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CLT-based Curricula and Pedagogical Recommendations in EFL Contexts: A Textual Analysis of the 10th-grade English Curriculum in Burkina Faso

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Abstract: This study critically evaluates the 10th-grade English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum in Burkina Faso to understand some of the implementation challenges reported in most empirical research about teachers' use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles. For this purpose, the article reviewed the literature on CLT principles, its theoretical background, and the pedagogical implications in multilingual contexts. Empirical research on implementing CLT-based curricula in different EFL contexts was also reviewed to identify common issues highlighted regarding CLT curricula implementation in EFL contexts. These reviews helped define the methodological guideline for this critical assessment of the CLT-based grade 10 EFL curriculum in Burkina Faso. It leads to a thorough examination of the grade 10 curriculum, whose findings indicate a lack of contextualization of CLT principles in the curriculum to reflect the national and local teaching and learning realities in Burkina Faso. The analysis reveals that the 10th-grade EFL curriculum prescribes specific topics, lesson content, and instruction time, leaving teachers with little autonomy to adapt lessons to students' needs and community realities. The control of what teachers can do regarding teaching and learning planning reduces teachers to policy implementers rather than facilitators of learning. To address these challenges, the article recommends a collaborative approach to curriculum design and implementation in which teachers serve as the last-mile planners. Granting this role to teachers can ensure that students' needs and local realities are considered in curriculum planning, implementation, and assessment.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching(CLT); Constructivism; EFL; CLT Principles

Introduction

This paper highlights the importance of curriculum design in shaping educational outcomes. Curricula, along with the materials that support them, encode the goals of teaching and learning. To ensure these goals are effectively realized, attention must be paid to both the discourses within the curriculum and the guidance provided to teachers—who play a key role as agents in implementing these changes. The paper stresses that when the philosophical and theoretical beliefs of curriculum designers do not align with the pedagogical practices recommended,

confusion arises in the classroom, leading to missed learning opportunities. In this paper, the grade 10 EFL curriculum was considered a gateway to the designers' beliefs about language teaching and a source of information for the analysis of alignment between nationally adopted pedagogical practices and the principles of their theories and ideologies of references. The analysis aimed to identify potential misalignments for recommendations that could support CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) curriculum designers and implementers in contexts similar to the context of Burkina Faso.

In agreement with [1], curricula can broadly be defined as transformative means and tools that translate national or district-level transformative missions into strategic and operational frameworks for teaching and learning. Therefore, curricula must be rooted in philosophies and ideologies that align with a broader national belief system and approach to both national and international realities. The curriculum designer holds the responsibility for this task and must be capable of thinking both globally and locally throughout the design process. While designing a national curriculum, their approach should be broadly informed by general theories and principles. Locally, they must adapt these principles to the national and regional contexts of their country. Echoing this idea, Corthran, in a YouTube interview with Memoria Press, describes each curriculum as a holistic set of principles that governs the transmission of cultural values to learners[2]. According to him, curricula aim to provide all students with shared knowledge to enable them to function as societal, economic, or political forces. Once again, the concept of context is crucial, as culture, economy, and politics must be given meanings that resonate with the community, nation, and international spheres—at least for the purposes of inclusive teaching.

In line with John Franklin Bobbitt and John Dewey's views, as discussed in [3], official written curricula should promote the official ideals of good citizenship, with teachers playing a key role as transformative agents. From this perspective, the curriculum designer acts as a guide, offering options that teachers can choose from based on the contextual needs of their students. Transformation, in this case, cannot be imposed uniformly across all schools by a national authority, given the diversity of contexts in each country and sociolinguistic factors to consider in each case. Therefore, the curriculum should not be delivered to teachers as a finished product that is expected to be implemented without modification. As agents of transformation, teachers should be equipped with the tools to assess their specific contexts and adapt the curriculum accordingly to fulfill the transformative mission in the specific sociocultural setting of their schools. Viewing the curriculum as a transformation project implies that it comes with specific roles attributed to teachers, students, and communities. In this case, change through schooling becomes a multi-actor goal that can only be achieved with the active participation and support of all stakeholders.

According to [4], the level of inclusivity in a curriculum depends on what the curriculum designer considers most important in the design process. They have to make a choice of focus between inputs (starting with the syllabus), processes (beginning with recommendations for teaching methods), and outputs (starting with learning outcomes). For [4], input-based curricula prioritize content, followed by the syllabus, methodology, outcomes, and assessment. Such curricula allow teachers the flexibility to select topics and create learning opportunities tailored to their students' needs. The design process of an input-based curriculum is referred to as "forward design", emphasizing a bottom-up approach to planning. When curriculum development begins with the selection of teaching activities, techniques, and methods, [4] considers the process to be central, focusing more on methods than on their intended outcomes. In language teaching, this approach has influenced the development of methods such as the Audiolingual Method, Situational Language Teaching, Task-based Language Teaching, Post-method Teaching, and The Ecological Classroom [4]. In central design, content is chosen based on its potential to facilitate processes such as investigation, decision-making, reflection, discussion, interpretation, critical thinking, choice-making, and collaboration.[5], [4]

Finally, when the design process is oriented toward educational outcomes, [4] refers to it as "Backward Curriculum Design." This top-down approach starts with clearly defined desired teaching and learning outcomes before considering appropriate teaching activities and content. A backward curriculum includes control standards for teaching, learning,

and assessment. It leaves little room for individually determined learning outcomes, typically providing a fixed blueprint that teachers are expected to follow. [6] refers to these types of curricula as product-oriented curricula. This design is generally used in most standard-focused contexts and in countries that administer national assessments of teaching and learning. Curricula informed by this approach are generally teacher-centered, and national education actors control teaching and learning activities.

A student-focused, CLT-based curriculum should be informed by input-based or process-based approaches that give teachers an active role in selecting resources and strategies to meet their students' expectations. Such approaches give teachers the flexibility to design activities and set learning goals that address their learners' specific needs. A CLT-based curriculum, however, should not be influenced by a backward design approach, which reduces teachers to mere script readers who must follow rigid blueprints for instruction. Such output-oriented curricula assume that all learners, regardless of their sociocultural backgrounds, must learn the same content through the same process and demonstrate their knowledge in a standardized format dictated by the curriculum designer.

