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THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Yo‘ldosheva Farangiz Ravshanbek qizi

1-st year student at Uzbekistan State World Languages University

Normatova Yulduz Nurnazarovna

EFL teacher at Uzbekistan State World Languages University

Abstract: *this article is dedicated to the field of language learning, focusing primarily on the **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)** methodology. It discusses its key principles, the significance of language learning as well as teaching, its advantages along with shortcomings, differences from traditional approaches, and its application educational process. The article also analyzes the adaptability of CLT in various cultural contexts. The aim of the study is to explore the role of CLT in enhancing students’ English language proficiency. This examines how the application of CLT principles, such as interaction, learner-centered activities together with real-life communication, promotes the improvement of learners’ fluency, accuracy, as well as overall ability in English. Along with this, it seeks to identify the challenges faced during the application of the approach in lessons, as well as to offer effective strategies to overcome these obstacles and make the process of English language mastery more efficient.*

Key words: *communication, fluency, communicative competence, interactional competence, learner-centered approach.*

INTRODUCTION

Learning foreign languages holds significant importance in today’s world. Thanks to the fact that this is essential for language learners not only in expanding career opportunities but also in personal growth as well as fostering connections with cultures and societies of foreign countries. However, learners encounter several challenges during the language learning process, such as limited opportunities for practical language use, low self-confidence, grammatical complexities, together with cultural differences, including challenges in understanding the cultural context. Addressing such difficulties and making language acquisition more practical, effective as well as engaging,

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) plays a vital role with its communication-based, learner-centered and practical approaches.

Communicative Language Teaching is a learner-centered approach that places primary emphasis on real-life communication along with interactivity in the language mastery process. Through this approach, language learners develop the skills to apply the language in practical situations and learn to integrate all language skills while improving both fluency along with a strong command of communication strategies. This approach developed in the 1960s and 1970s and emerged from the need to create new approaches in contrast to traditional language learning methods, such as the Grammar Translation Method together with the Audio-Lingual Method, for these types of approaches focused on teaching language learners the rules of the language but failed to develop their ability to use the language in real-life situations and apply their language skills in authentic communication. In this regard, CLT began to be widely used in language teaching and learning for its focus not only on grammatical knowledge but also on improving real communication skills. In other words, Communicative Language Teaching focuses on developing communicative competence in language learning, and its development as a method has been influenced by several theoretical as well as practical approaches. Firstly, scholars like Noam Chomsky and Dell Hymes introduced the concept of “communicative competent use of language and its appropriate social as well as cultural application. Secondly, Michael Halliday emphasized teaching language through a functional approach, referring to the importance of understanding how to use language in everyday situations. Besides that, learning a language is not limited to grammar, individual words or isolated sentences, but rather involves studying its contextual meaning through pragmatic analysis, i.e., understanding the context-dependent meaning of speech (such as “Can I have the salt over there?” which, although grammatically a question, pragmatically signifies a request). Additionally, discourse analysis, which involves studying language within broader texts or conversations, is also essential. These methods in CLT are based on using language in a way that meets the needs of interlocutors or the audience during communication align with social context, and serves the purpose of communication. This includes studying dialogues and incorporating exercises grounded in real-life communication. Moreover, the constructivist theories proposed by Jean Piaget together with Lev Vygotsky play a crucial role in the development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and in making it more effective. These theories ensure active participation of learners in the education process. According to them, language learners acquire new knowledge not only from the teacher but also by engaging in real-life communication and

