
Communicative Language Teaching in rural classrooms: Students' and pre-service teachers' experiences

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Abstract

The traditional teaching methods have proven to be ineffective, demonstrating a low English level, especially, in marginalized zones. As a result, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been proposed to improve student's learning English. The aim of the study was to describe the students' and pre-service teachers' experiences in implementing the CLT method in rural classrooms. The participants were twenty-three pre-service teachers from the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages Major at Technical University of Cotopaxi and two hundred fifty students belonging to parishes and neighborhoods in Cotopaxi, Ecuador. A qualitative-descriptive research design was employed, and data was collected through teachers' diaries and students' exit slips. The thematic analysis was used to analyze the participants' excerpts. The results showed that the application of adequate strategies and attractive didactic material according to students' levels and interests enable learners to implement appropriately CLT and develop their communicative competence. Additionally, the Encounter, Clarify, Remembering, Internalize, and Fluently Use (ECRIF) lesson planning framework was useful to organize the CLT method in the classroom since it enhances language skills from the simplest to complex activities to produce the language.

Palabras clave: CLT method, ECRIF, language in context, resources, strategies

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Resumen

Los métodos tradicionales de enseñanza han demostrado ser ineficaces, demostrando un bajo nivel de inglés, especialmente, en zonas marginadas. En consecuencia, se ha propuesto el método Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) para mejorar el aprendizaje del inglés de los alumnos. El objetivo de este estudio era describir las experiencias de los estudiantes y de los profesores en formación en la aplicación del CLT en las aulas rurales. Los participantes fueron veintitrés docentes en formación de la carrera de Pedagogía en Lenguas Nacionales y Extranjeras de la Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi y doscientos cincuenta estudiantes pertenecientes a parroquias y barrios de Cotopaxi, Ecuador. Se empleó un diseño de investigación cualitativo-descriptivo, y los datos fueron recolectados a través de diarios de docentes y hojas de respuestas de los estudiantes. Se utilizó el análisis temático como método para analizar los extractos de los participantes. Los resultados mostraron que la aplicación de estrategias adecuadas y materiales atractivos permite a los alumnos desarrollar su competencia comunicativa y promueve la enseñanza de la lengua en contexto, mediante actividades de lectura y comprensión oral. Adicionalmente, el marco de planificación de lecciones Encounter, Clarify, Remembering, Internalize, and Fluently Use (ECRIF) fue útil para organizar el método CLT en el aula, ya que potencia las destrezas lingüísticas desde las actividades más sencillas hasta las más complejas para producir la lengua.

Key words: Método CLT, ECRIF, lengua en contexto, recursos, estrategias

Introduction

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method is one of the most innovative and practical teaching methods in the current teaching (Savignon, 2002 as cited in Dos Santos, 2020). This approach creates a meaningful learning environment by promoting interaction in real communicative settings, enhancing the development of communicative competence through oral production activities (Toro et al., 2018; Oviedo & Mena, 2021).

The CLT method emerges from the challenges that English language teaching has faced during the years due to an inappropriate methodology used by English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

teachers. Students present limited vocabulary use, difficulty in concentrating, dullness, and low speaking skills, while teachers demonstrate constricted knowledge of teaching methods, low language proficiency, insufficient professional development, and inadequate resources (Songbatumis, 2017). Consequently, learners do not have enough opportunities to practice the language, causing disinterest and low English proficiency levels, especially in rural areas of Ecuador (Chadán, 2017).

To remedy this situation, there are many CLT strategies that enhance students' language learning. For instance, Toro et al. (2018) and Oviedo & Mena (2021) pointed out that modeling, repetition, pair and group work,

dialogues, and role plays developed students' speaking skills, which is the main goal of the CLT method, by promoting the use of the target language. Another aspect to take into account in the CLT method is applying resources that engage students in their learning process, such as audio-visual material (flashcards, laptop computers, animated cartoons, multimedia, tape recorders, chalkboards, objects, posters, and pictures) (Make & Yonas, 2018) or literary texts like fairy tales and stories that catch students' attention (Carranza & Badilla, 2022). Therefore, it is suggested the implementation of interactive material for the adequate development of this method (Tran, 2022).

