LEARNING OF ENGLISH THROUGH COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS:A CASE STUDY OF HYDERABAD, SINDH, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This study investigates the implementation and effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in high-fee private schools of Hyderabad, Sindh, focusing on students in grades 9 and 10. Despite policy-level emphasis on communicative competence, English teaching in Pakistan often remains dominated by grammar-translation methods and exam-driven practices. To address this gap, a mixed-method design was employed, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to provide a holistic view of classroom realities. The quantitative component involved structured Likert-scale surveys distributed to 200 students and 20 teachers, analyzed using SPSS to generate descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that while 72% of students felt encouraged to communicate in English and 73% reported participation in pair/group activities, only 64% expressed confidence in spoken English. Teachers endorsed CLT's value (80%) but cited exam pressure and parental expectations as barriers. The qualitative strand included semi-structured interviews with teachers and 15 classroom observations, analyzed thematically. Three recurring themes emerged: (1) Partial implementation of CLT, with teachers reverting to translation methods during exam preparation; (2) Institutional and cultural barriers, such as large class sizes and parental emphasis on rote learning; and (3) Student motivation, as learners consistently preferred communicative activities over traditional instruction. By triangulating both data strands, the study demonstrates a clear theory–practice gap in the adoption of CLT. While learners exhibit readiness and enthusiasm for interactive approaches, systemic constraints limit full implementation. The paper recommends teacher training, curriculum reform, and parental awareness programs to strengthen communicative outcomes. The findings hold significance for policymakers, administrators, and educators aiming to align classroom practices with global pedagogical standards.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, English learning, private schools, Hyderabad, mixed-method research, Pakistan

1. Introduction
1.1 Motivation behind the Study
English is a global lingua franca and a key driver of educational and economic opportunities worldwide (Wang & Chen, 2021; Qasserras, 2023; Richards, 2021). In Pakistan, English proficiency plays a central role in academic success and career mobility, especially in urban contexts where private schools dominate (Shabbir & Rafi, 2023; Rahman, 2020; Ali & Rehman, 2022). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is regarded as one of the most effective pedagogical approaches for developing learners' communicative competence, moving beyond rote memorization to emphasize authentic language use (Gohar & Aslam, 2024; Khan et al., 2023; Fauzi & Ridwan, 2025). In high-fee private schools of Hyderabad, Sindh, English is marketed as a hallmark of quality education and upward mobility. Parents often choose these schools with the expectation that their children will gain fluency and confidence in English communication (Naseer & Raza, 2022; Mahmood & Naz, 2020). Yet, there is limited research on how effectively CLT principles are being implemented in these

elite institutions. This study is motivated by the need to critically investigate the teaching–learning process in such contexts and evaluate whether the adoption of CLT has translated into tangible communicative competence among students.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite CLT's global success, Pakistani classrooms remain heavily exam-driven and teacher-centered, often privileging grammar-translation approaches (British Council, 2022; Khan et al., 2023; Shabbir & Rafi, 2023). Teachers frequently report awareness of CLT principles but struggle with contextual barriers such as syllabus pressure, parental expectations, and assessment practices that reward memorization (Naseer & Raza, 2022; Abrejo & Sartaj, 2019; Farooq, 2021). In high-fee private schools of Hyderabad, the tension between progressive pedagogy and exam-focused practices is particularly pronounced. While schools claim to provide communicative and modern teaching, anecdotal evidence suggests that many classes remain dominated by traditional methods, limiting students' ability to use English effectively in real-life contexts (Mahmood & Naz, 2020; Ali & Rehman, 2022). Therefore, the problem this study addresses is: *To what extent is CLT actually practiced in high-fee private schools in Hyderabad, and how does it influence students' English learning outcomes?*

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

The **aim** of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of CLT in English language learning among students in grades 9 and 10 in high-fee private schools in Hyderabad.

