Attitudes of EFL Learners towards Communicative Language Teaching

Sayeed Asif Akramy
English Department, Takhar University, Afghanistan

Besmillah Daqiq
English Department, Takhar University, Afghanistan

Sayeed Naqibullah Orfan
English Department, Takhar University, Afghanistan

ABSTRACT: *Communicative Language Teaching, as a responsive teaching approach to the needs of learners, has been extensively recognized as a favorable approach to EFL teachers and learners around the world. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes of EFL students towards CLT in an Afghan EFL setting. It also attempts to determine the effects of CLT activities on their motivation and CLT challenges by their demographic profile. The data were collected from 201 English major undergraduate students from the Faculty of Language and Literature at Takhar University purposefully through a questionnaire which consists of 30 items. For answering the research questions, descriptive statistics, sample T-test, and a one-way ANOVA test were employed. The findings revealed that Afghan EFL students have positive attitudes towards CLT approach. The study also showed that the attitude of the students towards CLT is positive in terms of their gender. Moreover, there is no statistically significant difference among the group factors (age, first language, and English learning experience) of the participants.*

KEYWORDS: Afghanistan, CLT, Communicative Language Teaching, EFL learners, motivation

INTRODUCTION

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been extensively recognized as a favorable approach to EFL teachers and learners around the world (Tootkaboni, 2019; Orfan et al., 2021). This approach appeared to be more responsive to the needs of EFL learners and teachers (Akramy et al., 2022b; Ndulila

& Msuya, 2017). It is also another common reason in the context of teaching and learning to improve the communicative competence which consists of knowledge (Sherwani & Kilic, 2017). The term 'communicative competence' has been defined by famous scholars in this field that it refers to a speaker's capability to speak a language either first or foreign language with linguistic proficiency and to use it appropriately in different contexts (Wong & Barrea-Marlys, 2012). Moreover, language users believed that CLT enable them to learn English skills and functions in a more systemic way. Seeking for a teaching approach which is more appropriate and learner-centered to communicative aims is CLT. To add more, this teaching approach also extracts meaningful engagement of EFL learners to convey meaning more accurately and properly (Akramy, 2021). EFL teachers' dissatisfaction of the previously-held approaches to language teaching is decreasing dramatically e.g., Grammar-Translation Method, Audio-lingual Method, and Direct Method (Akramy et al., 2022a).

Nevertheless, there have also been some remarkable challenges and obstacles in terms of implementation of CLT in EFL teaching settings. These may cover inconsistency between teachers' knowledge of the tenets of CLT and their desire to implementing these principles in language classroom. Regarding the complexity of applying a meaning-based CLT program, teachers' reluctance to put CLT instructional objectives into practice is important, (Wajid & Saleem, 2017), which may result in poorly and insufficient designed communicative-based English programs. Similarly, Ju (2013) and Noori et al. (2020) suggested that there is a clear discrepancy between teachers' attitudes of their instructional behavior and learners' attitudes in the learning process that will be considered as a source of difficulty.

English has been taught as one of the major courses in public schools and universities for years. Currently, it is learned and taught as a foreign language in Afghanistan (Orfan, 2020a). It is widely used in many areas such as education, business, economy and media. English education starts from fourth grade in public schools and grade one in most private schools (Orfan, et al., 2021). It is also one of the required courses for all majors in public and private higher education institutions. Students of all majors are required to study English for at least two semesters. Furthermore, an increasing number of private English language centers have been established since 2001 throughout Afghanistan to provide English education for English learners including old people (Akramy, et al., 2022a; Orfan, 2020b; Orfan, 2021; Noori et al., 2022).

Although a large number of studies regarding the attitudes of students towards CLT have been conducted around the world. Only two studies have been conducted by Noori (2018) and Takal et al (2021) in Afghan context, who explored the perceptions of university lecturers towards CLT, and the challenges of Afghan university students towards CLT, but the attitudes of Afghan EFL learners towards CLT have not been investigated in the study. There are many universities including language centers in which English is taught as a foreign language to Afghans and the number is getting more since the demand for English language services have been on the rapid rise since twenty years ago. The language centers here in Afghanistan utilize different English textbooks, particularly their own developed English textbooks which are lack of requirements necessary for developing English textbooks. The individuals who develop