In addition, employing the Communicative Language Teaching method in the classroom involves promoting meaningful input, by exposing learners to language in context using reading and listening activities through adapted material considering students' reality (Kırmızı-Ayyıldız & Akkuş-Çakır, 2022). However, when applying these strategies and resources in CLT, it is fundamental to think about students' needs, levels, and interests to trigger their motivation, attention, and participation to improve their language performance (Hien, 2021). Mahmudun et al. (2020) and Kustati et al. (2018) concurred that students with a low English level are not able to carry out effective activities in the target language. As a suggestion to support learners with a low level, Pateşan et al. (2018) and Matruty & Que (2021) mentioned the use of visual aids with simplified language such as flashcards, pictures, and videos. Likewise, Abdulrahman et al. (2022) advise maintaining

good body language to get students to understand better what is being taught.

Furthermore, teachers need to organize their teaching process using the CLT method through the ECRIF lesson plan framework since it allows them to design attractive activities to use the language. As reported by AlSleem (2018) that ECRIF framework non-traditional activities allowed students to communicate their ideas in the target language to achieve the desired learning outcomes. In order to achieve the learning goal, which is the development of productive skills, there could be several activities at the fluent use stage to evaluate if the goals were met (Tosuncuoglu, 2018). The activities to assess students' learning include role-plays, dialogues, or conversations that encourage the student to use the target language and put it into practice (Dalkıran & Semerci, 2020).

Since ECRIF presents several stages, teachers should design short activities to avoid students' dullness and fatigue to promote learning the target language (Mahmoud et al., 2021). A challenge with ECRIF is the lack of participation because learners are fearful of making mistakes (Bermello-García & Vaca-Cárdenas, 2022). To solve these problems, Caiza et al. (2023) stated that teachers should consider their students to supply them with opportunities to practice the language. Likewise, Tosuncuoglu (2017) suggested activities where students work in a cooperative way to help each other in their learning process.

For these reasons, as a contribution to improve the English teaching-learning process, the

present study aims to describe the students' and pre-service teachers' experiences in implementing the Communicative Language Teaching method in rural classrooms to provide some ideas about this method and its usage. Therefore, this study proposed to answer the following research question: What are the students' and pre-service teachers' experiences in implementing the Communicative Language Teaching method in rural classrooms?

Communicative Language Teaching Method (CLT)

The CLT method is a set of techniques and strategies that highlight teaching the communicative competence of the English language, which involves learning how to produce language properly in real communicative situations. Its main purpose is to provide students with opportunities to communicate effectively, prioritizing meaning and fluency over accuracy (Richards, 2006). Moreover, the teaching-learning process is student-centered since teachers are only facilitators of real-world tasks and learners play an active role in overseeing their own learning by working cooperatively with their peers to participate in the communicative process (Hakim, 2019).

Principles in Communicative Language Teaching. According to Nunan (1991) there are five features of CLT:

1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language
2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation

3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus not only on language but also on the learning process itself
4. An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning
5. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom (p. 279)

Accuracy and Fluency in CLT.

Accuracy and fluency contribute to language production since both play an essential role in the communicative process. As Oviedo & Mena (2021) mentioned, accuracy refers to the ability to produce the target language with appropriate grammatical structures whereas fluency deals with using the language with ease and smoothness (Krstinić, 2020). However, in a CLT classroom teachers should promote activities where accuracy and fluency are correlated in order to develop speaking, listening, reading and writing skills and subskills such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and interaction (Beltrán, 2018).

Strategies in Communicative Language Teaching.

Games. The use of games in teaching English can liven up the classroom and make learning more enjoyable while motivating students to communicate effectively in the target language. Among some communicative games are competition, spelling/vocabulary games, picture games, guessing games,

memory games, board games, jumbled sentences, and computer games (Wang, 2010).

