



English Language Teachers' and Educators' Perspectives on the BGCSE English Language Curriculum Implementation Using CLT

Mbizo Mafuraga

Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST), Botswana

Corresponding Author Email: mafuragam@biust.ac.bw

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v8i5.2754>

APA Citation: Mafuraga, M. (2026). English Language Teachers' and Educators' Perspectives on the BGCSE English Language Curriculum Implementation Using CLT. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, 8(5).437-454. <https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v8i5.2754>

Received:

24/06/2026

Accepted:

20/08/2026

Keywords:

Communicative Language Teaching, Continuous Professional Development, Curriculum

Abstract

This paper is part of a thesis project carried out on the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the teaching of an English Language curriculum. CLT by teachers and educators is the first step and key to the implementation of the approach. Supporting teachers who implement the curriculum is the second key step in the implementation process. The purpose of this paper therefore was to appraise the views of teachers and educators responsible for the teaching of high/senior secondary school English Language curriculum in implementing the BGCSE English Language using CLT. The researcher employed the qualitative approach and collected data using oral interview and questionnaire. Data was collected by interviewing five educators and administering a questionnaire to twenty-nine teachers of English Language from six senior secondary schools. Although the research findings show a good understanding of CLT by the teachers, the approach is not yet fully implemented. Teachers pay more attention to writing and reading neglecting speaking and listening. Also, there is misalignment between assessment practices and CLT principles. There is also lack of continuous professional development for teachers.

Introduction

Background

New trends in teaching and assessment in education in general keep on emerging. The emergence of such trends necessitates that curriculum delivery and assessment at all levels of education keep abreast of them. For instance, in the late 20th century there was a shift from using old approaches of teaching English Language to the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). At that time, CLT was a new approach that focused more on communicative competence of learners. Hence, the call to teach the four language skills: reading, speaking, listening and writing. As a result of this, English Language teaching also had to evolve. Evolving meant development and implementation of new English Language curricula to conform and align with CLT principles in terms of teaching, learning and assessment. It is under such situations that in-service plays a crucial role in upskilling and retooling the teachers.

The Problem

The teaching of English Language using CLT at senior secondary school in Botswana was introduced and implemented towards the end of the 20th century. When this happened, the aim was to improve learners' communicative competence. Hence, the syllabus would cover all the four language skills for the achievement of this objective, thus, delivering content in the classroom in a communicative manner and covering all the four language skills. Furthermore,

assessment practices and processes were supposed to be aligned with CLT principles. For this to happen, teachers, who are at the centre of curriculum implementation, had to be fully supported through in-servicing to fully understand the content of the new curriculum and perform optimally. However, full implementation of the said curriculum appears not to have been realised. The concern of the study therefore is why full implementation of the new curriculum has not been realised after more than two decades of CLT approach use and the implication that this has on both the learners and the teachers.

Research Question

The overall research question is: How do English Language teachers and educators/subject Officers perceive implementation of the BGCSE English Language curriculum?

Objectives

The objectives of this paper were to:

1. Appraise the views of teachers and Educators on the implementation of the BGCSE English Language curriculum using CLT.
2. Assess the extent of in-service on supporting teachers in the implementation of the BGCSE English Language curriculum.

Literature Review

Introduction

Botswana was a British Protectorate from 1885 to 1966 when she attained independence. Upon attainment of independence English and Setswana became the country's two official languages. English was used mainly for official purposes and as a medium of instruction in the education system. The language was valued very highly with a lot of prestige attached to it. Arthur (1996) puts it that "in the education system of Botswana, English is given structural preferment through its prestigious role as the main Language of instruction and through its use in official documents" (p.51).

English Language in Botswana's Education System

Learning English as a second language was regarded highly in the country's education system. As Olaotse and Oats (2019) note, English Language played and continues to play a very important role in providing an enabling means of communication in the teaching and learning process.

After attaining independence in 1966, Botswana strived to develop its education system. One such way of developing education was by constituting commissions on education in 1977 and 1993. The two education commissions came to be known as the 1977 and 1993 Commissions on Education. The latter Commission on Education was followed by what was termed, the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) released in April 1994. After its release, the RNPE had a significant bearing on the curriculum that was to be offered in the schools, including that of English Language. The 1993 National Commission on Education called for the localisation of both the senior secondary school syllabus and the final examinations. These were given clear focus by the 1994 RNPE.

The 1994 RNPE notes that in the mid-1990s, government started the process of localising both the senior secondary school syllabi and the final examinations. For English Language as a subject, Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLT) was introduced in the teaching of the subject. With CLT focus was expected to be on all the four language skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Previously, the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) syllabus was used which was structural in approach. The COSC Syllabus ignored or gave very little attention to speaking and listening. The two skills were also not assessed. With the CLT approach, expectation was that all four language skills would be given equal attention through teaching and assessment means.

Introduction of the CLT-based BGCSE English Language curriculum

As noted earlier, before the shift to a CLT based syllabus, the COSC syllabus was used. The syllabus focused on grammar, reading comprehension and composition writing only. Towards the end of the 20th century, the then Ministry of Education through the Examinations, Research and Testing Division (ERTD) assumed, for the first time, full responsibility for running the senior secondary school final examinations. This then necessitated the development and introduction of a new senior secondary school English Language curriculum, the Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) English Language Syllabus.

Review of Literature in Botswana

There is very limited recently published literature on the implementation of the new curriculum at the BGCSE level. Amongst a few notable scholars who have researched certain aspects of this BGCSE curriculum is Nkosana. Nkosana (2008) notes that the new syllabus was a product of a task force that had been formed to develop it based on CLT principles.

As stated earlier, the aim was to teach and assess all four language skills from a communicative approach perspective. Despite these efforts, speaking and listening have never been given attention either during teaching or in assessment. On that note, Fetogang (2016) comments that this has led to teachers only focusing on what is assessed in the final examinations, the washback effect. Maryslessor's Barasa's and Omulando's findings (2014) are aligned to Fetogang's assertion when they say the way the examinations are set influences teachers to cover components that the examination covers leaving out those that it does not. The authors say, "the nature of examination, however, does not encourage aspects of CLT like role play, dialogue, debate, public speaking, dictation, listening comprehension and others" (Maryslessor1, Barasa & Omulando, 2014, p.88). Moremi, Mafuraga and Mogotsi's (2018) study reveals that teachers focus more on writing and reading and neglect speaking and listening in both teaching and assessment. This is because the latter two skills play no role in the Final Examinations assessment of the learners. Teachers only cover what the examinations assess and this is not the basis upon which CLT was introduced. In such situations, learners' most likely exit senior secondary schooling with inadequate communicative competence. Hence, failure to attain the syllabus' objectives or goals.