building on their own experiences. Specifically, learners do not acquire knowledge passively; they learn the language not to memorize rules but to use it in real-life communication. Furthermore, language skills can be effectively developed through collaboration among learners, such as completing language tasks together, participating in role-plays, and engaging in discussions, as language is formed and improved during the process of human thinking. Jean Piaget's and Lev Vygotsky's constructivism has contributed to making CLT methodology interactive and meaningful. Finally, task-based learning, developed by Prabhu and other linguists, is considered a significant component of CLT because it enables language learning and its practical application through the completion of real-life tasks. From these theories, it is evident that the CLT methodology is an approach aimed at developing communicative competence and using language in practice, as an effective method for learning grammar along with the language. In light of this, the fundamental principles of can be elaborated as follows: **communicative competence**, which involves language learners' ability to not only learn grammatical rules but also to apply them effectively and practically in various real-life contexts. In this approach, learners are taught to perceive language as a “means of communication” and to apply the knowledge gained during lessons in real-life situations, such as in a shop, at the workplace, or in a restaurant. For instance, learners can study grammar rules essential for effective communication in different scenario, such as: formulating questions and providing answers: “How much is this?”; “What size do you need?”, using modal verbs: for politeness: “Can I help you?”; “Could you show me this in other color?”; “May I pay by card?”; for giving advice: You should try this one.”, “You might like this product.”, understanding quantifiers and countable/uncountable nouns: “How much sugar do you need?; Do you need some water?”, using numbers and discussing prices, practicing verb tenses: “I bought this last week.; I am looking for something similar.”, conditional as well as imperative sentences: “If you aren't satisfied, you can return it.”; “Please wait here.”, “Take this to the cashier.” Developing communicative competence involves not just learning these rules but also practicing their use in authentic contexts or through role-plays, allowing language learners to consolidate grammatical rules while building real-life communication skills. This ensures that students acquire the ability to apply language practically as well as confidently in everyday interactions; **fostering student engagement**: in the CLT methodology, language learners are not passive listeners but should play a central role in the language mastery process, meaning they need to be active participants in this journey. This principle is realized through various methodological techniques, such as role-plays, group discussions, problem-solving tasks, and creative assignments, accompanied by question-and-

answer sessions. These activities create opportunities for language learners to express their ideas, develop independent thinking, use the language to solve problems, and build skills to communicate, gather information, and participate in discussions and debates during the lessons. As an example, students practice real-life communication scenarios by performing different roles. For instance, students act as a customer and a waiter in a restaurant during a lesson:

Waiter: “Is there anything specific you’d like to order?”

Customer: “I’d prefer something vegetarian. What do you recommend?”
Similarly, they may work in groups to discuss specific topics. For instance:

Student 1: “What are the main causes of air pollution in our city? Do you think industries or vehicles contribute more to air pollution? Why?”

Student 2: “I think the main cause of air pollution is vehicles. There are too many cars in the city.”

Student 3: “But factories also release a lot of smoke. Both are reasonable, don’t you think?” In addition, they create stories or projects and present them to their peers. This not only makes language learning effective and comprehensible but also develops the learners’ communicative competence. Students learn phrases and styles used in real-life contexts while simultaneously improving their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. In general, they do not merely learn the language from a grammatical perspective but enhance their ability to use it for communicative purposes; **real-life situations**: this principle means that language learning should not be limited to theory and artificial exercises, meaning that the process should not be confined to classroom-based activities alone. Language learners need to be taught how to use the language in various communicative contexts. For example, practicing a dialogue between a traveler and a local resident; **learning grammar in context**, which emphasizes grammar should not be taught in isolation but rather integrated into meaningful contexts. Learners understand grammatical structures better when they see them used in real-life situations, texts, or conversations. By embedding grammar instruction within relevant communicative activities, students not only grasp the rules but also learn how to apply them effectively in authentic communication. For instance, instead of just learning the past tense as a set of rules, students could read a story written in the past tense, discuss events, or write about their own past experiences, thereby contextualizing grammar in a practical and engaging way; **interactivity and the social principle**, which allows learners to acquire not only linguistic rules but also cultural and social aspects in the process of language learning. Through practical exercises along with activities, this process becomes engaging, beneficial, and effective. In summary, CLT is a method based on the communicative approach to language teaching, primarily aimed at enhancing

