



## **Implementation of Communicative Language Teaching: Cambodian EFL Teachers' Attitudes toward Communicative Language Teaching**

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The aim of the present study was to examine the role of teachers' attitudes and beliefs in the implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT) in Cambodian universities. It has repeatedly been demonstrated in past research to teach English for socio-economic, socio-cultural, and other pragmatic purposes in Cambodia. This research explored teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward the implementation of CLT using quantitative methodology. This research was carried out at public and private universities offering the undergraduate program in TESOL/TEFL. The data was collected from 358 teachers who were working in public and private universities. The results of the study showed that teachers' attitudes and beliefs are significantly related to the behaviours in the implementation of CLT in Cambodian universities. The findings concluded that teachers' attitudes and beliefs in managing their instructional practices have significant role in implementing CLT. In order to successfully implement CLT, they need to determine their individual attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. The current study is one of its own kind. To the best of the current study's author's knowledge, no such study has been conducted before.

**Keywords:** teacher's attitude, teacher's belief, implementation of communicative language teaching, English language teaching, English as a foreign language

### **INTRODUCTION**

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is a leading theoretical paradigm for English language teaching (ELT), which is generally recognized as a successful method by all stakeholders i.e., scholars, instructors, and students (Hamid & Baldauf Jr, 2008; Kim, 2008; Rasheed, 2012). Ansarey (2012); Jacobs and Farrell (2003) and Sun and Cheng (2002) have pointed out that CLT has increased its scope and been used by different educators in different ways since it began its first appearance in Europe in the early 1970s and later evolved in English as a second language (ESL) in the last 20 years. These researches have put considerable effort to explore how CLT can be integrated with English in native and non-native spaces of English as a foreign language (EFL). However, CLT is still in its early stages in Asian countries particularly in Cambodia (Yusra & Lestari, 2020).

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Learning is an essential and necessary part of the development of a country (Hamid & Baldauf Jr, 2008). General educational achievement in Cambodia has been shown to fall behind in the region. For instance, Cambodia's literacy rate as compared to Indonesia and Philippines is far lower (Macro Trends, 2020). Even though the past 10 years' literacy rate is increasing by an average of 3% per year but still it is not competing with the other developing nations in the region. In 2008 the literacy rate was declined by 3.69% but in 2017 it was increased up to 2.47%. According to UNICEF (2020), Cambodian students seem to drop behind in school due to inadequate and poor quality education. However, literacy trends are constantly rising in Cambodia, to re-emerge from the unstable past, Cambodia's government and its people have selected English as a second language to interact and to do business with international entities and organizations (Moore & Bouchan, 2010).

In this regard, Cambodia is a strong illustration of language policies and their effect on a nation in transformation, its life, education, and future (Kosonen, 2019). It has repeatedly been demonstrated in past researches to teach English for socio-economic, socio-cultural, and other pragmatic purposes in Cambodia. CLT is facing tremendous challenges in the Asian countries including pedagogical, technological, and policy (Yusra & Lestari, 2020). A recent comparative study on CLT between teachers and students in Cambodia shows that teachers have low attitudes toward CLT than the students (Nhem, 2019). Among pedagogical challenges teachers and instructors have a key role, their knowledge, competence and behaviour are strongly contributing towards the implementation of CLT in the region.

Past researchers show that the imbalance between the CLT and its implication is based on the appropriate methods and teachers' attitudes (Yusra & Lestari, 2020). CLT's context defines its effectiveness or weakness since successful teaching methods provide a social relation to a given cultural setting (Hoa & Thi, 2020). CLT can contribute to more pessimistic attitudes in the EFL sense as a learner-centred approach to English language learning, the target is communication rather than mastering of language skills (Rahman et al., 2018). Many EFL scholars believe that it is not a practical approach to promote oral skills at the expense of writing and studying English as a foreign language (Hoa & Thi, 2020). Additionally, the fact that CLT is based on an English-Saxon educational approach (Putry, 2020), it may attribute pessimistic attitudes of teachers toward CLT and cannot thus be implemented in other areas of the world unless it is subject to modifications.

