English Language Teaching through Communicative Method: A Qualitative Study of Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions

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Sections Info	ABSTRACT
	Objective: This study aims to explore pre-service English teachers' perceptions of implementing the Communicative Language Teaching Method (CLT) after being exposed to theoretical and practical pedagogical aspects of CLT through the Teaching English as a Foreign Language Methodology (TEFL 1) course. **Method**: The present study was a qualitative research as it employed an online survey following the participants' teaching demonstration and reflections as instruments to collect the data. The sample group in the study consisted of 30 EFL male and female pre-service English teachers studying at a private university in a remote area in West Timor-Indonesia. **Results**: The results indicated that although most participants were highly optimistic about using communicative language teaching methods, they suggested several challenging factors and solutions to promote students' active interaction in CLT classrooms. **Novelty**: This study attempted to make the TEFL 1 course more relevant for pre-service teachers and promote CLT enactment in English teaching. Ultimately, it is expected that such initiatives encourage pre-service English teachers to implement interactive teaching methods in their future teaching professions.

INTRODUCTION

In language education, the role of the teacher and the chosen teaching method are crucial in facilitating effective language learning. One prominent approach that has gained popularity recently is the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method. This teaching method has been cited as the best practice for language use as it helps and motivates the learners to use language in real-life situations (Abrejo et al., 2019; Ahmad & Rao, 2021), trigger language acquisition through conversations (Azizah et al., 2022; Mudiono et al., 2023; Phoeun & Sengsri, 2021), improves learners' English skills including oral communication, pronunciation, and grammar (Nguyen & Hung, 2021; Putra et al., 2021; Toro et al., 2018), and promotes the twenty-first-century learners' skills (critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity) (Dörnyei, 2021; Ho, 2020).

The communicative teaching method employed by language teachers significantly influences the language learning process. Traditionally, English language instruction focused on rote memorization of grammar rules and vocabulary, often neglecting the development of practical communication skills. However, with the emergence of communicative language learning, teachers' role has shifted from being mere transmitters of knowledge to a facilitator of meaningful interactions in the target language (Al-Khayyat, 2019). These studies highlighted the essential EFL teachers' roles who guide and encourage students to actively engage in conversations, express their thoughts, and negotiate meaning in real-life contexts. By utilizing appropriate teaching

methods: English language teachers can create a conducive environment that fosters students' effective language learning.

The communicative language teaching method is particularly significant when teaching speaking skills or oral communication (Abrejo et al., 2019; Al-Khayyat, 2019; Phoeun & Sengsri, 2021; Toro et al., 2018). Speaking is a complex language skill that requires learners to combine vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and cultural awareness in real-time communication. These studies suggest that flipped instruction with the CLT activities was effective in improving the participants' speaking ability, which significantly contributed to better learning outcomes. Linguists in second language teaching and learning, such as Borg (2020), advocated that in teaching English as a foreign language, the traditional approach, which focused primarily on grammar and vocabulary drills, often failed to develop interactive classrooms and promote students' oral proficiency.

Communicative language teaching, on the other hand, emphasizes authentic and meaningful communication from the beginning of language learning. It encourages learners to use the target language to convey their ideas, opinions, and experiences (Qureshi et al., 2022) and promotes fluency and accuracy of speaking simultaneously as the method provides ample opportunities for students' engagement (Fattah & Saidalvi, 2019; Tiwari, 2021). By engaging in interactive activities such as role-plays, discussions, and information gap tasks, students can enhance their speaking abilities while building confidence in their language use (Galloway, 2023; Hien, 2021).

The positive perceptions of language teachers regarding the CLT method significantly influence its successful implementation in the classroom. The language teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and understanding of CLT play a vital role in shaping their instructional practices. Positive perceptions regarding the value and effectiveness of CLT can motivate them to create communicative activities that promote student engagement and active participation (Althagafi, 2023; Qureshi et al., 2022). Conversely, negative perceptions or misconceptions about CLT might lead to ineffective implementation or a reluctance to incorporate communicative tasks. Therefore, exploring the perceptions of pre-service language teachers becomes crucial in identifying areas for improvement in teacher education programs and supporting the successful integration of the interactive approach in language classrooms in their future teaching professions.

