

COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT) IMPLEMENTATION IN *KURIKULUM MERDEKA*: A LESSON FROM ENGLISH TEACHERS' VOICES

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: April 2024 Revised: July 2024 Published: October 2024	<i>This study examines the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) within the Kurikulum Merdeka framework in Gowa District, Indonesia, focusing on English teachers' experiences and strategies. Using qualitative methods, including surveys (n=12), focus group discussions (n=7), and in-depth interviews (n=2), the study identifies challenges such as limited vocabulary, uneven proficiency levels, and insufficient resources. Strategies to overcome these challenges include promoting peer communication, leveraging multimedia resources, and fostering parental involvement. Comparisons with curriculum reforms in South Korea, Japan, and Bangladesh provide a global perspective on CLT implementation. The findings highlight the positive impact of CLT on students' communicative competence and suggest that Kurikulum Merdeka's focus on independent learning and project-based initiatives, along with collaborative activities such as English day, clubs, camps, and competitions, can further support CLT. However, effective execution, continuous evaluation, and addressing diverse educational backgrounds and regional disparities are essential for achieving the desired English proficiency outcomes. This study offers valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers to enhance English language teaching in diverse educational settings.</i>
Keywords Communicative Language Teaching (CLT); ELT learning; Independent Curriculum; Kurikulum Merdeka; Pancasila Learner Profile Strengthening Project (P5)	
How to cite: Lestari, M.B., & Margana, M. (2024). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Implementation In Kurikulum Merdeka: A Lesson From English Teachers' Voices, <i>JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching</i> , 12(4), 1657-1672. DOI: https://doi.org/10.33394/joltt.v12i4.11266	

INTRODUCTION

The change of 2013 Curriculum to be *Kurikulum Merdeka* or Independent Curriculum in Indonesia indicates a fundamental evolution of the national education. *Kurikulum Merdeka* implementation aims at learning recovery, guided by specified policies (Kemdikbud, 2023). This reform is a significant attempt to improve the national educational system. To create a comprehensive educational framework, *Kurikulum Merdeka* includes a number of essential elements. *Pancasila* Learner Profile Strengthening Projects (P5) is the most imperative element. It integrates local content and offers a project based learning with unique assessment method (Direktorat SMP, 2022). The updated curriculum shows a dedication to encouraging students to become future qualified human resources, prepared to collaborate as a world citizen (Kemendikbud Ristek, 2021).

In the context of English for Junior High School, the curriculum reform goes along international standards, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in the B1 level (Kemendikbudristek BSKAP, 2022). By offering focused and organized language instruction, it is intended to guarantee that students acquire communicative competence in English as part of life skills. The suggested approach used in teaching General English in *Kurikulum Merdeka* is a text-based approach (genre-based approach) in various

modes, whether oral, written, visual, audio, and multimodal (Kemendikbudristek BSKAP, 2022).

Due to substantial impact of sociocultural backgrounds on English teaching (Mason & Payant, 2019; Poedjiastutie et al., 2021), planning of suitable instruction is the key to create a communicative curriculum. The effectiveness of English teaching is intricately tied to cultural and social contexts (Poedjiastutie et al., 2021), where the elements significantly influences learning dynamics within a region (Mason & Payant, 2019). Affective elements, such as emotions, attitudes, and motivation, also influence the learning process (HOSSAIN, 2022). It is essential to recognize the imperative of adopting a pedagogical approach that embraces linguistic diversity, accommodates varied learning preferences, and respects cultural norms (Mason & Payant, 2019).

Additionally, communicative competence is a complex network encompassing psychological, sociocultural, physical, and linguistic elements (Brown, 2007). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is recommended to be the effective approach to cultivate the communicative competence. Beside vocabulary and grammar memorizing, it is highlighting intercultural communication effectively (Santos, 2020). CLT emphasis on real-life communicative competence and interactive learning, aligns with the diverse elements to shape the learning experience (Richards, 2006). Therefore, incorporating into *Kurikulum Merdeka* is a commendable resolution, but it requires careful consideration, due to its extend beyond teaching communication.

CLT Outline

As a flexible approach, CLT worldwide solve limitations of traditional language teaching (Santos, 2020). Through engaging and meaningful communication, it creates an environment where learning becomes both enjoyable and effective (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003). Numerous studies highlight the benefits of incorporating skill acquisition activities in CLT, both in person classrooms (Asrul & Suratman, 2022; Lawn & Lawn, 2015; Sheeba & Karthikeyan, 2020; Suryanto & Nikmatillah, 2020; Thuratham, 2022) and in virtual or blended learning environments (Chagas & Pedro, 2021; Haryanto, 2020; Lawn & Lawn, 2015; Singaravelu, 2010). CLT not only outlines curriculum content but also emphasizes effective teaching methods, such as Task-based Instruction, gives priority on collaborative tasks to improve communicative competence (Szabo, 2012). There are eight crucial characteristics for authentic communicative classroom activities within CLT framework (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003).

