

# TÍN NIỆM CỦA GIÁO VIÊN TIẾNG ANH VỀ ĐƯỜNG HƯỚNG GIẢNG DẠY NGÔN NGỮ GIAO TIẾP (CLT) TẠI VIỆT NAM

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Nghiên cứu này được tiến hành để tìm hiểu tín niệm của giáo viên tiếng Anh về đường hướng giảng dạy ngôn ngữ giao tiếp (CLT) ở Việt Nam. Bảng câu hỏi của Khatib và Tootkaboni (2017) được sử dụng để thu thập số liệu từ 128 giáo viên tiếng Anh tại các trường trung học cơ sở ở hai tỉnh Quảng Ninh và Thái Bình. Phần mềm SPSS - phiên bản 26 được sử dụng để phân tích dữ liệu thống kê mô tả. Kết quả cho thấy giáo viên có tín niệm khá tích cực với đường hướng giảng dạy giao tiếp. Đặc biệt, trong sáu nhân tố của CLT, hình thức làm việc theo cặp/nhóm được giáo viên ưa chuộng nhất, tiếp theo là vai trò của người dạy, vai trò của người học, vai trò và ý nghĩa của ngữ pháp, sửa lỗi và đánh giá. Tín niệm kém tích cực nhất đó là vai trò của ngôn ngữ mẹ đẻ trong giảng dạy tiếng Anh giao tiếp. Cuối cùng, nghiên cứu đưa ra đề xuất đối với các nghiên cứu tiếp theo nhằm khẳng định những kết quả đã thu được.

**Từ khóa:** Tín niệm của giáo viên, đường hướng giảng dạy ngôn ngữ giao tiếp (CLT)

*This paper aims to investigate English language teachers' beliefs about Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Vietnam. A questionnaire by Khatib and Tootkaboni (2017) was administered to 128 EFL teachers at secondary schools in Quang Ninh and Thai Binh provinces to capture a source of data for this inquiry. SPSS - version 26 was utilized to analyze quantitative data and generate descriptive statistics. The findings indicate that the teachers generally held moderately favourable beliefs about CLT. Particularly, of the six core domains of CLT, the use of pair/group work was most favoured by the teachers, followed by the role of teacher, learners and grammar, error correction and evaluation, respectively. The least positive belief about CLT was found in the role of the native language in English teaching. The study implies that further research on teachers' beliefs about CLT is highly recommended to reaffirm the results of the current study.*

**Keywords:** teacher belief, communicative language teaching (CLT)

## VIETNAMESE EFL TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

### 1. Introduction

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has been

globally advocated by numerous linguistic scholars and English language teachers. In Vietnam, CLT was first initiated in the early 1990s and has been applied in the educational setting to enhance students' communicative competence. Despite the government's favourable support, the CLT has not been successfully implemented in Vietnam (Ngoc &

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Iwashita, 2012). A review of the literature reveals that one of the major rationales underlying ineffective implementation of this approach may be attributed to the teachers' neglect of beliefs in the teaching process; consequently, it is very unlikely for teachers to implement the cutting-edge educational innovation as they have not considered it as a useful resource of teaching (Kouritzin et al., 2007).

Many researchers have claimed that beliefs about teaching and learning serve as guidelines on the way that teachers teach (Almarza, 1996), and exert an impact on their instructional decision-making, planning processes, and classroom practices (Pajares, 1992). Accordingly, multiple research projects have been carried out to examine teachers' beliefs regarding CLT in diverse contexts (e.g., Nishino, 2009; Tootkaboni, 2019; Nhem, 2019; Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak, 2021). Teachers' beliefs toward CLT in Vietnam have increasingly received great attention from language teachers and researchers. Nevertheless, only a relatively few studies have explored the teachers' beliefs about CLT in the Vietnamese context (e.g., Ngoc & Iwashita, 2012; Son, 2013), especially in secondary schools in Vietnam. To address this gap, the researchers would like to delve into Vietnamese teachers' beliefs about CLT. Particularly, this study was an effort to shed more light on the following issue under question: *What are Vietnamese EFL teachers' beliefs about CLT?*

## 2. Literature Review

A number of theoretical concepts pertaining to the research literature in this paper must be clarified and differentiated. These concepts including the Communicative Language Teaching approach, teacher beliefs, and teacher beliefs about CLT are adopted as the core concepts in the current study.