In analyzing the 10th-grade English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) curriculum in Burkina Faso, the aim was to explore the curriculum designers' approach to adapting CLT principles within the context of Burkina Faso and to understand what they prioritized in the design process—whether input, process, or output. The analysis focuses on the curriculum's goals, the recommended pedagogical approaches, the provided didactic tools, and the instructional methods and resources. These resources were examined in light of CLT principles, literature findings, and personal understanding of the local context in Burkina Faso. After presenting the national educational context of Burkina Faso, the findings from relevant literature on textual analysis are highlighted below, followed by the methodology used in the analysis, the results of the analysis, a discussion of the findings, recommendations for implementation, and conclusions.

Context and Justification

Burkina Faso, a former French colony, is home to more than 60 national language communities [7]. Its education system, inherited from France in the 1960s, still relies on French as the medium of instruction and the dominant language of schooling. Since 1960, Burkina Faso has undertaken strategic reforms to introduce additional foreign languages into the school system and to create space for national languages. However, despite these efforts, French[8] remains the primary language of instruction from primary school through high school, while other foreign languages, such as English and German, are taught as subjects. In public primary school, French is the only language of instruction, and it continues as the language of content delivery from middle school to university. French also functions as the language of public affairs and the language required for most civil service positions. While 39% of the literate population can study French, it remains inaccessible to over 61% of the population, who are considered illiterate[7].

English is introduced in middle school (grade 7) as a subject, with the curriculum designed in a continuum format. The first cycle (middle school) focuses on general English. The current national curriculum for the four grades of middle school (grades 7 to 10) is a revision following a regional West African higher education reform project, which emphasizes a competency-based approach[9]. According to the official curricula for post-primary education, by the end of grade 10, each student "must be able to express themselves orally and in writing, respecting the basic rules of the language and with the ability to listen to, read, and understand oral and written productions related to different situations in everyday life" ([9], p. 17).

The epistemological and didactic expectations for EFL teachers in middle school indicate that they must prepare each student to become "a citizen who has acquired oral and written language and communication skills in English that enable them to pursue studies in general or technical secondary education after grade 10" ([9], p. 17). To achieve this goal, curriculum designers recommend a communicative approach, emphasizing interaction among learners or with other interlocutors, the use of authentic materials (such as press articles, radio or film extracts, photos, etc.), and the contextualization of learning situations to prepare learners for communicative needs beyond the classroom ([9], p. 17).

The CLT approach is intended to be a robust form of communicative language teaching, advocating for communicative approaches to teaching and learning.[10], [11] As stated, English learning in Burkina Faso has both short-term and long-term goals: the short-term goal focuses on communication within the school context, while the long-term goal aims for the use of English in social contexts at both national and international levels. Pedagogically, the short-term goal calls for the application of CLT principles guided by constructivist practices.[12], [13], [10] Philosophically, the long-term goal supports social reconstructionist practices that connect schools with communities, schools with national society, and schools with the global community.[14], [11]

The combination of CLT principles,[11] constructivist teaching and learning theory[10], and the social reconstructionist philosophy of education[14] necessitates an input-based curriculum[4] that encourages teachers' creativity in designing instructional processes and selecting resources. The 10th-grade EFL curriculum in Burkina Faso provides teachers with flexibility and guidance on how local sociocultural resources can be integrated into the classroom. Examining these orientations through constructivist and socio-reconstructionist lenses is particularly important, given that the local communities do not speak English. In some regions, the EFL classroom is the primary opportunity for students to learn and use English. Analyzing the curricular recommendations can help teachers better adapt the CLT-based 10th-grade curriculum for more effective implementation across various sociocultural contexts in Burkina Faso.

Literature Review

An analysis of an existing CLT-based curriculum requires a conceptual understanding of CLT principles and their implications for curriculum development and pedagogical practices. According to [15], missed teaching and learning goals often stem from a mismatch between the beliefs and expectations of curriculum designers and the understanding and approach of the curriculum implementers in operationalizing those beliefs. Therefore, key considerations in this review include defining Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and its core principles, understanding the theoretical and philosophical foundations of CLT, and examining how CLT principles are applied in different contexts.

Communicative Language Teaching: Definition and Principles

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is sometimes presented as a single approach[11] or as a set of integrated approaches[13] to language teaching. According to [13], CLT encompasses a range of integrated approaches, techniques, methods, strategies, and principles designed to guide language teachers in constructively supporting students to develop communicative competencies. CLT advocates for a shift from deficit-oriented perspectives associated with traditional methods like the direct method and audiolingual approaches, toward asset-based approaches that view students as active contributors to the teaching and learning process.[16], [13], [10] In this regard, CLT requires teachers to adopt the role of "a guide on the side rather than a sage on the stage" ([10], p. 95).

Clearly, CLT challenges language educators to move away from what[17] refers to as the "banking system of education", in which the teacher is an all-knowing expert who deposits knowledge into passive students. Instead, CLT repositions learners as experts in their own right—each bringing unique knowledge and perspectives that contribute to the co-construction of knowledge within the classroom. This shift necessitates innovative teaching planning, implementation, and evaluation, all of which should be clearly understood by both curriculum designers and classroom teachers.[16], [18] Analyzing how CLT principles are reflected in curricula is crucial to identifying any potential gaps between the perspectives of curriculum developers and EFL teachers.[15]

In the American context, [13] outlines five key principles that govern the use of CLT in language instruction. First, teachers should prioritize helping students acquire communicative competencies. To achieve this, students are expected to use the language actively to communicate in diverse instructional situations. Second, communication activities created by teachers or proposed in the curriculum should be authentic and meaningful to students. This requires incorporating sociocultural approaches that value the students' cultural and linguistic assets, which can be used to design activities that foster real interactions

in English. Third, the focus of instruction should shift from accuracy to fluency.