Table 1
Characteristics of CLT (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003)

Characteristics	Description	Classroom activity suggestions
Learner autonomy	-Gives emphasis to the role of the student rather than teacher. -Nurtures the intrinsic motivation of student and give them more rights and responsibilities in learning activities.	-Make small groups or pairs -Extensive reading as a lifelong habit -Provide self-assessment to help student feel more capable in a larger role of his/her own learning
Social nature of learning	Environment makes student interactively contact each other in the not formal teaching setting	-Collaborative learning -Project based learning
Curriculum integration	Combines a diversity of subject areas	-Content based learning -Project based learning
Focus on meaning	Associates meaningful portions and give the long-term knowledge of the language	-Task based learning -Journal writing to provide chances in exploring particular meaning
Diversity	-Different students accord different associations to the same information -Embraces the various background of students	-Apply multiple intelligences instructions -Differentiated learning
Thinking skills	-Applies creative and critical thinking skills -Integrate the higher-order thinking skills	-Lesson combination -Group activities challenge

Characteristics	Description	Classroom activity suggestions
Alternative assessment	-Consists of fluent, accurate, and socially appropriate instrument -Reflects closer real-life conditions and implicates higher order thinking skill	-Project based learning -Higher order thinking skill assessment
		-Competency based learning -Task based learning -Group or pair critical writing -Portfolio assessment
Teachers as co-learners	Teachers learn along with students	-Do similar activities and share with students -Portfolio as teacher's self-assessment

Identifying these factors is crucial for teachers and policymakers. These characteristics emphasizes contextual language use, interaction, and interdisciplinary elements. For effective CLT implementation, language teaching should facilitate these characteristics purposefully.

***Kurikulum Merdeka* (Independent Curriculum)**

There is a sequence of procedures for implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The Ministry encourages active participation from school and madrasah principals to register and submit required data (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, 2022). School has the flexibility to introduce *Kurikulum Merdeka* gradually, aligning with their preparedness levels (Direktorat SMP, 2022). The Ministry further assesses readiness through a non-judgmental questionnaire, aiming to identify suitable implementation options based on the school's condition (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, 2022; Pengelola Web Direktorat SMP, 2022). After the registration and assessment from the ministry, those school can implement the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in *PAUD* (pre-school) level, grades 1 and 4 in elementary school, 7 grade of junior high school, and 10 grade in senior high school, while the remaining grades persevere employing the 2013 curriculum (K13).

Table 2
Options for Independent Path *Kurikulum Merdeka* Implementation (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, 2022; Direktorat SMP, 2022)

Option	Description
Independent Learning	Provides the flexibility to implement <i>Kurikulum Merdeka</i> in specific parts and principles without altering the existing teaching administrative document.
Independent Change	Offers flexibility in implementing <i>Kurikulum Merdeka</i> by utilizing teaching administrative document provided by the ministry.
Independent Sharing	Provides school's autonomy in implementing <i>Kurikulum Merdeka</i> by developing various teaching administrative document.

Kurikulum Merdeka introduces specific changes from K13. It modifies the structure, assessment methods, and implementation strategies. The subsequent explanation from Direktorat SMP (2022) delves into the specifics of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* for Junior High School.

Table 3
Kurikulum Merdeka Implementation in Junior High School (Direktorat SMP, 2022)

Aspect	Details
Structure of the Merdeka Curriculum	- Comprises intra-curricular activities, the Pancasila student profile strengthening project, and extracurricular activities. - The allocation of teaching hours is recorded as a total for one year, with suggested allocations presented regularly/weekly.
Changes in Teaching Hours	- Teaching hours for each subject are allocated for intra-curricular learning and the Pancasila learner profile strengthening project.
Pancasila Learner Profile Strengthening Project	- Implemented by training students to explore real issues in their environment and collaborate to solve them. - Separate time allocation is necessary to ensure the proficient project.

Cultural Local Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educational institutions/local governments can add cultural local content as needed. - Flexibility in managing cultural local content through three methods: integration into other subjects, integration into the theme of the Pancasila learner profile strengthening project, or developing a separate subject.
Specific subjects for Junior High School Level (SMP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informatics becomes a compulsory subject, while <i>Prakarya</i> or Crafts becomes one of the choices along with Arts (Music, Dance, Fine Arts, Theatre) - The choice of one skill is intended for in-depth exploration, unlike the previous curriculum that allowed choosing a minimum of two types.
Assessment and Learning Outcome Mastery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning outcome mastery is no longer measured with the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) in quantitative grades. - Formative and summative assessment is used to identify the achievement of learning objectives.
Role of Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parental support is key to the success of the Merdeka Curriculum. - Parents can be study companions, understand their child's competencies, and study textbooks through buku.kemdikbud.go.id.