Classroom-based study indicates that teachers face challenges in the actual execution of communicative instructional strategy due to internal and external limitations (Haider & Chowdhury, 2012; Hu, 2005; Kumar, 2020; Rahman et al., 2018). Internal limitations are primarily those that are relevant to teachers themselves such as possessing a technical knowledge base (e.g., object-orientated or procedural knowledge) (e.g., declarative or procedural knowledge). External limitations, on the other side, are the ones that teachers cannot manage. These limitations are linked to the school environment such as scarcity of funding, time constraints, and populated classrooms.

Even though the role of instructors' attitudes in implementing teaching methods has been greatly taken up in literature, there is a shortage of study in the views of realistic issues with the application of such a method in language classes on the role of teachers' attitudes to communicative approaches. The analysis of attitudes and beliefs of teachers acts as a framework to recognise apparent inconsistencies between teacher values and the CLT concepts (Hall & Cook, 2012) and why teachers find it challenging in the course of their classes to adopt CLT. The challenges refer to the general personality attitudes of the teachers in implementing CLT in their classrooms. This research, therefore, explores the connection between the attitudes of CLT teachers and the implementation of CLT in an EFL setting's language classes in Cambodia.

## **Literature Review**

### **Communicative Approach**

Language teaching has traditionally swung like a pendulum between the extreme poles as instructors looked for realistic answers to language teachers' challenges in their classrooms (Batang, 2019; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The philosophy of language teaching has failed to distinguish between polar opposites as oral against written competencies, fluence versus precision, ability versus efficiency, expression versus form, object versus procedure, and analogy versus analytics. The motion of the pendulum can be seen by a change in methodologies of oral skills or those based on the type of context that priorities written skills (grammar-translation method, reading approach) (Kirkgoz, 2007). As a product of a pendulum swing between language modes and use, communicative language teaching has fulfilled the communicative needs of language learners, language teaching, and communication objectives (Kirkgoz, 2007).

CLT is a teaching theory focused on communicative usage and is characterized as an approach to language teaching or secondary learning which stresses the importance of communicative competence as the goal of language learning. The objective is to ensure effective communication and use of language in the classroom environment (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). The emphasis of CLT is communication rather than correctness and refinement of language, therefore, its functions are radically different for teachers and learners from those of conventional language programs (Knight, 2001). The CLT stresses the improvement of the skill of learners to interact, communicate, comprehend, and participate in social interactions. Students should feel comfortable in such a skills development classroom and prevent teachers from adopting a teacher-centered and oppressive attitude (Efrizal, 2012; Ho, 2020; Richards, 2005; Savignon, 1991; Solikhah & Budiharso, 2020). The instructor is therefore only an illustrator, an individual observer, an analyst of needs, an adviser, and a consultant (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

### **Teachers' Beliefs**

The main change in teaching was a reconceptualization of it as a cognitive rather than a behavioural phenomenon (Halbherr, 2020). It is not easy to conceptualise teachers' beliefs as there is no universal conceptualization and definitions of teachers' beliefs, different authors have defined teachers' beliefs differently (Tang, Wong, Li, & Cheng, 2019). In the conceptual context, teacher approaches can be theorised in three

perspectives based on distinguishing factors, such as definitions of belief, methodology of research, and relations between belief and others (Bahcivan et al., 2019). The word definition considers the beliefs of teachers as an indicator of their teaching behaviours and describes and classifies the types of beliefs that teacher has (Rahmawati, 2020). Nishino (2012) defined belief in the EFL context as the teachers' opinion and idea. Some studies in the quantitative measurements paradigm of research usually use Likert-scale questionnaires to examine beliefs, for example (Rahman et al., 2018). Horwitz (1987) developed the phenomenon of BALLI, which describes beliefs about language learning and inventory, his framework is generalized in the applied linguistics settings i.e., in determining the learners' and instructors' beliefs.

