



THE COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT) APPROACH IN MODERN TESOL

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Annotation: The article provides a comprehensive analysis of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach within modern TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). It traces the evolution of CLT, comparing it with older methods such as the Grammar Translation and Audio-lingual methods. The paper highlights the strengths of CLT, including its emphasis on real-world language use, interactive and learner-centered teaching, and its adaptability across various proficiency levels and learner contexts. However, it also discusses the limitations of CLT, such as its neglect of explicit grammar instruction and the challenges it presents in large classes or with students unfamiliar with communicative methods. Additionally, the article explores how CLT has adapted to contemporary technological advancements, integrating digital tools and online platforms to enhance language learning and communication. Ultimately, the paper underscores CLT's significance in shaping modern language education while acknowledging the need for a balanced approach that incorporates both communicative competence and grammatical accuracy.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), Grammar Translation Method, Audio-lingual Method, Language acquisition, Communicative competence, Learner-centered approach, Real-world language use, Interactive learning, Digital tools in language teaching, Language learning methodologies, Teacher role in CLT, Task-based learning, Grammar instruction, Global communication

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has been a cornerstone in the evolution of English language teaching for several decades. CLT emerged in the 1970s as a response to the limitations of traditional language teaching methods, focusing on communicative competence rather than solely on the mastery of grammatical rules. It prioritizes the ability to use the language for real communication in authentic contexts, promoting interaction, functional language use, and meaningful communication over rote memorization or isolated grammar drills. The shift from structuralist approaches, such as Grammar Translation and



Audio-lingual methods, marked a significant turning point in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). In a CLT classroom, the emphasis is placed on students actively engaging with the language through tasks that simulate real-life situations.

The teacher acts as a facilitator rather than a strict authority figure, creating an environment where learners feel free to experiment with the language and make mistakes. In CLT, language learning is seen as a social and dynamic process, where learners use language to negotiate meaning, ask questions, and express opinions. As CLT continues to evolve in the classroom, its key principles—such as communicative competence, task-based learning, and learner-centered teaching—remain at the forefront. However, the approach has adapted to the needs of modern learners, incorporating technology and digital tools that facilitate communication in a globalized world. The integration of multimedia resources, such as video conferencing, online forums, and interactive applications, allows students to practice language in authentic contexts outside of the classroom, reinforcing the communicative goals of CLT. One of the main strengths of CLT is its focus on real-world language use. It allows students to develop the ability to communicate effectively in a variety of situations, from casual conversations to professional exchanges.

Additionally, the emphasis on interaction fosters collaborative learning, where students learn from each other through group work, role plays, and peer feedback. This social aspect of learning is particularly beneficial for language acquisition, as it provides students with numerous opportunities to practice and refine their skills in a supportive environment. Another strength of CLT is its adaptability. It can be used with learners of varying ages, proficiency levels, and cultural backgrounds. Teachers can tailor tasks and activities to meet the specific needs of their students, making CLT a flexible and inclusive approach. However, CLT is not without its challenges. One of the weaknesses of this approach is that it can sometimes neglect the explicit teaching of grammar. While the focus on communication is important, some students may struggle with accuracy if they do not receive sufficient instruction on grammar rules. This can lead to fossilization, where learners continue to make the same mistakes without correction. Another challenge is that CLT can be difficult to implement in large classes or with students who are not accustomed to active participation. Some learners may find it challenging to engage in spontaneous communication, especially in cultures where traditional teacher-led instruction is the norm. Moreover, there is often a lack of standardized assessments in CLT-based



classrooms, which can make it harder to measure student progress. In comparison to methods like Grammar Translation and Audio-lingual, CLT presents both strengths and weaknesses.

The Grammar Translation Method, for instance, focuses heavily on the memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules, with little to no emphasis on speaking or listening. While it can help students gain a deep understanding of grammar, it fails to prepare them for real-life communication. In contrast, CLT provides opportunities for students to practice language in authentic contexts, promoting fluency and interaction. However, unlike Grammar Translation, CLT does not focus as much on explicit grammar instruction, which some learners may find problematic. The Audio-lingual Method, popular in the mid-20th century, relied heavily on repetition, drills, and pattern practice to teach language. While it was effective in developing listening and speaking skills, it had limited focus on real communication and contextual language use. CLT, on the other hand, encourages learners to use the language in varied, real-life scenarios, making it a more flexible and dynamic approach. One of the major differences between CLT and the Audio-lingual Method is the role of the teacher. In the Audio-lingual Method, the teacher is often seen as the central authority, controlling the flow of the lesson and correcting errors immediately. In CLT, however, the teacher is seen more as a guide or facilitator, creating an environment where learners feel comfortable experimenting with language and taking risks without fear of immediate correction. In summary, while CLT has had a profound impact on language teaching, it is important to recognize its limitations. It has evolved to become more flexible and adaptable, incorporating new technologies and approaches to better meet the needs of modern learners. Despite its challenges, such as the potential neglect of grammar and difficulties in large classes, CLT remains one of the most widely used and influential methods in TESOL. Its focus on real-world communication, student interaction, and learner autonomy continues to shape language education worldwide. However, it is important for teachers to balance communicative activities with appropriate grammar instruction to ensure learners develop both fluency and accuracy. As language teaching continues to evolve, CLT will likely continue to adapt and refine its approach to ensure that students are equipped to communicate effectively in an increasingly globalized world.