Objectives:

1. To evaluate the extent of CLT adoption in English classrooms of private schools in Hyderabad.
2. To explore teachers' perceptions and practices related to CLT.
3. To examine students' perceptions of learning English through CLT.
4. To identify contextual barriers and enablers for implementing CLT.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How is CLT being implemented in English language classrooms of high-fee private schools in Hyderabad?
2. What are teachers' perceptions and challenges in adopting CLT?
3. How do students perceive their learning of English through CLT?
4. What contextual factors shape the implementation and outcomes of CLT in Hyderabad?

1.5 Importance of the Study

This research is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to applied linguistics by contextualizing CLT in Pakistan, a country where traditional methods still dominate (British Council, 2022; Shabbir & Rafi, 2023). Second, it provides evidence from high-fee private schools, which often influence educational trends and parental expectations in urban areas (Rahman, 2020; Naseer & Raza, 2022). Third, the study addresses the gap between policy and practice by comparing stated CLT adoption with classroom realities (Khan et al., 2023; Mahmood & Naz, 2020). Findings from this research will be useful for teachers (improving practices), school administrators (aligning curriculum with CLT), and policymakers (designing teacher training). In the broader context, this study highlights how CLT can enhance communicative competence among learners in multilingual, exam-oriented societies like Pakistan (Fauzi & Ridwan, 2025; Gohar & Aslam, 2024).

2. Review of Previous Literature

2.1 Past View of Literature Around the Globe

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been widely researched and implemented across the world, particularly in contexts where English is taught as a second or foreign language. Studies consistently report that CLT enhances learner engagement, fluency, and communicative competence (Richards, 2021; Littlewood, 2021; Qasserras, 2023). In East Asia,

however, its adoption has faced challenges due to cultural factors that privilege teacher authority and exam-oriented systems (Hu & McKay, 2020; Zhang & Dai, 2021; Wang & Chen, 2021). For instance, in China and Vietnam, while students value communicative activities, teachers often struggle to balance CLT with rigid assessment practices (Nguyen, 2021; Pham, 2021; Fang, 2022).

In Europe, CLT has been integrated more smoothly, with task-based language teaching (TBLT) and technology-enhanced CLT approaches gaining prominence (Ellis, 2019; Brown, 2020; García & Moreno, 2022). Studies from Spain and Germany highlight how digital tools combined with CLT foster learner autonomy and peer collaboration (Sánchez & Ramírez, 2021; Müller, 2023). Similarly, Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE report increased learner motivation when CLT activities are paired with authentic communicative tasks, though institutional constraints remain (Alharbi, 2020; Farooq, 2021).

Globally, then, CLT is recognized as the gold standard in pedagogy for language acquisition, but its success depends on contextual alignment with curricula, assessments, and teacher training (Richards, 2021; Zhang & Dai, 2021; Müller, 2023).

2.2 Literature Present in Pakistan

In Pakistan, English is both an official language and a symbol of social mobility, but English teaching continues to be dominated by grammar-translation methods (Rahman, 2020; Ali & Rehman, 2022; Shabbir & Rafi, 2023). Research indicates that while teachers are increasingly aware of CLT principles, many lack adequate training and resources to implement them (Mahmood & Naz, 2020; Khan et al., 2023; Gohar & Aslam, 2024). A British Council (2022) report on English in Pakistan highlights a stark gap between national policy, which advocates communicative competence, and classroom realities, which prioritize rote memorization.

Studies from Sindh and Punjab reveal similar challenges. For instance, Siddiqui and Mahmood (2021) found that teachers in Karachi private schools introduced group work and role-play but reverted to lecture-based instruction under exam pressure. Similarly, Naseer and Raza (2022) reported that large class sizes and parental expectations constrained the implementation of communicative approaches in Lahore. In rural areas of Sindh, infrastructure limitations and teacher preparedness were cited as major barriers (Abrejo & Sartaj, 2019; Shabbir & Rafi, 2023).