***Pancasila* Learner Profile Strengthening Projects (P5)**

To create a comprehensive educational framework, *Kurikulum Merdeka* incorporates the *Pancasila* Learner Profile Strengthening Projects (Direktorat SMP, 2022). It described in the table 4.

Table 4
Pancasila Learner Profile Strengthening Projects (Kemendikbud Ristek, 2021)

Aspect	Description
Project Name	<i>Pancasila</i> Learner Profile Strengthen
Definition of Project	A series of activities designed to achieve a specific <i>Pancasila</i> Learner Profile (namely: faith and noble character, global diversity, collaboration, independence, critical thinking, and creative) by exploring specific themes provided by Ministry of Education and Culture-Higher Education themes for the academic year.
Project Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investigations - Problem-solving - Decision-making - Production of products and/or actions
Nature of Program	Cross-disciplinary initiative
Objective	Observing and devising solutions for local environmental problems
Learning Approach	Project-based learning approach, distinct from intracurricular programs in the classroom
Learning Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informal situations - Flexible learning structures - Interactive learning activities - Direct involvement with the surrounding environment

The *Pancasila* Learner Profile Strengthening Project (P5) particularly integrates investigative, problem-solving, and cross-disciplinary initiatives, aligning with the overarching goal of addressing local environmental issues through project-based learning. This shift provides opportunities to enhance communicative competence by effectively implementing CLT principles within the contextual framework of the curriculum change as stated by Jacobs and Farrell (2003).

The P5 within the framework of *Kurikulum Merdeka* promises rising English proficiency. It underscores the English practical usage and boost communicative competence through real-world application of content knowledge (Kovalyova et al., 2016). However, it is essential to acknowledge the need for effective execution, continuous evaluation, and potential challenges of P5 implementation relate to English lesson in order to fully accomplish the envisioned English proficiency. Moreover, within the large framework of the Indonesian archipelago and its diverse educational background.

Gowa District is one of the districts located in Sulawesi Island. Gowa is divided into three main regions: mountainous constituting approximately 72.26%, lowland, and coastal areas (DIKPLHD KABUPATEN GOWA, 2020). Despite its division into suburban, rural, and remote areas, this region maintains a strong educational vision. Education in Gowa District is implementing SKTB (*Sistem Kelas Tuntas Berkelanjutan*) or complete continuous classroom system which incorporates an automatic promotion system (Gowa, 2013). However, this approach, enforcing grade promotion regardless of students' competency mastery, introduces complexities in its execution.

Insights from South Korea's curriculum reforms emphasizing a focus on CLT reveals teachers concentrating merely on speaking skills, prioritizing student motivation, while expressing concerns about its practicality amid proficiency challenges (Lee, 2014). They also encounter challenges related to testing systems, curriculum constraints, and differing priorities between elementary and secondary levels. Similarly, in Japan, amidst curriculum change teachers resist CLT-oriented textbooks, adhering to traditional methods due to entrenched beliefs and insufficient support (Humphries and Burns, 2015). The study of CLT implementation amidst curriculum change in Bangladeshi secondary schools reveals issues like teachers' needs misalignment, CLT adoption complexities, and resource limitations (Rahman, Pandian, and Kaur, 2018).

Deep understanding of teachers' perspectives is crucial to addressing challenges in CLT implementation. It requires targeted training, criteria-based assessments for successful reform, and collaborative efforts between policymakers, experienced educators, and novice teachers (Humphries and Burns, 2015; Lee, 2014). Although urban teacher quality improves, comprehensive research involving diverse stakeholders is suggested for a holistic view for addressing teacher needs, enhancing clarity, providing resources, and reforming assessments (Rahman et al., 2018).

The research aims to examine how English teachers in Gowa District perceive the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, particularly in enhancing students' communicative competence. It seeks to identify the specific challenges these teachers face in adopting the CLT approach within the new curriculum framework. Additionally, the study assesses the effectiveness of current strategies and practices in implementing the curriculum, focusing on both pedagogical methods and classroom activities. Therefore, recommendations for improving the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* particularly in English teaching can be delivered.

This study is arranged in its contextual focus on Gowa District, offering an in-depth analysis within a region with unique educational dynamics and socio-cultural contexts. It also explores the interplay between CLT and the *Pancasila* Learner Profile Strengthening Projects (P5), a relatively under-researched area in Indonesian educational reforms. By highlighting the voices and experiences of English teachers, the study provides valuable insights into the practical challenges and opportunities encountered during curriculum change. Furthermore, it draws comparisons with international curriculum reforms, such as those in South Korea, Japan, and Bangladesh, to contextualize its findings within a broader global perspective on educational innovations. This research seeks to bridge these gaps in the existing literature and provide practical insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers involved in curriculum development and implementation.