Unlike previous methods that emphasize accuracy in forms and structures, CLT emphasizes helping students use the language effectively. The fourth principle allows for trial and error, encouraging students to learn through experimentation rather than rigid adherence to perfect grammar or structure. The fifth principle calls for the integration of all four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—into the teaching process. Teaching grammar, forms, and structure should only aim at developing students' ability to "effectively comprehend and convey intended meanings when reading books or other texts, making an oral presentation, writing a science or history report, or collaborating with peers to conduct a scientific experiment" ([13], p. 100).

Addressing common misconceptions about CLT, [11] notes that some curriculum designers and teachers misunderstand CLT as a call to teach only oral communication skills, to use only English in the classroom, to revert to audiolingual methods, or to exclusively focus on group or pair work. According to [10], this confusion often results in weak CLT-based curricula, sometimes reverting to traditional three Ps instructional approaches: Presentation, Practice, and Production. As [10] explains, these approaches, which emerged from cognitivist and behaviorist perspectives, rely on scaffolding for accuracy. In this model, "Presentation" grants the teacher full control, "Practice" is a guided process to ensure learning assimilation, and "Production" is the final stage where students perform what they have learned. A stronger application of CLT principles would involve task-based, whole-language, or competency-based teaching approaches.

[11] informs curriculum designers that developing communicative competencies involves focusing on meaning, carefully considering the learning context, and valuing the social and cultural competencies of the learner. CLT, in this view, is a humanistic approach that emphasizes the learner's ability to collaborate with others both inside and outside the classroom to co-construct meaning in the target language. The core pedagogical attributes of CLT, as presented by [11], integrate elements from various teaching approaches such as the task-based approach, whole-language approach, competency-based language teaching approach, and problem-based learning. The following principles, according to [11], should guide CLT curricula and pedagogical resources:

Main features	Attributes
Communicative competence and focus on meaning	English learning for communication
	Emphasis on meaning
	Socio-cultural, strategic, discourse, and grammatical competence
	Functional, practical, and global approach
Humanistic idea and learner autonomy	Learner-centeredness
	Learner-autonomy
	Holistic human development
	Learner participation encouraged
	Learner individualities respected
	Shift of power from teachers to learners and democratic classroom
	Teachers as communication facilitators, creators of learning communities, and providers of activities
	Teacher–student relationships as close, positive, and relaxed
Cooperative learning	Cooperative learning for participation, interaction, and communication
	Development of social as well as linguistic skills
	Cognitive growth stimulated by others
Task-based orientation	Task completion through quasi real-world communication
	Focus on meaning
	Increased talking, cooperation, and negotiation of learners
	Teachers as facilitators, advisors, managers, and guides
Content-based orientation	Increase of students' intrinsic motivation using the content of their concern
	Anxiety-free environment
	Comprehensible inputs
Misconceptions of CLT	Teaching oral communication skills
	Teaching English in English
	Applying the audio-lingual method
	Using group or pair work

Pedagogic CLT principles from[11]

Examining the CLT attributes highlighted in [11] through the lens of language teaching theories and educational philosophies can help contextualize the requirements for CLT curriculum design and implementation in foreign settings.

Theoretical and Philosophical Background of CLT Principles

From the above review, it is evident that, strategically, CLT is rooted in the social reconstructionist philosophy of education, particularly in its emphasis on the contextualization of teaching resources and preparing students for global challenges. Operationally, CLT is implemented through constructivist learning theories, focusing on student-centered approaches in the classroom. According to [14], social reconstructionism views school education as a cultural transformation process, linking educational contexts to broader societal needs. The call for holistic human development in [11] aligns with the reconstructionist goal of preparing students as change agents through education.

The reconstructionist philosophy informs the new Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for language teaching, learning, and assessment. In the CEFR, language education actors are urged to view the learner as a social agent, actively participating in the learning process ([19], p. 22). The framework explicitly promotes language learning through communicative approaches, helping learners develop the skills needed to meet real-life demands, in line with the social reconstructionist philosophy. This approach creates classroom contexts where students can express their skills and contribute to their development, consistent with the constructivist view.

The reconstructionist philosophy is also reflected in the mission statement of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), which places "language and communication at the heart of human experiences" ([20], p. 7). ACTFL advocates for language teaching that prepares students to "communicate successfully in pluralistic American society and abroad" ([20], p. 17). This vision informs the development of foreign language curricula in the USA. Both the CEFR and ACTFL standards clarify that CLT principles require both a macro (social) and micro (academic) understanding of communication skills development in language curricular materials. Academic communication, as a micro expectation of CLT, calls for constructivist approaches to teaching and learning. According to [12], constructivism is a meaning-making approach that emphasizes individual intellectual and personal growth, primarily within the school and classroom environment. From this perspective, the constructivist understanding of CLT focuses specifically on teaching, learning, and the learner's role in the classroom.

Whether approached from a reconstructionist philosophical standpoint or a constructivist theoretical perspective, CLT principles require empowering students with diverse curricular resources for meaningful communication within and beyond the classroom. Successful implementation of CLT in contexts where English is not widely accessible outside the classroom necessitates valuing the learner's sociocultural context, first in curricular materials, and then in teachers' pedagogical practices. In practice, CLT demands both philosophical contextualization and theoretical innovation. To effectively apply CLT principles in countries where English is largely inaccessible outside the classroom, the context is crucial.[21]

CLT Principles and Theories in Practice

CLT principles, informed by reconstructionist philosophy or constructivist theory, have influenced language curricula worldwide. In the USA, CLT principles guided the 2020 WIDA Standards for English Language Development, which focus on developing learners' proficiency in English, emphasizing communication for "Social and Instructional purposes within the school setting (Standard 1)" and communication of information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in content areas (Standards 2-5)'.([22], p. 9). The constructivist view informs WIDA standards by focusing on using English for academic purposes. This is particularly relevant for assessing English language learners' readiness for academic programs taught in English in the USA. The communication component of CLT is then framed around students' educational needs. The same goals are echoed in the Pre-K–12 English Language Proficiency Standards Framework (standards 1-5) by WIDA and TESOL, which differ from the missions of countries aiming to use English as a tool for global connection.