### 2.1. *Communicative Language Teaching Approach*

CLT has been widely incorporated into English language teaching. It can facilitate a change in teaching from grammar-based instruction to more communication-based tasks. Brown (2007, p. 378), defined CLT as “an approach to language teaching that emphasizes authenticity, interaction, student-centered learning, task-based activities, and communication for the real world and meaningful purposes.”

CLT is highly valued as one of the most effective approaches to instruction in English language teaching (Nguyen, 2010) that helps learners to enhance their competence to utilize the target language in meaningful and authentic settings. Moreover, this learner-centered approach helps to sustain a social relationship between the students and teachers (Nguyen, 2010; Tootkaboni, 2019). The communication-based activities can promote learners' active interaction in negotiating for meaning to develop ideas. Especially, this approach takes more emphasis on fluency than accuracy to keep learners involved in language use rather than repeated and memorized

grammatical patterns accurately (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Six core tenets of CLT briefly delineated below serve as the theoretical framework of CLT in this study.

### *2.1.1. The Role of Grammar*

Grammar plays a pivotal role in EFL instruction as good knowledge of the language should be followed by a good knowledge of grammar. Traditionally, EFL classrooms exclusively concentrated on the mastery of linguistic command by testing language skills in accordance with grammatical rules rather than communicative competence (Tyler, 2008). However, with the CLT approach, the meaning is given more priority than the form; therefore, it is strongly suggested that teaching grammar explicitly should be avoided (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

### *2.1.2. Pair/Group Activities*

One salient principle of the CLT approach is helping learners acquire a language through an authentic and meaningful context of communication. In relation to this, the use of individual, pair/group work or the whole class is necessary depending on the nature and purposes of the classroom activity (Nhem, 2019). In communicative language teaching, pair/group activities are given prominence in most of the learning tasks (Richards, 2006) because they best permit learners to facilitate their meaning negotiation and production of the language. This highlights the belief that language learning is not merely memorizing a wide range of grammatical

patterns or vocabulary, but more importantly, it is engaging learners in the cognitive process and social context (Nunan, 2004).

### *2.1.3. The Role of Teachers*

Generally, teachers no longer play authoritative roles as a sole source of knowledge, an imparter of knowledge and a controller, but rather a resource of knowledge and a facilitator of learning process (Harmer, 2007; Brown, 2007). Clearly, in CLT classes, teachers hold various roles in response to different communicative activities. Breen and Candlin (1980) provide two major roles of the teacher as a facilitator and a co-learner to aid students in using the target language and engaging in learning activities. Additionally, the teachers might take on other roles as activity organizers, guides, assessors, feedback providers, or error correctors in a CLT classroom (Harmer, 2007).

### *2.1.4. Learners' Role and Contribution to Learning*

With CLT, learners are put in communicative situations and activate their knowledge of the language and communicative competence through active engagements and interaction. Therefore, the learner-centered classroom is highlighted in the teaching and learning process (Brown, 2007). Moreover, learners fulfill various active roles in a language class for communication. They should take on contributory roles as an interactor, and a meaning negotiator, sharing and gaining knowledge (Nunan &

Lamb, 1996). It is implied that learners are required to take responsibility for their learning, become active agents in the process of learning, contribute as much as they attain, and thereby learn autonomously in a CLT class (Shenita, 2018).

#### *2.1.5. Errors Correction and Evaluation*

With reference to error correction, learners who are attempting to utilize language creatively and spontaneously are certain to commit errors. Accordingly, errors are perceived as a natural part of learning a language communicatively and are, therefore, tolerated. Frequent correction is thus not needed and is even counterproductive. In particular, teachers' error treatment excessively focuses on fluency rather than accuracy. As argued by Richards (2006), fluency refers to the use of natural language taking place when a speaker involves in meaningful interaction and maintains the flow of communication in spite of certain deficiencies in his or her communicative competence. Consequently, teachers should only treat mistakes that impede students' communication during their fluency practice, or delay correction which would better support students' language performance.

Regarding evaluation, CLT is aimed to enhance learners' ability to obtain communicative competence (Richards, 2006). In this sense, fluency and accuracy have been a matter of debate. According to Harmer (2007), evaluating fluency or

accuracy should depend on the goals of specific learning tasks. He proposes that non-communication activities for practice such as completing worksheets and generating correct examples of language use are designed to allow students to produce the language items perfectly. In this case, the focus of the evaluation is on accuracy. However, communication-based activities like role-playing are designed to ensure that students can produce the target language fluently. In this vein, fluency should be considered the focus of evaluation.

