



# Communicative Language Teaching: A Better Way of Language Learning

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## Abstract:

*The need for good communication skill has created a great demand for English teaching around the world. People want to improve their command over English. Students want to master English to a high level of accuracy and fluency. The demand for appropriate teaching methodology is therefore as strong as ever. At present, different methods and approaches have been used for teaching English in classroom at present. There are many opinions swinging in regard to issues like which approach or method is more effective in teaching English as a second or foreign language in Indian classroom in general and Gujarat in particular. Moreover the most important issue is how to teach English in our classrooms. At present Communicative Language teaching is the need of the hour as it has been extensively adopted by textbooks and curricula in second language teaching.*

*At present Following Communicative Approach Teaching points have been discussed in details.*

- *Language functions*
- *Communicative Language Teaching*
- *Principles of CLT*
- *Communicative Model of Teaching*
- *CLT Procedure*
- *Classroom activities in CLT*
- *Teachers' and Students' Roles in CLT Classroom*

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**Keywords:** *Communicative Language, Communicative Approach, Methodology*

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## 1. Introduction

Communicative Language Teaching as a methodology was regarded as revolutionary as it emphasis on communicative competence in the classroom. CLT endorsed as a reaction against the traditional language teaching practice in both ESL and EFL environments. Observation of children while they acquire the first language reveals how they initially start uttering telegraphic words in imitation of what they hear spoken around them. They pass from one to two or three word combinations. By the age of three, they can comprehend an incredible quantity of linguistic behaviour and also generate chatting and conversation. At school, they begin to learn not only what to say but also what not to say. Communicative Approach has been extensively adopted by textbooks and curricula in second language teaching. This holds true for India.

## 2. Communicative Approach

Communicative approach to language teaching aims at developing the communicative competence of the learners which would include the learners acquiring the knowledge of communicative functions of the language and the linguistic means to perform the different kinds of functions.

## 3. Language Functions

|    |                               |  |
|----|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. | The instructional function    | : to get things                            |
| 2  | The regulatory function       | : to control the behaviour of others       |
| 3  | The instructional function    | : to create interaction with others        |
| 4  | The personal function         | : to express personal feeling and meanings |
| 5  | The heuristic function        | : to learn and to discover                 |
| 6  | The imaginative function      | : to create a world of the imagination     |
| 7  | The representational function | : using language to communicate            |

(Venkateswaran)

## 4. Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching is a recognized theoretical model in English language teaching today. Many applied linguists regard it as one of the most effective approaches to ELT. Since its inception in Europe in early 1970s, CLT has served as a major source of influence on language teaching practice round the world.

When asked to majority of teachers about the approach they use in their classrooms, teachers assert “CLT” as the methodology of choice. However, when they are asked about the detail account of what they mean by communicative approach, they are different in their views. What is involved in CLT? Does CLT mean teaching conversation, an absence of grammar in a course, an open ended discussion activities? The answers to these questions can be best understood by examining CLT in terms of its historical development, of a set of principles about the goals of language teaching, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom.

According to D. L. Freeman in CLT, “almost everything that is done is done with a communicative intent; students use the language a great deal through communicative activities such as games, role plays and problem solving tasks”.

## 5. Principles of CLT

A. K. Paliwal has quoted D. L. Freeman’s principles of CLT as follows:

- a. Whenever possible, ‘authentic language’ at it is used in real context should be introduced.
- b. Being able to figure out the speaker’s or writer’s intention is part of being communicatively competent.
- c. The target language is a vehicle for classroom communication, not just the object of study.
- d. One function can have many different linguistic forms. Since the focus of the course is on real language use, a variety of linguistic forms are presented together.

- e. Students work with language at the discourse or super-sentential (above sentence) level. They must learn about cohesion and coherence, those properties of language which bind the sentences together.
- f. Games are important because they have certain features in common. In real communicative events there is a purpose of the exchange...
- g. Errors are tolerated and seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills.
- h. One of the teacher's responsibilities is to establish situations likely to promote communication.
- i. The social context of the communicative event is essential in giving meaning to the utterance.
- j. The grammar and vocabulary the students learn follow from the function, situational context, and the roles of the interlocutors...

According to Howatt (1984), CLT consist of a 'weak' and a 'strong' version. The weak version of CLT is based on the assumption that the components of communicative competence can be identified and thus systematically taught which means that CLT does not display a fundamental difference from the earlier traditional approaches. This weak version of CLT highlights the significance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching. Teachers pay attention to particular language functions such as 'making request' and 'giving advice'. Howatt (1984) describes the weak version of CLT as "learning to use English"

On the contrary, According to Howatt (1984) strong version of CLT is based on the claims that "language is acquired through communication". In other words, learners do not go through a learning experience in which they acquire the structural properties of a language and then learn to use this structural system in communication, students discover to learn how to communicate in a language. Here, teachers provide ample opportunities that how language is used in actual communication. Howatt (1984) says "using English to learn it"

In CLT meaning is given prime importance, which is achieved through interaction between reader and writer and through negotiation between speaker and listener. There are varieties of communicative activities (e.g. games, role plays, simulations) which offer learners an opportunity to practice their communication skills meaningfully in different contexts and by talking on different roles.