In countries where English is taught as a second or foreign language, CLT-based curricula incorporate social reconstructionist considerations alongside constructivist expectations in teaching. The combination of these two perspectives is essential when learners have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Contextualizing and adapting CLT principles, pedagogical practices, and teaching materials is critical for successful implementation in those contexts. However, many EFL curricula replicate CLT principles from international contexts without considering the practical realities teachers face, often resulting in resistance to using CLT-based materials due to the rigid national standards as observed in most empirical work.

In a qualitative study conducted in Bangladesh, [24] examined the barriers to implementing CLT in secondary EFL classrooms. The curriculum's goal was to develop "a workforce with communicative competence in English" to strengthen the country's human resource development initiatives (p. 12). This aligns with both constructivist and social reconstructionist views. However, the designers overlooked the need to reassess instructional time, assessment practices, and the school culture. As a result, [25] found that teachers in Bangladesh continued to rely on audiolingual and grammar-translation methods, citing time constraints and the teacher-centered nature of the educational system as primary reasons for resisting CLT-based approaches. Teachers felt that without focusing on structure and grammar, they would not be able to meet curriculum expectations.

In a similar study on Korean high school teachers' implementation of CLT-based curricula, [16] found that although the curriculum included instructional resources, teachers showed resistance to using CLT approaches. They cited the limited time available for instruction and the administrative workload as constraints that hindered their ability to apply CLT principles effectively. These issues were also noted in [26]'s study of EFL teachers in Burkina Faso.

In most empirical findings, assessment practices play a crucial role in the successful implementation of CLT-based curricula. Without innovation in assessment practices, teachers and students in EFL contexts will always resist CLT approaches and consider context-focused approaches as heavy loads that would slow their progress toward national goals. A study conducted by [27] on novice and experienced teachers in Korea revealed that while teachers understood the need for communicative language teaching, they continued to use grammar-translation methods. This resistance was attributed to their obligation to prepare students for national exams, which focus on grammar and translation skills. Similarly, in Morocco, secondary school teachers reported that their primary task was to prepare students for college entrance exams, which prioritize grammar-translation over communicative skills.[28]

In Hong Kong, where students are heavily motivated by national assessments, [29] found that students became more interested in CLT activities when they saw a direct connection to the exams they would take. This highlights the lack of alignment between CLT curriculum expectations and national assessments, as well as the failure to consider teachers' practical realities in curriculum design.

In Burkina Faso, a mixed-methods study by [30] revealed that EFL teachers lacked pedagogical resources, with many of them resorting to grammar-translation methods. Teachers complained about being instructed to use authentic materials without clear guidance on how to adapt these resources for students who had no access to English outside the classroom. Similarly, in Senegal, [31] found that while policy documents emphasized the use of local resources in teaching English, teachers were not provided with practical guidance on how to operationalize these recommendations. The lack of clear contextualization led to a gap between policy expectations and classroom realities, pedagogically translated into national assessment-focused teaching and learning.

Across these contexts, a consistent theme emerges: teachers find CLT-based curricula time-consuming, demanding, and misaligned with national assessments. This misalignment is due to a lack of contextualization of theories and philosophy and mainly the development of an ideal national context based on which teaching and learning activities are designed. Detailing teaching and learning programs up to the number of hours to spend on each lesson is an example of the generalization of a best-case scenario that does not reason with the daily teaching realities of all

teachers. The failure to contextualize or adapt CLT principles to local realities often leads to challenges in implementation. These findings underscore the importance of examining the CLT-based 10th-grade curriculum in Burkina Faso to draw lessons that could inform both curriculum designers and teachers about how to improve the practical application of CLT in EFL classrooms.

Methods

To analyze the CLT-based 10th-grade curriculum in Burkina Faso, I utilized the framework for curriculum analysis presented in [21]. According to [21], CLT curricula should be structured around a specific subject matter, which involves clearly defining languages and establishing how they should be taught and learned in the classroom. As reviewed above, CLT principles emphasize the importance of using authentic materials, balancing fluency and accuracy, developing both receptive and productive skills, teaching language form within contexts, focusing on meaning, and ensuring that both teachers and students use the target language in the classroom through collaborative activities. In such a curriculum, the learner is viewed as an active participant who engages in pair, group, and individual tasks.

Teachers are expected to create a rich language environment, providing meaningful input and offering opportunities for students to use the language in a meaningful and creative way through communicative activities or tasks ([21], p. 448). However, a common issue in translating these principles into practice is the confusion around multilingual and multicultural approaches. In many cases, curriculum designers opt for monolingual approaches that exclude other languages. [21] points out that context plays a critical role in the design and implementation of CLT-based curricula, particularly in foreign countries. Unfortunately, context is often overlooked in CLT curricula designed for students whose community languages differ from the language of instruction. This oversight typically leads to teachers relying on traditional audio-lingual pedagogical practices rather than adopting more communicative methods.

Recognizing this challenge is essential for analyzing CLT-based curricula and providing practical guidance to EFL teachers. [21] also emphasizes that a well-designed CLT curriculum should include a range of elements such as functions and notions to be learned, topics, skills, grammar, vocabulary, learning strategies, and intercultural awareness activities. Assessment practices should focus on speaking tests conducted in pairs, writing and speaking tests based on specific tasks, and the use of clear criteria for evaluation ([21], p. 450).

Using [21]'s framework, I analyzed the 10th-grade EFL CLT curriculum in Burkina Faso, identifying key elements that will aid its effective implementation by teachers. I focused on understanding the curriculum's language and content objectives, the roles and needs of the learners, the role of teachers, the significance of context, the design and organization of the curriculum, and the role of assessment. The findings, followed by challenges, recommendations, and conclusions, are presented below.

Results

English is presented in the 10th-grade CLT-based curriculum as a tool that should serve learners' communication needs at school, in academic tasks, and in social interactions outside of school. Learners are expected to acquire skills in the four language domains for use at school for academic purposes and out of school for social and professional needs. They are academically expected to be able to understand a text written in a simple language in link with their daily environment (reading and writing communication skills), understand oral content produced in simple language in link with their daily environment (listening skills), communicate easily on everyday topics and emerging issues when the interlocutor speaks slowly and, facilitating interaction (speaking skills), and finally write a simple, coherent text in everyday matters or topics of personal interest to describe an experience or express an opinion (writing skills).[9]

Compréhension écrite (*Reading comprehension*)	**Compréhension orale (*Listening comprehension*)**	**Expression orale (*Speaking*)**	**Expression écrite (*Writing*)**

Expected competency domains in the Grade 10 curriculum.