#### *2.1.6. The Role of Native Language*

The use of the native language offers considerable merits in a language class for communicative purposes. As suggested by Atkinson (1987) using learners' mother tongue is greatly advantageous for teachers to elicit students' information, check their comprehension, give instructions on tasks and promote their learning process. In addition, code-switching in class can facilitate the teachers' meaning clarification. However, injudiciously using or overusing the native language would generate disadvantages (Atkinson, 1987). In brief, although CLT is aimed to create numerous opportunities for students to use the target language productively in communication-based tasks like pair or group work (Richards, 2006), this does not imply that the native language should be completely evaded in class.

#### *2.2. Teacher Beliefs*

Teacher belief, one of the key issues in teacher cognition, has played a crucial

role in teacher education (Borg, 2003). However, researchers in this field have defined similar terms differently and different terms have been used to refer to identical concepts (Borg, 2003; Pajares, 1992). Bastukmen et al. (2004) define teacher belief as a “statement teachers made about their ideas, thoughts, and knowledge that are expressed as evaluations of what ‘should be done’, ‘should be the case’, and ‘is preferable’” (p. 244). According to Kagan (1992), teacher belief is conceptualized as “pre-or in-service teachers’ implicit assumptions about students, learning, classrooms, and the subject matter to be taught.” (p. 65-66)

Due to such different understandings referring to teachers’ beliefs, it is suggested that the researchers should intelligibly recognize the meaning of the term they are employing (Pajares, 1992). Accordingly, a definition by Bastukmen et al. (2004) seems to best fit our study as it clearly exhibits “the interrelationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices” (Alshibany, 2018, p. 61) in which beliefs are considered significant factors in determining and evaluating how teachers deal with their practices (Pajares, 1992; Almarza, 1996).

### ***2.3. Related studies on EFL Teachers’ beliefs about CLT***

Although the CLT approach has been adopted in the curricula, multiple teachers still hold misconceptions about what CLT is and display various perceptions in understanding and employing its characteristics in their actual classrooms.

This inconsistency between teachers’ beliefs and their actual behaviors indicates that teachers’ perceptions before embracing any new teaching method should not be ignored (Khatib & Tootkaboni, 2017).

In an attempt to explore teachers’ beliefs towards the communicative approach and their teaching practices in the EFL context of Iran, Tootkaboni (2019) developed and employed the questionnaire to capture a data source from 154 Iranian teachers of English whose actual teaching practices were later observed for additional examinations. Data analyzed from the questionnaire revealed that except for the role of grammar which was evaluated as rather favourable, a large number of the participants held favourable views about CLT principles regarding the teachers’ roles, the learners’ roles, the native language roles, and quality and quantity of error correction the pair/group activities. However, the study indicated that a clear misalignment was explored between the teachers’ beliefs and their practical employment of CLT.

Aiming at examining Cambodian EFL teachers’ and learners’ beliefs about CLT, Nhem (2019) conducted a study on 33 teachers in an MA TESOL course and 80 students at a private school in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Data were captured via an online survey that required the participants to respond to a questionnaire adapted from Khatib and Tootkaboni (2017). The results indicated that teachers

and students expressed their positive beliefs toward CLT, especially in regard to the role of teachers, the role of the native language, and pair/group work. This study unfolded that CLT is positively supported in the Cambodian context.

Pitikornpuangpetch and Suwanarak (2021) investigated Thai English language teachers' beliefs about CLT and their instructional practices. A source of data was collected using interviews and classroom observations in which interviews were conducted with seventeen teachers, and nine of them were observed in General English classrooms in four public Rajabhat universities in Thailand. Findings from the interviews uncovered that despite their slight favour of the CLT aspect of the grammar roles, the teachers held strong beliefs concerning pair/group activities, the role of teachers, the students' roles, quality and quantity of error correction, and teaching materials, which were mostly in line with the CLT principles. Nevertheless, the teachers merely adopted certain CLT principles in their actual classrooms, which demonstrated some inconsistency between the teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices.

Taking the context of Vietnam into consideration, Ngoc and Iwashita (2012) carried out a study to compare Vietnamese learners' and teachers' attitudes towards the CLT approach with reference to four tenets: grammar instruction, group, and pair work, error correction, and teachers' role. A questionnaire was utilized for data collection from 37 in-service teachers and

88 university first-year learners of English in Vietnam. The results unpacked that teachers and learners all held moderately positive attitudes toward CLT.