In addition, the usability of the CLT method in English teaching, specifically for students in remote areas, still needs to be improved. Various local factors were mentioned, including lack of previous teaching experiences that make up teachers' beliefs (Al-Khayyat, 2019), teachers' misconceptions of the use of communicative language teaching (Putra et al., 2021), teachers' teaching competence and workloads (Banagbanag, 2020), insufficient learning activities (Irambona & Chang'ach, 2023), and diverse interpretations of CLT among educators (Dörnyei, 2021). Therefore, this qualitative study aims to explore the perceptions of male and female pre-service English language teachers regarding using the CLT method in teaching speaking skills. By understanding the perspectives of these future teachers, valuable insights can be gained to enhance the implementation of the interactive language teaching approach and improve TEFL 1 course language instruction overall.

Literature Review

Research on communicative language teaching shows that despite the recognized benefits of CLT, foreign language teachers still experience various constraints in classroom implementations. To begin with, Abrejo et al. (2019) investigated the factors that deter teachers from implementing a communication approach in their teaching in public sector colleges of Hyderabad, Sindh. This qualitative study involved eight English language teachers, both male and female teachers, as participants. The findings indicated that although the students must be taught with a communicative approach, some factors always deter teachers from implementing CLT. These factors included a shortage of time, a lack of multiple resources, and many students in the class. This study emphasized the need to address these challenges to promote CLT in English language teaching.

Other studies investigating student teachers' perceptions of communicative language Teaching methods yield results about the benefits and challenges of using CLT in Hong Kong classrooms (Miller & Aldred, 2020). Involving 24 second-year BA TESL students, most of whom had recently completed secondary school, the focus groups' results suggested that although CLT was appropriate for the Hong Kong contexts such as students can learn English more effectively way, improves the classroom atmosphere and raise students' interest to participate in the classroom, the study further revealed several reasons why CLT was difficult to use in Hongkong schools. These range from classroom organizational issues, school management, teacher education, and exam priority of the education system. The study provided valuable insights for both student teachers and educators, allowing for the adaptation of future methodology courses to align with student teachers' beliefs and perceptions.

In another study, Azizah et al. (2022) examined the implementation of CLT in teaching spoken language at a secondary school in Tasikmalaya, the western part of Indonesia. This qualitative study involved an experienced EFL teacher as the participant. The findings revealed that the CLT approach facilitated learners' spoken language skills. The study highlighted the positive impact of CLT on creating an interactive and communicative learning environment in the classroom. A qualitative study entitled The Implementation of CLT to Teach Spoken Recounts in Senior High School. The study involved 34 of the tenth-grade students. The results indicated that CLT enhanced students' ability to engage in spoken recounts, providing diverse learning experiences and promoting the natural use of grammar in conversations. The study emphasized the importance of meaningful and communicative classroom interactions.

In the teacher education context, understanding pre-service teachers' beliefs about communicative language teaching methods allows teacher educators to discuss methodology from a similar perspective as the pre-service teachers' views. For example, Ho (2020), in a study about the influence of implementing communicative language teaching on cultivating undergraduates' communicative competence in Tourism English in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, demonstrated that CLT facilitates students' English learning, raises their confidence, and enhances their communicative competence in Tourism English. This study ultimately provides practical suggestions for pedagogy. This internal evaluation and understanding is crucial to ensure that teacher educators provide adequate support to the pre-service teachers so they can adopt the roles required of them when teaching communicatively.

The results provided insights for improving the programs from the insiders' perspectives (Coskun & Daloglu, 2020).

This present study aims to explore pre-service teachers' perceptions of CLT methods after being exposed to theoretical and practical pedagogical aspects of communicative language teaching through the TEFL course. The process starts with building pre-service teachers' conceptual knowledge of CLT methods through a 20-minute PowerPoint presentation, then continues with a teaching demonstration on integrating CLT methods in teaching speaking. A group of 4 pre-service teachers were assigned to carry out the presentations and teaching demonstrations after several consultations and teaching simulations with a TEFL lecturer prior to the classroom presentation. The purpose of this study was to raise the pre-service teachers' awareness of the appropriateness and issues in using CLT methods, as well as to promote the use of interactive methods in English teaching.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study describes the complexity of the research issue using qualitative methodology. The qualitative research methodology is appropriate as this study mainly focuses on the understanding of various aspects of communicative language teaching methods in natural EFL classroom settings. Creswell and Clark (2018) advocated that qualitative research is usually the compilation of various data, which includes numerous variables in a natural setting. In other words, the qualitative research design was used to explore the pre-service teachers' views about the implementation of communicative teaching methods in TEFL classes in order to make the course more relevant for the pre-service teachers and to promote the implementation of CLT in the classrooms. The research issue must be investigated comprehensively as the outcomes may bring a new role for prospective EFL teachers.