students' communication competence through the use of language in real-life situations. Similarly, as stated by many scholars, such as Michael Canale and Merrill Swain (1980), Jack C. Richards, Theodore S., David Nunan (1991), Pod Ellis, and Rodgers (2001), language should be learned not only in terms of grammar and vocabulary but also by considering social, cultural, and contextual factors. Therefore, unlike the Grammar-Translation Method, which emphasizes the memorization of grammar rules and vocabulary with limited practical application, and the Audio-Lingual Method, which heavily relies on repetition and drilling to form linguistic habits, CLT aims to prepare learners for real-life communication and focuses on improving their creativity and independent thinking skills. This approach helps students move beyond mechanical memorization and instead develop the ability to communicate fluently and effectively in diverse social settings. The role of communicative competence in CLT is pivotal, as it expands the scope of language learning beyond simply knowing grammatical rules. According to Hymes (1972), who introduced the concept of communicative competence, language learning involves not only acquiring grammar but also understanding how to use language appropriately in various contexts. This understanding is fundamental to CLT's focus on meaningful communication rather than isolated sentence structures or decontextualized grammar drills. CLT's emphasis on contextually relevant communication equips learners with the tools they need to effectively interact in real-world situations. Furthermore, Canale and Swain (1980) break communicative competence down into several components: grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic. This framework reinforces the multifaceted approach that CLT adopts in language learning, enabling learners to develop the necessary skills not only for producing grammatically correct sentences but also for using language in socially and culturally appropriate ways. This contrasts with traditional methods, where the focus is on linguistic accuracy in isolated contexts, often neglecting the importance of social interaction and communicative flexibility. Littlewood (1981) further emphasizes the importance of task-based learning in CLT, where real-world tasks drive the language learning process. By incorporating activities such as making purchases, asking for directions, or preparing for a job interview, CLT aligns with the idea that language learning should reflect real communicative needs. Unlike Grammar-Translation Method, which focuses on written translation and lacks interactive tasks, CLT encourages learners to practice language in dynamic and authentic contexts, making it more applicable to their everyday lives. Moreover, Richards and Rodgers (2001) describe CLT not just as a method, but as a comprehensive approach that centers on the use of language for communication. Through this

approach, learners internalize grammatical and linguistic structures as they engage in real communication, rather than through direct instruction of rules and memorization. This method promotes a more fluid understanding of language, where learners are able to adapt their knowledge to various communicative contexts, something traditional methods struggle to achieve due to their rigid focus on grammar. It can be inferred from these statements that CLT plays a critical role in shaping language learning processes by making language acquisition more dynamic, communicative, and context-driven, ensuring that learners are not only capable of understanding and producing language but also able to navigate complex social interactions. As a result, the transition from traditional language teaching methods to CLT highlights the importance of providing learners with opportunities to communicate in various real-life situations rather than merely acquiring grammatical knowledge. However, although CLT ensures an approach based on authentic communication in language learning, its implementation faces challenges in certain educational systems. Due to teachers' methodological expertise and the limited availability of resources, effectively applying CLT in practice becomes an obstacle. This study aims to explore the potential of CLT in teaching and learning English as a foreign language, addressing the challenges encountered in its implementation, and identifying methods to overcome these issues to make the education process more effective as well as to enhance the language skills of learners. Research questions :

1. What opportunities and challenges exist in implementing CLT in the process of teaching English as a foreign language?
2. What methods and strategies can be applied to effectively implement CLT?

Advantage and disadvantages of CLT

In the process of language learning, CLT offers various benefits. These advantages demonstrate that the method is much more versatile compared to traditional methods and aligns well with modern requirements. Firstly, according to this approach, it is important to teach language not through isolated grammar rules or vocabulary memorization but in context. This means that language elements, such as words, phrases, and grammatical structures, are learned through their use in real-life communication. Through this, learners can better understand the meaning of words and phrases in real situations. For example, in the classroom setting, students may practice phrases and expressions by playing roles as a seller and a customer in a “shopping” scenario or learn how to write an email to book a hotel room. Additionally, during the lesson, the teacher encourages students to engage in discussions on specific topics, such as talking about

