

# COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT) APPROACH IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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## Abstract

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has emerged as one of the most influential methodologies in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This article explores the principles, advantages, and challenges of implementing CLT in EFL classrooms. It also highlights the theoretical underpinnings and practical applications of the approach. Drawing on relevant studies, this article provides insights into how CLT can enhance learners' communicative competence and addresses the barriers faced by teachers and learners in diverse educational contexts.

**Keywords:** Communicative Language Teaching, EFL, communicative competence, language teaching methodologies, learner-centered approach.

## Introduction

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has undergone significant transformations over the decades, with a growing emphasis on equipping learners with the skills necessary for effective communication. Among the various methodologies, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has gained prominence for its learner-centered focus and emphasis on real-world language use. Developed in the 1970s, CLT emerged as a response to traditional, grammar-focused teaching methods that prioritized accuracy over fluency.

The CLT approach is grounded in the idea that language learning involves not only mastering grammatical rules but also developing the ability to use language meaningfully in diverse contexts. This approach emphasizes interaction, task-based activities, and the integration of the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Despite its widespread adoption, the implementation of CLT in EFL classrooms is often met with challenges such as limited resources, cultural factors, and teacher preparedness. This article examines the theoretical foundations of CLT, its core principles, and its practical application in teaching EFL.

## Theoretical Foundations of CLT

The CLT approach is rooted in the concept of communicative competence, introduced by Hymes (1972) as an expansion of Chomsky's (1965) notion of linguistic competence. Hymes argued that knowing a language involves more than understanding its grammatical structure; it



requires the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts. Canale and Swain (1980) further developed the framework of communicative competence, identifying its key components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

CLT also draws from the interactionist theory of language acquisition, which posits that meaningful communication plays a crucial role in language learning (Long, 1983). According to this theory, interaction provides learners with opportunities to negotiate meaning, receive feedback, and adjust their language output, all of which contribute to language development. CLT is characterized by several core principles that distinguish it from traditional language teaching methods:

The primary goal of CLT is to develop learners' communicative competence, enabling them to use language effectively in real-life situations.

CLT places learners at the center of the learning process, encouraging active participation and collaboration.

Activities in CLT are designed to mimic authentic tasks, such as role-plays, problem-solving, and group discussions, to promote meaningful language use.

CLT emphasizes the simultaneous development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

The use of real-world materials, such as newspapers, videos, and advertisements, is encouraged to expose learners to natural language use.

Research has shown that the CLT approach enhances learners' fluency, motivation, and confidence in using the target language (Richards, 2006). By engaging learners in authentic communication, CLT helps bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application. Furthermore, the collaborative nature of CLT fosters social interaction and cultural awareness. Despite its advantages, implementing CLT in EFL classrooms presents several challenges. Teachers often face difficulties such as large class sizes, limited access to authentic materials, and insufficient training in CLT methodologies (Li, 1998). Cultural factors may also influence the effectiveness of CLT, as learners from traditional educational backgrounds may be resistant to its learner-centered approach. Additionally, the emphasis on fluency in CLT can sometimes result in a neglect of accuracy, leading to gaps in grammatical knowledge.

To effectively implement CLT, teachers can adopt a variety of strategies:

- designing tasks that require learners to use language communicatively, such as interviews, group projects, and simulations.
- encouraging learners to practice real-life scenarios, such as ordering food at a restaurant or participating in a job interview.
- incorporating digital tools, such as language learning apps, online forums, and video conferencing, to facilitate interaction and access to authentic materials.
- providing constructive feedback on learners' performance and encouraging self-reflection to promote continuous improvement.



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**Conclusion**

The Communicative Language Teaching approach has revolutionized the way English is taught as a foreign language, shifting the focus from rote memorization to meaningful communication. While the implementation of CLT comes with its challenges, its emphasis on developing communicative competence makes it a highly effective methodology. By addressing the barriers to its adoption and leveraging its strengths, educators can create engaging and dynamic learning environments that prepare learners for real-world communication.

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