



COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING AS AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH FOR DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract

Speaking is widely recognized as one of the most important skills in foreign language learning. However, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners experience difficulties in developing communicative competence due to limited opportunities for authentic interaction and excessive focus on grammatical accuracy. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has emerged as one of the most influential approaches in language education, emphasizing meaningful communication and real-life language use. This article examines the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching in developing speaking skills among EFL learners. The paper discusses the theoretical foundations of CLT, its key principles, classroom techniques, advantages, challenges, and implications for English language teachers. The study highlights that CLT promotes learner engagement, fluency, confidence, and communicative competence, making it an effective approach for improving speaking skills in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: *Communicative Language Teaching, CLT, speaking skills, communicative competence, EFL learners, language teaching methodology, English language teaching.*

Introduction

In today's globalized world, English has become an international language used for communication in education, business, technology, tourism, and intercultural interactions. Consequently, the ability to communicate effectively in English has become one of the primary goals of language learning. Among the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—speaking is often regarded as the most challenging yet essential skill for learners.

Traditional language teaching methods frequently emphasized grammatical knowledge, vocabulary memorization, and translation activities. Although such approaches contributed to linguistic knowledge, they often failed to provide learners with sufficient opportunities to use the language for





meaningful communication. As a result, many students were able to understand grammatical rules but struggled to express themselves fluently in real-life situations.

In response to these limitations, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged during the 1970s as a learner-centered approach that prioritizes communication as both the goal and the means of language learning. CLT encourages learners to actively participate in meaningful interactions, develop communicative competence, and use language in authentic contexts. Today, it remains one of the most widely adopted approaches in English Language Teaching (ELT).

This article explores the role of Communicative Language Teaching in developing speaking skills and examines its contribution to enhancing learners' communicative competence.

Theoretical Foundations of Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching is based on the concept of communicative competence introduced by linguist Dell Hymes. Hymes argued that language learners need more than grammatical knowledge; they must also know how to use language appropriately in social and cultural contexts.

Communicative competence consists of several components:

Grammatical Competence

The ability to use vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical structures accurately.

Sociolinguistic Competence

The ability to use language appropriately according to social situations and cultural norms.

Discourse Competence

The ability to produce coherent and meaningful spoken or written texts.

Strategic Competence

The ability to overcome communication difficulties through various communication strategies.

The primary goal of CLT is to develop all these aspects of communicative competence rather than focusing exclusively on linguistic accuracy.

Principles of Communicative Language Teaching

Several key principles distinguish CLT from traditional language teaching methods.

Focus on Meaningful Communication





Language is viewed primarily as a tool for communication. Classroom activities are designed to encourage learners to exchange ideas, express opinions, and negotiate meaning.

Learner-Centered Instruction

Students actively participate in the learning process while teachers act as facilitators and guides rather than knowledge transmitters.

Use of Authentic Materials

Authentic materials such as newspapers, videos, podcasts, advertisements, and real-life conversations expose learners to natural language use.

Integration of Language Skills

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are taught together to reflect real-world communication.

Fluency and Accuracy Balance

While grammatical accuracy remains important, fluency and effective communication are given greater emphasis.

These principles create an environment in which learners can develop practical communication skills through meaningful interaction.

The Importance of Speaking Skills in EFL Learning

Speaking is a productive language skill that enables learners to express thoughts, feelings, opinions, and ideas. Effective speaking involves not only linguistic knowledge but also confidence, pronunciation, fluency, and interactional competence.

For many EFL learners, speaking presents significant challenges due to:

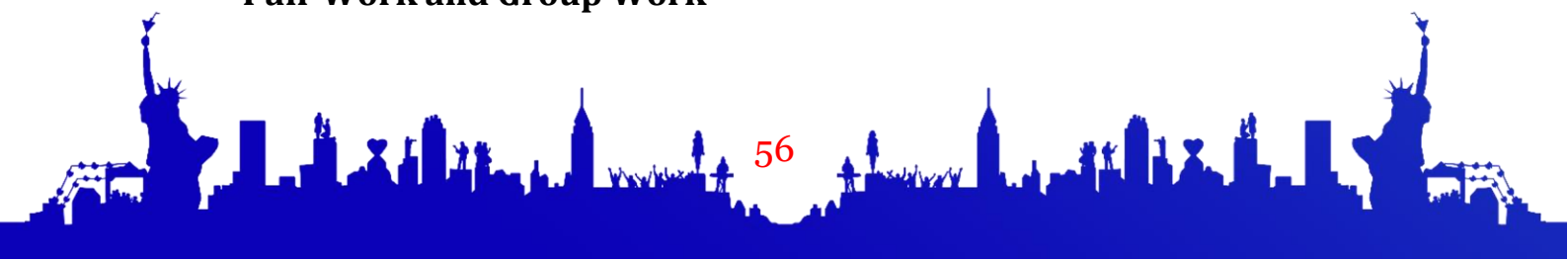
- Fear of making mistakes;
- Limited vocabulary;
- Lack of confidence;
- Insufficient opportunities for practice;
- Anxiety about public speaking.

Developing speaking skills is essential because it allows learners to participate in academic discussions, professional communication, and intercultural interactions. Therefore, language teaching approaches should provide opportunities for active communication and meaningful language use.

How CLT Enhances Speaking Skills

Communicative Language Teaching creates numerous opportunities for learners to practice speaking in authentic contexts.