Son (2013) carried out a research project to explore the Vietnamese teachers' beliefs in CLT and their self-reported classroom teaching practices. Forty-eight teachers of English majoring in ESP and Business English at a university in Vietnam participated in the study. A questionnaire was employed as a source of data. Findings revealed that the teachers demonstrated their positive beliefs toward CLT in terms of teaching activities, material, teaching aids, pair/group work, and the roles of the teachers and learners. However, there was a low relationship between teachers' beliefs about CLT and their self-reported classroom instructional practices.

Although these studies were undertaken in different teaching contexts, their results generally uncover that most of the EFL teachers hold favorable beliefs toward CLT, and "the teachers' views seem to shift to a more communicative paradigm (Chang, 2011, p. 23). Considering that beliefs play a crucial role in language teaching and can influence teachers' pedagogical decision-making and their teaching practices; and relatively few studies have been conducted in the field in Vietnam to date, especially at secondary schools; the current study sets forth to investigate secondary school EFL teachers' beliefs about CLT. The following research question guided this

study: *What are Vietnamese EFL teachers' beliefs about CLT?*

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Participants

The teacher participants consisted of 128 in-service teachers of English at secondary schools in two provinces of Thai Binh (84.4%) and Quang Ninh (15.6%) in Vietnam. 118 teachers were females while only 10 were males. Most of the teachers were either between 40 and 50 years old (68%) or 30 and 40 years old (26.6%). A higher rate of the teachers (48.4%) had been teaching English at secondary schools for around 15-20 years while 28.1% had worked as teachers of English for approximately 21 years, 16.4% had been teaching English for around 10-15 years, and only 7.1% for around 5-10 years. In addition, most of them (99.2%) possessed a BA degree in teaching while only one had an MA degree in TESOL (0.8%). At the time of the study, these teachers were engaging in an ELT program for the 2020 national FL project.

#### 3.2. Instrument

The questionnaire of this research project employed to explore the Vietnamese EFL teachers' beliefs about CLT was adopted from Khatib and Tootkaboni's (2017) for certain reasons, one of which is its validity and reliability which has been statistically tested to attain its research trustworthiness. As stated by Khatib and Tootkaboni (2017), in order to

obtain its validity, the questionnaire items were critically commented on, assessed, and modified by a panel of experts who were professionals in applied linguistics in terms of the intelligibility, content representativeness, ambiguity, bias, and their appropriateness; and piloted with 300 Iranian participants in order to ensure the clarity and comprehensibility of the questionnaire items. With regard to its reliability, the questionnaire was measured through Cronbach's Alpha in which the internal consistency of the whole questionnaire was found at 0.77. According to Dörnyei (2010), the reliability index of the questionnaire above 0.60 is regarded as an acceptable measure. Meanwhile, Kline (1999) stated that, for a scale to be reliable, Cronbach's alpha should be  $\geq .7$  to be accepted. More importantly, its statements were developed on the basis of a review of the literature on the core principles of CLT in relation to the selected domains (Khatib & Tootkaboni, 2017). Therefore, it can be concluded that the scale was reliable to be employed.

The questionnaire comprised 28 statements (18 positives and 10 negatives with an asterisk \*) categorized under six principles of CLT such as learners' role and contribution (5 items), the error correction and assessment (7 items), the role and importance of grammar (5 items), the role of teachers (4 items), the role of the learner native language (3 items), and pair and group work activities (4 items). The questionnaire items followed the six-

point Likert scale construction ranging from 1 to 6, in which 6 indicated '*strongly agree*' and 1 was designated as '*strongly disagree*'. The questionnaire was then translated into Vietnamese to maximize ease of administration, and ensure its greater accuracy of results and its comprehensibility (Shenita, 2018) for the Vietnamese EFL teacher participants.

Playing both roles as trainers and researchers, we started our training and data collection with the secondary teachers in Thai Binh province on the first day of July, then in Quang Ninh on the eighteenth of July. To explore the teachers' beliefs about CLT, we held a short meeting of about 15 minutes with all of the participants in the hall in the morning before the first lecture began in the order that we briefly introduced the purposes of the study, as well as the procedure involved, and then invited the teachers to take part in the research. The participants were also notified that the collected data was only used for the research, and kept confidential and anonymous. After asking the teacher participants to sign in their sheets of the consent form, we administered 132 sheets of the questionnaire in Vietnamese, guided them to complete their questionnaires, answered any questions from the teacher participants, and requested them to return with their completed questionnaires at the end of the lecture. As a result, 128 sheets of the questionnaire were handed in from two provinces.