To ensure the acquisition of these skills, [9] recommends that EFL teachers seek resources that provide learners with language knowledge (including grammar, vocabulary, and oral and writing communication techniques), encourage them to apply the acquired knowledge through tasks, and help them develop positive learning habits (such as regularly practicing what they have learned). Instruction is expected to be integrated within the first two competency domains (receptive and productive skills), but the last two skills are taught separately (focusing only on productive skills). This breakdown highlights a modeling pedagogical approach that begins with controlled activities, progresses through semi-controlled tasks, and culminates in free practice activities. As a result, the curriculum places a greater emphasis on the teacher's role in scaffolding the learning experience, with a focus on accuracy rather than fluency or proficiency. As [21] noted, this form of CLT is common in countries with limited external exposure to English, especially when CLT principles are not adapted or contextualized. A closer examination of the roles of learners, teachers, and the teaching context will provide deeper insight into how this framework operates.

EFL Learners' Needs and Roles in the Curriculum

The 10th-grade EFL curriculum expects students to engage in learning situations, reflect on and analyze problems, and derive meaning from them.[9] According to [9], grade 10 students in Burkina Faso are expected to acquire skills that allow them to conceptualize new ideas in existing situations and develop solutions based on their personal understanding of the instructional content. After acquiring knowledge at school, they should be able to apply their learning to solve problems or complete tasks in contexts that reflect social realities. High-order thinking activities are intended to encourage students to actively contribute to teaching-learning scenarios.

Despite the curriculum's clear emphasis on an active learner role, the practical recommendations place the learner in a passive position, creating a contradiction between the curriculum designers' intentions and the recommended pedagogical approaches. The suggested instructional method follows the traditional three Ps (Presentation, Practice, Production) without offering guidance on how to connect the curriculum units to learners' community and social knowledge. This issue is compounded by national performance indicators, which are evaluated through a national exam. These requirements pressure teachers to ensure they cover all compulsory curriculum units, often resulting in washback effects that shape teachers' thinking and practices.[33] This leads to a lack of high-order thinking and content contextualization in some instructional scenarios.

The three Ps are typically framed around learning and integration situations where students predominantly play a passive role during the first two phases (Presentation and Practice) and a nuanced active role only during the integration phase (Production). Accuracy is prioritized over proficiency, with pedagogical practices focusing on modeling verbal behaviors, leaving little room for errors or unplanned outcomes. This teacher-centered output-focused approach contradicts CLT's emphasis on student-centered practices. Consequently, communication in this context is often scenario-based, without clear implications for the practical use of ideas or language skills outside of academic settings. This is largely due to the backward-design approach used for the curriculum design in which both teachers and students have no control over teaching and learning activities and processes. As the curriculum focuses heavily on output, teachers lack the pedagogical freedom to make learning meaningful and relevant to the sociocultural realities of the students and their communities.

Role of the Teacher in the Curriculum

According to [21] framework, teachers in CLT-based curricula are expected to act as learning facilitators. Their role is to create classroom contexts that offer students meaningful learning opportunities, both in terms of receiving input and producing output. This aligns with [10], which describes teachers as guides on the side in CLT-driven classrooms. Creating context means contextualizing content to match it with local realities and building instruction on students' background knowledge of the different units. This last-mile task requires flexibility in the curriculum, not only in its expectations in terms of teaching and learning but also its expectations in terms of learning monitoring

and evaluation.

However, as seen in the 10th-grade curriculum, while the teacher's role as a facilitator is theoretically emphasized, in practice, they are positioned more as instructors who control the majority of the teaching and learning situations. The three Ps approach recommended for teaching contradicts the "guide on the side" concept. The first two stages of instruction (Presentation and Practice) require teachers to take a central role. Initially, students are expected to familiarize themselves with topics and concepts under the teacher's guidance. Only once the teacher is confident that students have mastered the concepts are they allowed to practice writing or speaking freely on topics related to the unit.

Stages	Grammar or vocabulary	Listening comprehension	Reading comprehension	Speaking or writing
Stage 1	Presentation	Pre-listening	Pre-reading	Familiarization
Stage 2	Practice	While-listening	While-reading	• Controlled practice • Guided practice
Stage 3	Production	Post-listening	Post-reading	Free practice / Dramatization

Instruction Methodology, [9]

Teachers are primarily controlled by detailed teaching plans provided by the curriculum designers that dictate the progression from units to lessons and specify the amount of time allocated to each lesson. Regardless of class size, classroom context, student levels, or community realities, all EFL teachers in Burkina Faso are required to follow the same pace nationwide in terms of progress in the implementation of the curriculum. The curriculum does not take into account various socioeconomic factors. In order to prepare students from disadvantaged schools and communities for national assessments, teachers are forced to teach to the test, focusing primarily on academic needs and exerting more control over classroom discourses and the use of English.

The centrality of the teacher's role is evident, especially in the speaking and writing components. Teachers are expected to model learning with a focus on accuracy rather than creating contexts for fostering fluency. This approach contradicts the strong adherence to constructivist and socio-reconstructionist CLT principles.[11], [10] According to [21], such contradictions in the application of CLT are common in many foreign countries where CLT principles are not adapted to national realities.

Role of context in the curriculum

The learning context in the 10th-grade curriculum is much more limited to the classroom. Teachers are expected to make classroom learning real-world-like by using authentic materials initially created for purposes other than teaching.[9] Practically, this recommendation is far to reach as the teacher is sometimes the only fluent speaker of English in the community and does not have the logistics needed to use audiovisual resources. The curriculum designers define authentic materials as newspapers, videos, pictures, and audio created for non-academic purposes. Such materials are sometimes nonexistent in the school context, and when teachers get them, there is sometimes no electricity, let alone projectors and sound systems to use them.