Likewise, the cognitive and emotional model treats beliefs as accumulated understanding, extracted from the individuals' experience of language learning, and instructing (Bahcivan et al., 2019). Ju (2013) supports this approach by the advocacy theory. Few number of studies have used this theory through semi-structured interviews and is usually the most commonly used tool. The contextual approach, perhaps the common method used to explore the beliefs of the teachers (Choi, 2000; Hiep, 2007; Nishino, 2012). Majority of these studies explored teachers' beliefs using an interpretive approach. In addition to empirical approach, the current study uses a socio-cultural theoretical framework to explore teachers' beliefs of CLT.

### **Teachers' Attitudes**

Attitudes are defined as an interaction between feelings and cognitions on behaviour (Edwards, 1990). The attitudes of teachers are of utmost important for changing the education system. Based on Diffusion Of Innovation (DOI), the success of an information sharing strategy aimed at implementing new educational ideas or practises depends on the nature of the breakthroughs, the targeted adopters and their social and organisational contexts, and the flow of information about advancement via different communications and channels such as media and interpersonal media (Kim, 2008). For educational innovations, compulsory actions lead to a lower rate of dissemination and change acceptance (Markee, 1992). With regard to the educators' personalities, optimistic and favourable attitudes to change are the factors that allow them to adopt change (Kaur, 2012; Paraskeva et al., 2008).

EFL teachers have relatively favourable attitudes to communicative approaches in different countries, as seen in observational studies (Karavas-Doukas, 1996). However, these optimistic attitudes do not generally ensure that teachers use CLT in their classrooms. The opinions of teachers who comply with CLT values are inconsistent with their present practise. This shows that their attitudes deviate from the core principles of CLT (Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006).

In some research, teachers have, however, shown pessimistic attitudes towards CLT (Burnaby & Sun, 1989) and perceive that it is for students from native English speaking background, not for EFL learners. Some instructors believe that if CLT is to be considered in their language schools, the communicative method should be updated based on its situational factors. "The attitudes and beliefs of teachers remain the most

important guide in teaching” (Stockwell, 2007). Nhem (2019) contended that what the teachers believed about education differed greatly from what they actually implemented in the classrooms. However, they do not actually facilitate many students' activities in class. Most of the teachers' time was spent lecturing, leaving little time for interaction between students. These negative attitudes may cause difficulties in implementing CLT for teachers. Communication difficulties can lead to an increase in negative teacher attitudes or changes to CLT instructional approaches when implemented. In such cases, teachers may even revert to their existing practise.

### **Conceptual Framework Development**

The present research focuses on the theory of activity by Engeström (1999), the theory of socio-culturalist (SCT) (Lantolf, 2000), and experience learning theory (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001). CLT scholars use these theories because it is claimed that these theories are meant to guide learning so that the activities will be outcome-oriented and meaningful. In this study the core concept of SCT was employed as English language is being used as CLT in Cambodia, since the beginning of industrialization in the region, cultural adaption is being recognised as the most important aspect for the development. In learning settings, SCT opens the interactional channels among the cultures through language medium. The interaction between teachers and learners is one of the key elements that contribute to the development of communication skills. SCT maintains that language is a phenomenon built up in society. Language can be learned if students socialise with their peers. This means that teachers must ensure that students participate through English lessons activities, discussion, and collaboration. This is possible if the teacher uses CLT activities to help students to interact.

In ELT, learning is based on experience and then reflection (Nhem, 2019). According to ELT, teachers' attitudes toward CLT should be positive, and they should encourage their students to interact with one another. With respect to SCT, learners should be allowed to interact with each other to get an understanding. For teachers using experiential learning, classroom interactions are used to enable students to achieve their potential. In the CLT classroom, teachers' attitudes and beliefs are the major factors that allow interactive activities in the classroom to improve the language skills of the learners.