Given the context provided in the introduction, this research purposes to address the following questions:

1. What challenges do English teachers face in adopting CLT approach under *Kurikulum Merdeka*?
2. How do English teachers overcome the challenges in the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in enhancing communicative competence among students?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research design

This is qualitative study aimed to understand subjective experiences, beliefs, and concepts, guided by distinct principles complementing digital research, relies on evidence quality and sample relevance (Cohen et al., 2018). Qualitative methods, aligned with digital research principles, are chosen based on evidence quality and sample relevance (Cresswell & Creswell, 2018). It utilizes case study methodology to deeply comprehend CLT application amid curriculum changes. The case study approach, acknowledging the complexity of variables in a single case (Yin, 2018).

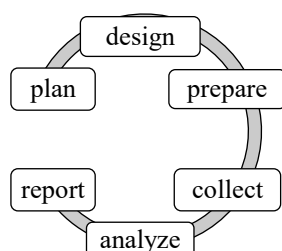


Figure 1. case study research procedure (adopted from Yin, 2018)

Research participants

The research involves a diverse group of participants to explore the perceptions, challenges, and strategies associated with the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* and CLT among English teachers in Gowa District, considering the sociocultural dynamics and specific elements of the new curriculum. Table 5 details the participants of the data sources used in the study.

Table 5. Participants of data sources

Data sources	Information			
	Instruments	Number	Teaching experience	Gender
Qualitative survey	Open-ended survey questionnaire	12	10-32 years	M=5, F=7
Focus group discussion	Guided discussion outline	7	10-32 years	M=4, F=3
In-person interview	Semi-structured interview guideline	2	13 and 29 years	M=1, F=1

Research instruments

The research employs a variety of data collection instruments to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research topics. Selected data sources include online qualitative surveys, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews with experienced English teachers in Gowa. These instruments are chosen to capture diverse perspectives and rich, detailed information about the challenges and practices in inclusive education. The online surveys provide broad initial insights, focus group discussions facilitate dynamic interactions and collective viewpoints, and in-depth interviews offer detailed, personal experiences and expertise from seasoned educators. This triangulation of methods enhances the reliability and depth of the research findings. Furthermore, the research instruments have been validated by lecturer and professor of English Department of Yogyakarta State University to ensure their relevance and accuracy, thereby strengthening the overall validity of the study.

Data collection technique

For data collection, the researcher distributed an online survey among the English teachers in the community of Gowa English Teacher Assembly, seeking volunteers who met specific criteria. Initial questions delved into personal details, CLT understanding, and various

teaching aspects, assessing willingness to participate in an online Zoom discussion forum. Despite 12 expressions of interest initially, only seven teachers actively joined the scheduled two-hour Zoom discussion. To enrich the dataset, the researcher interviewed two influential figures in English education in Gowa. First is a teacher spearheading the annual district-level English competition and the second one is a senior teacher former national K13 instructor, practiced the *Kurikulum Merdeka* with a focus on project-based learning.

Data analysis

According to the description given by Cresswell & Creswell (2018), the research analysis for the qualitative data is carried out within steps in figure 2.

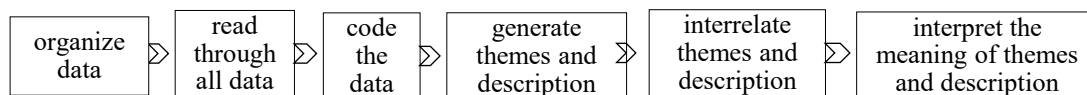


Figure 2. data analysis (Cresswell & Creswell, 2018)

The data analysis process for the research involves thoroughly examine the collected data and derive meaningful insights. Raw data from surveys, focus group discussions, and interviews, are organized, cleaned, and formatted for analysis. Descriptive statistics provide an overview of the data, while qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions are analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns. Finally, researchers interpret the results in the context of the research questions and theoretical framework, synthesizing findings to draw conclusions and generate recommendations. Throughout the process, maintaining rigor and validity is paramount to ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the findings, which contribute to knowledge advancement in the field of curriculum development and inclusive education.

Theoretical framework

The implementation of CLT requires careful consideration due to its complexity and challenges, emphasizing the need for a methodological shift. The curriculum recognizes the influence of sociocultural backgrounds on English teaching and underscores the importance of a pedagogical approach embracing linguistic diversity. Furthermore, the educational framework in Gowa District provides insights into regional disparities and challenges, reinforcing the crucial role of understanding teachers' perspectives for successful CLT implementation. The literature review explores communicative competence, CLT principles, and the details of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, while also addressing both opportunities and obstacles in its context. Therefore, the framework underscores the importance of a comprehensive and flexible approach to educational reform, integrating CLT principles within the contextual framework of *Kurikulum Merdeka* as demonstrated in figure 3.

