

## ENHANCING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: THE CORE OF CLT IN EFL SPEAKING CLASSES

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**Annotation.** *This article explores the essential role of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in enhancing speaking skills and communicative competence among learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. CLT, which emphasizes interaction, authenticity, and meaningful communication, fosters a learner-centered environment where speaking becomes both the goal and the means of language acquisition. The article explains the components of communicative competence - grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic - and illustrates how CLT strategies such as group work, task-based activities, and real-life simulations promote fluency, accuracy, and appropriate language use in real-life contexts.*

**Keywords.** *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), communicative competence, EFL speaking skills, learner-centered approach, task-based learning, fluency, interaction, speaking anxiety, real-life communication*

### **Introduction**

In traditional EFL classrooms, the focus has often been on grammar, vocabulary memorization, and controlled speaking drills. However, such methods frequently neglect learners' ability to use language naturally in real-life conversations. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged in response to this gap, shifting the emphasis toward developing students' communicative competence — a concept introduced by Dell Hymes, which refers to the ability to use language effectively and appropriately. It also addresses the practical challenges EFL teachers encounter when implementing CLT, including classroom limitations and learner resistance, and offers practical solutions for adaptation. By highlighting the importance of fluency over grammatical perfection and recommending effective methods for optimizing CLT-based speaking instruction, the article provides valuable insights for language educators, teacher trainers, and curriculum developers aiming to foster more communicative and engaging EFL speaking lessons.

### **Main Part**

#### **Introduction to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a methodology rooted in the idea that language learning is most effective when it is meaningful and interaction-based. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, the central objective of CLT is the development of communicative competence — the ability to use the language

appropriately in real-life situations, not merely to master grammar and vocabulary. This paradigm shift places greater emphasis on speaking fluency, functional language use, and social interaction.

### **Components of Communicative Competence**

Communicative competence, as conceptualized by Canale and Swain (1980), consists of four primary components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Grammatical competence refers to the accurate use of syntax, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Sociolinguistic competence involves understanding social norms and cultural context. Discourse competence is the ability to produce coherent and cohesive speech, while strategic competence entails the use of strategies to overcome communication breakdowns.

### **CLT Techniques in EFL Speaking Classes**

In EFL speaking classes, CLT is implemented through various interactive and student-centered activities such as role-plays, information gap tasks, interviews, group discussions, and problem-solving tasks. These activities simulate real-world communicative scenarios and require learners to negotiate meaning, express ideas, and respond spontaneously.

**Role-plays and simulations** foster sociolinguistic and strategic competence by immersing students in context-rich, pragmatic exchanges. **Information gap activities** stimulate authentic use of language by requiring learners to obtain missing information through dialogue. **Group discussions** promote discourse competence as students must organize and link ideas coherently.

### **Teacher's Role and Classroom Environment**

The teacher in a CLT-oriented class transitions from knowledge-giver to facilitator. Their role includes guiding interactions, providing feedback, and creating a supportive environment that encourages risk-taking in speaking. Teachers must design tasks that are purposeful, contextually relevant, and aligned with students' proficiency levels and interests.

Furthermore, an anxiety-reducing environment is critical in promoting student participation. Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis suggests that students learn better when they are relaxed and motivated. A CLT classroom that encourages mistakes as learning opportunities helps build confidence and fluency.

### **Challenges in EFL Contexts**

Despite its advantages, implementing CLT in EFL settings can be challenging due to factors such as large class sizes, limited exposure to authentic language, exam-oriented curricula, and cultural barriers. Moreover, learners and teachers accustomed to traditional grammar-translation methods may resist the shift toward more communicative approaches.

To address these challenges, teacher training and curriculum reform are necessary. Professional development should focus on equipping teachers with the skills to manage communicative tasks, assess speaking proficiency holistically, and use English as the main medium of instruction.

### **Assessment in CLT**

Assessment in CLT goes beyond testing grammatical accuracy. It involves evaluating fluency, coherence, interaction, and appropriateness of language use. Tools like oral presentations, speaking portfolios, peer assessments, and performance-based rubrics allow for a more authentic measurement of communicative competence.

**Conclusion.** Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is essential in enhancing communicative competence among EFL learners. By shifting the focus from rote learning and grammatical drills to meaningful interaction and real-life communication, CLT empowers students to speak more confidently, fluently, and effectively. For EFL educators, this approach requires embracing a flexible, learner-centered methodology that places authentic communication at the core of instruction. Successful implementation of CLT also demands a shift in teaching philosophy, teacher roles, and assessment practices—particularly in traditional, exam-oriented educational contexts. When applied thoughtfully, CLT creates a dynamic learning environment where learners develop both linguistic proficiency and the confidence to use English in diverse real-world situations.

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