In order to examine how classroom learning techniques impact teacher attitudes and beliefs, the current study has constructed a framework for CLT implementation in Cambodia that is based on the attitudes and beliefs of teachers. Hence, this study hypothesises are that:

*H1: Teachers' attitudes toward CLT are important in implementing CLT in Cambodian university classrooms.*

*H2: Teachers' beliefs toward CLT are important in implementing CLT in Cambodian university classrooms.*

## METHOD

This research explores teachers' attitudes and beliefs in the implementation of CLT through a quantitative methodology. Prior studies explored the topic by qualitative studies, hence the current study tried to examine teachers' beliefs and attitudes from the quantitative study design. The population of the current study were EFL teachers working in public and private universities. Therefore, the research was carried out at public and private universities offering an undergraduate program in TESOL/TEFL. To select the sample size, Ary et al., (2009) approach was followed, and convenient sampling technique was adopted. The minimum sample size to do the data analysis was calculated using Gpower. Hence, the minimum sample size was 119. The data collection was conducted online during the time period of June 2020 to September 2020. Online data collection was adopted for two main reasons, firstly, because of Pandemic (Covid 19), universities were closed and classes were being conducted online. Secondly, the online survey collection technique is previously not used in CLT studies, this can be one of the contributions of the current study that the teachers and instructors respond to the online surveys of CLT implementation.

Teachers and instructors of the program were contacted by email and quantitative survey questionnaire was electronically distributed to them. Google forms were used to collect the data. Survey included demographic profile of the respondents and measurement tools of the current study variables. To achieve the minimum sample size, the researcher of the study distributed questionnaire to 450 teachers from the public and private universities. However, the final useable responses received were 358 responded with a response rate of 79.5%. Among them, 28% of the respondents were female however 72% of the respondents were male. 56.5% of the respondents were full time university teachers however 43.5% were part-time faculty members. Among the respondents, the majority were teaching Core English courses. As per the age of the respondents, majority of the respondents falls under the age group of 25-30 years old. Lastly, in terms of education 65.87% of the respondents hold master's degree, 12.2% holds bachelor's degree and 22% holds PhD degree.

### Measurement

Teachers' attitudes toward CLT were measured using four items adopted from Rahimi and Naderi (2014), Items were measured on 5-point Likert scale. The sample item for the scale is "*The teacher as "authority" and "instructor" is no longer adequate to describe the teachers' role in the language classroom*". The Cronbach Alpha value of the scale was reported 0.87 in the past studies. To assess the beliefs of the teachers, 4 Items scale was adapted from Guada and Boersma (2018) and converted into the context of the study, one example of the questionnaire is "*CLT is important in classroom instruction*". All of the Items were measured on 5-point Likert scale. CLT was measured using four items adopted from Sharp, Hopkin, and Lewthwaite (2011), Items were measured on 5-point Likert scale. The sample item for the scale is "*Teachers at this university are supported in their overall efforts in using CLT in Classrooms*". The Cronbach Alpha value of the scale was reported 0.81 in the past studies.

## FINDINGS

Preliminary analyses are required to resolve research issues and study aims by means of statistical analysis (Pallant, 2005). The data was coded and placed into a specific database according to the needs of the sample for this preliminary analysis. SPSS 22v was used in this study to code the content, screening, and initial analysis.

This research used a simulation approach to the structural equation. There are two forms of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), i.e. SEM covariance-based (CB-SEM), and SEM or partly least-square (SEM) variant-based models (PLS-SEM; also called PLS path modelling). It focuses on an overall match from the model suggested by a goodness-of-fit evaluation and is ideal for confirmatory studies. CB-SEM is one of the most similar modelling or factor dependent approaches (e.g., LISREL, AMOS, EQS and Mplus). PLS-SEM is one of many linear regression models, depending on maximization of explicit variances of dependent variables (for example SmartPLS, WarpPLS, PLS-Graph, and ADANCO). PLS-SEM is ideal for exploratory study. Thus, SmartPLS 3.0.3 was used for this report for data processing.

