

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT)?

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Abstract. *The growing need for fluent communication skills in today's globalized world creates a challenge for foreign language teaching. Students must be given a proper foundation of communication skills that are demanded in different interactive real-world situations outside of the classroom. Students need to be prepared for real-life scenarios instead of just helping them to pass a superficial paper exam.*

Communicative teaching methods are currently a popular point of discussion and their effectiveness has been taken into account by language teachers all over the world. This article aims to provide an overview of communicative language teaching methods and encourage teachers to apply them to their foreign language teaching.

Keywords: *communicative language teaching, target language, grammatical competence, interaction skills, collaborative tasks.*

КАКОВЫ ПРЕИМУЩЕСТВА КОММУНИКАТИВНОГО ПРЕПОДАВАНИЯ ЯЗЫКА?

Аннотация. *Растущая потребность в навыках свободного общения в современном глобализированном мире создает проблему для преподавания иностранных языков. Студенты должны получить надлежащий фундамент коммуникативных навыков, которые требуются в различных интерактивных ситуациях реального мира за пределами класса. Студентов нужно готовить к реальным жизненным ситуациям, а не просто помогать им сдать поверхностный экзамен.*

Коммуникативные методы обучения в настоящее время являются популярным предметом обсуждения, и их эффективность учитывается преподавателями иностранных языков во всем мире. Цель данной статьи - дать обзор коммуникативных методов обучения языку и призвать учителей применять их в преподавании иностранных языков.

Ключевые слова: *коммуникативное обучение языку, целевой язык, грамматическая компетенция, навыки взаимодействия, совместные задания.*

The ever-growing need for good communication skills in English has created a huge demand for English teaching around the world. Millions of people today want to improve their command of English or to ensure that their children achieve a good command of English. And opportunities to learn English are provided in many different ways such as through formal instruction, travel, study abroad, as well as through the media and the Internet. The worldwide demand for English has created an enormous demand for quality language teaching and language teaching materials and resources. Learners set themselves demanding goals. They want to be able to master English to a high level of accuracy and fluency. Employers, too, insist that their employees have good English language skills, and fluency in English is a prerequisite for success and advancement in many fields of employment in today's world. The demand for an appropriate teaching methodology is therefore as strong as ever.

Communicative language teaching emerged in the 1980s as a response to the growing demand for a language curriculum that would enable learners to use the second language in real-life situations. Previously, foreign language teaching has predominantly had its emphasis on grammatical competence, rather than actually focusing on developing students' communication and interaction skills.

At the end of the day, language does principally exist to make communication possible. CLT methods primarily focus on the interaction during a classroom-based foreign language class or online language learning session, in which students actually produce speech and engage in conversations for most of the classroom time using the target language.

The main purpose behind communicative language teaching methods is to prepare students to be confident communicators in different real-life contexts, through repetitive oral practices and student-student cooperation. In CLT, communication is the end and the means of the teaching method.

Student-student interaction plays an essential role in applying a communicative teaching approach. As the more traditional teaching styles have usually been rather teacher dominant with students mainly learning through passive listening, student-student interaction, on the contrary, focuses on the active interaction among the students themselves during language classes.

Student-student interaction embraces the strategies of cooperative learning in which each student's learning success is dependent on the whole group's input during the classroom sessions. This is an effective way of engaging the whole class as such exercises engage all students, not just the minority of active students who typically participate in a regular class.

One popular CLT activity is role-playing. There is a playful component in role-playing that helps students practice speaking without feeling pressure. You can for example assign parts to your students, or let them decide on a specific setting. Choose a topic that is relevant to students, or one that connects to other topics explained in class. This will ensure that role-playing is an integral part of language lessons and not only a stand-alone experience.

Collaborative tasks like assigning student groups to solve a puzzle using only the target language are also popular activities in CLT. This type of exercise allows not only to enhance students' communication skills but also to experiment with the peer-learning approach, which is useful in strengthening relationships among students.