In 2015, a Member of Parliament asked a question in the Botswana parliament whether there was any in-service training for teachers. The question was, however, specifically on a senior secondary school. The answer to the question was that there were none (BWgovernment, 2015). It can be deduced that this situation was applicable to other schools. Lack of funds, which was given as a reason for not providing in-service training could not be applicable to only one school since all of them are funded the same way and from the same source. It therefore goes without saying that full implementation of this curriculum could not be achieved without in-service training of the teachers. This also confirmed by Mothudi's and Bosman's (2015) findings (although conducted at the JC level) that 78% and 84% of teachers who participated in their research agreed and strongly agreed with the following statements respectively: "Teachers do not teach communicatively" and "Teachers continue to use traditional methodologies" (p.122). This is indicative adoption of CLT only in theory and not in practice.

So, the forgone discussion paints a picture where the implementation of a new CLT-based does not conform to the principles of CLT, the results of which may not have been what the new syllabus aimed at developing in the learners. The new syllabus was aimed at developing learners' communicative competence (Ministry of Education, 2000) by teaching and assessing all four language skills. However, full implementation of CLT has not been attained.

A Synopsis Review of Literature of selected countries in Sub-Saharan Africa

This part features a brief literature review of some selected countries that teach English as a second language, like Botswana, at high/senior secondary using the CLT approach. The idea was to make a comparison with Botswana in terms of the implementation.

Lesotho

Lesotho's shift to the Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE), a local CLT-based syllabubs took effect in 2013. Before then, they were using a COSC syllabus like Botswana. With the LGCSE in effect, several studies were conducted on the implementation of the CLT-based syllabus. Amongst such were those conducted by Moea (2023) whose analysis of the LGCSE English Language syllabus ideology revealed that teachers are ill equipped to implement the curriculum. This means that they do not possess adequate and up-to-date skills to implement the curriculum and this is ten years after its introduction. In another study, Moea (2024) findings reveals that "curriculum limitations and a focus on examination-related competencies may also play a role" (pp. 415-416). The findings reveal that the demands of the examinations compel teachers to focus more on what is going to be tested and less or ignore altogether what is not tested but being part of the curriculum. Furthermore, the study "identified professional development needs among teachers. Many reported inadequate training . . ." (p.417). In-service training was also found to be lacking further impeding the achievement of the aims of the new syllabus.

Also, Ekanjume-Ilongo and Letsie conducted some studies to assess the implementation of the LGCSE English Language curriculum. These studies largely triggered by the realisation that learners who graduated from high school/senior secondary school and went for further studies at the National University of Lesotho (NUL) appeared to have been ill-prepared in the acquisition of English language competencies. Ekanjume-Ilongo (2015) notes that staff from the English Department at NUL has, over the years, lamented the very poor quality of students they receive from the high school as far as the English Language skills is concerned. This remark was made under the backdrop of poor communication skills displayed by students newly admitted into the university. The study findings were that students graduate from high school with low competencies in English Language due to poor foundation in the teaching of the subject at that level. Ekanjume-Ilongo (2015) also bewails the English Language teaching at the LGCSE level because it is skewed more towards reading and writing and reading disregarding speaking and listening. The author notes the biasness in the teaching of the English Language in the LGCSE English Language curriculum. The findings reveal selective teaching of some skills (writing and some reading) leaving out the others (speaking and listening). In general, their studies show some shortfalls in relation to teaching, learning and assessment of the new syllabus.

Another study by Letsie's (2019) notes that the LGCSE English Language assessment "consists of two components, namely writing and reading" (p.59). This supports Ekanjume-Ilongo's findings about teaching and assessment that they are skewed towards certain skills ignoring others. Therefore, unequal attention on these language skills may not yield the results expected of a CLT-based curriculum.

Zimbabwe

Like Botswana and Lesotho, Zimbabwe shifted to a CLT-based English Language curriculum at senior secondary school in the late 20th century. However, this shift has had hurdles in the implementation of this approach. For example, Mupupuni's (2024) study reveals one hurdle as "partial focus on preparing students for professional environment" (p.275). This incomplete focus on the curriculum disadvantages learners as fail to fully acquire communicative competencies that the CLT-based curriculum aims they should get. Hence, partial implementation of the curriculum

In another study, two lecturers, Mareva and Nyota (2012), in Communication Skills at one university, also realised some hurdles in the implementation of the new curriculum. This has resulted in learners' deficiency in the necessary English Language competencies especially of

First-year learners. On investigating on methods and ways of teaching English Language at senior secondary school in Zimbabwe, they found out that the use of the Structural Approach was predominant. In their study report, they indicated that “although the ZIMSEC ‘O’ Level English Language syllabus advocates the communicative approach to the teaching of English Language, teachers in Zimbabwe . . . prefer the Structural Approach. . . (p. 111). Applying this approach resulted in failure to maintain a balance between integrating grammar and communicative competence as its focus is on grammatical form. The Structural Approach is teacher-centred and uses the lecture method, drills and memorisation. It cannot yield the expected CLT outcomes.

In yet another study, Mukenge (2020) also notes that “. . . teachers revealed that language proficiency assessments focus only on the written component which is evaluated through several written tests and examinations . . . despite the curriculum requirement that teachers should assess proficiency in all four skills” (p.117). As stated earlier, this goes against the principles of CLT. The question always remains: why selective application of the CLT principles?

Kenya

Kenya adopted the use of CLT in the teaching of English Language at the start of the 21st century. Like other third world countries, Kenya has had its fair share of challenges in the implementation of the CLT approach. Some of these challenges include. In their study, Barasa, Kiai and Ndeke (2022) found out some of these challenges to include inadequate teaching and learning materials, insufficient exposure of learners to CLT activities like debates, large classes and no in-service platforms such as seminars and workshops. This works against the realisation of the desired results for CLT.

