teachers, students, parents, school principals, the ministry of education, and legislators—need to collaborate.

CONCLUSIONS

The actual application of communicative language teaching is far from the intended goal, despite the national English language teaching curriculum's stated purpose of improving learners' communicative competence in particular and English language teaching practice in general. It is not realised to the extent that the national ELT curricular policy envisioned. The fundamental ideas of communicative language education were not well understood by the EFL teachers in secondary schools, both theoretically and practically. Additionally, variables pertaining to students, educational institutions, and the repercussions of university entrance exams impacted the application of communicative language instruction. They therefore only occasionally used it in the classes. It appears that what instructors did in the classroom and the goals of the textbooks weren't aligned. Although all language abilities are given about equal weight in the textbooks' communicative design, teachers focused on vocabulary and grammar drills. This demonstrates that the theoretical and practical cognitive components of communicative language teaching by instructors, as well as other contextual elements that influence the application of

communicative language education, are not given enough attention. The problem of "one-size-fits-all" or teacher-centered teaching approaches is unworkable in the academic setting of today's pupils due to their diversity in needs and learning styles. The study's conclusions lead to the following suggestions being made:

Continuous in-service training and development in the theoretical and practical facets of communicative language instruction should be provided to EFL teachers.

The teaching strategies that EFL instructors employ should encourage interaction and communication in the English language classroom. They ought to genuinely care about the communication proficiency of their pupils in the English language. They should offer as many communicative activities as possible to the kids. The fundamentals of communicative language teaching should guide the planning and implementation of pre-service and in-service training for English language teachers. It is advised that they give EFL instructors chances to connect theory and practice.

The results of this study may not apply to other zones and areas of the nation because the participants came from a single zonal government. To ensure that the study is thorough, more research on EFL teachers in secondary schools—both public and private—is advised.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors thank Wollega University for providing the necessary supports.

DECLARATION

No competing interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author.

REFERENCES

- Abbadi Habte. (2018). Reviewing communicative approach. *International Journal of Innovations in TESOL and Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 1-9.
- Adinew, T. D. (2015). *Conceptions of teaching and teaching practices in relation to student-centered instruction in selected Ethiopian Universities*. (Doctoral Dissertation), University of South Africa.
- Birhanu, S. (2012). *A study of secondary school EFL teachers' pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices* (Doctoral Dissertation), Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia.
- Black, T. R (2002). *Understanding social science research*, (2nd edition), London: Sage.
- Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe and do. *Language Teaching*, 36(2), 81-109.
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Teaching by principles*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th edition). Boston: Pearson Education.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4th edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.
- Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th edition). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Dawson, C. (2007). *A practical guide to research methods: A user friendly manual for mastering research techniques and projects* (3rd edition). United Kingdom: How to Content.
- Field, A. (2013). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics* (4th edition). London: SAGE.
- Goldkuhl, G. (2004). *Meanings of pragmatism: Ways to conduct information systems research*. Sweden: Linkoping University Press.
- Gul, A. (2016). *Constructivism as a new notion in English language education in Turkey*. (Doctoral dissertation), Kent University.
- Habtamu Adem & Mendida Berkessa. (2022). A case study of EFL teachers' practice of teaching speaking skills vis-à-vis the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT). *COGENT Education*, 9(1), 1-23.
- Harmer, J. (2003). *The practice of English language teaching*. UK: Longman.
- Johnson, B. & Christensen, L. (2012). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches*, (4th edition), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Judy, M. (2007). *Mentoring Theory and Practice*. California: SW Publisher.
- Karavas-Doukas, E. (1996). Using attitude scales to investigate teachers' attitude to the communicative approach. *ELT Journal*, 50(3), 187-198.
- Marczyk, G., DeMatteo, D., & Festinger, D. (2005). *Essentials of research design and methodology*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Ministry of Education (MoE). (1994). *Ethiopian education and training policy*. (Unpublished policy document), Addis Ababa: Ethiopia.
- Pallant, J. (2010). *SPSS survival manual: A step by step guide to data analysis using SPSS* (4th edition). Berkshire (England): McGraw-Hill Education.
- Tadesse, B. (2008). *ELT curriculum innovation in Ethiopia: A study of its implementation*, (Doctoral Dissertation), Hyderabad, India.
- Walliman, N. (2011). *Research methods: The basics*. London: Routledge.