Songs. This strategy provides learners with new vocabulary in meaningful contexts. The teacher can use it to provide meaning to words, teaching specific grammatical structures, indicating cultural aspects and to make the class more interesting (Tovmasyan & Ghazaryan, 2021).

Brainstorming. It is a strategy used to elicit student's opinions through images, pictures or phrases (Paulus & Kenworthy, 2019).

Videos. Videos help teachers because besides being eye-catching, they allow the learner to have access to the content, context, and language as well as enable the learner to understand the target language and be able to use it (Feruzza et al., 2020).

Collaborative Work. Collaborative work allows students to interact with each other, allowing them to get to know their partners' opinions in order to practice the language while learning mutually (Webb, 2009; Teh, 2021).

Dialogues and Role-plays. Role-plays and dialogues help students to put into practice what they have learned, so this type of activity can normally be carried out at the end of the class. (Jarvis et al., 2002).

Encounter, Clarify, Remember, Internalize, and Fluently Use (ECRIF) Framework

ECRIF aims to guide teachers to plan their lessons according to students' perspectives

as they are learning the language, providing them with real communicative tasks. So, it includes five stages which are encounter, clarify, remember, internalize, and fluency, which occur during the development of a lesson (AlSaleem, 2018).

Encounter Stage. In this stage, the students will be introduced to a new language by matching activities, brainstorming, answering concept-checking questions, and describing pictures to activate students' knowledge

Clarify Stage. The learner starts to clarify the input in its form, meaning, or use, so teachers provide drilling exercises, gap-fill information, gap searches, scrambled words, guessing games, matching, and reading scripts to help students understand.

Remember Stage. Here, students begin to grasp the knowledge and store it in their long-term memory by practicing grammar and vocabulary with activities such as guessing games, information gaps, storytelling, short answer activities, bingos, and matching.

Internalize Stage. It permits students to practice speaking on how to use the language in real contexts by guessing games, fluency lines, peer teaching, correcting sentences, information gaps, and discussions.

Fluently Use Stage. Finally, teachers must provide students with opportunities to use the language as much as possible freely in real-life settings. The appropriate activities are debates, role plays, retelling stories, discussions, and dialogues.

Methodology

Design and method

A qualitative descriptive study was held to obtain insights about the experiences that pre-service teachers and students had during a training course with the application of the CLT method. This type of design was chosen as it aims to generate data that describes from a subjective point of view the “who, what, and where of events or experiences” (Kim et al., 2016, p. 23).

Research context and participants

This research was conducted based on the results of five previous educational projects that included twenty-three pre-service teachers from the sixth level of the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages Major of the Technical University of Cotopaxi. The projects were held through the support of the “Vinculacion” department within a four-week course where two hundred fifty children and adolescents were participants. The students' ages ranged from seven to sixteen years old who belong to the Cotopaxi province (Ecuador).

Research instruments

The data collection instruments applied were pre-service teachers' journals with the aim to know how their experiences were throughout the lesson by describing the positive and negative aspects of the class as well as action plans, and reflections on the application of the CLT method. In addition, another instrument was an “exit slip” applied to students at the end of the class, containing simple questions that allowed students to express their understanding, interests and reflections about the implementation of the CLT method.

Data analysis

To answer the research question, the study followed the thematic analysis in order to analyze the data. This analysis seeks to detect and select the most important themes that were attained in the qualitative data to guide the research (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). To carry out this method of analysis, the researchers followed the six steps suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006): before starting with the data analysis, the first step was to become familiar with the teachers' and students' statements by organizing the information. Next, the generation of initial codes was made with information that was relevant to address the research question. Then, with these codes, the preliminary themes with similar ideas were identified. In the same way, the repetitive excerpts were removed. After that, the themes were modified according to the data that supported them which were color-coded. Then, subthemes were created if it was necessary. In addition, the final themes and subthemes were defined to provide a logical sequence; and finally, these themes were considered for the discussion.

Ethical considerations

In order to obtain the necessary data, an informed consent form was used to get participants' approval for the use of the corresponding information. The participants were contacted by telephone to explain to them the scope of the study and its objectives. Afterwards, they were informed that the document would be sent to their e-mails, which they had to read, fill out, sign, and

send back. Finally, with the receipt of the documents back, the researchers proceeded to follow the corresponding steps and to make use of the data.