In another study, Kimamo and Gathara (2023) found out that although teachers have good understanding of communicative competence their teaching did not reflect it as what was happening in the classroom cannot result in equipping learners with those competencies. In other words, classroom teaching and CLT expectations were not in harmony.

Namibia

In Namibia, English is taught either as a First or Second language. The teaching of English as a Second language was effected after the country’s attainment of independence in 1990. Most Namibian public schools therefore teach English as Second Language (ESL). In that regard, Haufiku (2022) references Ipinge (2016) as having noted that the Communicative Approach was introduced in the teaching of English as a Second Language in Namibia. Namibia’s senior secondary school English Language curriculum therefore adopted CLT as the teaching approach.

With the adoption of this teaching approach, Namibia also faced some challenges. One notable challenge is that revealed in a study on teaching challenges of the English Language in senior secondary schools in the Ohangwena Region. In this study, Haufiku, Mashebe and Abah, (2022) found out that “. . . the participants articulated that ever since they joined the teaching profession, they had never attended any workshop to inform them about new strategies, and methodology in ESL teaching” (p. 1953). This means there are no opportunities for professional development for teachers. As Densmaa and Enkhbat (2025) put it, professional development for teachers is important because it “involves continuous enhancement of their expertise in terms of teaching pedagogy and being up to date with the latest skills required to function in their profession. In this study, the reasons for no refresher courses are not explicit, leaving the reader to guess. This might be due to several issues such as budgetary constraints, ineffective management and many others. The same study findings reveal other challenges such as lack of advice and parental involvement from the relevant authorities and teachers respectively.

Review of Literature from some other parts of the world

Japan

In Japan, there were similar challenges as those experienced in Sub-Saharan Africa on the implementation of CLT. Yanagi (2016) investigated the challenges students face in oral communication skills. In the investigation, the authour engaged sixteen Japanese students studying in Australia through an interview. In their engagement, the interviewees expressed the view that most Japanese teaching of English emphasises more attention on reading and writing at than speaking and listening. Yanagi therefore concluded that the Japanese education system had failed to teach English Language in a manner that would promote and enhance learners communicative competence.

In another study, Refareal, Angeles and Ratunil (2025) note that, “one participant believes that the communicative method, which emphasizes fluency and spontaneous dialogue, undermines their confidence in their ability to speak English and departs from their conventional teacher- centered responsibilities” (p.8-9). Such a finding shows resistance from some teachers in Japan to teach communicatively. The participant laments CLT for ‘departing’ from traditional teacher-centred teaching. A belief in the traditional teacher-centred by the teacher might mean lack of understanding of CLT probably due to insufficient retooling on what the CLT-based curriculum was all about and what it was meant to achieve. When CLT was introduced, its aim was to bring change in the way the language was taught thus departing from those traditional ways of teaching to place the learner at the centre of the teaching-learning process. The shift was meant to improve the overall learners’ communicative competence.

In yet another study, Smith (2025) found out that “teachers struggle to implement communicative methodologies . . . and insufficient training opportunities” (p. 59). The question therefore is, *why is sufficient training not provided when authorities know its importance in teaching in general?*

Indonesia

Indonesia is one other country that adopted CLT in their English Language syllabus. Chang and Suparmi (2020) note that teachers of English Language in Indonesia face some challenges that prevent them from implementing CLT as should be. The two authors further note that amongst these problems is inadequate time for CLT materials development and lack of in-service training which would help them improve content delivery. Furthermore, their findings reveal that “. . . teachers have limited knowledge about the appropriate use of the method” (Chang and Suparmi, 2020, p.48). This is a very unfortunate situation that may demoralise them in their duty. Teachers are at the centre of curriculum implementation. Their performance determines either the success or failure of curriculum implementation. Hence, they need to be fully equipped with all that is required for them to deliver.

Another problem was that of large class sizes (Syahputra, 2018). With large classes, it is difficult to engage each student in a spoken activity because not all the students might have time to practice spoken language. Furthermore, giving meaningful feedback to individual students might not be possible. Therefore, with large classes teachers normally find themselves resorting to lecture or teacher-centred approach.

Conclusion

The literature reviewed has shown a common trend and constraints in the implementation of CLT in teaching, learning and assessment of English across ESL contexts. Although Vijay and Suresh, (2023) point out that “success or failure of implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) within EFL contexts heavily hinges on teachers' commitment and involvement” (p.2107), the same authors also note Bax’s (2003) study that the “setting where CLT was developed is distinct from the EFL context where CLT is adopted or imported . . .” (p. 2108). It is therefore the EFL settings that are different from where CLT originated that is mainly a cause for most of the failure. In most EFL or ESL situations, unlike the origins of CLT, curriculum aspirations and implementation are far apart due to several constraints. IN EFL or ESL contexts schools function with, amongst others, inadequate teaching and learning

resources, large classes, and with teachers that rarely or never get any in-service or CPD. CPD is “one of the most common problems in implementing CLT in EFL settings” (Heng, 2014, p.28). This aspect of teacher development is vital for continued teacher relevance in their job. On general resource constraints, Bedah, Tarihoran and Heryatun, (2026) underscore the issue by noting that “several studies have shown that limited infrastructure and training cause teachers to continue to rely on traditional methods such as translation or drilling” (p.31). As stated earlier, this is mainly applicable in the EFL context.

Methodology

Research Approach

The qualitative approach was used in this study. Billups (2022) is of the view that “the focus of attention for qualitative research must revolve around the individual and unique experiences of the participants. As many scholars note, the key question in any qualitative exploration is this: What is really going on here?” (p.20). By employing the qualitative approach, the participants’ experiences were sought to give a picture of ‘what’s going on in the teaching of English language’? Hence, giving their own experiences in the teaching of English Language at the BGCSE level.