### Validity and Reliability

Initially, validity and reliability were assessed using factor loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite reliability, and average variance. The results revealed that all the values cross the threshold point. According to Hair et al., (2011), all the values should exceed 0.05 for loadings and AVE. However, for Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7 are considered ideal. Therefore, considering the threshold values the instrument used in this study was valid and reliable. Table 1 and Figure 2 show the summary of the results. The results of the table shows that CLT implementation, Teachers' Attitudes' and teacher beliefs' scales are reliable to measure the possible outcome of the current study.

Table 1  
Summary of validity

Variables	Items	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
CLT Implementation	CLTM1	0.867	0.867	0.910	0.717
	CLTM2	0.783			
	CLTM3	0.846			
	CLTM4	0.886			
Teachers' Attitudes	TA1	0.843	0.883	0.912	0.721
	TA2	0.860			
	TA3	0.867			
	TA4	0.826			
Teachers' Beliefs	TB1	0.919	0.924	0.946	0.815
	TB2	0.886			
	TB3	0.922			
	TB4	0.883			

Note: AVE= Average Variance; CR= Composite Reliability

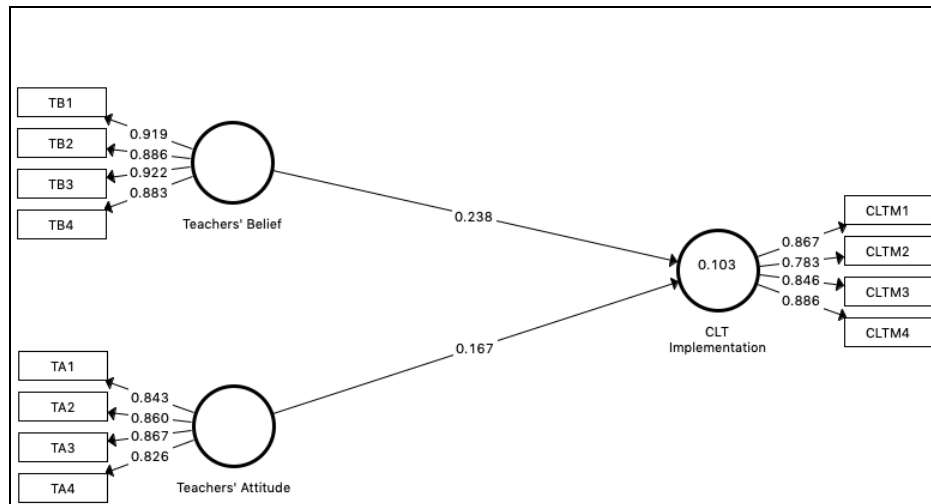


Figure 1  
Measurement model of the study.

The discriminant validity of the model was also tested by Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Henseler et al., (2016) explained that the HTMT ratio is a superior criterion as compared to other methods such as the Fornell-Larcker criterion. They suggested two different cut-off values of 0.85 and 0.90 for HTMT criterion to establish discriminant validity. The study used 0.90 criterion (i.e.,  $HTMT_{.90}$ ) to establish the discriminant validity of the model as shown in Figure 3.

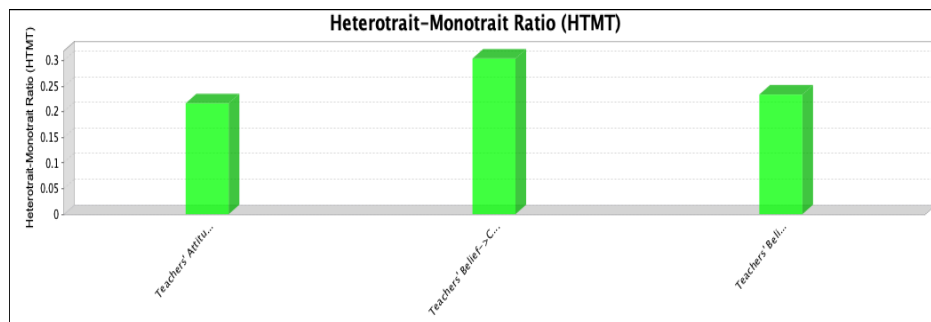


Figure 2  
 $HTMT_{.90}$  criterion.