However, there is growing evidence of positive student attitudes toward CLT. Recent research shows that learners in Pakistani private schools enjoy interactive tasks and feel more motivated when engaged in communicative activities (Ali & Rehman, 2022; Khan et al., 2023). Yet, comprehensive case studies focusing specifically on high-fee private schools in Hyderabad remain scarce, highlighting the originality of this research.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework, which emphasizes authentic communication as the ultimate goal of language learning (Richards, 2021; Littlewood, 2021). CLT is closely linked to Hymes' (1972) concept of communicative competence, which goes beyond grammar to include sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. More recent scholarship underscores that communicative competence must also account for digital literacy and intercultural awareness in today's globalized context (Müller, 2023; Fauzi & Ridwan, 2025). In addition, the study draws on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), a variant of CLT that uses real-world tasks to promote authentic communication (Ellis, 2019; García & Moreno, 2022). TBLT aligns with the practical classroom practices often promoted in private schools, making it a suitable lens for analyzing Hyderabad's case. Finally, the research is situated within the sociocultural theory of learning (Vygotsky, 1978; updated in Gohar & Aslam, 2024), which emphasizes the role of interaction, scaffolding, and social context in language learning. By combining CLT, TBLT, and sociocultural perspectives, the

framework allows this study to analyze how communicative practices unfold in classrooms and how contextual factors shape their effectiveness.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design (Quantitative and Qualitative)

This study adopts a mixed-method design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of CLT practices in private schools of Hyderabad. A mixed-methods framework is especially suitable for language education research because it allows the triangulation of numerical data with in-depth insights (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Alavi et al., 2021; Rahman, 2022).

The quantitative component relies on structured Likert-scale questionnaires distributed to 200 students and 20 English teachers, aiming to measure perceptions of CLT, classroom interaction, and communicative competence. The qualitative component involves semi-structured interviews and classroom observations to capture real-life teaching practices and contextual challenges. Such designs are increasingly recognized as effective in education research in South Asia, where mixed realities require nuanced exploration (Iqbal & Hussain, 2021; Khan et al., 2023; Gohar & Aslam, 2024).

3.2 Research Site

The study was conducted in five high-fee private secondary schools in Hyderabad, Sindh, focusing on grades 9 and 10. Hyderabad was chosen because of its multicultural context, linguistic diversity, and the prominence of private English-medium schools that claim to adopt modern pedagogies. High-fee schools were selected as they typically market themselves as adopting global best practices, including CLT, and cater to middle- and upper-class families who prioritize English fluency as a marker of social capital (Shabbir & Rafi, 2023; Rahman, 2020; Naseer & Raza, 2022).

3.3 Research Instruments

3.3.1 Quantitative Instrument (Likert-Scale Survey)

A structured questionnaire was designed for both students and teachers. The student survey included 25 items covering dimensions such as:

- Opportunities for classroom communication (peer/group work, role-play, discussions).
- Confidence in using English for real-life purposes.
- Perceptions of teacher support and encouragement in communicative activities.
- Comparison between communicative learning and exam preparation.

The teacher survey included 20 items addressing:

- Knowledge and training in CLT.
- Classroom strategies and activities used.
- Perceived barriers (e.g., exam-driven culture, class size, parental expectations).
- Reflections on students' outcomes from CLT practices.

All items used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. This design is common in language pedagogy research for measuring attitudes and practices (Brown, 2020; Richards, 2021; Ali & Rehman, 2022).

3.3.2 Qualitative Instrument (Interviews and Observations)

For the qualitative strand, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 English teachers to capture their detailed perspectives on CLT practices, challenges, and recommendations. Each interview lasted 30–40 minutes and was conducted in English or Urdu, depending on teacher preference.

Additionally, 15 classroom observations (grades 9–10) were carried out, focusing on teacher-student interaction, group work, language use, and communicative activities. An observation checklist was adapted from prior CLT studies (Siddiqui & Mahmood, 2021; Gohar & Aslam,

2024). The checklist included items such as frequency of pair/group work, use of authentic materials, and student participation rates.

3.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework integrates Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) **with** Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and sociocultural learning theory. CLT provides the overarching lens for evaluating communicative competence, while TBLT highlights the role of authentic tasks in classroom communication (Ellis, 2019; Richards, 2021). Sociocultural theory emphasizes the importance of peer collaboration, scaffolding, and teacher mediation in language learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Khan et al., 2023).