Sampling

The study population comprised two main categories; a) officers holding certain positions that relate to the teaching and assessment of the BGCSE English language here referred to as educators, and b) teachers of the BGCSE English Language. The former responded to the oral interviews and the latter to the questionnaires. For the oral interviews, participants were purposefully selected. These were three Principal Education Officers, the English Language subject officer at the Botswana Examinations Council (BEC) and the BGCSE English Language Paper 1 Principal Examiner. These participants hold positions that make them directly responsible for the teaching and assessment of English Language at BGCSE. Their mandate therefore positioned them well to give data that added credulity to the study since they are well versed with the teaching and assessment of the subject.

As for the questionnaire, thirty-six teachers were randomly selected (six teachers from each school) in two regions made up of thirteen (13) schools with 156 +/- ten (10) teachers. Each one of these schools has, on average, twelve (12) teachers of English Language from which six (6) were randomly sampled. The reason for random sampling was to get a mix of experience as all the teachers had the required teaching qualification. All the twenty-nine teachers operate under the same conditions in their respective schools.

Data Collection Methods

To get the research participants’ experiences alluded to above, the researcher used two data collection methods, the oral interview and questionnaire. Bowen (2009) notes that it is necessary that a qualitative researcher collects data using several data collection methods for purposes of corroboration. Hence, convergence of data analysed to provide sound understanding of the issue under investigation. Why use questionnaire which is a quantitative method?

Oral Interviews

This study used oral interviews as one of its data collection methods. Ugwu and Eze (2023) say oral interviews are “one-on-one conversations in which questions are directly asked of participants” (p. 24). This engagement often results in rapport building as it brings the interviewer and interviewee close to each other. Taherdoost (2021) says “oral interviews provide a fundamental way of collecting data through social interaction between the interviewee and interviewer” (p.17). Normally, an oral interview guide comprising of questions is prepared before the interview sessions start. This guide is then followed during each session.

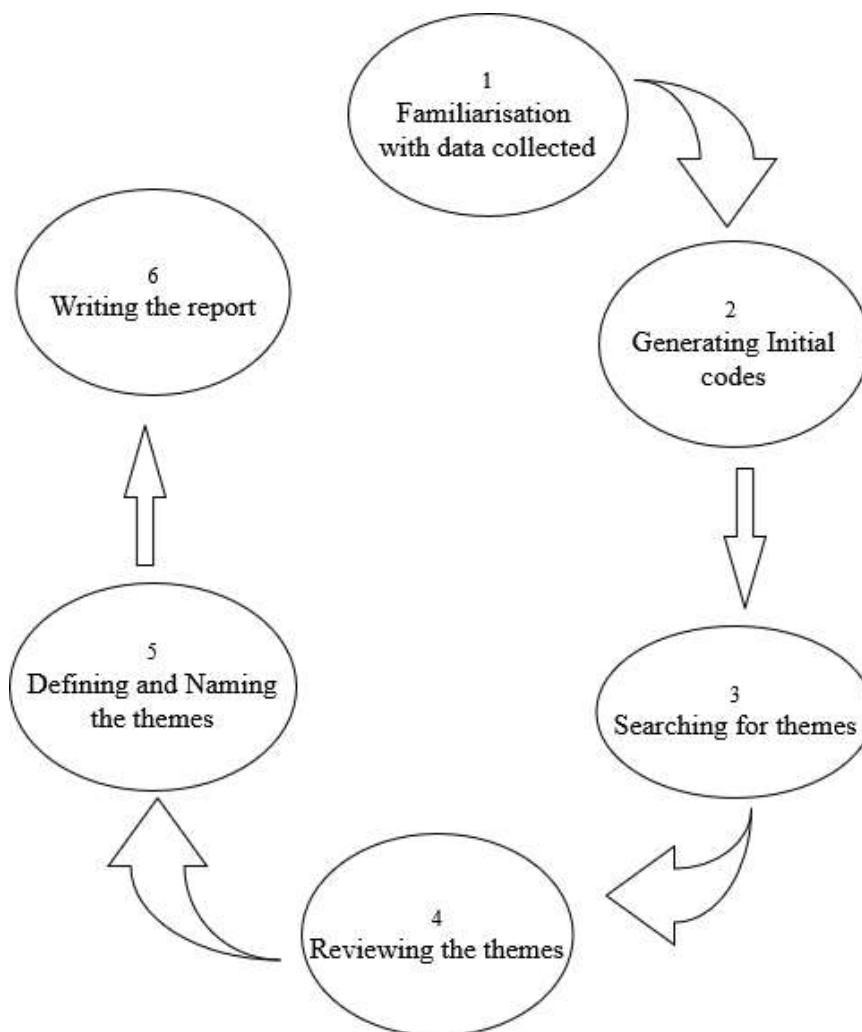
Monday (2020) notes that preparing an oral interview guide is an “essential component for conducting interviews” (p.17). It was therefore necessary for this step to be taken prior to conducting the interviews. The oral interview guide, in the form of open-ended questions, was first prepared. These kinds of questions allowed for probing for both the interviewer and interviewee to allow for clarification of both questions and answers. Both the interviewer and interviewee could make follow-up questions when there is need. The interview sessions were recorded with consent from the interviewees.

Questionnaires

Although a questionnaire is mainly a quantitative data collection method, in this study it was used for qualitative purposes with open-ended questions. As Banda et al (2017) put it the type of data required normally guides the research as to the type of data collection methods to use. In this study, the questionnaire, with open-ended questions, was found suitable to yield deep thick qualitative data about participants’ experiences. The open-ended questions were aimed at getting in-depth views: attitudes, perspectives and most importantly experiences of the teachers and subject officers. In that way, the respondents gave clarification of reasons for their views on the teaching, learning and assessment of the English Language. The use of the questionnaire thus gave the researcher more detailed and elaborate answers. Hence, crucial insights into the issue under investigation shared.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed through Thematic Analysis (TA). Maguire and Delahunt (2017) say TA is a “process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data” (p.3352). As patterns or themes are identified, insights are revealed and informed decisions are made by the researcher. Naeem et al (2023) puts it that “thematic analysis is a highly popular technique among qualitative researchers for analyzing qualitative data, which usually comprises thick descriptive data” (p.1). As indicated earlier, the two data collection methods allowed for the collection of thick data which was then thematically analysed. To analyse data, the study utilised a six-phase process of thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2020) as below.



Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2020)

This process allowed the researcher to make exhaustive analysis of the data which aided in its interpretation. As the researcher went through these steps, themes that emerged were clustered together by merging similar content of the data, at the same time coding it accordingly so that meaning and sense could be derived to address the research questions. Data from the oral interviews, which had been audio recorded, was transcribed before analysis to reproduce responses in written text.

Results/Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the research, addressing perceptions of English Language teachers and officers on the implementation of the BGCSE English Language curriculum. First, demographic information about the participants is given followed by a presentation of the results. Five (5) educators were orally interviewed with the duration of the sessions ranging from 10 to 25 minutes here referred to as I. O for Oral Interviewees. These oral interviews were executed on a one-on-one basis and audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. On completion of all the interviews, the researcher transcribed the audios. For the teachers, twenty-nine (29) responded to the questionnaires.

Table 1: Demographic data for the Oral Interviewees (O.I.)

	Educator	Position held	Experience (In Years)	Highest qualification	Gender
	O.I. 1	Subject Officer	11 and above	MA	F

Perspectives on BGCSE English Curriculum Implementation Using CLT

	Educator	Position held	Experience (In Years)	Highest qualification	Gender
	O.I. 2	Principal Education Officer	6 – 10	BA	M
	O.I. 3	Principal Education Officer	11 and above	MA	M
	O. I. 4	Principal Education Officer	11 and above	BA	M
	O. I. 5	Principal Examiner – BGCSE English Language final Examinations	6 -10	BA	F
Total	5				

O. I = Oral Interviewee

Table 2: Summary of Demographic data of participants of all the schools

	Age group				Highest qualification		Position held		Gender		Teaching Years Experience		
	30 Yrs and below	31 -40 Yrs	41 – 50 Yrs	51 Yrs and above	First Degree	Master's Degree	Teacher	Senior Teacher	Male	Female	Below 5 Yrs	6-10 Yrs	11 Yrs and above
Totals	0	3	23	3	27	2	27	2	11	18	1	2	26
Totals	29				29		29		29				

Lack of Professional Development in CLT Implementation

90 % of teachers overwhelmingly expressed dissatisfaction about the lack of professional development prospects for them on the CLT implementation. They reported that they were not adequately in-serviced to fully implement this curriculum in line with CLT principles. One teacher shared the following regarding in-service and professional support, “no workshops, no refresher courses”. The teacher decried the lack of support from in-service which negatively affects full implementation of the curriculum. Another teacher lamented, “there is no in-service training provided to English Language teachers that is necessary for our development as teachers”. Almost all the teachers’ responses noted this lack of in-service.

The same sentiments regarding lack of CPD for teachers were underscored by the oral interviewees. While O. I. 1 noted that “since the death of the in-service office, things have not gone well, no in-service office training when teachers fall through the cracks, there is no one to notice that”, O. I. 2 reminded that “there used to be a department for organising those. The department is no longer there . . .”. From these sentiments, it can be realised that lack of CPD is seriously crippling teacher performance. O. I. 4 further noted that “we are challenged in terms of providing short/refresher courses for teachers. It has been quite some time since these were done in our schools. I can think of the last ten years and cannot remember any of such courses mounted for our teachers”. Provision of CPD opportunities is the responsibility of the In-service Officers who are supposed to be stationed in various regions throughout the country but are not there.

Mismatch between Testing Formats and CLT Principles

Discordance between testing formats and CLT principles was one major issue raised by teachers and educators. Testing formats used in the BGCSE final Examinations and the communicative goals of the curriculum are not in harmony. While the examinations mainly focus on reading and writing, the CLT based syllabus focuses on all the four language skills. This makes teachers to also pay more attention to what is examined (reading and writing) and less attention or neglect that which is not (speaking and listening) in assessment. One teacher

commented: “our teaching is exam based, i.e. writing”. This statement plainly shows the washback effect examinations have on the teachers. Another pointed out that “exam is never communicative based”. Yet another remarked, “I focus on the skills that would help learners pass the examination”. From the teachers’ assertions referred to above, it is noted that assessment formats used are based primarily on writing and, to a small extent reading, at the exclusion of measuring students’ ability in other language skills. The exclusion of these other language skills negatively affects senior secondary school leavers’ attainment of all the communicative competencies (grammatical, socio-linguistic, discourse and strategic). One educator also remarked: “the assessment modes we use are based on written exams, which don’t measure students’ ability to communicate in spoken language. This disconnect between the curriculum and assessment needs to be addressed”. This is a serious disconnect between curriculum delivery and assessment and needs attention.

The curriculum aims at equipping the learners with all the communicative competencies through the teaching of the four language skills. The assessment format, however, disregards speaking and listening. This concern prompted one oral interviewee to remark that “we are going to revise the way we do assessment to learners so that it is mandatory for teachers to also do all the approaches of composition writing” (O. I. 1). Teachers expressed similar concerns as those of the oral interviewees. One teacher said, “BEC needs to revise its assessment methods to include speaking and listening components if we want to develop students’ full communicative competence”. Another teacher noted that “not assessing speaking and listening in the final exams makes me also not to assess those skills”.

Discussion

Introduction

This part discusses two main findings presented centring around curriculum implementation which draws heavily on continuous professional development and curriculum and assessment. These two aspects fall under the Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation and BEC respectively with the Ministry of Child Welfare and Basic Education overseeing both departments. These two entities play a crucial role in shaping both the curriculum development, its implementation and finally, its assessment. They thus have a relationship and must therefore ensure there is harmony or alignment between curriculum implementation and its assessment. However, the study findings revealed lack of alignment between implementation and assessment processes.

Lack of Continuous Professional Development

One major finding was the lack of Continuous Professional (CPD) opportunities for teachers in the application of the CLT approach. Although teachers have a good understanding of CLT, they decried lack of refresher courses to keep them abreast with new trends of its implementation (both teaching and assessment). The questionnaire and oral interview respondents indicated a lack of support for teachers to develop professionally. Etienne (2023) notes that if teachers are “not assisted by continuing education mostly for routine professionals, the daily practice issues will affect the good way of doing things. . . where there is no ongoing training only make things worse” (p.12). Sato and Oyanedel (2019) say that if teachers are not adequately in-serviced they most likely do things their own way including resorting to traditional, teacher-centered methods, which do not aid in the development of communicative competencies. The lack of continuous professional development for teachers has impacted negatively not only on content delivery but also on assessment.