The analysis of the 10th-grade curriculum in Burkina Faso shows a generic presentation of the teaching and learning contexts without specific consideration of the variation of the national context of Burkina Faso from town to rural areas. There is no particular orientation on how to implement activities for big classes, nor specific orientation for teachers of remote areas where students sometimes lack books and only hear English when their teacher speaks it. Teachers sometimes do not have printers to provide students with pictures for picture talk, and administration can generally not afford to print the recommended materials as they sometimes do not have printers. From what can be observed, context is key to Burkina Faso's successful implementation of CLT and any students-centered pedagogical approach. Matching curriculum designers' intentions with learning outcomes is almost impossible without a clear national definition of the teaching and learning contexts and pedagogical orientation.

Design and Organization of the Curriculum

CLT curricula are designed to integrate language and

content objectives to develop students' communicative skills. These curricula specify both the language skills to be acquired and the methods or content required to support practical language use in the classroom. Resources are provided to help teachers address the four language domains—reading, listening, speaking, and writing—in an integrated manner. The curriculum prioritizes students' ability to perform across these domains in content areas, with language support (such as vocabulary and grammar) being a secondary objective.

In Burkina Faso's EFL curriculum, students are expected to express themselves both orally and in writing, following the basic rules of the language, while being able to listen, read, and understand oral and written material in everyday situations.[9] The curriculum also aims to prepare 10th-grade students to become citizens with English language skills in both oral and written communication, enabling them to pursue general or technical secondary education. To achieve these goals, the curriculum encourages teachers to emphasize learner interaction, use authentic materials (e.g., newspaper articles, radio or film excerpts, photos), and contextualize learning situations to prepare students for real-world communicative needs beyond the classroom. These theoretical aims align with CLT principles but are contradicted by the practical recommendations for teachers.

Upon examining the 10th-grade curriculum, I observed that it is structured around eight units and fifteen lessons, all to be covered nationwide in 84 hours (60 hours of teaching and 24 hours allocated for assessments and remediation). These eight units, which are intended to be implemented from October to May, follow a specific chronological order according to the academic calendar. Teachers must strictly adhere to the planned schedule, as any deviation would risk failing to prepare students for the national assessments of learning outcomes as set by the curriculum designers. During the first quarter (October, November, and December), teachers are required to cover units on "Love and Marriage Celebrations," "Food and Health," and "Migrations," including related grammar and vocabulary. In the second quarter (January, February, and March), the units on "Heroes," "The Environment," and "Training and Jobs" must be covered. Finally, the third quarter (April and May) focuses on "Tolerance," "Literature," and "Civilization." In June, a nationwide assessment evaluates students' understanding of the content from these eight units, as well as the required language competencies.

Each unit is accompanied by detailed content lessons, grammar structures, language use objectives, and the designated instruction time. Teachers are tasked with ensuring full implementation of the curriculum, which can hinder the adoption of best pedagogical practices. The national exam outcomes become a priority, often leading teachers to focus more on covering the prescribed content than on fostering real-world language use. This situation is further exacerbated by the backwash effects of the national assessments, which prioritize "teaching to the test" over communicative approaches.[33], [30]

The 10th-grade curriculum, although theoretically aligned with communicative goals, focuses heavily on output, limiting opportunities for pedagogical innovation. Both teachers and students are constrained by the detailed national guidelines which control teaching and learning processes. Curriculum designers determine the focus for each unit's language domain and specify the amount of time to be dedicated to each lesson. In urban and private schools, where resources are more available, teachers may have some flexibility to implement creative teaching strategies while still meeting the curriculum's requirements. However, in rural and public schools with overcrowded classrooms and limited resources, teachers struggle to meet even the minimum expectations outlined in the curriculum.

The detailed curriculum blueprint does not align with the integrated skills approach typical of CLT-based curricula.[10], [22], [13] For example, the "Language Use" column of the curriculum outlines specific expectations for reading comprehension (e.g., reading for general information and details) and vague expectations for writing (e.g., writing a paragraph). However, speaking is only generally addressed, and listening is not specifically highlighted as a priority in the output section. This omission sends a signal to teachers that listening comprehension is less important in the classroom, leading to a disproportionate focus on reading comprehension, limited writing practices, and a lack of listening comprehension activities during instructional time. Nonetheless, some teachers take

proactive steps to create opportunities outside of instructional time to reinforce students' skills across all four language domains.[33]

	Competencies		Units	lessons	Content objectives	Language objectives	Language use	Number of hours
1rst Quarter	**Reading comprehension :** Larners must be able to read and understand a text written in simple language in link with the themes: *Love and marriage celebrations, food and health,* and *migrations* **Listening comprehension :** Larners must be able to listen and understand an oral production in simple language in link with the themes: *Love and marriage celebrations, food and health,* et *migrations* **Speaking** Larners must be able to basically	**Octobre**	**1. Love and marriage celebrations**	**01. The ideal partner (Physical and moral features)**	- Discussing advantages and drawbacks - Describing features	Review of : - Past perfect tense - Indirect/ direct speech Adverbs	- Skim a text (reading for the general idea or the gist) - Scan a text (reading for specific information or details) - Identify the topic sentence and the secondary ideas of a paragraph. - Write a paragraph. Use the vocabulary and grammar items to express themselves either orally or in writing.	4
				02.Traditional weddings vs modern weddings				4
				Evaluation				2
				Remediation				2
		Novembre	**2. Food and health**	**01. Sound nutrition**	- Explaining purpose - Arguing	- Infinitive after passive *(she was heard to say…He was made to sing)* - Modals: Need/ dare - Passive voice If clauses (type 3)		4
				02. Local foods contribution to sound nutrition				4
				Evaluation				**2**
				Remediation				**2**
		Décembre	**3. Migrations**	**01. Home migration (rural exodus)**	- Giving reasons - Sensitising	-Coordination: *Yet, however, still, as well as* - I'd like to; If you want to - So he is; So, I am		**3**
				02. Overseas				**3**

10th-grade EFL Curriculum organization and content, MENAPL (2021, p. 58)

The national evaluation of the outputs of the 10th-grade curriculum assigns one credit to a reading comprehension test and two credits to a speaking test, which also assesses students' understanding of a short paragraph on the themes and topics covered in the curriculum's units and lessons. While the curriculum broadly defines communication to include needs beyond the academic environment, in practice, communication is limited to academic discourse, mainly revolving around topics and themes determined by the curriculum designers. This lack of adaptation in both the learning and assessment contexts results in a disconnect between the curriculum's theoretical CLT principles and its practical implementation in EFL classrooms in Burkina Faso. The failure to align these contexts effectively hinders the realization of CLT's communicative goals.