Results and discussion

In order to answer the research question, the researchers analyzed the extracts with the information of teachers' and students' comments. As a result, three main themes were found (See Table 1).

Table 1. Themes and subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
Communicative Language Teaching method	Strategies Resources
Teaching language in context	
ECRIF framework	Lesson plan development Assessment

Theme A. Communicative Language Teaching

This section consists of two sub-themes: strategies and resources. They involve the results with regard to the application of the teaching method, revealing pre-service teachers' and students' points of view.

Subtheme A.1. Strategies. Pre-service teachers mentioned that they applied different strategies such as games, songs, answering questions, brainstorming, videos, collaborative work, and dialogues which promoted students' motivation and attention to develop the English language.

“We perform a role-playing game where they actively practice with their peers; he presented a song, and it caught their attention, and they came out to sing very loudly.” (Get1)

“Games strategy was integrated and the children participate a lot when it comes to playing and doing dynamic activities.” (Get5)

“Cooperative learning and matching exercises work on this course. It was also evident that most of the students are visual, that is, that images facilitate their learning.” (Gat1)

“The brainstorming activity at the beginning helped them to remember the basic numbers.” (Gat2)

“The video allowed them to better understand the activities and for this reason they were not complicated.” (Get6)

In the same way, according to the students' comments, they considered that games, videos, and collaborative work were interesting and eye-catching.

“Lo que más me gustó de la clase de hoy fue ver videos y practicar conversaciones.” (Gbs2)

“Me gustó hacer los juegos en clase.” (Gbs3)

On the other hand, the pre-service teachers mentioned that there were a few unfavorable points after the application of the Communicative Language Teaching, such as not considering the students' English level and age for the activities, causing a lack of participation and engagement in the classroom.

“More practice is needed in dialogues and speaking skills in class.” (Gbt4)

“Some students get bored quickly and, in this case, the worksheets do not help to catch their attention.” (Get5)

“I think that some of the activities were not suitable for all students because they did not capture the interest of the children to learn English.” (Get9)

“Some students were not fully engaged in the activities of today’s class as the activities were not according to students’ level.” (Gbt2)

In addition, many students considered that the pre-service teachers could implement more interactive activities.

“Que ponga ejemplos, que cuando estudiemos un tema haga con dinámicas.” (Gas3)

“Que utilice más juegos interactivos.” (Ges16)

“Hacer cosas para nuestra edad; que nos haga hacer grupos para una actividad.” (Gbs2)

Furthermore, some pre-service teachers reflected on what future actions could improve the effectiveness of CLT in the classroom.

“Implementing more oral interaction exercises.” (Gat1)

“The students are very active but I need to integrate more activities to work in class and pay attention to everyone so that they can learn.” (Get7)

“It is necessary to apply different strategies in classes according to the needs of the students.” (Get16)

The findings showed that the strategies that were applied by pre-service teachers, such as games, songs, answering questions, brainstorming, videos, collaborative work, and dialogues based on the CLT method, allowed students to participate actively in class; similarly, Toro et al. (2018) demonstrated that modeling, repetition, pair and group work, videos, and audiovisual strategies enhanced students’ communicative competencies and motivated them to learn the target language, thus fostering meaningful learning to develop oral skills. In the same way, Oviedo & Mena

(2021) showed that the use of dialogues and role plays improved students’ speaking skills.

Therefore, to make effective use of these strategies, pre-service teachers report that it is necessary to take into account the students’ levels, interests, and needs to promote positive attitudes toward learning the language and avoid discouragement. The activities and strategies applied in class must be in accordance with the level and needs of the students since their participation and motivation depend on it (Hien, 2021). Although implementing these strategies was successful, they could be improved by integrating interactive activities so students can engage in the classroom as pre-service teachers mentioned in their reflections (Tran, 2022).