Teachers lament lack of support from education officers. Hence, one teacher remarked: “in-service officers should avail themselves to schools to help those given the responsibility to train teachers” (Mphale, 2014, p.87). From this remark, in-service education officers rarely visit schools on issues of in-service training. This therefore impacts negatively on curriculum delivery. It must be noted teachers need to be continuously in-serviced to keep abreast of new

trends in curriculum delivery. As CLT was introduced as a new teaching approach in the BGCSE English Language, teachers must be equipped with the strategies needed to create communicative learning environments (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). However, there is a gap in CPD for teachers. This gap works against effective implementation of CLT, suggesting a need for the development of focused professional development programmes.

CPD also gives teachers opportunities to collaborate. As teachers come together time and again, they can establish working relationships through teams or clusters. Through these clusters they can learn from each other as they share not only new ideas but also teaching strategies and even resources. In the process they examine and evaluate their teaching approaches for improvement.

Mismatch Between Testing formats and CLT Principles

The study results reveal that there is no alignment between the objectives of the BGCSE curriculum and the way testing or assessment is done in both the internal and the BGCSE Final Examinations. Majority of the teachers noted that the BGCSE Final Examinations' focus only on composition writing and reading comprehension. They further noted that this makes to also focus more on those when they teach and assess meaning both their teaching and internal assessments are aligned to the BGCSE Final Examinations. It therefore follows that such assessment does not test all the language skills or learners' communicative competencies. Tavakoli and Howard (2020), note that assessment of this nature does not address the learners' ability to use language communicatively and as a result, fails to equip learners with full communicative competencies as it excludes speaking and listening. The non-assessment of speaking and listening skills in the BGCSE Examinations subverts the curriculum's objectives of equipping and developing learners' communicative competencies. Graddol (2021) notes that communicative competencies are best assessed by covering all four language skills. However, contemporary assessment processes in the BGCSE Examinations focus mainly on writing with some bit of reading. These processes inhibit learners' opportunities to show their capability in their spoken and listening skills, especially that the Assessment Syllabus states:

To assess those skills, which are not readily assessed by timed, written papers, such as Speaking and Listening, it is intended to introduce centre-based assessment (Coursework) as soon as suitable exemplar materials and training are available. The administration and marking of Coursework will be centre-based and the marking will be externally moderated.

(Botswana Senior Secondary Assessment Syllabus, English Language, Examinations, Research and Testing Division, Ministry of Education, 1999, p.14).

What the Assessment Syllabus is saying is long overdue as it should have been put in place a long time ago. However, nothing has been done regarding course work based at the school level to address, especially speaking and listening. It is worth noting that the misalignment between assessment and curriculum is a real drawback in the attainment of the BGCSE English Language objectives. There is limited practical use of the language. BEC oversees all examinations at the basic level of education and therefore needs to address this misalignment. Failure to address this issue results in having senior school graduates who are deficient in communicative competence and find it difficult to cope with the demands of education at a higher level, tertiary.

The lack of harmony between curriculum implementation and assessment is a significant impediment to achieving the objectives of this CLT-based curriculum. As noted in the literature review, this problem is also experienced in other countries offering a CLT based curriculum. In Lesotho, for example, Letsie (2019) says the LGCSE English Language assessment comprises of only reading and writing yet they use a CLT-approach based curriculum which also covers listening and speaking. In Zimbabwe, Mukenge (2020) also points to assessment that focuses only on writing.

The issue mentioned and discussed above also speaks to lapse in monitoring. When a project is implemented, there are steps or a process that it goes through from design or

inception, implementation/delivery to monitoring/evaluation and closure. In this case, the implication is that somewhere along the line, there was lack of monitoring in the curriculum implementation process. Education administrators should have realised this problem and corrected it.

BEC, which functions under the auspices of the Ministry of Child Welfare and Basic Education, is responsible for the assessment of the curriculum. So, these two entities play a crucial role in shaping both the curriculum and its assessment, thus should play a significant role in ensuring harmony between classroom instruction and assessment. However, the study revealed lack of harmony between the curriculum delivery and assessment practices. Hence, this concern was raised by the study participants. This prompted one teacher to remark: "BEC needs to revise its assessment methods to include speaking and listening components if we want to develop students' full communicative competence". One educator to said: "We are going to revise the way we do assessment to learners so that it is mandatory for teachers to also do all the approaches of composition writing". This educator realises a lapse in monitoring after so much 'damage' has been caused to the learners. Though it has taken too long, the admission that a corrective measure is long overdue is a welcome move.

Furthermore, Hamstra and Bell in White and Delaney (2019), point out that curriculum, classroom instruction and assessments must be aligned with each other. This is to holistically realise the aims and or objectives of the curriculum, and in the BGCSE case, to equip learners with communicative competencies. However, there is selective assessment which also influences what to cover and what to leave out in the teaching-learning process.

Overall, Hughes (2020) underscores the importance of aligning curriculum delivery with assessment modes to holistically promote all the four communicative competencies in the learners. The emphasis Hughes makes is that content taught should all be assessed. In the case of the BGCSE English Language, that is not the case. All components of the curriculum need to be covered in both classroom delivery and assessment.

Limitations of the study

This study has some limitations. These limitations include limited sample size, limited data collection methods, reliance on self-report data and potential researcher bias.

Limited sample size

The study engaged 29 teachers. Although general applicability of the findings may be a bit questionable, the results are from a mix of teaching experiences. 26 out of 29 (90%) have more than 11 years teaching the subject. To some extent, this gives a real picture of their lived experiences and what has been transpiring in the teaching of the language. Similarly, the 5 educators who participated in the study were previously teachers of the same curriculum, with others also having taught the old COSC one.