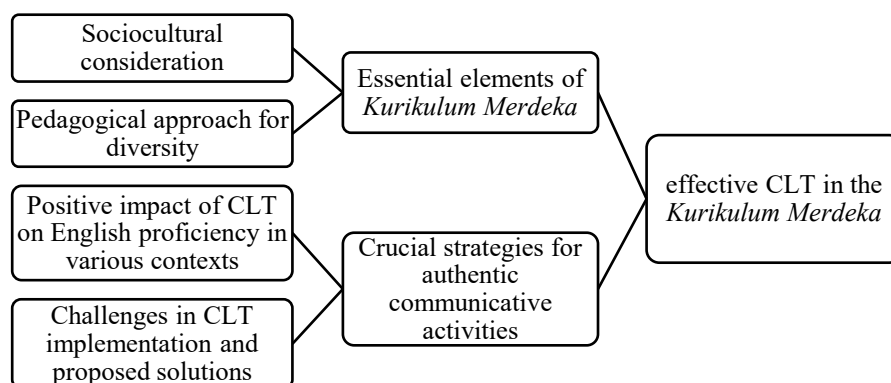


Figure 3. theoretical framework

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

Sociocultural consideration

In response to sociocultural consideration, the teachers provided valuable insights during the focus group discussion, based on their experiences from 10-32 years of teaching and the specific issues they encountered in their diverse teaching environments i.e. remote, rural, and suburban areas. The individual perspectives and responses of each teacher gave a comprehensive understanding of their viewpoints.

Table 6. Sociocultural consideration (excerpt from group discussion)

Teacher	Sociocultural consideration
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Translation challenges due to strong local languages and accent in remote areas. - Limited Indonesian proficiency among students, making English more difficult. - Less parental involvement due to parents' limited education and work.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pressure to maintain high standards in a prestigious private institution with an integrated level school. - Overwhelmed teachers due to teaching across different educational levels.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students' lack of prior English learning in elementary school. - Basic reading and writing skill gaps upon enrolling junior high school due to SKTB program.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of vocabulary among students in rural areas due to insufficient facilities. - Inadequate facilities impacting students' awareness and achievements. - Hesitation to practice English due to fear of making mistakes.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significant differences in educational conditions between remote and suburban school. - Prioritization of farming over education in remote areas. - Overcrowded classrooms and classroom management issue in suburban school.
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insufficient parental support, along with transportation hurdles, widens the education gap and lowers enthusiasm.
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic and peer group pressures contributing to low attention in lessons among some students. - Inappropriate curriculum demands make English learning out of rural education context.

Additional information from informant 1, as a 2013 curriculum instructor, she finds frequent complaints from teachers in her trainings duty, particularly in remote and rural schools. Teachers have strived to foster communicative competence, but students remain passive. The main issue is hesitancy in speak English due to their formidable-to-escape mother tongue that cause pronunciation concerns. Whereas suburban schools pose further complexities with diverse mother tongues due to more ethnic groups of students.

Pedagogical approach for diversity

From the online qualitative survey, it can be seen that each teacher employs unique strategies to foster effective communication and overcome the sociocultural considerations and educational settings.

Table 7
Pedagogical Approaches for Diversity

Teacher	Pedagogical Approach
T1	Utilizes direct verbal and nonverbal communication methods and integrates video media to enhance effective English communication.
T2	Utilizes CLT to foster increased confidence in English speaking.
T3	Focuses on two-way communication, collaborative learning, project-based learning, and utilizes native speaker videos.
T4	Favours a "Learning by Doing" approach, utilizing visuals, demonstrations, discussions, and debates.
T5	Emphasizes communication in every learning goal using various strategies like TPACK, discovery learning, and problem-based learning (PBL).

Teacher	Pedagogical Approach
T6	Acknowledges the lack of vocabulary among students and addresses it through communication activities
T7	Prioritizes communication as the main goal of language teaching, tailoring material delivery based on students' needs.
T8	Encourages English language use in class to overcome student shyness and limited vocabulary due to the use of local languages.
T9	Focuses on student-centered learning to increase student activity.
T10	Approaches English understanding without rigid grammar rules, often through songs and light dialogues.
T11	Emphasizes communication as the main goal through social interaction, discussions, and presentations.
T12	Student-centered, cooperative learning, utilizes simple and easily accessible media in the local environment.

Table 7 reflects varied pedagogical approaches in English teaching. These approaches including utilization of direct verbal and nonverbal communication with audiovisual media (T1) to a "Learning by Doing" approach using visuals, demonstrations, discussions, and debates (T4). Some teachers arrange communication as the core goal, modifying lesson delivery according students' needs (T7, T11), while others recognize the deficiency of students' vocabulary and address it through communication activities (T6) as Brown (2007) and Nunan (1989) suggested.

Positive impact of CLT on English proficiency in various contexts

Teachers draw attention to the positive impact of CLT on English proficiency. They confirm that CLT is beneficial for enhancing linguistic competence in various educational settings.