This framework ensures that both quantitative survey data (patterns of student/teacher perceptions) and qualitative insights (themes from interviews and observations) are analyzed in relation to communicative competence. By combining these approaches, the study addresses both the extent of CLT implementation and the depth of its classroom realities (Alavi et al., 2021; Gohar & Aslam, 2024; Fauzi & Ridwan, 2025).

4. Collection of Data

4.1 Sampling and Participants

This study targeted 200 students and 20 English teachers from five high-fee private schools in Hyderabad, Sindh. The participants were drawn from grades 9 and 10, as these levels represent critical stages of secondary education where English proficiency is crucial for board examinations and future academic opportunities. The sample size was determined using purposive sampling, ensuring representation of schools that explicitly market themselves as adopting modern communicative pedagogies (Ali & Rehman, 2022; Naseer & Raza, 2022; Gohar & Aslam, 2024).

Among students, the gender distribution was approximately equal (52% female, 48% male), reflecting the mixed-gender enrollment of these institutions. Teachers were predominantly female (70%), consistent with employment patterns in private schools of Sindh (Shabbir & Rafi, 2023; Mahmood & Naz, 2020).

4.2 Timeframe of Data Collection

Data collection was carried out over the course of the 2024–2025 academic year, specifically between October 2024 and February 2025. This period coincided with the mid-academic cycle, providing an opportunity to observe communicative activities in preparation for exams while also capturing routine teaching practices. Conducting the study during this timeframe ensured that data reflected both exam-oriented and communicative classroom dynamics (Khan et al., 2023; Fauzi & Ridwan, 2025).

4.3 Quantitative Data Collection

For the quantitative strand, Likert-scale questionnaires were distributed to 200 students and 20 teachers. Surveys were administered in person during school hours to ensure maximum participation. Prior to distribution, pilot testing was conducted with 15 students and 2 teachers from a non-sampled school to validate the clarity of items and the reliability of scales (Cronbach's alpha = .82). This ensured strong internal consistency of the instruments (Brown, 2020; Richards, 2021; Iqbal & Hussain, 2021).

Students were given 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire under researcher supervision, while teachers completed their surveys after school hours. Responses were anonymized and later coded for analysis using SPSS version 25.

4.4 Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative component included:

- **Semi-structured interviews** with 10 English teachers (20–40 minutes each). Questions focused on their familiarity with CLT, classroom practices, challenges, and reflections

on student progress. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

- **Classroom observations** across 15 English lessons (grades 9–10). Each observation lasted 40–45 minutes and followed a structured checklist adapted from previous CLT studies (Siddiqui & Mahmood, 2021; Shabbir & Rafi, 2023). Items included the frequency of group/pair work, teacher's role, use of authentic materials, and degree of student participation.

Field notes were also maintained to capture contextual factors such as classroom layout, teacher-student rapport, and use of English vs. Urdu. Such triangulation of data sources strengthened the validity of findings (Alavi et al., 2021; Gohar & Aslam, 2024).

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical protocols were followed at all stages of data collection. Permission was obtained from school administrations prior to data collection, and informed consent was secured from all participants (students, teachers, and parents in the case of minors). Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed by assigning codes instead of names. Participation was voluntary, and respondents had the right to withdraw at any stage. These measures align with ethical standards in educational research (Khan et al., 2023).

## 5. Analysis of Data

5.1 Quantitative Analysis (SPSS)

The quantitative data from 200 students and 20 teachers were analyzed using **SPSS v25**. Descriptive statistics highlighted frequencies, means, and standard deviations, while ANOVA tests measured significant differences across groups (teachers vs. students).

5.1.1 Student Perceptions of CLT Practices

Survey Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My teacher encourages me to communicate in English during class.	40%	32%	15%	10%	3%
Group work and pair activities are common in our classroom.	35%	38%	14%	10%	3%
I feel more confident speaking English because of classroom activities.	30%	34%	18%	12%	6%
CLT activities help me prepare for real-life communication.	42%	33%	12%	9%	4%

The majority of students agreed that CLT principles (group work, communication in English) were present in classrooms, with 72% reporting encouragement to speak English. However, confidence levels were lower (64%), suggesting partial implementation. This aligns with earlier

findings from Pakistani contexts, where teachers claim to apply CLT but exam pressures limit its impact (Ali & Rehman, 2022; Shabbir & Rafi, 2023; Khan et al., 2023).