Limited data collection methods

In this paper, the researcher used only two data collection methods as they were the only ones suitable for target groups. The paper deals with perceptions of these two targeted groups. Documents like lesson plans and assessment records could have been analysed but the questionnaire for teachers covered some issues that are normally the content of those documents. However, an analysis of those documents by the researcher would probably have given a much clearer picture

Reliance on self-report data and potential researcher bias

Before developing the questionnaire, the oral interview guide and analysing the data collected using these methods, the researcher first did a self-awareness check. This involved making an introspection to allow for an adjustment of the researcher's attitude and position him to deal with and reduce biasness that might arise during qualitative studies. In the study, for example, the researcher allowed for theme emergence as data was analysed.

Lack of consideration for contextual factors.

The paper does not examine other factors such as resource availability and socio-economic factors. Although this may be considered as a limitation, the paper's focus is only on the teachers' and educators' perspective on the implementation of CLT. It does not aim at looking at other factors.

Given the above limitations, it can be concluded that the results should be interpreted with caution. Despite this, they give the view of these two categories of people on the implementation of CLT in teaching the BGCSE English Language curriculum.

Conclusion

The findings of this study have highlighted two key issues in the implementation of CLT in the BGCSE English Language curriculum. From these findings several implications can be reached.

Firstly, there is mismatch between the examination formats and content delivery in the classroom. While the curriculum aims to develop learners' communicative competence by focusing on all the language skills, assessment sidelines speaking and listening and only focuses on writing and some reading. There is no sufficient exposure to listening and speaking activities during teaching and none in assessments. In that regard, there are implications because of this.

The first implication is in relation to the BGCES Assessment Syllabus. In this document, it is stipulated that speaking and listening would be assessed at school level on a continuous basis. Assessment grades would therefore count towards the learners' final grade on completion of their senior secondary school studies. This was said this would be effected once suitable material for assessing these two skills has been acquired and teachers have been trained in their assessment has been done. However, this has not been done. It is long overdue and needs to be treated with urgency. There is urgent need for BEC to revise assessment practices to include speaking and listening components. In that way, the persistent gap between curriculum objectives and assessment practices will be addressed.

The second implication relates to CPD. The second finding of the study is that of lack of CPD opportunities for teachers which does not only hinder them from being upskilled but also limits them in content delivery thus stifling their performance. Upliftment and improvement in teachers' performance can only be achieved when CPD opportunities are availed for them. So, these opportunities must be made available at least twice a year thus investing in the development of education. Investing in education does not come cheap but it is necessary to do. The findings reveal that in-service officers are no longer available at the regions. The implication therefore is that it is necessary that the Ministry of Child Welfare and Basic Education re-establish these or alternative CPD mechanisms be put in place.

These study findings also have implications for classroom teachers, school administrators, and educators. For teachers, strategies for incorporating speaking and listening activities, even when they are not assessed externally, should be developed. The incorporation of such activities should be monitored by both the Senior Teacher 1, English and the school the top school managers (HoDs, Deputy School Head and School Head). This will be to ensure coverage of all the syllabus components.

Overall, the study findings may mean that learners, who are supposed to be the ultimate beneficiaries of this curriculum may exit senior secondary school without the communicative competence needed for tertiary education and employment due to the implementation gap contrary to the aims of CLT. The study has highlighted significant amount of work needs to be done regarding CLT implementation not only in Botswana but also in other EFL contexts. This includes monitoring of the implementation of the approach which is clearly lacking.

Recommendations for Future Studies

In view of the above, the study makes some recommendations. The first recommendation is that it is essential to conduct future research on the implementation of CLT that involves learners. This is because learners are an important part and at the centre of the implementation

of any curriculum. This would also involve classroom observation to examine actual teaching practices

Secondly, intervention studies testing the effectiveness of specific CPD approaches should be conducted. This will help in establishing challenges associated with CPD and suggest ways of addressing them.

Lastly, studies examining the impact of the implementation gap on learner outcomes are necessary. Apart from the examinations washback identified as setback on the implementation of CLT, such studies can help identify exactly what leads to breakdown in compliance on the administrative part. The cause of such breakdown in the communication process can then be fixed. At the same time, the extent of student loss because of these problems can be measured.

References

- Arthur, J. (1996). Language Pedagogy in Botswana: Paradigms and Ideologies, Mosenodi. 4 (1), 47 -57.
- Banda, S., Mpolomoka, D. L., Dube, M. & Sampa, R. L. (2017). "Use of questions in qualitative research: how questions guided our study", International Journal of Development Research, 7, (12), 17895-17898
- Barasa, M. W., Kiai, A., & Ndeke, F. N. (2021). Challenges teachers and learners experience in the teaching and learning of English as a second language. The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management, 9 (3), 188-196
- Bedah, B., Tarihoran, N. & Heryatun, Y. (2023). Teachers' and Students' Perspectives on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in EFL: A Systematic Review. International Journal of Science Education and Cultural Studies. 5(1):22-35
- Billups, F. D. (2022). Qualitative Data Collection Tools: Design, Development, and Applications. Sage Publications, Inc: Thousand Oaks
- Bowen, A. G. (2009). "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method", Qualitative Research Journal, 9 (2), 27- 40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2020) One Size Fits All? What Counts as Quality Practice in (Reflexive) Thematic Analysis? Qualitative Research in Psychology, 18, 328-352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238>
- BWgovernment. (2015). Facebook page. Facebook. Retrieved August 09, 2026, from <https://www.facebook.com/BotswanaGovernment/posts/question-in-parliament-11215-in-service-training-for-teachers-at-naledi-senior-s/906065432809449/>
- Chang, A. N., & Suparmi. (2020). The implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT) and factors hindering teachers from implementing it in high school. Al-Ta'dib, 13(1),46-56
- Densmaa, O. and Enkhbat, A. (2025) Teachers Require Ongoing Professional Growth. International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science. 1(45). doi: 10.31435/ijitss.1(45).2025.3202
- Ekanjume-Ilongo, B. (2015). The Teaching of English Language as a Second Language: The Case of the National University of Lesotho (NUL). Journal of Language Teaching and Research. 6 (6), 1157-1164). <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0606.01>
- Etienne, V. (2023). Oral Communication Skills Assessment In English In Rural Haiti When teaching traditional Grammar is not effective. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373822429>