textbooks are shortage of expertise in learning theories and teaching methods (Akramy et al., 2022a). Although the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) recommended Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to all universities where English is taught as a foreign language in English Departments, but many Afghan EFL teachers cannot implement or do not know how to apply CLT in their classrooms. It might also be due to some particular challenges that Afghan EFL teachers face during teaching in their classrooms. Moreover, there is lack of empirical research investigating the situations in Afghan educational contexts (Hashemi & Kew, 2020; Daqiq & Hashemi, 2021; Orfan et al., 2021). To fill the gap in the literature, this current study aims to investigate attitudes of Afghan EFL students in particular Takhar University's students towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in terms of implementation of CLT in an EFL setting, effects of CLT activities on their motivation. It also attempts to determine the respondents' perceptions of CLT challenges in Afghan EFL setting based on their participation in language classrooms, i.e., group work activities, low English proficiency, and English learning experience. Furthermore, this study helps students and teachers to have an understanding of teaching and learning English through the application of CLT in their own teaching contexts in Afghanistan. It also gives ideas to teaching approaches on a number of variables such as, group work activities, low English proficiency, and English learning experience of the students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
CLT is a multi-perspective approach that builds on a couple of disciplines, such as linguistics, psychology, sociology and education. The focus of this approach is predominantly on performing and conducting methodologies which can widely increase the learners' functional language ability through authentic communicative approach (Assessfeh et al., 2012). In addition, CLT is known as an approach that supports level of consistency in the theoretical framework to widen the individual interpretation and variation. It is not a method to provide the chance of designing and procedure of a particular program (Sherwani & Kilic, 2017). In this approach, (Albahri et al., 2018; Akramy, 2020), the real and authentic communication get promoted and the meaningful interactions, discussion, pair/group work are to consider. Thus, it may sometimes come into conflict with particular elements of EFL cultural practice where a formal relationship between both students and teacher is a one-way dominant.

In addition, Albahri et al. (2018) stated that CLT is recognized as an approach which confesses that the core role and function use in language learning is communication. That is, the main purpose of this approach is to facilitate the development of learners' communicative competence in a language learning program. Richards (2006) believed that CLT is a functional view of a language to keep the language as a vehicle for the expression of language items and purposeful meaning of the target issue. It clearly illustrates that instead of focusing on some grammatical structures, it can show the learner a way of concentrating on the communicative dimension. Albahri et al. (2018) reported CLT was firstly introduced during the 1970s, which later on, got replaced with other traditional methods of language teaching. Traditional methods were focusing more on centrality of grammar, but they did not have the aspect of

communication in which students could freely communicate and express with each other. Therefore, the prime goal of CLT in a language classroom is the production of students successfully rather than being careful about their input. As Khatib (2017) stated, CLT is considered an important and leaner-centered approach because it seems ironic to ignore learners' beliefs and attitudes towards its principles. It means the success of students is clearly seen in the attitudes of students they show towards CLT.

In conclusion, various descriptions regarding CLT have been stated by a big number of authors around the world to introduce a specific and suitable approach which can be tailor-made to foreign language teachers and students. Connecting this to the Afghan context, numerous problems and challenges exist while teaching English to Afghan learners. For instance, CLT is a new approach to Afghan EFL teachers and they do not have a clear picture of what CLT is and how it is applied in Afghan teaching context. They are not also familiar with the premise and principles of CLT while planning their course materials. They do not know how to implement some of the CLT principles in their teaching context. For further clarification, while teaching grammar, teachers usually, (Akramy et al., 2022a) teach their students deductively (focusing on structures). Instead of getting their students involved in classroom activities, they themselves give lectures which are no longer useful and helpful without any relevant and practical activities. Instead of being ready to improve their fluency, they are still trying to enhance their accuracy (Akramy, 2020; Akramy, 2022; Noori et al., 2020). Therefore, there are a lot of problems to get fixed as to have a comfortable approach for learning English. Moreover, CLT is a great response to all the unanswered questions of teachers and learners in their language classrooms because throughout this teaching approach, the learners not only learn the language properly, but they also get familiar with other skills which are indispensable to humans and educational communities. That is, they know how to communicate with each other, have confidence, and many other things in order to be successful both in educational and life careers (Akramy, 2022).

Students' Attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching
Rao (2012) stated that Turkish university students are much interested in Communicative Language Teaching. The study also showed that students' preferences to CLT and their delightedness for it improve their potentials in some activities conducted in language classrooms such as, whole-class discussion, pair work, and group work. Similarly, students held their positive attitudes towards CLT in Taiwan. Furthermore, the learners reported CLT is a helpful approach which helped them enhance their communicative competence for language acquisition through a wide range of classroom activities (Albahri et al. 2018). Another study carried out in Oman by Kalbani et al. (2018) who investigated the effects of CLT on Omani students in a private university. The results of the study revealed that students expressed their positive preferences to CLT. They further confessed that CLT helps them speak English after a short period of time. They also reported that their teacher was acting like a facilitator and gave chances to everybody in the class to take part in the lesson, activities, and any other presentation sessions. The study showed that students were happy from their teacher because their teacher would not correct them while the students were speaking or doing a particular activity in the class. The teacher usually reminded them of their errors at the end of the lesson in the error correction stage.