The choice of qualitative methodology in this study is because the researchers mainly employed an inductive data analysis procedure to generate ideas from the collected data. The researchers used specific observations (data) to develop conclusions (explanation and interpretation). Further processes include comprehension, synthesis, theorizing, and recontextualizing. The researchers were involved in understanding the phenomenon being investigated, creating a mental picture that accounts for relationships between related concepts, explaining why these relationships occur, and then placing this new knowledge back to previously developed knowledge. In a qualitative data analysis, Harding and Whitehead (2012) highlighted that although researchers might have a pre-chosen theoretical framework or a theoretical stance related to the study's purpose, the theoretical aspects only guide the researchers to find what is most important in the data. The use of specific theoretical lenses can prevent the emergence of ideas from the data.

Participants

The sample group of this study consisted of 30 pre-service English teachers studying teaching methods at Widya Mandira Catholic University in Kupang, Eastern part of Indonesia. The mean age of the participants was 25.6, within the range of 19 and 29. Of the participants, 23 (76.7%) were female, whereas 7 (23.3%) pre-service teachers were male. All participants were in the fourth semester of the English Education study program and had the course TEFL I (Teaching English Foreign Language One). The overall aim of the course is to promote several methods of English language teaching

through which pre-service teachers practice teaching with the learned methods. By the end of the course, all participants should be able to explain both theoretical and pedagogical principles underlying the method used, assess the relevance of using different teaching techniques in teaching English, and demonstrate how to teach using the selected method effectively. As the sample group included all of the students who took the mentioned course, it allows the researchers and pre-service teachers to observe how the assigned group used the Communicative Learning Method in teaching, enabling them to assess the strengths and weaknesses of this approach themselves.

Research Tools
The data collection followed three procedures. First, all students who took the TEFL 1 course attended a presentation about the theoretical concepts and principles of the Communicative Language Teaching Method. Following this session, 4 to 5 pre-service teachers were assigned to prepare a teaching plan for their teaching demonstration. This teaching plan described the goals, language focus, teaching materials, and teaching procedures. After securing the tutors' approval and several assigned group teaching simulations, the groups conducted the teaching demonstrations in front of the remaining fellows. Next, following the teaching demonstrations, all participants were given an online survey link. They should answer four questions generated from the literature reviews and classroom discussions about theoretical concepts in the previous section. The first two questions were designed using a 5 Likert scale, requiring participants to supply a short answer to explain their choice. The reason for administering two question forms was to explore further information about the data gathered through Likert-scale questions. The process helped the researchers to examine the trustworthiness and validity of the data (Creswell, 2007). The four questions are as follows:

1. Is the Communicative Language Teaching Method interesting? Why?
2. As a prospective English teacher, will you use communicative language teaching methods in your class? Why?
3. What are the constraints of employing CLT in English language teaching?
4. How do you overcome the problems in implementing the CLT method in English language teaching?

   These questions were distributed to all the pre-service teachers through a Google link after the teaching demonstration. The pre-service teachers were required to individually answer the questions anonymously as their personal opinions seemed necessary to obtain qualitative data. The survey was anonymous to assure confidentiality and trustworthiness of the study findings. Finally, the researchers also inserted two background questions to collect demographic information about participants' age and gender. In general, the flowchart of this research procedure can be described in Table 1.

Table 1. A flowchart of the research procedure.

Research actions procedures	Description of research actions
Preparation	A group of TEFL I, course participants was assigned to prepare a PowerPoint presentation of the theoretical concept of CLT. The presentation provided information about a brief background, principles, procedures, and typical constraints of teaching English using CLT. The group then prepared a lesson plan for teaching demonstration using the CLT method. The group should regularly consult their

Research actions procedures	Description of research actions
	preparations and teaching simulations with the TEFL team lecturers.
Implementation	The assigned group presented the concept and theory of teaching English using the CLT method in front of their fellows, followed by a Q&A session. The assigned group then carried out a teaching demonstration using the CLT method.
Evaluation	All the participants, including lecturers, were invited to give comments and inputs about the previous teaching presentation orally. Then, the team lecturers distributed the designed anonymous survey link through the TEFL I WhatsApp group.