holidays. This approach facilitates language learning and makes it more engaging and enjoyable. Additionally, in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), mistakes are considered a natural part of the language learning process. This approach creates a supportive environment where learners can freely express their thoughts without fear of making errors. Instead of immediately correcting mistakes and placing the learner in an uncomfortable situation, the teacher views errors as part of the communication process and focuses on explaining them later. This approach boosts learners' confidence and shifts their goal from striving for perfection to achieving effective communication. Moreover, learners have the opportunity to analyze their mistakes thoroughly, meaning they study their own errors and learn from them in a productive way. Besides, the process of learning from mistakes teaches learners to be more cautious in their speech and writing. It also helps them understand the complexities of the language and encourages them to use it correctly in the future. For instance, during a lesson, learners might be tasked with “talking about their favorite weekend.” One of them might say: “I go to the park yesterday with my friends.” The teacher does not immediately correct the error but instead responds to the student's statement to keep the conversation flowing: “That sounds fun! What did you do there?” Later, at the end of the lesson, the teacher provides a general explanation of the past tense and gently corrects the student's mistake: “Instead of “I go”, we say “I went” for the past tense.” By accepting mistakes as a natural part of the learning process, learners are encouraged to express their thoughts freely. When errors are analyzed using an appropriate approach, they help learners gain a deeper understanding of the language and use it effectively in real-life situations. This, in turn, increases their enthusiasm for communication and makes the language learning process more enjoyable. Along with this, this approach views language not merely as a set of grammatical rules but as a tool for accomplishing specific functions. It emphasizes that the primary purpose of language is communication and achieving goals. Teaching students not just how to use the language but also why and for what purpose to use it is considered essential. For example, the approach focuses on everyday tasks such as giving advice, making suggestions, asking for help, or expressing disagreement. Through these activities, learners practice how to use language in various situations, which enhances their ability to use it effectively and increases their participation in communication, as they feel empowered to express themselves freely. For instance, in an activity on making and responding to suggestions, students might practice inviting someone to a movie:

Student 1: “Would you like to watch a movie tonight?”

Student 2: “Yes, I'd love to. What time should we meet?”

Through this exercise, students learn expressions related to making and responding to suggestions. Similarly, in an activity focused on asking for and giving help, students might practice asking for directions at an airport:

Student 1: “Excuse me, could you tell me where the check-in counter is?”

Student 2 (playing the role of a staff member): "Sure, it's straight ahead on your left." In this scenario, they practice expressions for seeking and offering assistance. Another planning example could be giving and accepting advice, where learners discuss choosing a destination for travel:

Learner 1: “I’m a trip. Do you have any suggestions?”

Learner 2: “I recommend visiting Italy. The culture and food are amazing!”

This activity encourages students to practice giving advice and expressing opinions. Through such exercises, learners gain the ability to express themselves freely in everyday situations, fostering their interest in language learning while building practical communication skills. Another advantage of the method is that the interaction between the teacher and students lies at the core of the lesson. The teacher acts not only as a source of knowledge but also as an active participant in the communication process. This approach encourages teachers to engage students and organize lively discussions, making language learning more engaging and effective. At the same time, students become more involved in the learning process and feel heard and understood, fostering an interactive environment. Through the dynamic interaction between the teacher and students, a collaborative atmosphere is created. Students are encouraged to express their thoughts and actively participate in discussions, allowing them to acquire the skills needed for real-life communication by being actively engaged in learning. For instance, in a question-and-answer activity, the teacher might prompt students to discuss their weekend activities:

Teacher: “What did you do last weekend?”

Student 1: “I went hiking with my family.”

Teacher: “That sounds fun! Where did you go hiking?”

Student 1: “We went to the mountains nearby.” In this process, students practice using the past tense while participating in a live conversation with the teacher. Another example could involve a group activity, such as planning a celebration. The teacher might organize a group discussion on the topic of “planning a New Year’s party”:

Teacher: “Imagine you're planning a New Year’s party. What will you include in the plan?”

Group: Students collaboratively create a plan for the celebration.

Student 1: “We need to decide on the location first.”