In addition, Albahri et al. (2018) stated that the main reason behind the low achievement of Saudi learners in English is applying some traditional teaching methods such as the Grammar Translation method and the Audio-lingual method in the absence of CLT in their educational contexts. They also said that CLT gives the learners a kind of consideration to use a foreign language to communicate. Saudi learners stated that after the implementation of CLT in their classrooms, they were denoted a revolution in the language learning focus to learn a couple of skills while being coached and instructed through the application of CLT. According to Matsuura (as cited in Asassfeh et al. 2012), Japanese students intend to consider speaking, grammar, listening, cultural differences, and reading important for learning English communicatively. The majority of students believe that it is necessary to respond to each other and interact with their teachers. They have more preferences to learning English through communication that can only be possible through the use of CLT. Tootkaboni (2019) asserted that EFL learners in Iran are positively interested in English learning which is based on communication. The EFL learners in Iran also reported that they learn English better by CLT than traditional methods. It means through CLT, they learn English language in order to communicate and interact with others in a positive manner. The traditional methods will get them familiar with structures, forms, and memorization systems which are no longer useful for them (Akramy, 2020).

Another study conducted in Turkey and the students showed more favorable attitudes towards CLT and got convinced that CLT is the most recent language teaching approach which has a great deal to offer to English language teaching (Ozsevik, 2010). That is, students believe that CLT is a helpful and useful approach to be implemented in their classrooms because they need to improve their English sufficiently and based on the students' perceptions, CLT is the only approach they can have access to other important English opportunities. Regarding this issue, Akram and Mehmood (2013) stated that when teachers applied CLT in their classrooms in Pakistan, they found that CLT enhances the learners' confidence and it gives a sense of satisfaction to the teacher as well. They also reported CLT is better than any other traditional methods because they can do different things in CLT, but when they switched the approach and come to traditional methods in their classes, their students get bored. The reason is that there is no positive change in classroom activities, no creative ideas emerged in classroom seating arrangement. Therefore, they welcomed CLT in their classrooms in order to have a productive language learning process.

Furthermore, Jarvis and Atsilarat (as cited in NGOC & Iwashita, 2012) stated that in Thailand (CLT) was an appropriate teaching approach in Thai context. Thai students have had the desire to feel some changes in their learning styles to learn a language fundamentally and properly. As it is tried and applied several times in the class, most of the students have positive attitudes towards CLT. According to Rao (2002), the learners' beliefs and perceptions towards a specific method of teaching is crucially important because they may have a profound influence on learning behavior and on learning outcomes. Therefore, some activities like pair/group works, whole-class discussion, and games were conducted by the teachers of Chinese university; the learners were more active in these activities rather than being involved in some other activities done through grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods.

In opposition to the above ideas, Rao (2002) stated that most of EFL Chinese undergraduates' perceptions are different towards CLT approach because of some activities like drills, teacher's direct explanation of grammatical rules done in the class, the learners show their interest in them and said that they can learn the language this way better than imposing any other approach which is no longer useful. Based on their perceptions, they are delighted to have their teacher's authority, direct explanation of grammatical rules deductively in their classrooms. Irrespective of positive attitudes, Asassfeh et al. (2012) asserted that there is still some discrepancy found between students' learning preferences and their actual instructional practice. When CLT was applied for the first time in language classrooms, they could not get familiar with it easily. They would rely on what it was before. Based on their expression about the way of teaching, they said that they were interested in the form-focus language teaching rather meaning-focus language teaching. That is, learners learn a language by focusing more on structures, forms and grammar patterns. The language of communication is rarely felt on their language classroom.

Besides the effectiveness of the CLT on some contexts, the majority of Afghan EFL teachers and learners face problems while applying Communicative Language Teaching approach in their classrooms. For example, a study conducted by Noori (2018) who studied the effects of CLT from EFL teachers' perspectives. The study pointed out that CLT approach requires more time to design and prepare materials for the learners. The participants of the study also stated that if they plan to prepare handouts for students, they sometimes have no electricity to print them out and give them to the learners. Moreover, the study showed that learners are not ready to welcome CLT to their classes. They preferred the traditional teaching methods like Grammar-Translation Methods (GTM) which does not help them learn a foreign language communicatively. Another problem is that teachers are still lack of knowledge when they want to apply CLT in their language classrooms. That is, they do not know what the purpose of CLT is and what it wants the learners to know. The only thing they know is that CLT focuses on communication, but teachers are not capable of preparing materials for their students (Akramy, 2021; Orfan et al., 2021).