Data Analysis

The researchers analyzed the data from each source together. In this process, they noted, examined, determined, and underlined the statements in detail by the abovementioned questions. This process was necessary to provide insight into participants' perceptions regarding different aspects of the same phenomenon. As the researchers performed the whole process in English, there were no translations. Then, the researchers marked similar texts with specific code labels based on the topics, terms, concepts, ideas, phrases, and keywords. The codes were named as an indication of the idea or concept that underpinned the mentioned categories. Last, they numbered topics, terms, concepts, ideas, phrases, and keywords found in each source to ensure the similarities and contradictions of the data from different sources. After comparing the statements in each concept map, the researchers concluded the findings.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Developing reliability and validity in qualitative research instruments is crucial to ensure that the data collection tools of the present study are accurate, consistent, and trustworthy (Collingridge & Gantt, 2022; Creswell & Clark, 2018). To achieve the reliability and validity of qualitative research instruments, the researchers of the current study established several steps; first, before distributing the survey, the researchers clearly defined the concepts and the aims of the present research to the participants. All pre-service teachers who attended the TEFL I course were encouraged to participate in this study voluntarily. The survey was carried out anonymously to assure confidentiality of the findings. Furthermore, the results of the findings were analyzed separately by the two researchers to enhance the inter-rater reliability. Collingridge and Gantt (2022) argued that involving multiple raters or coders and having them independently code a subset of the data and then compare their results can help assess the authors' consistency of coding or interpretation.

In addition to multiple data sources (an online survey and teaching practice observation), to ensure that the researchers' interpretations align with the participants' experiences and perspectives, the findings were shared and discussed with the participants to obtain their feedback. Finally, as the reliability and validity of qualitative research are ongoing processes that require continuous attention and refinement (Collingridge & Gantt, 2022), the researchers were always aware of personal biases and preconceptions by maintaining the appropriate qualitative research procedures throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

Results of this study show that most EFL pre-service teachers were interested in implementing the CLT method in English teaching (see Figure 1). The findings also demonstrate that they evaluate their performance in CLT activities and find out the advantages and disadvantages of CLT in language teaching. In addition, they encountered several problematic areas. However, findings show that they develop several strategies to overcome those problems. Figure 2's findings demonstrate the contributions of CLT teaching activities, pre-service teachers' perceptions of CLT teaching performance, the problems they encountered and observed during the teaching demonstrations and the strategies they planned to overcome the problems.
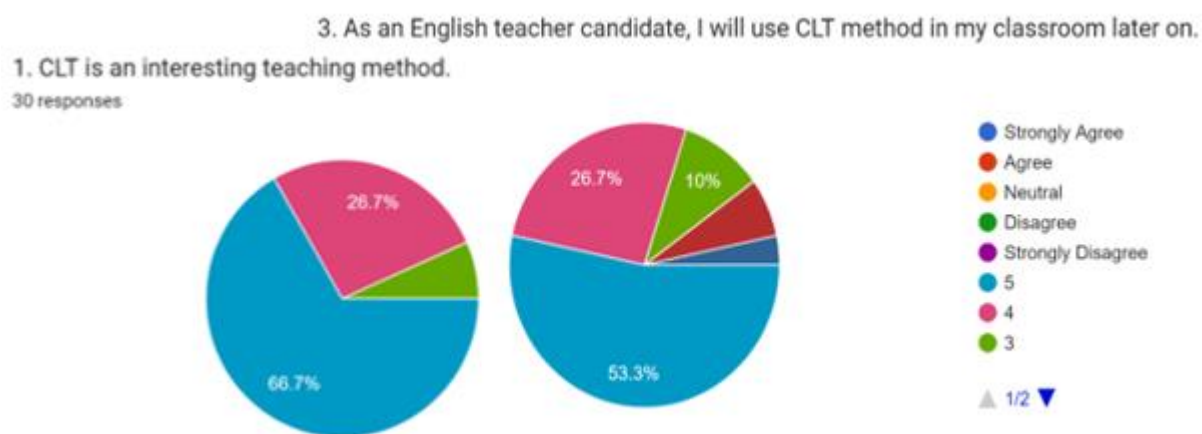
Figure 1. Pre-service teachers' interest in CLT implementation.

The findings indicated pre-service teachers' disparities in perspectives on the interest in applying communicative language teaching in their future teaching profession. Regarding the question of whether the CLT was an exciting teaching method, although the majority of pre-service teachers considered the CLT method exciting (n=20) and interesting (n=8) (93.4%), two participants (6.6%) disagreed with it. Similarly, regarding the research question of whether they will employ the CLT in their future English teaching, more than half of the participants strongly agreed to employ the CLT method.