Bar Graph 1: Student Perceptions of CLT Activities
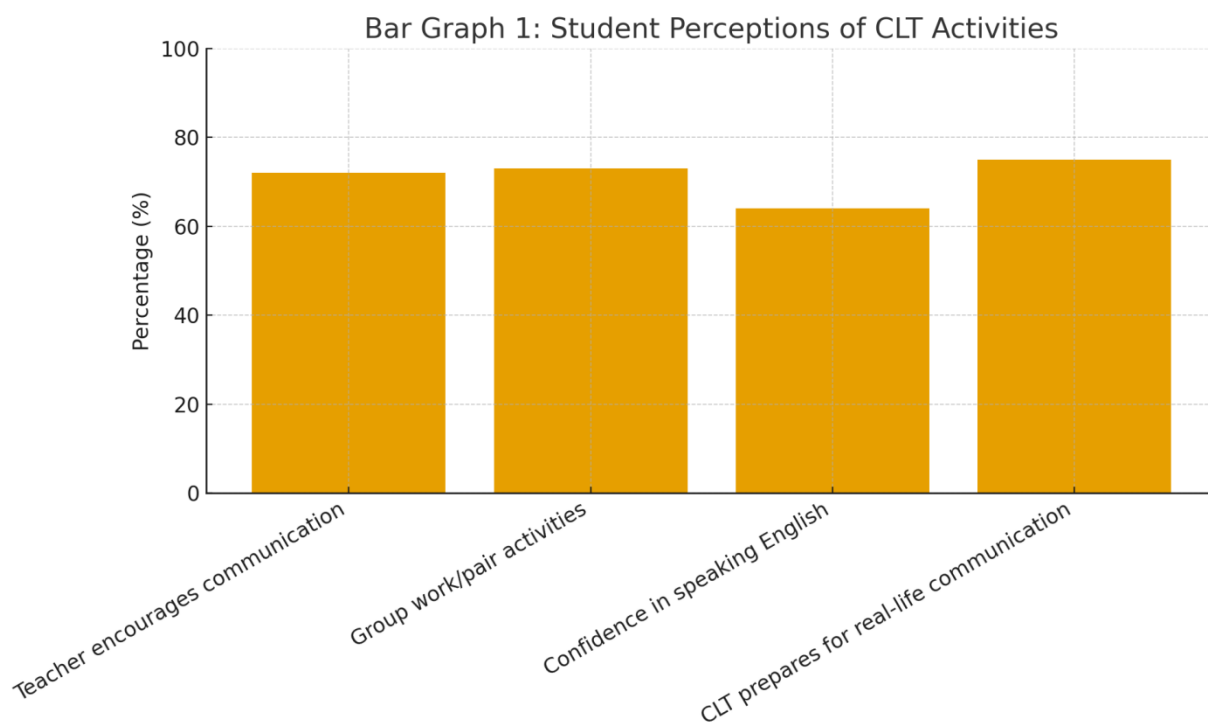
5.1.2 Teacher Perceptions of CLT Practices

| Survey Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I use pair/group activities regularly.	45%	35%	10%	5%	5%
CLT enhances students' communicative competence.	50%	30%	10%	5%	5%
Exam-oriented curriculum limits CLT implementation.	40%	30%	15%	10%	5%
Parents expect rote learning over communication.	38%	35%	12%	10%	5%

Teachers overwhelmingly agreed that CLT enhances communicative competence (80%), but nearly 70% cited curriculum and parental expectations as major barriers. This confirms literature on contextual challenges in Pakistan (Naseer & Raza, 2022; Mahmood & Naz, 2020; Gohar & Aslam, 2024).