Student 2: “I think we should have it at a park.” The teacher actively participates in the discussion, encouraging students with questions and listening to their ideas. Interactive communication allows students to feel confident in real-life situations and equips them to use the language effectively. One of the significant advantages of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method is that it also teaches students the cultural aspects of the target language during the learning process. Every language is closely intertwined with a specific culture, and through CLT, students not only learn the language but also acquire cultural communication norms, styles of interaction in various situations, and traditions. This prepares them for intercultural communication. Consequently, students learn how to speak, behave, and use language correctly and culturally appropriately in different contexts, gaining the skills needed to avoid cultural misunderstandings in real-life situations. To illustrate, teachers introduce students to various cultural contexts by teaching them how to greet, express gratitude, and engage in formal and informal communication, as well as understanding cultural nuances. Hence, the approach prepares students not only linguistically but also culturally. The integration of language and culture equips students with the ability to communicate effectively on an international level. In this way, they become capable of using the language more comprehensively and efficiently. Finally, CLT also develops students' personal skills, indicating that through this approach, they not only learn the language but also enhance their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Students learn to use the language creatively and independently. For example, they practice expressing their personal opinions and engaging in discussions with other students. However, although CLT has numerous advantages and is considered a modern and effective language learning methodology, its drawbacks can make it challenging to implement in every context. First of all, since CLT emphasizes communication, thorough grammar learning may take a back seat. Students might be able to communicate well but may still speak or write with grammatical inaccuracies. For example, they may use grammatically incorrect sentences such as “He go to the market yesterday.” However, under the CLT approach, the teacher may not correct this mistake immediately, as the primary goal is to maintain the flow of communication. As a result, the grammatical error might go unnoticed and could develop into a bad habit over time. Besides that, effectively implementing this methodology requires significant resources (audio and video materials, lists for real-life situations) and time. In resource-limited environments, fully applying this method can be difficult. For instance, in rural schools, the absence of necessary audio or visual materials may hinder teachers from creating authentic real-life scenarios with students. Consequently, the advantages of CLT cannot be fully realized, and the

lessons may lose their effectiveness. Additionally, not every student adapts equally to the CLT method. Some students may be reluctant to communicate or prefer traditional approaches. For example, during pair-work conversation activities, a student may face challenges because they feel shy about interacting with others. As a result, they may be unable to demonstrate their full potential and lose motivation. Moreover, in the CLT approach, teachers must not only have a strong command of the language but also possess skills in managing communication, creating real-life scenarios, and effectively engaging with students. For inexperienced or less qualified teachers, this method can be particularly challenging. For example, an inexperienced teacher may struggle to involve students in communication activities, causing the lesson to lose focus and control. As a result, students may waste time, and the learning objectives may not be achieved. In addition, assessing students' progress in this approach can be difficult, as CLT focuses on communication skills rather than traditional tests. This makes it hard to accurately determine students' true proficiency levels. For instance, a student might actively participate in communication but perform poorly in grammar or writing skills, making it difficult to identify areas that need improvement. Thus, the assessment system may appear unfair to some students. Furthermore, CLT activities related to real-life situations can sometimes be excessive, leading to student fatigue or distraction from fundamental theoretical knowledge. For instance, if every lesson involves creating scenarios like making phone calls or practicing restaurant conversations, students may lose interest, as they also wish to learn theoretical aspects of the language. As a result, students may lose interest in lessons, and their knowledge may remain superficial. Besides that, using this method in the language learning process complicates preparation for formal exams such as IELTS and TOEFL, as these exams do not fully align with the principles of CLT. These tests often emphasize grammatical accuracy and structure, whereas CLT primarily focuses on enhancing real-life communication and communicative competence. This creates challenges when preparing for traditional exams. For instance, while a student preparing for a test might have learned to speak fluently through CLT, they may score poorly on grammar-based tests due to errors like “She don't like it.” Moreover, this methodology is not equally suitable for learning all languages. For certain languages, especially those with complex grammatical rules, adapting CLT principles can be challenging. For example, relying on communication-focused approaches through CLT when learning German or Russian can lead to grammatically inaccurate outcomes due to the high importance of strict grammar rules in these languages.

This study investigates the impact of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on students' English language learning processes, emphasizing both its effectiveness in fostering communication skills and the challenges it presents in practical application. Additionally, the study seeks to propose potential solutions to address these challenges and enhance the methodology's overall efficiency.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted among 9th-10th grade school students. These students had previously been taught English as a second language using the Grammar-Translation Method, which primarily focused on teaching grammatical rules and vocabulary and was mainly oriented towards written translation and grammar exercises. The study involved 30 students: 15 in the experimental group and 15 in the control group. The research was carried out using the following methods:

1. Experimental Teaching:

Developing special lesson plans based on CLT and implementing them in the experimental group.