The Effects of CLT Activities on Students' Motivation
Ochoa et al. (2016) reported motivation is a significant factor in language learning process. Similarly, it is perceived as a goal-directed element since it involves four aspects or dimensions: goal, positive behavior, having desire to reach the goal, and positive attitudes towards a classroom activity (Gardner, 2016). Harmer (2001) stated that it is a type of initiative that pushes someone to do things to reach their desired goal. That is to say, motivation is a fundamental and essential step to succeed in most fields of learning. Without motivation, the learners will not be able to make efforts to learn a specific language in a specific context (Akramy et al., 2022a)

According to Sreehari (2012), a wide variety of activities (e.g., role plays, interviews, discussions, information gap activities, language games, language learning simulations, problem solving tasks, quizzes, and surveys) are used in language classroom because all the above mentioned activities have the aspects of communication and raise the motivation of students in an EFL context while they are paying a close attention to learn languages. Related to the point, Wajid and Saleem (2017) acknowledged that when

learners are actively involved in the learning process through making positive changes in teaching practices, the students will surely show their interest and get their motivation through participation in different activities. The more they are involved in communicative activities the more capable they can become in their education careers (Hashemi & Kew, 2020). Larseen-Freeman (2000) asserted that more changes in a language setting in terms of activities, language learning environment, and reducing 'Teacher-Talking Time', the learners can properly show their interest in learning and they can get motivated to eagerly participate in classroom activities and answer what is to be expected.

In addition, Ozsevik (2010) stated that to make the students have motivation towards language learning process, the teacher may have to create a communicative-based learning environment. That is, the teacher brings positive changes in classroom practices, bringing supplementary materials if possible, the learners can easily be in touch with classroom activities through showing their motivation. Rao (2012) reported using songs activities in language classrooms are also helpful and useful for increasing students' motivation. Communicative exercises include exercises characterized by student-to-student interaction with little influence of teacher in the class; activities which are communicative-based are mostly related to songs, interviews, whole-class discussions are helpful as well. They will improve the students' extrinsic motivation and the language learning process can go smoothly and successfully.

Another study carried out by Rasheed (2011) who investigated the effectiveness and enhancements of CLT in Bangladesh. He found in his study that for increasing the students' motivation it is important to have the parents' involvement in their learning process. That is, while teaching the students in language classroom where the principles of CLT are applied, the parents may have to be invited to the class and watch their children. It not only improves students' motivation, but it also causes that students feel they are part of the learning. Furthermore, Chen (2018) stated that the students' motivation in a language classroom can be improved through collaborative learning. For example, the teacher can apply a wide range of activities, (i.e., problem-solving activities, group discussion, games, and group work activities) to enhance the motivation of students in learning. Similarly, the students' motivation and their autonomy can be increased through bringing some real objects (realia) to the language classroom. The more reflective teaching classroom a teacher creates the more effective and capable students will be delivered to the community (Koosha & Yakhabi, 2013).

Purpose of the Study
The study aims to investigate the attitudes of Afghan EFL learners towards CLT in terms of its implementation in an Afghan EFL setting, effects of CLT activities on their motivation. Furthermore, the attempts to determine the participants' attitudes towards CLT challenges in an Afghan EFL setting and their demographics, i.e., gender, age, first language, and learning experience. The study also makes efforts to provide answers for the following questions:

(1)   What are the attitudes of Afghan students towards Communicative Language Teaching in Afghan EFL classrooms?

(2)   What challenges do Afghan students face while learning English through the implementation of CLT in their classrooms?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design
In this study, two types of statistics (i.e., descriptive and inferential statistics) were employed to analyze the data. As a measuring instrument, a questionnaire which consists of 30 items aims to explore the attitudes of Afghan EFL learners towards Communicative Language Teaching was utilized in the study.