Communicative Language Teaching or CLT is widely recognised across language classrooms globally as a highly applicable and effective teaching and learning approach (Savignon, 1987 and 2002). But why is the approach so effective and what are the advantages of the communicative language teaching approach for educators and students?

The CLT approach focuses on giving students the skills to clearly and confidently communicate in real-world situations with native speakers of their target language. As such, it moves away from a traditional focus on grammar to encourage the active and authentic use of language in learning and acquisition. CLT therefore prioritises interaction and problem solving and usually involves classroom activities such as role play and pair / group work.

Author and researcher David Nunan identified five key elements to the CLT approach:

- An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.

- The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
- The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on the language but also on the learning process itself.
 - An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
 - An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom.

According to Harmer, 1988 and Savignon, 2002, the CLT approach offers many advantages for both teachers and students. Firstly, CLT delivers a clear and obvious benefit to learners – they're actually able to use the skills they've learnt to communicate in their target language. CLT is not about learning just for learning's sake, it has a clear and definable purpose. Students become competent communicators, able to use the right grammar, vocabulary and sentence structure in different real-life contexts and are flexible enough to adapt as circumstances dictate.

As such, CLT typically places less emphasis on rote learning of detailed grammatical rules in favour of gaining greater fluency in the target language. Students are assessed on their level of communicative competence rather than on their ability to regurgitate information. This approach also enables learners to quickly gain confidence when interacting with other people, which helps them enjoy using their new-found language skills.

The above advantages also help us to identify a third – that the CLT approach tends to be a more student-centred and situation-oriented language teaching practice. In fact, according to Oxford (1990), CLT deliberately emphasizes “self-direction for the learners”. Given that the teacher will not be available to help students when they're out in the real-world, it's appropriate that they should take the lead in developing their core language skills and find ways to prioritise communication and conversation. Oxford believes that this is: “essential to the active development of the new language.”

In this light, CLT also has a highly positive impact on the relationships between teachers, students and their peers. At the highest level, CLT requires all participants to move away from the traditional teacher / student model to be successful. In the language classroom, learners also need to engage in learning activities in a cooperative rather than individualistic manner – it's vital that they work together to build effective conversations and to complete the pair / group tasks that are at the heart of the CLT approach. As such, teachers can develop more creative language learning activities that go beyond the traditional repetition and the memorization of sentences and grammatical patterns.

As a result, evidence suggests that the CLT approach usually increases the students' engagement and enjoyment of their lessons. Where classroom resources and tasks are grounded in everyday situations with immediately evident, real-world application, students come alive. They become the protagonists at the centre of learning rather than the audience on the sidelines watching on (Dos Santos, 2020). Furthermore, students are also immediately able to take their learning and put it into practice in their engagement with native speakers outside of the classroom.

As well as offering clear advantages to the student, the CLT approach can also offer significant benefits to educators by fundamentally changing their role in the classroom. The educator is both a “facilitator, a guide and a helper” as well as being a “coordinator, an idea-

person and a co-communicator” (Oxford, 1990). Teachers talk less and listen more as well as being more focused on students’ individual learning journeys and working closely with them to achieve their goals.

As adopting the CLT approach usually means that traditional, repetitive Instructional tasks become less important, teachers have more scope to be creative in the classroom. Although this means that additional time is needed to prepare appropriate teaching resources, there’s significant benefit in increased student engagement and motivation.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, CLT is a powerful teaching approach to encourage the development of the four macro skills in language learning— speaking, listening, reading and writing. These are a core part of CLT from the very start, since active communication serves to integrate the different skills. The use of authentic or real teaching materials (brochures, flyers, timetables, menus and magazines) also helps ensure that students develop relevant grammar and vocabulary while working through activities that build these core skills.

Today CLT continues in its classic form as seen in the huge range of course books and other teaching resources that cite CLT as the source of their methodology. In addition, it has influenced many other language teaching approaches that subscribe to a similar philosophy of language teaching.

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