Subtheme A.2. Resources. Most pre-service teachers agreed that the resources implemented should be striking, colorful, assorted, eye-catching, and not complex to help students grasp what is being taught and achieve the desired learning, such as flashcards, videos, pictures, and worksheets.

“The materials used in the lesson are worksheets. I believe that for some students it helps them to understand better.” (Get5)

“Also, when I presented the flashcards, students seemed to like them a lot because they were very striking and colorful images.” (Get1)

“We tried to find a simple but at the same time attractive material for the student facilitating the understanding to acquire the desired learning.” (Gbt4)

Similarly, students concurred that the visual material enables them to take an interest in the class.

“Me gusta los dibujos que muestran en la clase.” (Gds1)

However, some students suggested that the pre-service teachers could use more interesting material such as tales.

“Que traiga cosas interesantes como cuentos.” (Gas4)

As a result, pre-service teachers considered that the material must be in accordance with the activity presented in their future lessons.

“For the next lesson where role-play activities are required, I will use didactic material more appropriate to the students’ level by including videos to make the class more enjoyable and to be able to interact more with the students.” (Gct1)

Based on the experiences of pre-service teachers, they indicated that colorful and interactive material such as flashcards, pictures, videos, and worksheets stimulated students to engage in the class, allowing them to comprehend better and learn from it to develop communicative skills. These results are in line with Make & Yonas (2018) who found that audio-visual material motivates and increases the students’ attention to develop speaking skills. Furthermore, students suggested that the use of resources such as tales could be appealing to them to improve their learning. Similarly, Carranza & Badilla’s (2022) findings revealed that the use of literary texts like fairy tales and stories in English are useful to engage students’ language learning.

Complementary to this, pre-service teachers concurred that the elaboration of the material should be considering students’ real contexts, levels, and needs where they can also have access

to the language in context to motivate them towards learning (Hien, 2021). Moreover, Kırmızı-Ayyıldız & Akkuş-Çakır (2022) assert that the implementation of adapted material promotes meaningful learning in the target language since students can relate to the content presented. So, it is suggested that the wrong choice of materials could affect the effectiveness of CLT implementation.

Theme B. Teaching Language in Context

Pre-service teachers indicated that students were able to be familiar with the use of target language in real-life settings.

“They practice listening and speaking in a real context; students enjoy the reading activity because the activities were carried out with comprehensible input.” (Gat1)

“The students liked that the activity was in a real context; students can adapt easily to activities where they can use the language in context.” (Gbt5)

Nevertheless, some of the pre-service teachers mentioned that a few students showed frustration since the class was entirely in English without any translations into the mother tongue, and consequently, they did not fully understand what was being conveyed.

“Frustration at the time of applying the teaching method, since the CLT method only allows the use of the target language, and this did not allow a good management and control of the interaction with the students.” (Gct3)

“The students do not understand the English language, so it is necessary to explain in the Spanish language. This happens because the English language in rural areas is not taught as it is in urban areas, the level of English is poor.” (Gat5)

Likewise, students concurred that they felt a bit conflicted that the teacher explained only in the target language and did not speak much in Spanish.

“Que cuando hable en inglés diga también el español.” (Gas1)

“El teacher habla muy poco Español.” (Gds3)

Consequently, according to these reflections, the pre-service teachers commented that for the following lessons, they would implement better body language, flashcards or illustrations, and short videos with simplified language to enhance the students' understanding.

“When I started explaining the class, I realized that most of the students did not understand the target language so I decided to use flashcards and more body language to make them understand better.” (Get15)

“I will also use images referring to the words that they do not understand to make it easier for them to understand.” (Gct2)

“Present short videos with simple words.” (Gdt3)

Pre-service teachers stated that learners were pleased to find that adapted material used for listening and reading activities were set in real-life situations, providing them with opportunities to familiarize with vocabulary and structures to use the target language. This is supported by Kirmızı-Ayyıldız & Akkuş-Çakır (2022) who manifested that adapted material used in reading and listening activities reinforces the students' willingness to learn how language is used in everyday interactions. Despite this, some pre-service teachers noticed frustration in students' understanding at

the moment of developing the activities. Thus, pre-service teachers found themselves translating everything they presented in the class into students' mother tongue, in this case Spanish, because their proficiency level was very low. Likewise, Mahmadun et al. (2020) and Kustati et al. (2018) reported that a constraint of applying CLT in rural areas was the students' low English level, preventing the activities in the foreign language from being properly carried out, getting teachers to use the native language instead.