### 3.3. Data analysis

Regarding the analysis of questionnaire results, the data gathered from the questionnaire were quantitatively analyzed. Given that the questionnaire covered both positive and negative statements, the coding of the data was interpreted in given patterns, ranging from 1 to 6, with 1 indicating "Strongly Disagree" and 6 being "Strongly Agree" for the positive, and the reversal pattern was true for the negative. Therefore, after being entered into a data file, the data from the participants' responses were recoded if the statements were negative so that the data files are "consistent with each other" or "one coding pattern makes more sense" (George & Mallery, 2018, p. 71), and then analyzed statistically to generate descriptive statistics with the use of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences), version 26. With reference to scoring interpretations, their answers to the six core features of CLT were calculated and classified into three groups: favourable, rather favourable, and unfavourable. Scores ranging from 4.34 to 6 were evaluated as 'favourable', whereas those ranging from 2.67 to 4.33, and from 1.00 to 2.66 were measured as 'rather favourable' and 'unfavourable' respectively (Khatib & Tootkaboni, 2017). When the combined mean scores of subcategories were higher, this indicated that respondents held more positive beliefs towards CLT, whereas referring to the traditional or non-CLT teaching approach was reversed in scoring.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Teachers’ Beliefs about Six-Core Tenets of CLT

4.1.1. Teachers’ Beliefs about Pair/Group Activities

With regard to group/pair work activities, the respondents generally expressed their favourable beliefs on this CLT theme with the total mean values of 4.66 and 0.61. Table 1 revealed that knowledge and skills developed from group/pair work activities triggered learners’ greater success in performing tasks was most preferred by the respondents (M= 5.13, SD= 0.86). In the same vein, the participants explicitly manifested their agreement with taking more emphasis on both active and effective forms of learning like pair/group

activities (M= 5.10, SD= 0.89), and more ideas, and therefore greater confidence and more effective communication as a result of group/pair work (M= 4.95, SD= 0.84). Despite their overwhelming positive beliefs about the benefits of group/pair work, the respondents held their slightly negative orientation to the issue that ‘group/pair work tasks can never replace the whole class formal instruction’ (M= 3.45, SD= 1.30). To summarize, the great majority of respondents highly appreciated the significance of applying pair/group tasks in promoting genuine interactions in communicative language classes, despite their inconsistent beliefs among the various aspects of the use of group/pair work activities.

Table 1: Teachers’ Beliefs about Pair/Group Activities

Items	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Group/pair work activities can lead to more developed ideas, and therefore greater confidence and more effective communication.	128	3	6	5.13	0.86
More emphasis should be given to active and effective modes of learning such as pair or group work.	128	3	6	5.10	0.89
Group/pair work activities provide knowledge and skills which lead to greater success in undertaking tasks.	128	2	6	4.95	0.84
*Group/pair work tasks can never replace the whole class formal instruction.	128	1	6	3.45	1.30
Overall	128	1	6	4.66	0.61

4.1.2. Teachers’ Beliefs about the Teachers’ Roles

In reference to the role of the teachers, the participants, on the whole, demonstrated their favourable view on

what roles the teachers should adopt in language classes (M= 4.46, SD= 0.48). As illustrated in Table 2, a considerable portion of the respondents revealed their agreement with or endorsed their roles as a facilitator and advisor during the task performance with the average mean values of 4.93 and 0.85. In a similar fashion, a great proportion of respondents agreed that teachers should provide helps to learners in a way that increases their motivation to use the language (M= 4.91, SD= 0.81), and create an interactive and not excessively formal EFL environment (M= 4.78, SD= 0.93). In these situations, the teachers played the roles of a helper, a guide, and a creator of the interactive learning environment. Nevertheless, as for the last item in the category, a significant number of teachers showed their preference for the non-CLT or traditional approach to language instruction which viewed the teacher as ‘authority’ or ‘center’ in the EFL class with average mean scores of 2.47 and 1.01.