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has remained a central methodology in modern TESOL for several decades, continually adapting to the changing landscape of language learning. While its core focus on communicative



competence has remained constant, CLT has evolved significantly to accommodate new teaching technologies, evolving educational contexts, and diverse learner needs. Originally, CLT was developed in response to dissatisfaction with traditional teaching methods that emphasized rote memorization and grammar drills, such as the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the Audio-lingual Method. These methods were criticized for failing to prepare learners for practical communication in real-world contexts, where fluency and the ability to negotiate meaning are paramount. CLT, by contrast, stresses the importance of using language for meaningful communication, incorporating a range of interactive activities such as role-plays, discussions, debates, and problem-solving tasks.

One of the primary strengths of CLT is its learner-centered approach, which encourages active participation and interaction among students. In a CLT classroom, learners are typically engaged in collaborative activities, where they work together to solve problems, express ideas, and share information. This collaborative learning environment helps students not only improve their language skills but also build social skills and become more confident in their ability to use the language effectively. Through this approach, language learning becomes more authentic and connected to real-world use, rather than isolated drills and memorization. The adaptability of CLT is another significant benefit. It is a versatile approach that can be implemented with learners of varying proficiency levels, from beginner to advanced, and across different age groups. Teachers can tailor tasks to suit the language needs and interests of their students, whether they are preparing for an international exam, a business presentation, or casual conversation. CLT is flexible enough to accommodate the diverse cultural and educational backgrounds of students, making it a universal approach to language teaching. Additionally, as the world becomes increasingly connected through digital technologies, CLT has embraced the use of multimedia tools and digital platforms to facilitate communication outside the traditional classroom. Online collaboration tools, virtual classrooms, and language exchange platforms allow students to practice language skills with speakers from around the world, expanding the scope and authenticity of their learning experiences.

Another challenge associated with CLT is its effectiveness in large classes or with learners who are not accustomed to interactive learning. While CLT thrives in small, interactive groups, it can be difficult to maintain student engagement and ensure equal participation in larger settings. In such environments, teachers may struggle to give individualized attention or facilitate group work effectively.



Additionally, some learners, particularly those from educational cultures that prioritize teacher-centered approaches, may find the CLT style of learning unfamiliar and difficult to adjust to. For these students, the freedom to express ideas without immediate correction or the emphasis on collaborative activities may feel uncomfortable or even unproductive. Moreover, CLT's reliance on interaction and spontaneous communication can sometimes be perceived as too informal, with critics arguing that it may lack the rigor and structure of more traditional methods. Unlike the Grammar Translation Method, which provides clear, rule-based instruction, or the Audio-lingual Method, which uses repetition and drills to establish patterns, CLT's focus on communicative competence can sometimes be seen as lacking a clear progression of learning. This can create a challenge for teachers who are looking to implement a structured curriculum that builds language proficiency gradually.

When comparing CLT to the Grammar Translation Method, several key differences emerge. The Grammar Translation Method, which dominated language instruction in the 19th and early 20th centuries, is focused on the translation of written texts, memorization of vocabulary, and mastering grammatical rules through explicit explanation and practice. While GTM can be useful for reading and writing, it does not equip students to speak or understand spoken language effectively. In contrast, CLT's focus on communicative tasks helps students practice language in real contexts, preparing them for active use in social, academic, and professional settings. CLT's emphasis on speaking, listening, and interaction means that learners gain a more well-rounded ability to use the language, beyond simply translating text or understanding grammar. The Audio-lingual Method, another predecessor to CLT, is rooted in behaviorist theory, emphasizing repetition and drills to build language habits. In the Audio-lingual Method, language is taught through a sequence of pattern drills and dialogues, with teachers correcting errors immediately. This approach is effective in training learners to produce specific linguistic structures and to practice pronunciation, but it lacks a focus on communicative context. The Audio-lingual Method often does not allow for the kind of fluid, spontaneous communication that CLT encourages, as learners are trained to follow set patterns rather than express original thoughts or engage in meaningful conversations. CLT, on the other hand, allows students to use language in a more flexible and creative manner, which aligns more closely with real-world language use.

The teacher's role in CLT is another point of contrast with older methods. In the Audio-lingual Method, teachers are the central figures in the classroom,



providing correction and controlling the flow of the lesson. In CLT, the teacher's role is more as a facilitator or guide, creating an environment where students are encouraged to take risks with their language use and collaborate with their peers. This shift reflects a broader change in education, from teacher-centered to learner-centered approaches. Teachers in CLT classrooms may provide initial instruction and help scaffold learning, but the focus is on enabling students to use language creatively and meaningfully.

In conclusion, while the Communicative Language Teaching approach has shown remarkable flexibility and adaptability, there is no perfect method in language teaching. Each method, whether it's CLT, Grammar Translation, or Audio-lingual, offers different strengths that can be applied in various contexts. The key to effective language teaching lies in balancing different approaches and understanding the unique needs of students. CLT, with its focus on communication, student interaction, and real-world application, remains a highly effective method in modern TESOL. However, its implementation must be carefully managed to address its limitations, such as the need for explicit grammar instruction and the challenge of large classes, to ensure that learners develop both fluency and accuracy in their language skills. As TESOL continues to evolve, CLT will undoubtedly remain a foundational approach, while adapting to new teaching contexts and technologies.

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