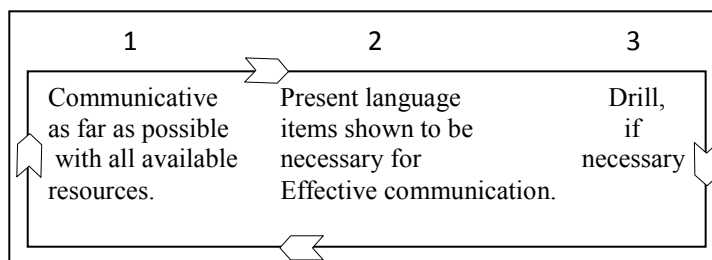
Communicative class are commonly carried out by students in small group. Students are engaged in meaningful communication rather than mechanical practice of grammatical rules. CLT activities in pair and group work will benefit the learners in the following ways:

- a. They can learn from hearing the language used by other members of the group.
- b. They will produce a greater amount of language than they would use in teacher- fronted activities.
- c. Their motivational level is likely to increase.
- d. They will have the chance to develop fluency.

## 6. Communicative Model of Teaching

A. K. Paliwal has quoted C. J. Brumfit and K. Johnson's communicative language teaching model as follows.

### 6.1 Communicative Model of Teaching

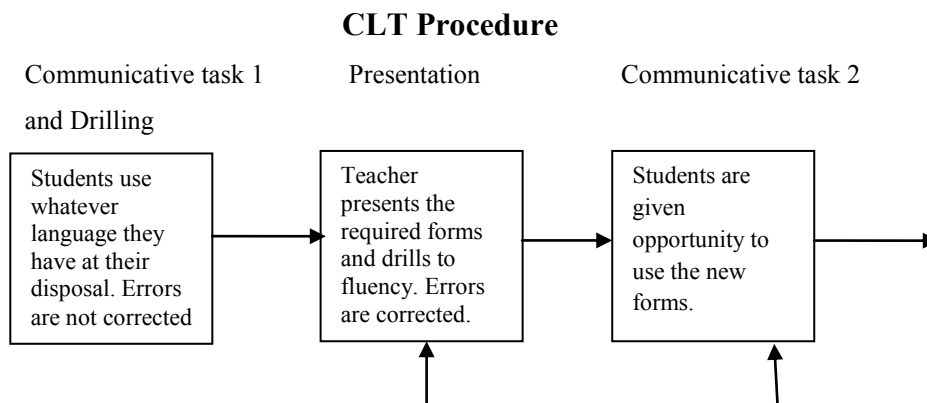


**Figure 1**  
**Communicative Model of Teaching**

The model suggests that the teacher should set a task for his pupils who should be asked to communicate as far as possible with all available resources. If the teacher feels that his students are not in a comfortable position to communicate due to lack of linguistic support, then he must present the necessary language items, both structural and lexical, for effective communication. The teacher can provide drills, if necessary. This is the pedagogical and methodological framework in which communicative language teaching must be conducted.

### 7. The Communicative Language Teaching Procedure

Peter Hubbard, Hywel Jones et al. have proposed the following procedure for consideration.



**Figure 2**  
**Communicative Language Teaching Procedures**

They explained the procedure in the following words:

- a. The teacher sets up a communicative activity which demands ability to express the functions to be taught. At this stage, the teacher does not supply the language forms which the students require for expression of this function. Instead, the students have to cope with whatever language resources they have available. In performing this task they will inevitably produce errors, mistakes and much inappropriate language.
- b. The teacher introduces the required language form(s) and does sufficient drilling to achieve a reasonable degree of fluency. Since a model interaction might be the best way to introduce these forms, a suitable way to do this would be to play a taped dialogue illustrating use of the forms and functions to be presented.

- c. The teacher gives students a fresh communication task so as to provide them with an opportunity and motive to use the language forms they have learnt. If serious errors occur, the teacher goes back to the drilling stage again.

### **8. Classroom Activities in CLT**

Communicative intent is always given a prime position in every CLT activity. In a communicative class, students are provided with opportunity to use the language through communication activities. There are various classifications of activities that are found in a communicative language classroom that are listed below:

1. Describing people
2. Describing processes
3. Cue cards
4. Follow me (Giving Instruction)
5. Jig-saw-reading / listening
6. Cloze reading
7. Dictation with a difference
8. Then and now
9. Strip story
10. Information transfer
11. Moods and mindsets
12. Simulations

### **9. Teachers' and Students' Roles in CLT Classroom**

In CLT, there are different roles in the language classroom for teachers and learners than form those found in traditional classroom. Learners in CLT classrooms are supposed to participate in classroom activities that are based on collaborative rather than individualistic approach to learning. Students are found active in language learning process. Therefore, CLT alters the role of the teacher. Also, CLT as a methodology has much to do with interaction. Teachers' and Students' roles in CLT classroom have a dynamic feature and they tend to vary all the time.

William Little wood has stated teacher's role in CLT classroom, "the teacher's role in the learning process is recognised as less important. More emphasis is placed on the learner's contribution through independent learning."

A. K. Paliwal has also quoted Breen and Condlin about the learner's role in CLT classroom, "The role of the learner as negotiator-between the self, the learning process, and the object of learning-emerges from and interacts with the role of joint negotiator within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities which the group undertakes. The implication for the learner is that he should contribute as much as he gains, and thereby learn in an interdependent way".

It is thus advisable for teachers adopting a communicative approach to produce and use authentic teaching materials that meet the needs of their particular learners. Moreover, teachers need to motivate their students as well as provide them with a comfortable classroom atmosphere for language learning.

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