For these reasons, pre-service teachers suggested adding visual cues such as flashcards, pictures, and videos with simplified language to engage students' attention and understanding. Similarly, Pateşan et al. (2018) and Matruty & Que (2021) mentioned that visual aids with simplified language such as flashcards, pictures, and videos help students to focus on the activities and improve their comprehension. In addition, pre-service teachers expressed that enhancing their body language at the moment of speaking could facilitate students' performance. Abdulrahman et al. (2022) agree that teachers with good non-verbal language help get the message across to students.

Theme C. ECRIF Framework

This section comprises two sub-themes concerning the findings on the application of the ECRIF lesson planning framework: lesson plan development, and assessment.

Subtheme C.1. Lesson Plan Development. Concerning the development of the lesson plan based on ECRIF, some pre-service teachers stated that with this

format, the classes are appealing to the students because of its wide variety of adaptable activities that engage learners in the learning process.

“The lesson plan was adaptable and attractive for my students where there was an interest in participating in the entire class.” (Get1)

“Although there were several activities developed during the lesson plan, they showed good predisposition and commitment to comply with each one of them, making their best effort.” (Gbt4)

Nonetheless, in some instances, the pre-service teachers perceived students' attrition resulting from the activities' long duration as they exceeded the planned time, causing a lack of interest in the learners. Likewise, they pointed out that while planning, the activities should be well thought out to promote attention.

“Sometimes the students felt a little tired because of the length of the activities; some activities took longer than planned. The planned time was not adequate for the number of students.” (Gbt1)

In this regard, the pre-service teachers provided ideas for improving the teaching-learning process in future classes through ECRIF, such as selecting suitable teaching materials and ensuring that the activities meet some features: being in line with the ECRIF stages, being short and not time-consuming, and suited to the level of proficiency and age of the learners.

“For the next speaking lesson, I am going to use more didactic material and even make the class more fun so that I can interact more with the students. I will also use activities based on the ECRIF framework to help me achieve the learning objective.” (Gat3)

“I have to select activities that are short in order to manage the time better, and achieve the learning outcome; plan activities that are according to the student's level of proficiency and age.” (Gbt2)

“I should have planned activities that catch students' attention and interest.” (Gbt2)

“I learned that it is necessary to be prepared for any situation regarding the materials for our class, to make the students enjoy learning in a fun and active way.” (Get1)

Likewise, students indicated that they needed more time for the activities, claiming that the planning process could be better.

“Más tiempo para jugar con las tarjetas.” (Gds1)

The results based on the implementation of the CLT method through the ECRIF activities in the lesson plan, demonstrated that the class was attractive to students due to the diversified and compelling activities presented. Hence, students showed a predisposition to engage in their learning process. This result is in line with AlSleem (2018); he reported that ECRIF made students concentrate on how to communicate their ideas since the activities were not boring and traditional, achieving the learning desired outcomes. However, some teachers expressed that students were exhausted from completing the large amount of activities during a lesson and suggested designing short and not time-consuming tasks and organizing teaching materials according to each ECRIF stage. By the same token, Mahmoud et al. (2021) indicated that as ECRIF requires students to do many tasks in specific periods of time according to each stage, the lesson planning process should be organized.

Moreover, pre-service teachers considered the flexibility of ECRIF and manifested that the activities should be adapted to the level of competence and age of the learners to increase and develop students' language skills. This concurs with the findings of Dalkiran & Semerci (2020) where students improved academically as ECRIF meets students' needs, enhancing their learning. Likewise, Caiza et al. (2023) stated that teachers should consider their students to supply them with opportunities to practice the language to foster engaging learning.