Participants
The study recruited 201 participants including 69 females who were majoring in English at the Faculty of Language and Literature of Takhar University. The researchers selected the participants purposefully from four classes: freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior classes. (67.7%) of the participants' ages were ranged from 21 to 25 years while (32.3%) of them had 15 to 20 years. The respondents' first languages are (Dari, Pashto, and Uzbek). To know more about them, Table 1 shows that the majority of the participants were Dari speakers (62.7%). The majority of the participants who were recruited in this study had English learning experience as well.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of Attitudes towards CLT by First Language*

First Language		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
	Dari	126	62.7	62.7
	Pashto	25	12.4	12.4
Valid	Uzbek	43	21.4	21.4
	Other	7	3.5	3.5
	Total	201	100.0	100.0

Data collection instrument
The researchers prepared a questionnaire after they reviewed a rich body of literature. The questionnaire items were adapted from a wide range of studies conducted by Wong and Barrea-Marlys (2012), Ozsevik (2010), Sherwani and Kilic (2017), and Orfan et al. (2021). The questionnaire items were set in three main sections. The first part of the questionnaire inquired the participants' demographics. The second part containing of 15 items attempted to determine the attitudes of Afghan EFL learners towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) while the last part was seeking the perceptions of students they have about challenges in CLT (i.e., group activities, low English proficiency, and participation of the participants in language classroom activities). The questionnaire was expected to ask the participants to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed on a 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4=agree, and 5= strongly agree).
Validity

For the validity of the questionnaire, it was given to four of our colleagues in the English Department of Takahr University for revision and improvement (Akramy & Aiyaz, 2022). After the researchers received their feedback concerning the questionnaire, problematic items were identified and edited (Daqiq & Akramy, 2023).

Reliability
Cohen et al. (2000) stated that the wording of the questionnaire is very important in order to be conducted successfully. The present study carried out a pilot study with 15 students who were randomly selected from English Department of Takhar University. The pilot study participants were required to respond to 30 items of the questionnaire on a 5-point Likert Scale. For the analysis of the questionnaire items, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version (26) was used. The analysis described that the value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.853. Therefore, it was inferred that the items of the questionnaire were appropriate for the present study.

Data collection procedure
The researchers gathered data from 201 students from English Department, Language and Literature Faculty at Takhar University. The data collection procedure was arranged in 12 weeks (three months) in coordination with the participants after the researchers received their confirmation through signing a consent letter. Moreover, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and its scope to the participants. The participants were assured that there were no true or false responses while participating in the study. They were asked to read the questionnaire items carefully and select an answer for each item which was appropriate to them. It took only 10 minutes to complete and fill in the questionnaire.

Data analysis
The researchers analyzed the data collected from participants through SPSS version 26.0. The frequency, the mean, and the standard deviation of the data were investigated through descriptive statistics. Moreover, the independent sample *T*-test and a one-way ANOVA test were also conducted to determine the differences between groups of the participants in terms of their demographic profile, (i.e., gender, age, and learning experience) in the study.

RESULTS

Students' attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching
Effects of CLT activities on students' motivation and using group work activities
(Table 2) shows that the majority of the participants (70%) agreed with the seven provided statements (1 – 7) that CLT approach while being applied in language classroom enhance their motivation. They believe they can learn English while they help, interact, and cooperate with other partners in the class. Furthermore, CLT approach as an effective teaching approach improves the confidence of students because they have a wide range of possibilities and opportunities while being coached by their teachers. (8 – 18) statements report that using group work activities was also emphasized by (80%) of the

participants. They think that their teacher gives them more opportunities of learning language through using a wide range of different activities (i.e., group work, pair work, discussion, and role plays) in order to improve their language proficiency. Additionally, the table reveals that there are a big number of students (35%) who have disagreed with the statements. They believe that CLT approach does not improve their motivation when it is applied by the EFL instructors. Finally, the table below concludes that the majority of the participants feels comfortable and welcomes more different types of classrooms activities, e.g., group work activities to improve their motivation through the use and application of CLT in their language classrooms.

Table 2. *Effects of CLT Activities on Students' Motivation and Using Group Activities*

No	Statements	SD	D	U	A	SA	%
1	The lessons motivate the students to keep learning English.	6%	10.9%	2.1%	44.2%	36.8%	100%
2	Students' security is enhanced by cooperative interaction.	3%	27.9%	0%	56.7%	12.4%	100%
3	Teacher supports the students when they are in a communication troubles.	1%	17.2%	3.2%	48.3%	30.3%	100%
4	Students enjoy communicating in English with their partners.	6.5%	10%	1.3%	45.5%	36.7%	100%
5	Students are less confident and less prepared for CLT.	6.5%	36.8%	1%	38.3%	17.4%	100%
6	Students are not encouraged when they are in the class.	11.4%	37.8%	2.2%	44.3%	4.3%	100%
7	Students interact with one another in the class.	3%	19.4%	1%	62.2%	14.4%	100%
8	Teacher helps students to take part in group work activities.	4%	22%	1%	43%	30%	100%
9	Teacher gives students more opportunities to express their individuality.	8.5%	20.9%	0%	52.7%	17.9%	100%
10	Pair and group work activities help to provide more chances for developing useful and helpful interaction among students.	6%	6.3%	1.2%	42.8%	43.8%	100%
11	Pair and group work activities waste the teachers' and students' time.	27.4%	38.3%	3.8%	21.5%	9.0%	100%
12	Pair and group-work activities help students to focus purposefully on understanding language skills.	2%	7.5%	0 %	58.2%	32.3%	100%
13	Teacher gives students more opportunities to express their individuality.	8.5%	20.9%	0%	52.7%	17.9%	100%
14	Teacher uses more group-work activities in the class.	7.5%	15.9%	0%	50.2%	26.4%	100%
15	Activities are often carried out by students in small groups.	1%	21.4%	4.5%	60.2%	12.9%	100%
16	Students help each other when they participate in activities.	4%	13.9%	2.8%	48.3%	31%	100%