On the one hand, the participants motivation to implement CLT implied five relevant reasons. First, the CLT method created fun activities that enable students' active learning and avoid boredom. Second, the CLT method boosted students' basic communication skills as they could practice short conversations provided by the teacher. Third, the CLT method enables students to boost their confidence to speak simple English; and fourth, the CLT method enables learners to improve not only their speaking skills but also other English components such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation as directed by the teacher. Last, the participants stated they learned to collaborate and cooperate in speaking activities with their friends and teachers.

On the other hand, the participants who were still doubtful about implementing CLT in the classroom implied that the CLT method created noise that might not be controlled and bother other classes. They wrote, "I do not have the confidence to use the CLT method because my voice is too low to control many students who are actively talking with their peers at the same time ."Another participant who was neutral about the CLT method explained, "I think the crowdies can create disruptions for other

classes. I am too small to handle talkative students". Interestingly, other pre-service teachers noticed that although most students were active, they discussed different topics. He wrote, "I heard some students talk different things not in English while the teacher was busy with other groups. Teachers need more training to use this method successfully".

Results further indicated that pre-service teachers encountered problems during the implementation of CLT activities. These problems are: First, need for classroom management. The majority of participants indicated that the primary weakness of implementing the CLT teaching method is the need for teachers' classroom management. The classroom environment may appear disorderly when other students converse while others are busy with their activities. This can disrupt the learning process and create an unfavorable atmosphere—second, excessive time requirement. Pre-service teachers indicated that the CLT method took too much preparation time. Although the teaching materials were about daily life, teachers should provide engaging activities to encourage students' active participation. Most students in EFL classrooms still needed to improve in English and unmotivated to speak English. If not properly managed, the learning process that involves interaction and conversations among students can be time-consuming and exhausting for teachers and students.

Findings indicated that pre-service teachers suggested several strategies to overcome the abovementioned problems. These strategies include: first, providing clear instructions. Students in the back row seemed passive and did not carry out activities as teachers' instructions were unclear in terms of voice and procedures for carrying out the activities. They suggested to teachers that while implementing CLT, it is essential to provide clear instructions to ensure clarity among students. Clear and concise guidance helps students understand the tasks and expectations, enabling them to engage effectively.

Second, building confidence and encouraging participation: Teachers should focus on building students' self-confidence and make it mandatory to participate actively in class. This can be done through various strategies that promote student involvement and active learning. Third, Effective classroom management and creativity: Teachers need good classroom management skills creating a friendly and supportive learning environment. Additionally, incorporating creativity into teaching methods helps prevent student boredom and maintains their interest in the CLL/CLT approach. Then, Preparedness and active participation: Students should come to class prepared and actively participate in CLL/CLT activities. Preparedness includes having a good understanding of the material and being ready to engage actively and enjoy the learning process. Lastly, Continuous improvement and adaptation: Teachers should continually improve their teaching methods by preparing materials effectively, seeking new teaching references, conducting evaluations, and adapting resources and assessments to align with the goals of communicative learning.

Discussion
Based on the qualitative study conducted on pre-service language teachers' perceptions of the CLT method in teaching English, several key findings emerged. The results of the study indicated that most pre-service teachers expressed their interest in implementing CLT in their future classrooms. They recognized the benefits of CLT, including its ability to create fun and interactive activities, enhance students' basic communication skills, boost students' confidence in speaking English, and facilitate the improvement of

various language components such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. This study reached similar results to the findings obtained by Abrejo et al. (2019) and Kołsut and Szumilas (2023) regarding attitudes toward the communicative language teaching method. In other words, these studies revealed that communicative language teaching focuses on communication and helps learners to communicate actively about the learning topic and build positive relationships between teacher and students.

The study's findings were consistent with the results of Miller and Aldred (2000) and Al-Khayyat (2019), stating several reasons for implementing communicative language teaching in their classrooms. The rationale for employing CLT is that students can learn English more actively, improve the fun and communicative atmosphere in the classrooms, and teachers can raise students' interest to participate in conversations and avoid boredom. When students are encouraged to be communicative through CLT activities, the teacher develops learners' competence in critical thinking and collaboration, too (Dörnyei, 2021; Dos-Santos, 2020; Winch, 2019). These studies advocated similarities between CLT and critical thinking, which are essential for promoting students' communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity, which become central learning skills of 21st-century learners. This suggests that TEFL 1 lecturers should promote the implementation of CLT in English language teaching.