Subtheme C.2. Assessment. The assessment part is quite significant in the development of the ECRIF framework in such a way that two groups of pre-service teachers agreed that evaluative activities such as role plays and fluency exercises allow the students to put into practice what they have learned.

"Students completed the assessment activity as they understood the instruction and put in practice what they have learned." (Gbt2)

"All students participated actively in the fluently used stage." (Gbt5)

"On this occasion, an assessment was integrated to evaluate the performance of each student in the class through role-plays." (Get7)

Complementary to this, some students indicated that they felt motivated to do dialogue activities as an evaluation.

"Me gustó el diálogo." (Gbs2)

"Me gustó el examen." (Gbs4)

Despite this, some pre-service teachers pointed out that difficulties may arise at this stage,

such as the students' fear of speaking and the interference of the mother tongue.

"The assessment was about speaking; some students don't like to speak in class." (Get11)

"Students began to speak in Spanish since the role-play activity was complicated when it was developed with the class topic." (Gct1)

"At the assessment stage the students showed their learning, however, the fluency at the time of solving the activity was not as expected." (Gbt4)

Notwithstanding, pre-service teachers suggested that this stage could be improved by carrying out assessment activities in groups or pairs and using real communicative situations that would allow them to become more involved in the activity.

"I believe that these students who make mistakes in the assessment work better in a group, they do not like individual activities such as assessment very much." (Get7)

"Look for activities where students can show what they have learned in real communicative situations." (Gbt4)

The data analysis showed that the pre-service teachers consider the assessment to be significant in the ECRIF framework as it allows students to put into practice what they have learned and to identify their current level. This coincides with Tosuncuoglu (2018) who indicates that this process is fundamental since it allows teachers to know the level at which the students are and to know if the desired objective was met. Within this framework, by focusing on the development of productive skills, the assessment process usually arises in the fluently use stage where dynamic and interactive activities centered on the students

and their needs can be used, such as role-plays, dialogues, or conversations that motivate the student to use the target language and put it into practice. As Dalkıran & Semerci (2020) found, role-plays, dialogues, or conversations help students practice the language.

However, developing the assessment can be interrupted by different factors such as fear of speaking or mother tongue interference, causing problems in the use of the language. Bermello-García & Vaca-Cárdenas (2022) found that several students were afraid to participate for fear of making mistakes. Despite this, pre-services teachers considered that to address this problem, it is necessary to promote assessment activities that take into account the student's real context to create meaningful learning, as reported by Dalkıran & Semerci (2020). In addition, pre-service teachers further suggest that such activities should be worked in a cooperative way so that students help each other and are able to identify their mistakes (Tosuncuoglu, 2017).

Conclusions

As a conclusion, teachers and students had positive and negative experiences in implementing Communicative Language Teaching. Teachers believed that the application of games, songs, answering questions, brainstorming, videos, collaborative work, dialogues, and attractive supplies such as flashcards, pictures, and worksheets fostered students' motivation, attention, and comprehension to develop their communicative competence in the target language. Nevertheless, considering students' insights, it was determined that teachers need to take

into account their age, level and interests when selecting the strategies and didactic materials to make more effective the implementation on CLT. In addition, the employment of reading and listening activities to teach English, enables the student to be exposed to real-life situations, so they become familiar with the use of the target language. However, the total exposure to English had a disadvantage when students had a low level of English, because they did not understand everything in class and it made students unmotivated. So, it is essential teachers use a lot of body language, short and clear instructions to help understanding in English and not translating to their mother tongue. Regarding the ECRIF framework as a lesson plan, it could be useful since it allows the development of diversified and attractive activities for students to learn from the simplest to complex activities. It is also significant the use of dialogues and role plays to assess the students. It avoids the fear of speaking in front of students and makes them feel more comfortable to use the language. This study can serve as a guide for pre-service teachers, teachers in service to learn a new methodology such as CLT and be ready to apply it effectively and make sure students learn the language easily and entertainingly. In the same way, it may help future researchers who try to solve English educational problems in classrooms of urban and rural areas of Ecuador, by applying non-conventional methodologies and frameworks.

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