Table 2 shows that the discriminant validity of the model was established since all the results of the  $HTMT_{.90}$  criterion were below the critical value of 0.90. This shows that CLT Implementation, Teachers' attitudes and Teachers' beliefs are different than each other. Overall, the measurement model has shown adequate convergent and discriminant validity. Further, the mean and standard deviation values of the constructs were also assessed. Table 2 is presented below:



Table 2  
Validity (HTMT, Mean, SD)

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2
CLT Implementation	4.142	0.897		
Teachers' Attitudes	3.761	0.870	0.217	
Teachers' Beliefs	3.200	1.063	0.304	0.23'

### Structural Model

The methodology of PLS-SEM does not apply traditional goodness fitness measures (Ramayah et al., 2017). This study is carried out by the structural model Hair (2010). The collinearity of the structures is measured in the structural model. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value is the only solution to determine collinearity problems. This analysis tests two collections of collinearity constructs (predictors). To verify multi-linearity, the VIFs are measured with the SPSS package (version 22.0). The findings have shown marginal collinearity in the structural model because the typical cut-off threshold of 5 to 10 is far below all VIF values (Hair, 2010).

Next, the structural model predictability is computed by means of variance explained  $R^2$  values for the dependent latent constructs.  $R^2$  may vary depending upon the research area. Ringle et al., (2012) suggested values of 0.67, 0.19, and 0.33, as measure of  $R^2$  to be considered substantial, moderate, and weak respectively. The  $R^2_{(CLT\ Implementation)} = 0.103$ , therefore, these values are considered moderate and acceptable.

The results showed that the relationship between Teachers' Attitudes and CLT Implementation has the beta = 0.167; T value = 3.525 and P value less than 0.01, It shows that the hypothesis was found positive and significant. It can be concluded that H1 was accepted. Similarly, the relationship between Teachers' Beliefs and CLT Implementation has the beta = 0.238; T value = 5.063 and P value less than 0.01, hence the hypothesis was found positive and significant. It can be concluded that H2 was also accepted. The results found are further discussed in the Discussion Section. Figure 4 and Table 3 show the results of the study.

Table 3  
Summary of hypothesis testing

Path	Beta	SD Error	T Values	P Values	LL	UL	Decision
Teachers' Attitudes -> CLT Implementation	0.167	0.047	3.525	0.000	0.090	0.272	Supported
Teachers' Beliefs -> CLT Implementation	0.238	0.047	5.063	0.000	0.144	0.332	Supported

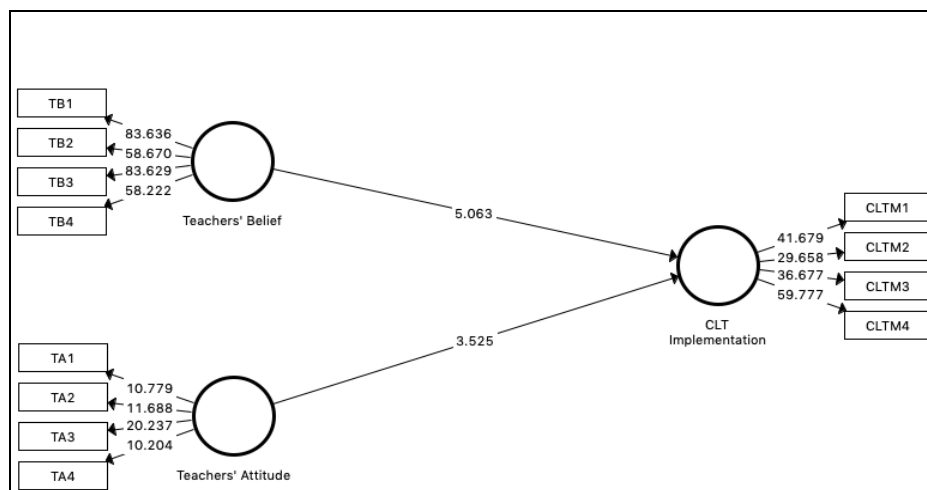


Figure 3  
Structural model of the study

## DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to examine the role of teachers' attitudes and beliefs on the implementation of communicative language teaching in Cambodia. The results of the study show that teachers' attitudes and beliefs are significantly related to the implementation of communicative language teaching in Cambodian universities.