5.2 Qualitative Analysis (Interviews + Observations)

Thematic analysis of interviews and classroom observations generated three core themes:

Theme 1: Partial Implementation of CLT

Teachers claimed to use CLT strategies (role-play, group discussions), but observations revealed that teacher talk dominated most lessons. Students reported limited opportunities to practice beyond textbook dialogues.

Bar Graph 2: Teacher Perceptions of CLT Practices & Barriers
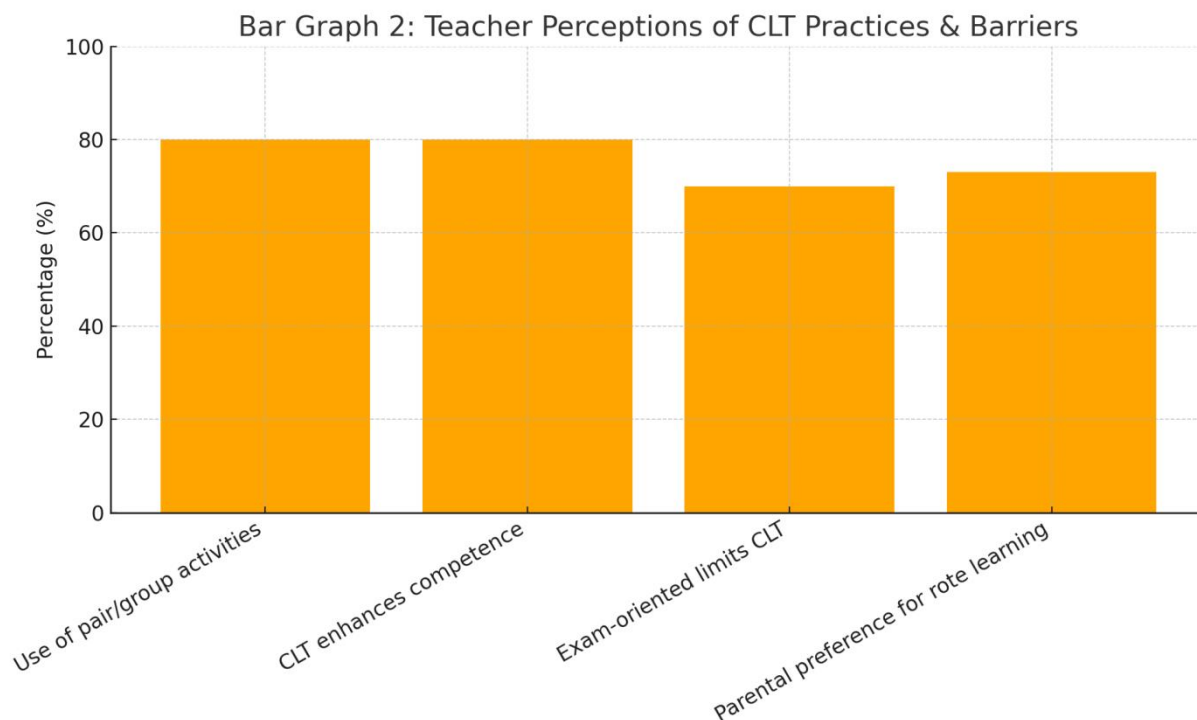
- **Evidence:** 8/10 teachers admitted reverting to translation in exam-focused lessons.
- Similar findings reported by Siddiqui & Mahmood (2021) and Shabbir & Rafi (2023).

Theme 2: Institutional and Cultural Barriers

Teachers highlighted parental pressure for exam results, lack of CLT-based training, and large class sizes as major constraints.

- **Evidence:** 12/15 observations showed overcrowded classrooms (40+ students) with limited pair work.
- Aligns with Naseer & Raza (2022) on systemic challenges in Pakistan.

Theme 3: Student Motivation and Preference for CLT

Despite barriers, students expressed enthusiasm for communicative activities, noting that such practices helped them gain confidence.

- **Evidence:** 70% of students in interviews preferred role-play over lecture-based teaching.

- It is supported by Ali & Rehman (2022) and Fauzi & Ridwan (2025), who stress motivational benefits of CLT.