- Fetogang, B. E. (2016). Teaching to the Test: Assessment syllabus and the validity of English Education in Botswana Secondary Schools. *European Journal of English Language Teaching*, 1 (2).1 -17
- Graddol, D. (2021). English next: Why global English may mean the end of ‘English as a foreign language’. British Council.
- Haufiku, I. (2022). Teaching Challenges and Coping Strategies of English Second Language Teachers in Senior Secondary Schools in the Ohangwena Region, Namibia, Doctoral Thesis, University of Namibia
- Haufiku, I., Mashebe, P., & Abah, J. (2022). Teaching Challenges of English Second Language Teachers in Senior Secondary Schools in the Ohangwena Region, Namibia. *Creative Education*, 13, 1941-1964. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2022.136121>
- Heng, K. (2014). Communicative Language Teaching In Efl Contexts: Challenges And Suggestions For Successful Implementation. Master’s Dissertation, University Of Canberra.
- Hughes, A. (2020). Testing for language teachers (3rd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Kimamo, D., & Gathara, P. (2023). Teaching of English Language Expressive Skills and Communicative Competence. A comparative Study of Secondary Schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya. *Msingi Journal*, 7(1), 54-71. <https://doi.org/10.33886/mj.v7i1.434>
- Maguire, M. & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a Thematic Analysis: A Practical, Step-by-Step Guide for Learning and Teaching Scholars. *All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. 8 (3). 3351-33514
- Mareva, R., and Nyota, S. (2012). Structural or communicative approach: A case study of English Language teaching in Masvingo urban and peri-urban secondary. *Internal journal of English and Literature*, 3 (5), 103-111, <http://www.academicjournals.org/IJEL>
- Maryslessor1, A. O., Barasa, P. L. & Omulando, C. A. (2014). Challenges Teachers Face in the Use of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach in the Teaching Listening and Speaking Lessons in Ligrari District, Kenya. *International Journal of Science and Research*. 3 (9). 83 -92.
- Ministry of Education, (2000). Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education Teaching Syllabus. Gaborone
- Ministry of Education, (1999). Botswana Senior Secondary School Assessment Syllabus, English Language. Gaborone
- Moea, K. S. (2024). Assessing Lesotho High Schools Teachers’ Content Knowledge of Teaching Narrative Composition Writing. *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies*. 4(6):411-419
- Moea, K. S. (2023). An Analysis of the Curriculum Ideology in the Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education English Language Syllabus. *Innovare Journal of Education*. 1 (11), 42-46
- Monday, T. (2020). Impacts of Interview as Research Instrument of Data Collection in Social Sciences. *Journal of Digital Art & Humanities*. 1(1):15-24
- Moremi, M., Mafuraga, M. & Mogotsi, B. (2018). Implications of non-assessment of speaking and listening skills in Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE)

- English Language Examinations. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*. 7 (1). 107 – 119
- Mothudi, T. H. & Bosman, N. (2015). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Botswana: Perceptions of implementation by some teachers in Botswana's Junior Secondary Schools, *Journal for Language Teaching*. 49 (1).105 – 139. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jlt.v49i1.5>
- Mphale, M. L. (2014). The Effectiveness of Teachers' Professional Development Initiatives in Enhancing Teachers in Botswana Secondary Schools Growth in Botswana. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 7, 75-90.
- Mukenge, C. (2020). The Paradigm of Zimbabwean English: Implications for ESL Teaching. *Journal of Linguistics and Language in Education*. 14 (11). 105- 128
- Mupupuni, G. (2024). Developing English Language Writing Skills Using the Process Model in Zimbabwean Schools. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications on Education*. 14 (1). 268 -278.
- Naeem1, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K. & Ranfagn, S. (2023). A Step-by-Step Process of Thematic Analysis to Develop a Conceptual Model in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 22. 1–18 DOI: 10.1177/1609406923120578
- Nkosana, L. (2013). Theoretical Insights into Curriculum Reform in Botswana. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*. 6 (1), 68-75.
- Nkosana, L. (2008). Attitudinal obstacles to curriculum and assessment reform. *Language Teaching Research*. 12 (2), 287–312
- Olaotse, K. & Oats, R. (2019). Code switching at reception classes in Botswana: A strategy to academic Excellence, *International Journal of Scientific and Research Education*. 9 (12). 225-3153
- Refareal, A., Angeles, M. A., Ratunil. M. L. (2025). Japanese SHS English Teacher's Implementation of MEXT's Communicative Approach. *International Journal of Innovative Studies in Humanities and Social Studies*.1(3); 01-10. <https://doi.org/10.71123/3067-7319.010301>
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2020). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (4th ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Sato, M. & Oyanedel, J. C. (2019). Strategies for successful implementation of communicative language teaching in large EFL classrooms. *ELT Journal*, 73(3), 345-354
- Smith, C. (2025). Challenges in English Language Education in Japan: Policy vs. Practice. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy*. 6 (2). 53 – 6
- Syahputra, I. (2018). Using Communicative Language Teaching among English Teachers at A Senior High School in Riau. *Indonesian Journal of Integrated English Language Teaching*. 4 (1). 188-197
- Taherdoost, H. (2021). Data Collection Methods and Tools for Research; A Step-by-Step Guide to Choose Data Collection Technique for Academic and Business Research Projects, *International Journal of Academic Research in Management (IJARM)* 10 (1).10-38.
- Tavakoli, P. & Howard, M. J. (2020). *Language Assessment and Communicative Competence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Perspectives on BGCSE English Curriculum Implementation Using CLT

- Ugwu, C. N. & Eze V, H. U. (2023). Qualitative Research. International Digital Organization for Scientific Research. Journal of computer and applied sciences. 8(1) 20-3
- Vijay, A & Suresh. (2023). Challenges in Implementing the CLT Approach for Non-Native English Learners. Journal for ReAttach Therapy and Developmental Diversities. 6(10s): <https://jrtd.com>
- White, E. & Delaney, T. (2019). Handbook of Research on Assessment Literacy and Teacher-Made Testing in the Language Classroom. Hershey PA: IGI Global
- Yanagi, M. (2016). Challenges experienced by Japanese students with oral communication skills in Australian Universities. Faculty of Social Sciences Papers, Wollongong <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent>.