Pair Work and Group Work





Pair and group activities encourage learners to interact frequently and use English for genuine communication. Such activities increase student talking time and reduce teacher dominance in the classroom.

Through collaborative tasks, learners gain confidence and improve their ability to express ideas spontaneously.

Role-Plays and Simulations

Role-play activities allow students to practice real-life communication situations such as:

- Ordering food in a restaurant;
- Conducting job interviews;
- Making travel arrangements;
- Participating in meetings.

These activities help learners develop practical communication skills that can be transferred to real-world contexts.

Information Gap Activities

Information gap tasks require students to exchange information in order to complete a task successfully.

Because learners possess different pieces of information, communication becomes necessary and meaningful. This increases interaction and promotes speaking practice.

Problem-Solving Tasks

Problem-solving activities encourage learners to discuss, negotiate, and justify their opinions while working toward a common solution.

These tasks promote critical thinking and communicative competence simultaneously.

Discussions and Debates

Classroom discussions and debates provide opportunities for learners to express opinions, defend arguments, and respond to alternative viewpoints.

Such activities enhance fluency, confidence, and interactional skills.

Advantages of Communicative Language Teaching

Research has demonstrated numerous benefits associated with CLT.

Increased Student Participation

CLT encourages active learner involvement and increases opportunities for meaningful communication.

Improved Fluency

Regular communication practice helps learners speak more naturally and fluently.





Enhanced Motivation

Interactive activities create an engaging learning environment that motivates students to participate actively.

Development of Real-Life Communication Skills

Learners acquire practical language skills applicable to everyday situations.

Greater Learner Confidence

Frequent speaking practice reduces anxiety and increases self-confidence.

Promotion of Learner Autonomy

Students become more responsible for their own learning and communication development.

These advantages contribute significantly to improved speaking performance among EFL learners.

Challenges in Implementing CLT

Despite its benefits, implementing CLT may present several challenges.

Large Class Sizes

Managing communicative activities can be difficult in overcrowded classrooms.

Limited Language Proficiency

Lower-level learners may struggle to participate effectively in communicative tasks.

Examination-Oriented Education Systems

In some contexts, standardized tests emphasize grammar and reading rather than communication skills.

Teacher Preparation

Successful implementation of CLT requires teachers to possess strong classroom management skills and a thorough understanding of communicative methodology.

Cultural Factors

In some educational cultures, learners may initially feel uncomfortable participating actively in discussions and collaborative activities.

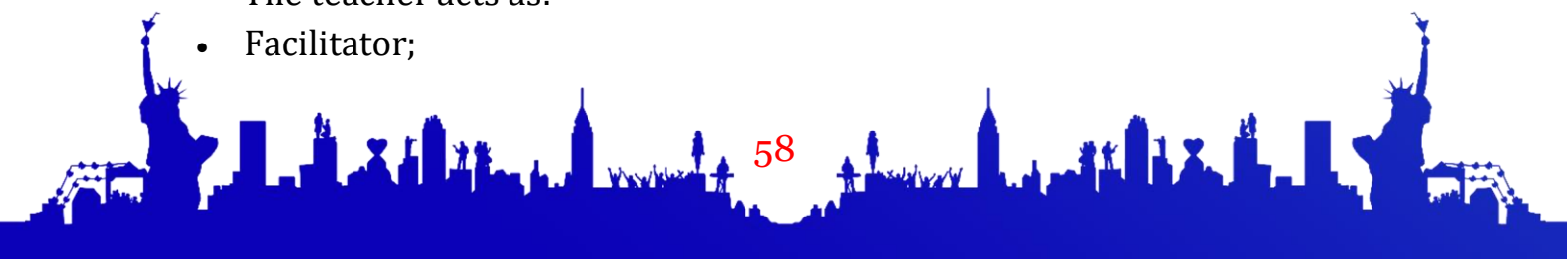
Teachers should adapt communicative activities according to learners' needs and contextual factors.

The Role of the Teacher in CLT

Within Communicative Language Teaching, the teacher assumes multiple roles.

The teacher acts as:

- Facilitator;





- Organizer;
- Motivator;
- Resource provider;
- Communication partner.

Rather than dominating classroom interaction, teachers create opportunities for learners to communicate and support them throughout the learning process.

Effective CLT teachers design meaningful tasks, encourage participation, provide constructive feedback, and foster a positive learning environment.

Implications for English Language Teaching

The growing emphasis on communicative competence highlights the importance of integrating CLT principles into English language classrooms.

Teachers should:

- Increase student talking time;
- Incorporate communicative activities regularly;
- Use authentic materials;
- Encourage collaborative learning;
- Create opportunities for meaningful interaction;
- Balance fluency and accuracy instruction.

Teacher education programs should also provide training in communicative methodologies to ensure effective classroom implementation.

Conclusion

Communicative Language Teaching has become one of the most influential approaches in modern English language education. By emphasizing meaningful communication, learner interaction, and authentic language use, CLT effectively supports the development of speaking skills among EFL learners. Through activities such as role-plays, discussions, information gap tasks, and collaborative learning, students gain confidence, improve fluency, and develop communicative competence.

Although challenges may arise in implementing CLT, its benefits significantly outweigh its limitations. As English continues to serve as a global means of communication, communicative approaches will remain essential for preparing learners to use language effectively in real-life situations. Therefore, Communicative Language Teaching represents a powerful and effective methodology for enhancing speaking skills in EFL classrooms.

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