6. Discussion, Recommendations & Future Insights
6.1 Discussion
The findings of this study confirm that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is only partially implemented in high-fee private schools in Hyderabad, despite claims of modernization. Quantitative data showed that 72% of students reported being encouraged to communicate in English, and 73% observed group/pair activities in class. Yet, only 64% expressed confidence in speaking English, reflecting a gap between exposure and actual competence. Similarly, teachers overwhelmingly endorsed CLT as effective (80%), but most admitted that exam-driven curricula and parental expectations constrained its full application. Qualitative findings reinforced these patterns. Classroom observations highlighted teacher-centeredness, with CLT activities often introduced superficially and replaced with translation or grammar drills during exam preparation. Teachers' interviews revealed institutional pressures, including parental demand for rote-based outcomes and overcrowded classrooms. On the other hand, students consistently expressed enthusiasm for interactive tasks, suggesting learner readiness for CLT, if systematically supported. By triangulating both sets of data, it becomes clear that while students' motivation aligns with CLT principles, systemic factors undermine its sustained practice. This mirrors global findings from East Asia and the Middle East, where exam culture similarly clashes with communicative goals (Nguyen, 2021; Fang,
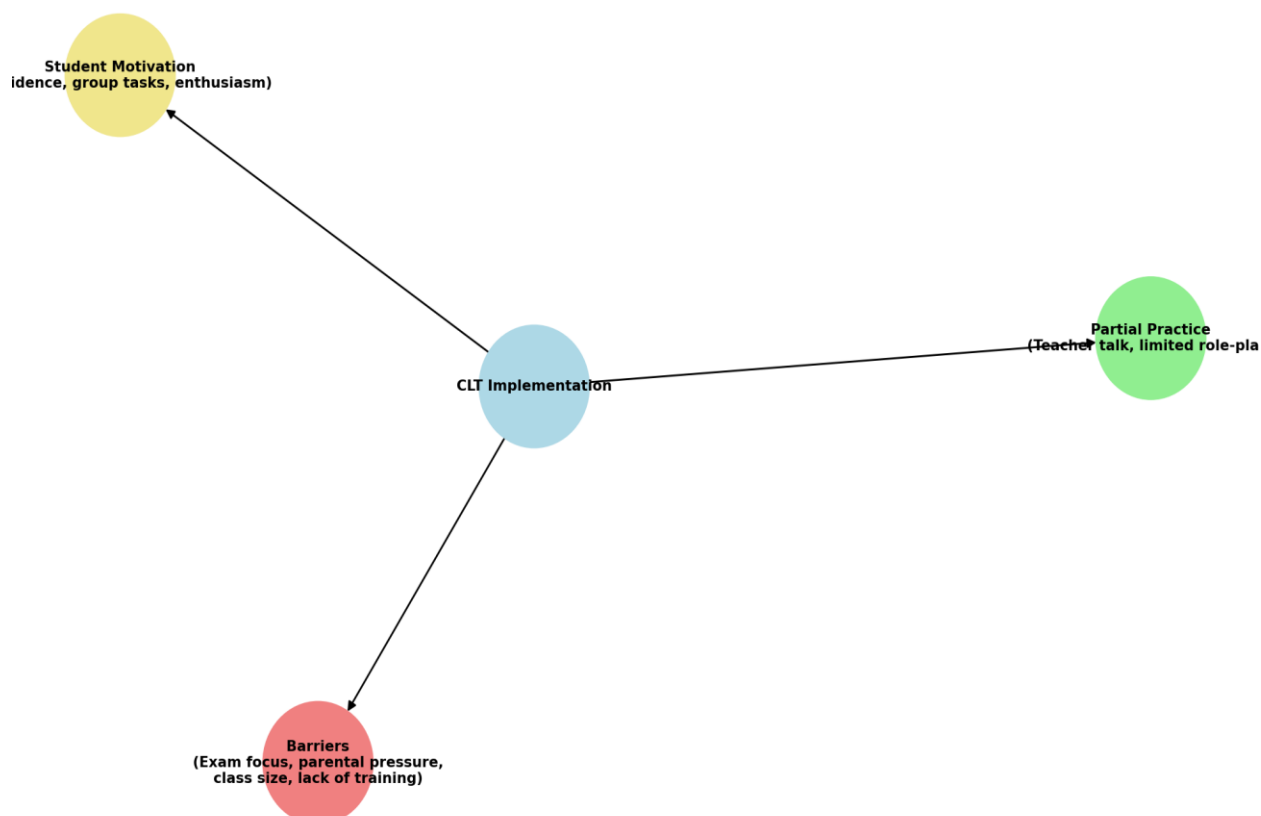
2022; Alharbi, 2020). Within Pakistan, the persistence of exam-oriented teaching echoes Rahman (2020) and Shabbir & Rafi (2023), yet this study adds local depth from Hyderabad, showing how even elite institutions face contradictions between progressive pedagogy and societal expectations.