Assessment in the Curriculum

Assessment and feedback play a crucial role in teaching and learning, providing valuable insights to teachers, students, and other stakeholders regarding progress toward meeting policy and curricular expectations. [9] mandates that teachers conduct ongoing formative assessments and three graded summative assessments each quarter. However, the language use objectives in the curriculum do not fully align with the need to assess learners' comprehensive communication skills at the end of each unit. While teachers are instructed to assess reading comprehension—such as students' ability to skim, scan, and identify key ideas in a text—the curriculum leaves the assessment of oral and written communication skills to the discretion of the teacher.

Moreover, the curriculum's detailed plan and lesson objectives lack specificity regarding what should be taught, learned, and assessed. Given that neither textbooks for teachers nor students are provided, teachers are often expected to source texts themselves for the relevant units. The curriculum takes an output-oriented approach, but it lacks the necessary resources to ensure that instructional and learning activities align with national objectives, potentially leading to inequities in national assessments.

The curriculum follows a backward design approach while recommending forward design strategies—this theoretical inconsistency creates significant pedagogical challenges. The curriculum is caught

between traditional teacher-centered methods and the expected student-centered approach. While general national standards are intended to guide assessment at the national level, the absence of specific national assessment criteria means that teaching and learning can diverge from the intended outcomes of the final national assessment.

Discussion

From the above analysis, it can be deduced that the 10th-grade EFL curriculum in Burkina Faso has a socio-reconstructionist goal, a constructivist pedagogical perspective, and traditional didactic recommendations. First, the stated curricular goal is to prepare students to use English for communication purposes within school contexts and in the community. However, eight specific themes and lessons must be covered within specific times. It does not allow school-level contextualization to include topics of interest to students based on their local contexts. It does not give clear evaluation criteria to allow teachers to adapt the themes and lessons to their class size and school realities. The detailed curriculum is a prescription with little room for extra activities that could interest students and their communities unless initiated outside official instruction time.

Second, the curriculum claims that teachers should have student-centered approaches to teaching. However, it recommended that teachers have 2/3 control over instructional activities as teachers are called to use the three Ps to model students' communication on selected topics. Such an approach is teacher-centered as the free production expected in the third P is a scaffolded production to demonstrate guided learning. Curricular expectations in such pedagogical practices tie the teachers' hands. In turn, teachers tie the hands of the students to avoid trouble with supervisors.

Third, the curriculum claimed adherence to CLT with an aspiration for a Competency-Based Approach, considered the strongest form of CLT.[11], [10] However, it does not allow teachers to do classroom-level planning as it gives a specific annual plan with eight (08) specific units and fifteen (15) lessons to cover in 60 hours. The distribution of the instruction time to each unit and lesson gives no room for introducing other topics that might interest students. A maximum of four (04) hours per lesson seems insufficient to engage students in communicative activities (in the four skills), given that each 10th-grade class in public schools in Burkina Faso has a minimum of forty (40) students in some regions.

Moreover, the 10th-grade EFL curriculum in Burkina referred to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for language teaching, learning, and assessment. CEFR views the language "user/learner as a social agent, acting in the social world and exerting agency in the learning process" ([19], p. 22). It is not an operational tool but a strategic one developed in a distant context that does not match the context of Burkina Faso. The strategic CEFR definition is not reflected in the detailed plan, though the insinuation could be in the unit and lesson titles. For instance, most EFL learners in Burkina Faso cannot use English outside of school to act in the social world on the selected themes and topics. For that to happen, there should be pedagogical innovation and didactic creativity.

As it can be inferred, CLT principles in EFL classrooms in Burkina Faso are a policy and curricular dream that can only come true through contextual definitions, pedagogical innovations, and didactic creativity. The whole document is well-written and aligns with most CLT principles. However, the practical orientations fall back to traditional practices, certainly based on the curriculum designers' knowledge of the challenges of the context. Unfortunately, that knowledge of the national context did not lead to deeper contextualization. When the curriculum designers recommend the teaching of listening, knowing that most 10th-grade classrooms in Burkina Faso do not have electricity, no printing machines, and the logistics needed for audiovisual resources, they appear idealistic with little to no practical consideration. It would have been good for the curriculum to have context-specific orientation on conducting listening and picture talk activities when there are no logistics for doing it in the common ways. In the following section, I recommend some practical approaches that could help EFL teachers introduce the themes and topics of the different lessons in ways closer to the curriculum's goal and its referred principles.

Practical Recommendation to EFL Teachers

EFL teachers are often the first to be blamed by students, parents, and schools when communication

goals are not achieved. This is partly because the curriculum itself is typically unknown to students and their families, leaving them unaware of the inherent challenges. While teachers may rightly point to the curriculum's lack of resources and its inability to support their efforts, they risk becoming double victims of the system. On one hand, students and parents may blame teachers for not developing students' communicative skills adequately. On the other hand, curriculum designers and inspectors will hold teachers accountable for not strictly following the prescribed curriculum. It is important, therefore, to critically analyze the curriculum while finding strategies to shift from teacher-controlled classrooms to student-centered approaches.

In this section, I offer recommendations that could maximize the use of communicative approaches, even in situations where resources are scarce and classrooms are overcrowded. As an active participant in the Burkina English Teachers' Association (BETA), the author has witnessed teachers seeking out resources from their colleagues every year to effectively teach the different units. This need for resources is particularly pressing given that Burkina Faso has updated its curricula multiple times over the past two decades, yet the same textbook has been used in grade 10 throughout these changes.