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| 17 | Teacher uses more group-work activities in the class. | 7.5% | 15.9% | 4.2% | 46% | 26.4% | 100% |
| 18 | Students use English through communicative activities such as game and role plays. | 4.5% | 15.9% | 5% | 55.7% | 18.9% | 100% |

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, U = Undecided, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

CLT challenges and low English proficiency
More than 60% of the participants have agreed that they face more challenges while CLT is applied and used by their teachers. They believe that although CLT is used in the classes, many things are not observed based on the CLT premises and principles. For example, the progressive and final achievement tests are not set based on the CLT principles. The tests are usually asking them about the forms and grammar structures. In addition, statements (25 – 30) in (Table 3) indicate that the majority of the participants (80%) have agreed that they feel weak while dealing the principles and premises of the CLT approach. Furthermore, the table below shows the teachers do not provide authentic materials which respond the today's needs of the learners. Many activities are designed and create but they cannot be conducted in a real life condition to put students a real word picture. The table further highlights that many participants have disagreed with the following six statements. That is, the participants do not believe they have challenges while CLT is being used in the class. Therefore, it can be concluded that the participants see CLT approach as a big challenge while it is applied. The students also face difficulties to digest the activities and learn the language through the principles of CLT.

Table 3. *The Respondents' Attitudes of CLT Challenges and their Low English Proficiency (%)*

No	Statements	SD	D	U	A	SA	%
19	The exams are usually designed based on the traditional methods' principles.	8.5%	41.3%	1.3%	37.3%	11.6%	100%
20	The language classrooms are much smaller with a big number of students.	11.9%	31.7%	3.1%	41.3%	11.9%	100%
21	There are not enough authentic teaching materials to use in the class.	8.5%	26.9%	0%	52.2%	12.4%	100%
22	Students resist in active participation.	31%	30.3%	2.3%	29.9%	6.5%	100%
23	Teacher does not gives the students chance of opening their mouth to say something in English.	20.4%	39.1%	3.7%	28.4%	8.5%	100%
24	The teacher's and students' focus is on grammar rules not communication.	10%	37.8%	2.3%	35%	14.9%	100%
25	Students have low-level English proficiency in the class.	15.9%	24%	4.4%	44.3%	11.4%	100%
26	Learning English through communication is important for students not the grammar only.	5%	17.4%	0%	44.8%	32.8%	100%
27	Everything is mostly done with communicative intent.	5%	15.5%	7.6%	53.7%	18.4%	100%
28	There is some lack of sufficient spoken English competence in teachers.	10.9%	41.7%	3.1%	38.3%	6%	100%
29	Teacher has little time to prepare communicative materials	9.5%	34.3%	0%	47.8%	8.5%	100%
30	The students do not often practice English in their real life situation.	4%	14.9%	7.9%	44%	29.2%	100%

Attitudes and demographic profile of the participants
The researcher attempts to describe the demographic factors affect the participants' attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching. The factors are, i.e., gender, age, first language, and their English learning experience.

Participants' Gender

Descriptive statistics was conducted to clarify the impact of the participants' gender on their attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching, and implementation of CLT in their classes. Table 4 clearly shows that the overall mean score of female participants' attitudes is 3.4473 (SD = 0.45092) while the mean score for male participants is 3.4114 (SD = 0.35564). The difference between the two groups of the participants in the mean score is 0.0359 which indicates that there is not a remarkable difference. Furthermore, in Table 5, the independent sample *T*-test shows that the p-value in both Leven's test (3.158) and *t*-test (-.617) is greater than the alpha level (0.05). Lastly, it is concluded that there is not a statically remarkable difference between female and male participants' perceptions towards Communicative Language Teaching.