Table 8
Positive impact of CLT

Teacher	Positive impact of CLT
T1	Effective English communication; Practice English in class
T2	Increase confidence in English speaking although uneven proficiency
T3	Improve flexibility in foreign language; Overcoming timidity
T4	Prepare students to communicate effectively
T5	Active student participation; Increase confidence and interest
T6	Improve communication skills
T7	Facilitate learning process although different understanding of English
T8	Encourage English language use in class
T9	Student-centered learning; Increase student activity
T10	Train in both oral and written communication
T11	Enhance communication skills; Develop English communicative abilities
T12	Build student confidence in speaking; Overcome language learning obstacles

Table 7 demonstrates teachers' success cases concerning the adaptability and effectiveness of CLT. The positive impacts of CLT on English proficiency in diverse educational backgrounds under the 2013 Curriculum and the *Kurikulum Merdeka* context are revealed. The accomplishment cases align with CLT principles that prioritize contextual language use, interaction, and interdisciplinary elements (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003). The importance on communication as a crucial objective (T7, T11) associate with the essential principles of CLT, promoting language learning through meaningful and authentic communication (Brown, 2007; Richards, 2006).

Challenges in CLT implementation and proposed solutions

Challenges in the implementation of CLT are recognized from the teachers' experience both within K13 and *Kurikulum Merdeka* context. They also recommend strategies to deal with their challenges within their teaching contexts.

Table 9
Challenges and strategies to overcome in CLT within *Kurikulum Merdeka* context

Teacher	Challenges	Strategies to Overcome Challenges
T1	Limited vocabulary and understanding of English structures	Provide more practice for communication with peers
T2	Uneven English proficiency	Encourage more communication among students during class
T3	Vocabulary limitations; Lack of confidence to start communication	Use varied methods, provide motivation and support, ensure school facilities support learning
T4	Complex English grammar for students	Increase exposure to educational videos, audio books, and TV without dubbing or subtitles
T5	Large class size; Limited student vocabulary; Short class hours	Do not underestimate students, create student-friendly innovations, make learning enjoyable
T6	Students lack vocabulary and media for enhance the vocabulary such as dictionary	Enrich vocabulary through communication activities out of lesson hours such as English club focus on CTL
T7	Students' understanding of English language learning is not equal.	Parental cooperation and providing necessary language learning facilities
T8	Student shyness; Limited vocabulary due to using local languages	Train students in English communication with vocabulary and pronunciation guidance
T9	Students find English difficult	Use different media and games to increase student interest
T10	Low initial competence of students, lack of supporting facilities and learning media	Teachers improve competencies through self-learning, participate in training; Schools provide necessary resources and use media in teaching
T11	The main challenge is teaching English from scratch since K-13 elementary schools did not cover English	Promote a movement that motivates students to practice English, so that all feel comfortable when they want to practice English communication.
T12	Students' anxiety due to limited vocabulary and confidence.	English Day and English-focused area implementation is recommended, and, if feasible, organizing quarterly English camps.

Table 8 indicates CLT implementation challenges include environmental, psychological, and linguistic factors, along with low students' initial competence, resource limitations, and the focus on standardized exams. Addressing the limited vocabulary as common challenge (T1, T3, T5, T6, T8, T12) in English teaching involves utilizing strategies grounded in the CLT principles and communicative competence theories (Savignon, 1987).

Discussion

Sociocultural consideration

Based on the findings, there is a discernible proficiency among teachers in their respective areas. This proficiency is demonstrated not only in recognizing diverse sociocultural elements within the same geographic area but also extends to their ability to discern and articulate differences in sociocultural contexts and the affective elements (attitudes and motivations) in diverse areas as emphasized by HOSSAIN (2022); Mason & Payant (2019); Poedjiastutie et al. (2021).

Teachers exhibit a heightened understanding between social, cultural, economic, and linguistic factors that influence the educational landscape, presenting a comprehensive awareness of the sociocultural dynamics in their teaching environments. Sociocultural backgrounds identified above are important considerations before English teachers make

careful planning of a communicative course, including linguistic, cultural, and economic factors as highlighted by Littlewood (2013) and Mason & Payant (2019) that a comprehensive understanding of context is essential for effective education.

Pedagogical approach for diversity

During his teaching experience in remote area school, the key informant 2 found that students' and parents' perception of English is inappropriate lesson to daily life. It contributes to lacking in enthusiasm. Therefore, teachers visit students at home and encourage their parents to convince students learning that will make their future better. As he teaches in the suburbs school, students are more diverse and necessitate the differentiated learning based on their needs and preferences. The shift from the K-13 to the *Kurikulum Merdeka* promotes the differentiated learning, offering teachers more flexibility (Direktorat SMP, 2022). However, comprehension and implementation of differentiated learning in the context of English within the *Kurikulum Merdeka* context remain a challenge, needful further exploration among teachers.