**Table 2:** *Teachers’ Beliefs about the Teachers’ Roles*

Items	N	Min	Max	M	SD
The teacher should facilitate the communication process and advise learners during task performance.	128	2	6	4.93	0.85
Teachers should help learners in any way that motivates them to work with language.	128	3	6	4.91	0.81
The teacher should set an English learning environment that is interactive and not excessively formal.	128	2	6	4.78	0.93
*The teacher’s role is to act as ‘authority’ in the language classroom where English learning is aimed at communicative competence.	128	1	6	2.74	1.01
Overall	128	1	6	4.46	0.48

4.1.3. *Teachers’ Beliefs about the Learners’ Role and Contribution*

For the group of items dealing with teachers' beliefs toward the role and contribution of the learners, the respondents, overall, showed their rather favourable support for the CLT notion of

this tenet (M= 4.25 and SD= 0.58) despite their significant misconception about it. As can be seen from Table 3, a higher proportion of the respondents favourably agreed upon the learners’ great role in the learning process (M= 4.96; SD= 0.81) than upon the other items, such as the

learners' own experience as a significant contributing component in a language class ( $M= 4.94$ ,  $SD= 0.84$ ); and learners' interaction either in the flesh, through pair and group work, or in their writing' ( $M= 4.26$ ,  $SD= 1.07$ ). However, they, to some extent, disagreed with the point that learners need to be given the freedom to

'choose their language use rather than practice what they are told to say' ( $M= 3.63$ ,  $SD= 1.36$ ), and could suggest the content of the lesson and useful activities in class ( $M= 3.45$ ,  $SD= 1.26$ ), which still exhibited their rather favorable tendency on the non-CLT notion.

**Table 3: Teachers' Beliefs about the Learners' Role and Contribution**

Items	N	Min	Max	M	SD
It is the learner who plays a great role in the process of learning.	128	2	6	4.96	0.81
Learners are expected to interact with each other either in the flesh, through pair and group work, or in their writing.	128	3	6	4.94	0.84
Learners' own personal experience should be regarded as an important contributing element in language classrooms.	128	2	6	4.26	1.07
*The learner is not in a position to suggest what the content of the lesson should be or what activities are useful for him/her.	128	1	6	3.63	1.36
Learners need to have the freedom to choose their language use rather than practice what they are told to say.	128	1	6	3.45	1.26
Overall	128	1	6	4.25	0.58

#### 4.1.4. Teachers' Beliefs about the Role and Importance of Grammar

In terms of the role and importance of grammar, the respondents were fairly split over the issue as they held both CLT-oriented beliefs and non-CLT-oriented. However, this tenet of CLT was generally rather favoured by the respondents with the total score values of 4.12 and 0.57. As displayed in Table 4, more participants

positively responded to the CLT aspects of the grammar role and its significance, for instance, 'language forms should be addressed within a communicative context and not in isolation'; 'learners seem to focus best on grammar when it relates to their communicative needs and experiences; and 'less attention should be paid to the overt presentation and discussion of grammatical rules' with the

mean scores of 4.98, 4.12, and 4.05 respectively. However, the traditional non-CLT notion of grammar instruction reflected in the items that ‘direct instruction of language rules leads to effective communication’ (M= 4.03, SD=1.06); and ‘the most important part of learning English is practicing grammatical patterns’ (M= 3.42, SD=1.21) was rather preferred by a higher rate of the respondents.

Table 4: Teachers’ Beliefs about the Role and Importance of Grammar

Items	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Language forms should be addressed within a communicative context and not in isolation.	128	3	6	4.98	0.75
Learners seem to focus best on grammar when it relates to their communicative needs and experiences.	128	1	6	4.12	0.97
Less attention should be paid to the overt presentation and discussion of grammatical rules.	128	1	6	4.05	1.06
*Direct instruction of language rules leads to effective communication.	128	1	6	4.03	1.06
*The most important part of learning English is practicing grammatical patterns.	128	1	6	3.42	1.21
Overall	128	1	6	4.12	0.57

4.1.5. Teachers’ Beliefs about Error Correction and Assessment

The teacher participants, in general, held slightly positive beliefs about the CLT tenet regarding error correction and assessment (M=4.07, SD= 0.50). As clearly seen from Table 5, with the average mean scores of around 4.13 to 4.81, the respondents, to some extent, agreed with the four positive items pertaining to error correction and evaluation that language errors are valued

as a natural phenomenon in the learning process and are therefore tolerated; learners’ performance is better evaluated basing on communicative tasks; frequent correction of student errors is unnecessary for ensuring successful learning; and that correction should take place only when communication is broken down. Interestingly, the teacher participants did not completely believe that ‘because of the learners’ limited linguistic knowledge, they should not be allowed ‘to correct

each other's errors'; and 'for evaluating learners' progress in communication, their vocabulary and structural knowledge should be assessed', which indicated their rather favourable support for CLT orientation with the mean values of  $M=4.19$ ,  $SD=0.99$  and  $M=3.72$ ,  $SD=1.44$  respectively. However, in terms of the

teachers' perspective on evaluation, the respondents reported their preference for the non-CLT notion about the focus of accuracy. It is evident that a large number of respondents declared their slight agreement with the good evaluation focusing on accuracy' ( $M=3.34$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ).