Table 4. *Descriptive Statistics of Attitudes towards CLT by Gender*

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Female	69	3.4473	.45092	.05428
Male	132	3.4114	.35564	.03095

Table 5. *Independent Samples T-test of Attitudes towards CLT by Gender*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	3.158	.077	-.617	199	.538	-.03583	.05806	-.15032	.07865
Equal variances not assumed			-.573	113.199	.567	-.03583	.06249	-.15964	.08797

Participants' age, first language, and learning experience

Three types of statistics (descriptive statistics, independent samples *T*-test, and ANOVA test*)* were conducted to know whether the age, first language, and learning experience of the participants affected their attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching. Table 6 shows that the overall mean score of the age group (15-20 and 21-25) is 3.4725 and 3.3981 (SD=.31543, .42538). The sample T-test in Table 7 reveals that the p-value of both Levene's test (3.725) and *T*-test (1.190) is greater than the alpha level

(0.05). Table 1 shows the participants were from different local languages of Afghanistan (i.e., Dari, Uzbek, Pashto, and others). For example, the number of Dari-speaking participants is more than the Uzbek and Pashto speakers. They are 126 while Uzbek, Pashto, and other-speaking participants (from different ethnic groups) are respectively (43, 25, and 7). Moreover, a one-way ANOVA test was also conducted in (Table 8) to determine the differences between first languages of the participants. Therefore, it shows that the p-value of the four groups is 0.709 (F = 0.463), which is greater than the alpha level (0.05). Lastly, (Table 9) reveals that 150 of the participants have already taken some English course inside and outside of the university. In (Table 10), a one-way ANOVA test indicates that the p-value is (.799) (F= 0.336), greater than the alpha level (0.05). To conclude, there are not any statistically important differences between the groups.

Table 6. *Descriptive Statistics of Attitudes towards CLT by Age*

Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Percent	Valid percent
15-20	59	3.4725	.31543	.04178	32.3	28.4
21-25	142	3.3981	.42538	.03648	67.7	67.7

Table 7. *Independent Samples T-test of Attitudes towards CLT by Age*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	3.725	.055	1.190	199	.236	.07440	.06253	-.04894	.19775
Equal variances not assumed			1.341	140.13	.182	.07440	.05546	-.03525	.18405

Table 8. *Differences of the Participants' Age by ANOVA Test*

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between groups	.201	3	.067	.463	.709
Within groups	28.453	197	.144		
Total	28.653	200			

Table 9. *Descriptive Statistics of Attitudes towards CLT by Learning Experience*

Learning Experience		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
	0-1 Year	51	25.4	25.4
	1-5 Years	128	63.7	63.7
Valid	5-7 Years	17	8.5	8.5
	7-10 Years	5	2.5	2.5
	Total	201	100.0	100.0

Table 10. *Differences in the Attitudes by Learning Experience through ANOVA Test*

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between groups	.146	3	.049	.336	.799
Within groups	28.507	197	.145		
Total	28.653	200			

DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes of Afghan EFL students towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in terms of implementation of CLT in Afghan EFL setting, effects of CLT activities on their motivation. Another aim of the study was the effects of CLT activities on students' motivation. Furthermore, it also attempted to determine the respondents' perceptions of CLT challenges in Afghan EFL setting based on their participation in language classrooms (i.e., group activities, and low English proficiency) and demographic profile of the participants such as, gender, age, and English learning experience. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the participants held positive attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching approach and they thought that applying and utilizing CLT as an affective teaching approach, which focuses more on students' communication skills and self-confidence, is necessary in an EFL learning context. The finding is in line with the results of the studies conducted by Albahri et al. (2018), Rao (2012), and Jafari et al. (2015) who

reported that the participants of their studies had strong attitudes towards implementation of CLT principles in a language learning classroom.

In addition, the results showed that the respondents positive and negative attitudes in terms of three aspects in CLT (i.e., challenges of CLT in an EFL setting, using group work activities, low English proficiency of students in utilizing CLT approach). The finding is corroborated by the results of studies conducted by Asassfeh et al. (2012), Rao (2002), and Takal et al (2021) who studied challenges of CLT in language classrooms, low English proficiency, and using group work activities considering the CLT principles in the teaching classrooms. Their studies reported that there is still some discrepancy found between students' learning preferences and their actual instructional practice. When CLT was applied for the first time in language classrooms, they could not get familiar with it easily. They would rely on what it was before. Based on their expression about the way of teaching, they said that they were more interested in the form-focus language teaching than meaning-focus. That is, learners learn a language by focusing more on structures, forms and grammar patterns. The language of communication is rarely felt on their language classroom.