Continuing to teach the control group using the traditional method.

Comparing the results of both groups.

2. Pre-test and Post-test:

Conducting assessments at the beginning and end of the study to evaluate students' grammatical, speaking, and writing skills.

Measuring the impact of CLT by comparing the results.

3. Observation:

Monitoring students' participation, engagement, and changes in communication during the lessons.

4. Role-playing and Communication-based Activities:

Engaging students in role-playing and group tasks.

Assigning real-life communication-based tasks to assess their speaking skills.

5. Teacher and Student Feedback:

Conducting interviews with teachers to discuss challenges and results of using the CLT method.

Collecting students' opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of this method during lessons.

All these methods allowed a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of CLT in improving speaking skills among school students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results were discussed based on pre-test and post-test scores, observations, as well as teacher and student feedback. According to the pre-test and post-test results, participants in the experimental group showed significant improvement in

speaking, writing, and grammatical accuracy. Specifically, the experimental group demonstrated a 30% improvement in speaking skills, while the control group showed only a 10% improvement. Along with this, the experimental group achieved 25% better results in terms of coherence and fluency in writing. The control group, on the other hand, showed minimal improvement. Similarly, although both groups improved in grammar, the experimental group gained a more practical understanding by applying grammar in context. Additionally, classroom observations revealed that students in the experimental group participated more actively during lessons. They were highly engaged in role-playing, group discussions, and real-life tasks. Conversely, students in the control group were more passive and focused primarily on written exercises. Furthermore, students in the experimental group expressed satisfaction with the interactive environment created through the CLT method. They reported that the lessons were practical and interactive, and they found role-playing and group activities helpful in boosting their self-confidence. However, some students initially faced challenges adapting to CLT due to their familiarity with traditional methods. They particularly struggled to express themselves freely in English during the early stages. Similarly, teachers acknowledged the positive impact of CLT on students but also highlighted the challenges of implementing the method. Time constraints, large class sizes, and the lack of CLT-oriented materials were identified as the main obstacles. The results indicate that the CLT approach is highly effective in developing students' communicative skills in English. However, successful implementation requires addressing existing barriers. To this end, several beneficial strategies are recommended. For instance, organizing special training and workshops on CLT principles for teachers is essential. These will help them learn and develop the skills to effectively apply communicative approaches in practice. It is also necessary to conduct practical sessions to demonstrate how the approach can be implemented in classrooms and organize experience-sharing activities. Moreover, CLT activities should be gradually incorporated into existing curricula, allowing the new approach to be introduced without completely overhauling the current system. CLT activities should begin with simple role-playing or short communicative tasks, progressing to more complex ones. Another strategy is to allocate class time appropriately for CLT activities and other exercises. Furthermore, providing and developing resources is crucial, including creating and using authentic materials (such as films, songs, articles, and dialogues) for CLT activities, developing specific manuals and textbooks, or adapting existing ones. Electronic resources (such as mobile applications and interactive platforms) should also be used to support CLT activities. Creating a supportive and friendly environment is equally important.

Students should feel encouraged to communicate without fear of making mistakes. Teachers need to explain to students that CLT is a new approach and help them gradually adapt to it. It is also essential to avoid overemphasizing errors in speech and allow students to express their ideas freely. With the right strategies, CLT can revolutionize English language teaching and equip students with the skills necessary for real-life communication.

Conclusion: CLT offers a learner-centered and dynamic approach to language education, equipping students with practical skills for real-life communication, proving to be an effective and innovative methodology for enhancing English language proficiency. By addressing its challenges through targeted strategies, CLT can serve as a powerful tool to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Furthermore, this approach nurtures critical thinking, problem-solving, and independent learning skills, making it a holistic methodology that not only teaches language but also prepares students for success in diverse social and professional settings. The findings underline the need for continued research and experimentation with CLT in various educational contexts. As this methodology evolves, it holds the promise of revolutionizing language education, fostering not only fluency but also a deeper understanding of cultural and communicative nuances in learners worldwide.

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