**Table 5:** *Teachers' Beliefs about Error Correction and Assessment*

Items	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Errors are seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills and are therefore tolerated.	128	2	6	4.81	0.96
*For evaluating learners' progress in communication, their vocabulary and structural knowledge should be assessed.	128	2	6	4.19	0.99
It is better to evaluate learners' performance in communicative-based activities such as role-play.	128	2	6	4.15	0.98
Constant error correction is unnecessary and even counter-productive.	128	1	6	4.14	1.00
Correction from teachers should happen only when there is a communication breakdown.	128	1	6	4.13	1.09
*Because of the learners' limited linguistic knowledge, they should not be allowed to correct each other's errors.	128	1	6	3.72	1.44
*Good evaluation is carried out when the focus of the evaluation is on accuracy.	128	1	6	3.34	1.08
Overall	128	1	6	4.07	0.50

*4.1.6. Teachers' Beliefs about the Role of the Learners' Native Language*

Generally, the participants had a slightly positive perception of the CLT approach ( $M=3.84$ ,  $SD=0.55$ ). As clearly displayed in Table 6, the teachers agreed

most with the judicious use of learners' native language when feasible ( $M=4.48$ ,  $SD=0.80$ ), accompanied by the belief that learners' mother tongue should not be utilized as a communicative medium in EFL classes ( $M=4.05$ ,  $SD=0.93$ ). In

contrast, the respondents expressed slight support for the non-CLT concept of the idea that ‘teachers must provide directions of homework, classwork, and test directions by using learners’ native language’ (M= 2.99, SD= 1.05).

**Table 6:** *Teachers’ Beliefs about the Role of the Learners’ Native Language*

Items	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Judicious use of the learner’s native language is acceptable when feasible.	128	1	6	4.48	0.80
*Learners’ native language should be a vehicle for communication in language classrooms.	128	1	6	4.05	0.93
*Teachers must provide directions for homework, classwork, and test directions by using learners’ native language.	128	1	6	2.99	1.05
Overall	128	1	6	3.84	0.55

4.2. *The Overall Teachers’ Beliefs about Six Themes of CLT*

**Table 7:** *Teachers’ Beliefs about CLT before the ELT Program*

CLT Tenets	N	Mean	SD	<i>Favourable</i>	<i>Rather favourable</i>	<i>Unfavourable</i>
				(4.34-6.00)	(2.67-4.33)	(1.00-2.66)
Group/pair work activities	128	4.66	0.61	√		
The role of the teachers	128	4.46	0.48	√		
The role and contribution of the learners	128	4.25	0.58		√	
The role and importance of grammar	128	4.12	0.57		√	
Error correction and assessment	128	4.07	0.50		√	
The role of the learners’ native language	128	3.84	0.55		√	
Overall	128	4.23	0.33		√	

The overall results in Table 7 show that the teachers held moderately favourable beliefs about CLT with the average scores of 4.23 and 0.33 in total. As demonstrated in the table, the six major domains of CLT were assessed either as favorable (pair/group work activities and teacher's role,) or as rather favorable (learners' role and contribution, error correction and evaluation, grammar role and importance, and native language role). Of the six CLT tenets, pair/group work activities ( $M=4.66$ ,  $SD=0.61$ ) were explicitly most favoured by the participants, followed by the other tenets of CLT, such as the role of teachers ( $M=4.46$ ,  $SD=0.48$ ), the role and contribution of learners ( $M=4.25$ ,  $SD=0.58$ ), the importance of grammar ( $M=4.12$ ,  $SD=0.57$ ), the role error correction and assessment ( $M=4.07$ ,  $SD=0.50$ ). However, the mean scores for the learners' role of native language were found the lowest for the participants ( $M=3.84$ ,  $SD=0.55$ ) in the six domains of CLT. The finding for the native language seems to be contrary to the findings of Tootkaboni (2019) and Nhem (2019) who held a strongly favourable belief about the learners' role of native language in EFL classes as the adoption of learners' native language offers multiple merits for eliciting students' information, checking comprehension, giving instruction or promoting the learning process (Atkinson, 1987). The result of this study could uncover that using the native language (Vietnamese) in communicative classes

might not always be required for the teachers and students in fostering their language teaching and learning. In a similar view, the other findings for learner roles, error correction, and evaluation seem to disagree with those of other previous studies (Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak, 2021; Tootkaboni, 2019) in which the teachers' beliefs were favourably supportive of the CLT approach.