On the other hand, the pre-service teachers in the present study also expressed their doubts and concerns about CLT implementation in the classroom. Those concerns included potential noise and disruptions during the CLT classroom activities, teachers' unclear guidance and language instructions to carry out the activities, teachers' low voices, lack of time to prepare activities as CLT requires many preparations, and teachers' poor oral English competence. These findings echoed the previous study that revealed several typical challenges in implementing the CLT method in English teaching. The challenges included a large number of students occupying a small space classroom size (Abrejo et al., 2019), students' lack of willingness and motivation to speak in English (Williyan et al., 2023), insufficient and inappropriate use of teaching materials (Toro et al., 2018) and lack of continuous support from school leaders (Tiwari, 2021).

Apart from teaching materials, in terms of teaching practice, students' low level of English proficiency could be a deter factor for CLT implementation. The majority of EFL school students in Pakistan (Ahmad & Rao, 2021), Saudi Arabia (Alharbi, 2021; Althagafi, 2023), Turkey (Ozsevik, 2020), Nepal (Tiwari, 2021), and Bangladesh (Nuby et al., 2020) tend to translate written text into native language because they do not understand English. This is also a typical situation in the majority of schools, especially in remote areas of Indonesia (Muhammmad, 2023; Nasution, 2022; Williyan et al., 2023). Moreover, Borg (2020) pointed to several conceptual, procedural, attitudinal, and institutional barriers to students' classroom engagement; in this study, pre-service teachers had problems related to classroom management, teachers' English competence, and lack of supporting facilities.

To overcome these challenges, pre-service teachers proposed various strategies, including providing clear instructions to avoid students' confusion, creating an engaging classroom environment, building students' confidence to participate actively, and developing practical classroom management skills. The participants further suggest the importance of addressing these challenges through ongoing teaching career development and support to be professional teachers. These strategies can contribute to the successful implementation of CLT in the classroom.

Accordingly, some practical recommendations regarding the conclusions found in the study are as follows. First, given that CLT methods contribute to the students' active communication in English, TEFL educators need to focus on training the pre-service teachers to teach interactively. This is because the current programs primarily focus on developing pre-service teachers' theoretical knowledge, which is isolated from micro-teaching practice. As pre-service teachers develop their communicative teaching skills and knowledge during their teaching demonstration activities, the mentioned course should be specific regarding CLT methods in specific contexts.

The second recommendation is that TEFL educators work with pre-service teachers in close collaboration, as they need help in classroom management, time management, and collaboration. Research on teacher education stresses the importance of teachers' classroom behaviors on students' academic and emotional outcomes. As such, close collaborations between TEFL educators and pre-service teachers will promote not only effective classroom management but also characteristics of twenty-first-century learners' skills. Furthermore, the mentioned course should also focus on developing pre-service teachers' reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar skills through collaborative learning.

In addition, TEFL educators should guide pre-service teachers regarding CLT teaching procedures, which include pre-, while, and post-activities. Pre-service teachers need to prepare the activities and manage their time to carry out each of the prepared activities effectively. These steps will help pre-service teachers to effectively implement CLT in English teaching. However, due to a shortage of time for preparations, teachers frequently refrain from applying CLT in the classroom (Abrejo et al., 2019; Ahmad & Rao, 2021; Alharbi, 2021). This challenges teacher educators to encourage pre-service teachers to make use of the technological media in the classrooms. Although lack of resources has always remained one of the significant factors in implementing CLT, the presence of Android mobile phones with various applications such as videos, pictures, speakers, and other artificial intelligence attributes could be beneficial for facilitating CLT learning methods.

CONCLUSION
Fundamental Finding: The present study demonstrated that although most participants were highly optimistic about the use of the communicative language teaching method, they revealed several determinant factors that might challenge CLT implementations. The participants further proposed some practical solutions for effectively implementing CLT in teaching English. **Implication**: By understanding pre-service teachers' perspectives, TEFL educators and teacher education authorities can better prepare future English teachers to incorporate CLT principles and practices into their classrooms. Ongoing support and professional development can help pre-service teachers overcome challenges and enhance their ability to create engaging and communicative learning environments in their future teaching professions. **Limitation**: While several exciting findings emerged from this study, there are some aspects for improvement. The sample size of the current study could have been more extensive, which might underestimate its strengths. Also, since this study was explicitly interested in TEFL I courses, the results cannot be generalized to other groups of pre-service teachers. **Future Research:** Research on more experienced teachers might show different belief–behavior associations, and therefore, further research is needed covering in-service English teachers and students at schools. In addition, descriptive and

experimental research is necessary to contextualize the factors influencing participants' perceptions and the relationship between their perceptions and demographic variables such as gender, age, and previous teaching experiences.

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