The results of the study also reported that there were not any significant differences in the attitudes and perceptions of the participants by their gender. The finding is in line with the results of the studies conducted by Noori (2018). However, this finding is contradicted by the studies carried out by Wong and Barrea-Marlys (2012) who reported that male and female participants held different attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching approach in language classrooms. That is, the demographic profile of the participants affect their attitudes towards CLT to some extent. Wong's and Barrea-Marlys's findings reported that the more participants showed interest in CLT the more positive perceptions they held to the approach. Moreover, the results did not reveal any significant differences in the attitudes and perceptions of the participants by their age, class level, first language, and English learning experience. This finding supports the results of the studies done by Noori (2018) and who investigated to determine whether age had any significant effects on the students' perceptions and attitudes.

Finally, the results reported that Afghan EFL students with their English learning experiences held more negative attitudes towards CLT approach in an Afghan EFL setting. This finding is in support of the study carried out by Wong and Barrea-Marlys (2012) who attempted to examine the perceptions of the participants towards Communicative Language Teaching in terms of their age. They reported that students had more negative attitudes than that of those who held positive attitudes towards CLT.

CONCLUSION

The main goal of this study was to investigate the attitudes of Afghan EFL students towards CLT in terms of implementation of this approach in an Afghan EFL setting. Another aim of the study was to dertermine the effects of CLT activities on students' motivation. Furthermore, it also attempted to explore the respondents' perceptions of CLT challenges in Afghan EFL setting based on their participation in language classrooms (i.e., group activities, and low English proficiency) and demographic profile of the

participants (e.g., gender, age, and English learning experience). The findings of the study reveal that overall attitudes and perceptions of Afghan EFL students towards CLT are both positive and negative. Moreover, the respondents show their preferences to welcome more variety of classroom activities (i.e., group work activities, discussion, pair work, and role plays) in order to improve their language. Moreover, their attitude towards CLT by their gender is positive and there are not any significant differences in the attitudes of the participants by their age and English learning experiences.

In light of the findings, the study proposed numerous implications for the Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan. The study reports that the participants request the Ministry to make a reform on the current examination system which is the grammar oriented. They acknowledge that the exams are taken which are not based of the principles and premise of CLT. What they study in the class is different from the items brought in the exam sheets. The study also suggests that special attention may have to be paid to teachers, particularly the novice teachers. They have to be provided some professional training courses (e.g., conferences, seminars, and workshops) to enhance their positive attitudes towards CLT and get acquainted with the CLT principles. Moreover the study proposes that the class size and number of students have to be taken into account. The students cannot learn language properly when the class is containing a large number of students. The study shows that all the activities getting designed for language classrooms are accordance with the principles of CLT. It is difficult to benefit from activities when the class has 50 to 70 students. The study proposes that the class should be changed and students should be decreased from 70 to 20 to 25 students to enable teachers and students benefit from CLT approach.

As the most evident limitation of the study, the researchers designed all the items of the questionnaire themselves. They did not give any space for students more open and deeper responses to their attitudes and degrees of motivation. Questionnaire designed for this study failed to collect richer and more in-depth answers because it is not clear how much exposure the participants of the study had to CLT. It is also worth mentioning that some of the questions did not deal with motivation in the questionnaire of the study. The researchers attempt to improve the items of the questionnaire in further studies. Moreover, the gender measured in the study purely quantitatively. In future studies, it will be measured qualitatively because it is a qualitative dimension.

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Authors' information

Sayeed Asif Akramy is a senior lecturer at Takhar University, Taloqan, Takhar, Afghanistan. He teaches linguistics, research, teaching methodologies, and study skills. He has Master's degree in the field of M. Ed. TESOL. He is also one of the British Council certified English teachers. He was a master trainer from 2017 to 2019 at British Council Afghanistan. He has been teaching English for eight years in different local and international sectors. He is also one of the civil society members working voluntarily for advocacy, education, and human rights. His areas of research are language attitudes, language learning and teaching, inclusive education, student-centered learning approaches, and online learning.

List of Abbreviations

**a.	SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)**
**b.	ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages)**
**c.	M. Ed. TESOL (Master of Education in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)**
**d.	EFL (English as a Foreign Language)**
**e.	ESL (English as a Second Language)**
**f.	CLT (Communicative Language Teaching)**
**g.	SD (Standard Deviation)**
**h.	SD (Strongly Disagree)**
**i.	D (Disagree)**
**j.	A (Agree)**
**k.	SA (Strongly Agree)**