Cambodian teachers have a generally favourable position concerning CLT following prior researches (Choi, 2000; Guadu & Boersma, 2018; Horwitz, 1987; Nishino, 2012). The EFL teachers have a positive attitude towards CLT principles. This is a positive finding that EFL instructors showed to have a positive belief in terms of CLT. Such as, they realized the importance of CLT and are willing to provide a useful opportunity for students to learn in an environment that is more educational and less dominant.

The first objective of the study was to examine the role of teachers' attitude on the implementation of CLT in Cambodian universities. The results also suggest that the optimistic and positive attitudes of teachers towards the implementation of CLT, attitudes are correlated to their classrooms' adoption of CLT. This indicates that the mindset of teachers is one means of ensuring that creativity and improvements in the educational environment should be introduced. In addition, it is important to look at more considerations such as the essence of the invention and to understand what hinders CLT in Cambodia. Similar to previous studies on EFL teachers have relatively favourable attitudes to communicative approaches (Abugohar et al., 2020; Edwards, 1990; Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Rahimi & Naderi, 2014). These studies were conducted in qualitative settings in different countries through observational studies. It was also suggested in the studies that even though teachers have optimistic attitudes, it does not ensure that teachers use CLT in their classrooms.

The second objective of the study was to examine the role of teachers' beliefs on the implementation of CLT in Cambodian universities. Results showed that the beliefs of the teachers toward CLT, as the beliefs of teachers were high in the descriptive statistics. Interestingly, the relationship of teachers' beliefs towards the implementation of CLT was highly significant. Likewise, the cognitive and emotional model treats belief as accumulated understanding, extracted from the individuals' experience of language learning, and instructing are impacting the implementation of communicative language teaching. Prior studies support this approach by the advocacy theory such as Rahimi and Naderi (2014) has used tested the teachers' beliefs on the implementation of CLT through semi-structured interviews. Their results were consistent with this study. This study has extended the scope of the research on CLT by conducting in quantitative settings. Hence, it may help in generalizing the findings of prior studies. These findings elaborated the importance of teachers behavioural characteristics in implementing CLT in the classrooms.

### CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the role of teachers' attitudes and beliefs on the implementation of communicative language teaching in Cambodia. The results of the study show that teachers' attitudes and beliefs are significantly related to the implementation of communicative language teaching in Cambodian universities. If the teachers have a positive attitude there are higher chances to implement the CLT in the classroom. It is very significant to take such necessary steps in English language acquisition in Cambodia.

Current research has clear implications for implementing CLT, as this study supports the argument by previous research that learning, and teaching beliefs are important in understanding the teachers' classroom behaviours. There is compelling evidence from studies that teachers' classroom behaviours are determined by the teachers' beliefs (Choi, 2000; Guadu & Boersma, 2018; Horwitz, 1987; Nishino, 2012). For the teachers to have a clear picture of how they manage their instructional practices in implementing CLT, they need to determine their individual beliefs. From the institutional perspective, On-going training that includes regular seminars, workshops, and instructor observations is necessary for teachers to understand their beliefs on the learning and teaching of English. Thorough these trainings, teachers can discover various teaching methods to later apply in their respective classrooms. In particular, regular seminars offer a platform where educators can understand their pedagogical approaches based on teaching beliefs.

This study also has some limitations, and suggestions for future research. Such as the study was conducted in a cross-sectional design, it is recommended to examine future research in longitudinal design by collecting data in multiple time series. Other than Teachers' beliefs, and attitudes, there are many factors that can hinder the implementation of CLT such as Teachers' willingness, therefore, it is recommended to examine these factors to further strengthen the knowledge on CLT implementation.

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