One recommendation is for BETA to lead the development of student and teacher handbooks that align with the eight modules and fifteen lessons of the 10th-grade curriculum. The student handbook can be derived from the detailed curriculum and made available to students at the beginning of each school year. A mixed steering committee consisting of inspectors, teacher educators, and didactic resource designers could contribute to quality assurance, while experienced teachers can propose content based on lessons of their choice.

The proposed handbook could cover the input goals outlined in the first two stages (Presentation and Practice) of the curriculum's pedagogical recommendations. By providing this resource, the responsibility for these stages of teaching would be partially handled, leaving teachers more time and flexibility to focus on the final stage—Practice. Furthermore, mobilizing resources at the community level could help ensure that students have free access to these handbooks, allowing teachers to incorporate flipped classroom strategies. This would provide more time for the application of learning and the practical use of knowledge during instruction time.

If all students have access to copies of the handbook, teachers could reduce the time spent on presentations and dedicate more time to discussions, analysis, and deeper content exploration. Below is an example of how one unit, specifically Unit 1: Love and Marriage Celebrations, which is typically taught in October, could be structured to meet curricular expectations while saving teachers valuable instructional time:

Unit 1: Love and Marriage Celebrations

Overview: The overview can be a text about love and marriage celebrations in the student community. It can be a text of three to four paragraphs produced by the teachers through ethnographic inquiries about the local marriage processes in the regions, provinces, or departments where they teach. The overview should be about traditional weddings if the teacher is posted in rural areas and modern weddings if they teach in urban areas. Appropriate pictures should be included to guide warm-up discussions about the unit's theme. This overview can be one page.

Learning objectives: The unit's learning objectives are based on the two lessons required in the curriculum. Hence, at the end of this unit, students should be able to write and talk about love and marriage celebrations in traditional and modern worlds. They should also be able to understand a text or a short conversation about marriage processes in both traditional and modern ways.

Major concepts (Presentation): This part presents the key concepts linked to marriage celebrations in traditional and modern ways. The traditional process must be based on the perspectives of local communities. Practices in Burkina Faso should also inform the key concepts of the modern process.

Activities (Practice): For this section, teachers must provide three to five paragraphs of texts on marriage processes, one text for traditional processes (focusing on practices in the student's local community), and one on modern national practices. Those texts should be written with intentional use of the language features recommended in the curriculum. Reading comprehension questions, guided essay questions, and

discussion topics/pictures should follow each text. Grammar lessons can conclude the activities and cover the recommendations of the curriculum designers.

Students' ethnographic research (Production): This is the last important P that requires writing and oral presentations. From the first two Ps, they would acquire the language skills needed for production in the content area. Teachers can now teach them interview, report writing, summary, and presentation techniques and prompt them to interview their parents about marriage celebrations in their communities. It would be important for the teacher to provide a sample interview report (dialogue) on the marriage process in his/her community and explain the process he/she followed to produce that dialogue or essay. For instance, record the interviews in their home language, transcribe or summarize them in French, and translate them into English. Students would then be prompted to recommend techniques to complete the activities. Translanguaging and codemeshing could be allowed for a focus on fluency. Words that are not translated could be provided by the teachers during presentations or when grading the papers. Students can be asked to compare what they record from their parents with the texts they have read in the activity sections. This can be a project to carry out throughout October. Their final product can be turned in at the end of the month as the summative evaluation of the unit.

Conclusion

The findings from the examination of the 10th-grade EFL curriculum in Burkina Faso reveal that while the curriculum designers have made some efforts to align with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles, they have not sufficiently integrated the local context, which limits its practical implementation. Given that students in Burkina Faso rarely have an anglophone context outside of school and often come from families that do not speak the school's language, it becomes challenging for teachers to meet all the expected learning goals within the 60 hours of annual instruction, particularly when preparing students for national exams. The curriculum theoretically advocates for a strong form of CLT, yet the practical recommendations lean towards the traditional three Ps (Presentation, Practice, and Production), which are rooted in audio-lingual pedagogies. Given the short instruction time and the overcrowded classrooms, teachers often resort to focusing primarily on the first two Ps, limiting opportunities for true communicative practice.[30], [26], [34]

To address these challenges and help teachers achieve the communicative goals set out in the curriculum, I recommend an inclusive approach to curriculum design and implementation. This would involve moving from the current backward design approach to a forward design approach, which aligns better with the practical realities of teaching in Burkina Faso. A forward design approach would allow for more flexibility and responsiveness to the local context, thereby enabling teachers to address the needs of students more effectively.

For a successful adoption of a student-centered, CLT-based curriculum, it is essential that EFL curriculum designers in Burkina Faso initiate a national debate on the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of teaching and learning. This debate should aim at fundamental and structural reforms that are both theory-informed and practically actionable. Unfortunately, many curriculum changes in Burkina Faso have not been accompanied by necessary reforms in these areas, which partly explains why most innovations in EFL teaching and learning have failed. One glaring contradiction is the adoption of CLT without CLT-informed textbooks or didactic resources.

To implement a forward design approach, I recommend collaborating with curriculum designers, the Ministry of Education, teacher trainers, inspectors, and teachers to produce relevant teaching materials and student handbooks. These materials should be available to students free of charge. If the Three Ps pedagogical model remains a focus in the curriculum, the student handbooks could be designed to cover the controlled and semi-controlled activities (Presentation and Practice) while allowing teachers to concentrate more on the third P (Production) during classroom instruction. The Burkina English Teachers' Association (BETA) could take the lead in developing these handbooks, in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education and Literacy (MENAPLN) and other partners. BETA could seek grants to ensure the handbooks are available in rural school libraries, allowing students from low-income families to borrow them for free and use them throughout the school year.

Additionally, BETA and MENAPLN could explore partnerships with the multimedia sector to provide subsidized, rechargeable sound systems for EFL teachers in both urban and rural areas. These sound systems would facilitate listening comprehension activities, which are essential for a well-rounded language education.

Another key component of this approach is involving local communities in their children's education. By interviewing parents about the curriculum units and lessons, teachers can create opportunities for learning in home languages, such as French and English, which can deepen understanding of the themes and topics being taught. This collaborative effort would provide valuable learning opportunities for both students and their parents, fostering a community-driven approach to education that strengthens the connection between school and the local context.

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