The teachers' endorsement to pair/group work activities as the most favourable belief about CLT implied that they recognized the significance of pair/group work activities in communicative EFL classes, and believed that this domain could help learners develop ideas, confidence, and effective communication skills. The finding for pair/group activities seems to be highly in accordance with that of Ngoc and Iwashita's (2012) and Pitikornpuangpetch and Suwanarak's (2021) views as this tenet was strongly believed by a majority of the teachers. As argued by Nguyen (2002), Vietnamese learners increasingly become more active in their learning, and actively engage in communicative activities, such as pair/group work to facilitate their language use in classes, which reflects the learners' preferences shifting from the traditional whole-class mode of learning towards pair/group tasks. Similarly, the finding on the role of teachers is strongly congruent with that of the literature (Nhem, 2019;

Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak, 2021; Tootkaboni, 2019) as the teachers held their favorable beliefs regarding CLT.

The finding for the role of grammar is in line with that of Tootkaboni (2019), Pitikornpuangpetch and Suwanarak's (2021), and Ngoc and Iwashita's (2012), who reported the teachers' rather favourable belief toward this CLT aspect. As pointed out by Ngoc and Iwashita (2012), the wash-back from the testing methods of grammatical discrete items presently employed at all the levels, such as primary, secondary, and tertiary in Vietnam affects the teachers' and learners' preferences for explicit form-focused instruction of grammar. Consequently, communicative language teaching and learning will be substantially influenced by the negative wash-back from the system of traditional examination if the situation has no change (Khatib & Tootkaboni, 2019).

While the overall result in this study is, to some extent, consistent with that of numerous prior research projects (e.g., Chang, 2011; Nhem, 2019; Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak, 2021; Son, 2013; Tootkaboni, 2019), it highly accords with Ngoc and Iwashita's (2012) perception which indicated that the Vietnamese teachers held moderately positive beliefs about CLT. This exhibits a good indication to those paying great attention to the application of the CLT approach in the Vietnamese context as the major CLT principles are reasonably

acceptable in this setting (Ngoc & Iwashita, 2012).

### 5. Implications and Conclusion

The present study investigated the Vietnamese teachers' beliefs about CLT. Overall, the results revealed that the participant teachers held moderately favourable beliefs toward CLT. Of the six tenets of CLT, pair/group work activities and teacher's role were evaluated as favorable, while learners' role and contribution, error correction and evaluation, grammar role and importance, and native language role were valued as rather favorable. Additionally, pair/group work activities were most favoured by the participants, followed by the other tenets of CLT, such as the role of teachers, the role and contribution of learners, the importance of grammar, the role of error correction, and assessment respectively. However, the role of the learners' native language was least preferred by the participants.

This study reveals certain limitations, one of which is that only a single instrument such as a questionnaire with Likert-scale data in the current study does not help us gain a deeper understanding of the nature of teachers' beliefs about CLT. Further inquiries therefore might incorporate more qualitative methods, for instance, diaries or interviews to yield richer accounts of teachers' perceptions of CLT. Another limitation lies in the fact that teachers' beliefs about CLT explored in the questionnaire responses may not

reflect their actual classroom practices at secondary schools in Vietnam. Future research could employ classroom observations to examine how teachers' beliefs about CLT are translated into their classroom instructional practices. However, with small sample size, only 128 teachers in two provinces in Vietnam, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be transferable to other contexts. Future research should involve a larger number of participants in many different locations to generalize the findings to a larger population of teachers in Vietnam or other teaching contexts.

Despite some limitations, certain relevant implications are proposed in this study. First, teachers' beliefs about CLT should be shed more light on as they can guide teachers in employing CLT principles to promote their actual teaching practices, for instance, enhancing their teaching methods and performance, and designing lesson plans and classroom activities. Second, the theoretical contributions of the current research can inform Vietnamese stakeholders in teacher professional development to provide EFL teachers with additional training about the CLT approach for positive changes in teachers' pedagogical beliefs. Finally, due to the small size of the population, further research is highly recommended to make the findings of the present study more powerful.

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