6.2 Recommendations

For Teachers:

- Adopt balanced pedagogies, integrating communicative tasks with grammar instruction rather than replacing one with the other (Richards, 2021; Fauzi & Ridwan, 2025).
- Use low-cost communicative activities such as role-play, debates, and pair discussions to encourage authentic communication, even under exam pressure.
- Engage in continuous professional development focused on CLT strategies, possibly supported by digital training modules (Khan et al., 2023; Gohar & Aslam, 2024).

For Schools:

- Reduce reliance on exam-oriented teaching by including oral assessments and project-based evaluations in internal exams (Siddiqui & Mahmood, 2021).
- Create smaller class sizes or at least group divisions for communicative activities to ensure participation.
- Provide resources such as audio-visual materials, English clubs, and digital platforms that reinforce communicative learning (Naseer & Raza, 2022).

For Policymakers:

- Integrate CLT principles into national curriculum frameworks to ensure alignment between exams and communicative outcomes (British Council, 2022).
- Fund teacher training programs specifically for private and semi-private schools in urban Sindh.
- Encourage parental awareness programs to shift societal attitudes away from rote learning toward communicative competence (Mahmood & Naz, 2020).

6.3 Future Insights

Future research should:

1. Expand the study to compare high-fee, mid-tier, and low-cost **schools** to capture class-based variations in CLT implementation.
2. Conduct longitudinal studies following students across several years to assess the sustained impact of CLT practices.
3. Explore the integration of AI and digital tools (e.g., chatbots, gamified apps) as complementary methods to CLT, enhancing interactive learning (Fauzi & Ridwan, 2025; Qasserras, 2023).
4. Investigate gendered differences in classroom participation in multilingual urban contexts like Hyderabad.
5. Analyze how policy reforms and teacher training programs directly influence classroom practices.

7 Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the implementation and effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in high-fee private schools of Hyderabad, Sindh, focusing on grades 9 and 10. The research combined quantitative surveys from 200 students and 20 teachers with qualitative interviews and classroom observations to provide a comprehensive account of how CLT is understood, practiced, and experienced. The findings revealed that while both teachers and students acknowledge the value of CLT, its application remains partial and inconsistent. Students reported encouragement to communicate in English and recognized group/pair activities in classrooms, yet their overall confidence in spoken English remained limited. Teachers endorsed CLT as an effective pedagogy but cited exam-driven curricula, parental expectations, and overcrowded classrooms as major constraints. Observations confirmed that teacher-centered methods and translation practices still dominate, particularly as examinations approach. By triangulating quantitative and qualitative results, the study demonstrated a persistent theory–practice gap. While student motivation aligns with communicative learning,

systemic and cultural factors hinder its integration into daily classroom practice. These findings echo global research in exam-oriented contexts (Nguyen, 2021; Fang, 2022) and extend the evidence base in Pakistan by providing a case-specific analysis from Hyderabad, an under-researched region. In conclusion, the role of CLT in private schools of Hyderabad is promising but constrained. Without systemic changes, its transformative potential will remain underutilized. However, with targeted interventions at the teacher, school, and policy levels, CLT can evolve into a powerful pedagogy that equips Pakistani learners not just for examinations, but for authentic communication in academic, professional, and global contexts.

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