The eight critical areas for authentic communicative activities in the CLT framework (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003) and considerations for the future of communication-oriented language teaching (Littlewood, 2013) also align with the identified approaches and strategies. For instance, teachers emphasize the need for learner autonomy, social learning, curriculum integration, and higher-order thinking skills to address the language challenges, such as translation difficulties, vocabulary gaps and fear of making mistakes identified in these findings.

The findings expose correspondence in several aspects. Teachers highlight on communication aligns with CLT principles, which prioritize contextual language use and student interaction (Brown, 2007; Richards, 2006). Teachers also employ a range of strategies such as discovery learning, Task-Based Learning (TBL), and problem-based learning (T5). It is appropriate with the CLT approach for balancing fluency and accuracy and nurturing equally productive and receptive language skills (Brown, 2007). Savignon's (1987) components of communicative competence, essentially sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence, are conveyed by teachers' approaches that emphasis on two-way communication, project-based learning, collaborative activities, and the usage of native speaker videos (T3). This associates with the wider objective of CLT to cultivate language skills for real-life communication in diverse milieus.

Additionally, the considerations for the future of communication-oriented language teaching, as presented by Jacobs & Farrell (2003) is applied by the teachers. For instance, the emphasis on learner autonomy (T9), alternative assessment methods (T8, T10), curriculum integration (T3, T12), and social nature of learning (T12). These findings accentuate an accordance concerning theoretical foundations of communicative competence and CLT with the teachers' pedagogical approaches in their sociocultural diversity.

Positive impact of CLT on English proficiency in various contexts

The positive impact of CLT on English proficiency, as reported by teachers, underscores its effectiveness in enhancing linguistic competence across various educational settings. Teachers highlight a range of benefits resulting from CLT implementation, including effective English communication, increased confidence in speaking, improved flexibility in using the language, and active student participation. These findings align with CLT principles that prioritize contextual language use, interaction, and interdisciplinary elements (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003).

The success cases reported by teachers demonstrate the adaptability and effectiveness of CLT in both the 2013 Curriculum and the *Kurikulum Merdeka* context. These achievements emphasize the importance of communication as a central objective of CLT, promoting language learning through meaningful and authentic interactions. Overall, the positive impacts of CLT

on English proficiency underscore its potential to facilitate language acquisition and development in diverse educational backgrounds, contributing to students' communicative competence and language skills.

In the context of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, it offers structural modifications and the *Pancasila* Learner Profile Strengthening Project. Both are indicating a commitment to competency and content standards. The project-based learning approach within the *Pancasila* Learner Profile Strengthening Project aligns with CLT principles. Therefore, teachers can tailor language authentic situations for learning activities and stimulate concrete language skills (Littlewood, 2013; Savignon, 1987).

It also encourages investigations, problem-solving, and cross-disciplinary initiatives to address local environmental issues in the teamwork and student-centered with meaningful interaction that emphasized in CLT framework (Brown, 2007; Jacobs & Farrell, 2003; Littlewood, 2013; Richards, 2006). Therefore, these findings reveal numerous prospects to enrich English proficiency and encourage meaningful teaching and learning activities in diverse educational backgrounds using CLT.

Challenges in CLT implementation and proposed solutions

From the findings, teachers emphasize CLT effectiveness in enhancing linguistic competence through practices such as effective English communication, increasing confidence in speaking, and improving communication skills. Despite challenges like limited vocabulary and uneven proficiency, strategies such as peer communication practice and exposure to educational media are proposed to overcome these hurdles. Implementing CLT within the *Kurikulum Merdeka* framework requires addressing vocabulary limitations, fostering student confidence, and promoting parental cooperation.

Additionally, creative solutions like English clubs and varied media usage are suggested to enrich language learning. Overcoming these challenges is essential for maximizing the benefits of CLT in diverse educational settings. In the context of K-13, organizing English camp periodically to enhance students' communication skills through fun activities like singing, poetry, debates, and other daily interactions is beneficial. Regrettably, the camp has been discontinued due to covid era. Furthermore, due to changes in the lesson schedule and the time-consuming of the *Pancasila* Learner Profile Strengthening Projects this camp is never organized anymore in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* context. However, in this project teachers avoid English communication, as it is interdisciplinary (Kemendikbud Ristek, 2021) and potentially misunderstood by non-English teachers. This perspective impedes students practicing CLT, despite the project is fundamental opportunity for authentic English communication (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003).

Organizing an annual English competition where his school invites all schools in Gowa District to participate in several competitions for instance speeches, singing, debates, and quizzes from K13 to *Kurikulum Merdeka* context. It prioritizes communicative activities (Angelo, 2020; Jacobs & Farrell, 2003) that facilitating the use of diverse vocabulary in real-life contexts (Sharma & Thakur, 2012). Varied teaching methods, including games, multimedia resources, hands-on activities, with discovering part of mother tongue in the classroom (Littlewood, 2013) align with the multifaceted approach recommended by CLT and contribute to enhancing students' sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence (Nunan, 1989; Savignon, 1987).

English day and English club is potentially arranged for training sessions focused skills-getting and skills-using to enhance communicative competence (Hidalgo, 1998; Szabo, 2012). Organizing English day and English club is sophisticated compared to planning competition or camp, yet it needs parental cooperation as purposed by T7. The assignments under TBI framework (Szabo, 2012) that involve parents in English communication is required for more

advantageous learning (Direktorat SMP, 2022). It encourages a holistic learning experience for students within the K13 and *Kurikulum Merdeka* context.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of CLT has led to a substantial improvement in English proficiency across various educational settings, as evidenced by both the K13 and *Kurikulum Merdeka* frameworks. Teachers reported enhanced linguistic competence, greater student confidence in speaking, and improved communication skills. The adaptability and effectiveness of CLT were evident in diverse environments, where it successfully addressed challenges such as limited vocabulary, uneven proficiency, and students' reluctance to practice English. The emphasis on meaningful, context-based communication, interactive learning, and student-centered approaches in CLT has fostered a more engaging and effective language learning experience. This positive impact underscores the value of CLT in promoting English language proficiency and suggests its continued relevance and applicability in different educational contexts.

Despite encountering challenges such as limited vocabulary and disparities in proficiency levels among students, the strategies identified offer practical solutions to address these obstacles. For instance, promoting peer communication practice, increasing exposure to educational media, and fostering parental involvement are crucial steps in mitigating vocabulary limitations and enhancing students' confidence in using English.

Moreover, the implementation of CLT within the *Kurikulum Merdeka* framework necessitates proactive measures to overcome specific challenges to this context. Strategies such as creating student-friendly learning innovations, organizing English clubs to enrich vocabulary outside of class hours, and leveraging parental cooperation for language learning support emerge as effective approaches. Additionally, the need to address students' varying levels of understanding of English language learning underscores the importance of collaborative efforts between educators and parents to provide necessary language learning facilities and support.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that innovative solutions, such as incorporating English-focused areas and organizing quarterly English camps, can help alleviate students' anxiety and boost their confidence in using English. These initiatives, coupled with ongoing teacher professional development and access to diverse learning resources, are essential for ensuring the successful implementation of CLT principles within the *Kurikulum Merdeka* framework.

By addressing challenges and implementing proactive strategies, educators can create inclusive learning environments that empower students to effectively communicate in English and succeed academically. The importance of considering linguistic, cultural, economic, and social factors in planning communicative language courses shows teachers' adaptive pedagogical approaches aligned with CLT principle. Despite acknowledging challenges, including limited vocabulary and learning resources, uneven proficiency, and classroom management issue, teachers proposed practical solutions emphasizing continuous teacher development, innovative teaching methods, and collaboration with parents. The potential of CLT needs for adjusting CLT implementation. This can involve creative use of resources, project-based learning using English in communication, and collaborative activities for instance English day, English club, English camp, or English competition to elevate more positive impact on English proficiency and overcome the obstacles.

CLT is particularly beneficial in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* framework due to its emphasis on independent learning and the P5 or *Pancasila* Learner Profile Strengthening Project. The *Kurikulum Merdeka*'s focus on independent learning aligns well with CLT's principles, promoting learner autonomy and self-directed study, which are crucial for developing communicative competence. Additionally, the P5 which integrates interdisciplinary projects, offers an ideal platform for using English communication in real-world contexts. This encourages students to practice English in meaningful, practical situations, thereby enhancing

their communicative competence more effectively than in traditional settings. The combination of CLT's interactive, student-centered approach and the Kurikulum Merdeka's innovative learning strategies creates a robust environment for improving students' English language skills.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Whereas offering insightful perspectives on the implementation of CLT in diverse Indonesian educational settings under the K-13 and *Kurikulum Merdeka* contexts, this study has limitations. The findings are based on a specific group of teachers, potentially limiting generalizability. The study relies on qualitative data, introducing subjectivity, and lacks broader stakeholder perspectives. Additionally, the temporal context is limited to information availability, potentially missing recent changes. Incorporating larger and more varied samples, quantitative data, and a more up-to-date analysis could address these limitations and provide a more comprehensive understanding of CLT efficacy in diverse educational contexts. Future studies should consider a larger and varied sample size, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data. Continuous monitoring of changes in educational policies and practices are essential for updated insights. Additionally, exploring innovative ways to measure CLT outcomes, such as incorporating standardized test scores, can enhance the depth of analysis to provide a more comprehensive and current assessment of CLT implementation in Indonesian new curriculum contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors extend sincere appreciation and gratitude to the BPPT, PUSLAPDIK, and LPDP of the Republic of Indonesia for sponsoring the author's master's degree as awardee BPI 2022 and for their invaluable support in facilitating this publication and collaboration.

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