
The Emergence of Communicative Language Teaching in the English Language Learning and Teaching Context

Lalu Azizan Bohari*

Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris, Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Sumbawa

Jl. Labu Sawo, Kecamatan Moyo Utara, Kabupaten Sumbawa, NTB, 84371. Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: laluazizanb@gmail.com

Article History

Received : December 22th, 2025

Revised : January 20th, 2026

Accepted : February 16th, 2026

Abstract: English has gained a prominent role in today's globalisation-functioning as an international language-conveying communicative messages as well as connecting people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Being able to speak the language fluently and appropriately enables the speakers to interact more effectively. The majority of English learners, however, still have difficulty coping with the target language in spite of being instructed for years. One of the most salient problems facing the learners is the use of the irrelevant and monotonous approaches to language learning and teaching. For this reason, this article attempted to explicate the notion of Communicative Language Teaching, the so-called CLT, which is viewed as a contemporary and complementary approach to the previous ones, focusing on the optimal attainment of the communicative competence and to delve into numerous attributes contributing to its emergence in the English Language Learning and Teaching (ELT) context by highlighting the theoretical concepts underlying such approach. Synthesizing the relevant sources of the conceptual data, the CLT emphasised several significances for the learners: being communicatively skilful; mastering vocabulary and grammar; and understanding the function over form of language. It finally proposed the implications for the teaching practitioners to take into consideration in their attempts to succeed in the classroom teaching endeavours.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, communicative competence, use of language, English Language Learning and Teaching context

INTRODUCTION

The diversity in needs of every student in learning English as a second or foreign language has stimulated numerous teaching approaches to emerge in order to accommodate such needs. One of the most influential current teaching approaches which has gained in popularity for some time now is Communicative Language Teaching, the so-called CLT. This contemporary practice is outed to have resulted from an attempt to switch from the implementation of traditional approaches to language learning and teaching, which was considered monotonous and mechanical, to a more interactive and practical one. It mainly emphasises the use of the target language in actual communication. The question then arises whether or not the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) considerably affects a changing paradigm towards the current English Language Learning and Teaching (ELT) milieus.

Some scholars who are the proponents of traditional approaches doubted if the CLT would be the perfectly ultimate solution to pedagogical challenges, and contended that the traditional approaches do still have their place in assisting students in mastering language, and eventually cannot be completely demolished from classroom instruction. Among them are Jin and Cortazzi, who affirmed that the traditional approaches are still used for teaching second or foreign language in some circumstances, such as a classroom instruction which needs to explicitly explain grammatical and syntactical patterns of language, and to lead students to memorize lexical items and connect with their mother tongue (2011). On the contrary, those in favour of the CLT maintained an argument ascertaining that the traditional practices might be no longer suitable, and the Communicative Language Teaching emerged as the alternative formula which can evolutionarily complement the previous ones. Taking into account the

abovementioned arguments, this article then will elaborate the notion of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach along with some factors contributing to its arrival in the ELT setting.

METHODS

The study was descriptive qualitative focusing on assessing the notion of the CLT as well as identifying fundamental factors influencing its emergence in the ELT context. The aforementioned research method, according to Rachman et.al (2024), emphasizes the ability of a researcher to explore a topic more deeply within its natural scope. This means that the subjective perceptions and contextual understanding of the topic are given greater importance in order to comprehend the issues in research. It then employed the library research as a method of collecting data by compiling several research papers in relation to the topic being discussed. This literature review process assists in assessing and sorting an ample of previous research results (Snyder, 2019). The next process is synthesising the key terms of the topic, disclosing the relation of those concepts prior to be evaluated as the final phase of the data collection procedure.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the synthesis of the relevant sources of the data, it was discovered that the emergence of the CLT was boosted by numerous factors such as being communicatively skilful; mastering vocabulary and grammar; and understanding the function over form of language.

English language learning and teaching principally aims at providing integrated assistance for learners in an attempt to arrive at a peak of mastering a target language with profoundly satisfactory achievement in terms of accuracy and fluency. The integrated assistance has to consider both macro skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) and micro skills (grammar, vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation and others) the same in terms of importance for learners in acquiring the target language. While this perspective seems plausible, in addition, there needs to be some methods to boost students' performance in language learning. Reflecting on the previous English Language Learning and

Teaching experiences, however, learning objectives that were to be achieved and the approaches used in classroom practice seemed somehow irrelevant. As a result, there was no increase in the level of students' language intelligibility although the target language had been instructed formally for long time. This is an irony that 'there are still very limited numbers of students who are able to communicate simple [simply] in English, although they have been studying English for about [more than] six years' (Mattarima & Hamdan, 2011, p. 288).

The aforementioned issue was caused by a phenomenon in which the vast majority of the classroom practices still emphasise mostly small components of language rather than encouraging learners to utilise the target language communicatively. The previous portraits of the teaching and learning of English seemed to be rule-governed or grammar-based (Richards, 2006; Nunan, 1999; Canale & Swain, 1980). This typical classroom practice was assumed to be less beneficial in injecting the acquisition of English as a second or foreign language. The ability to understand an astronomical number of grammatical rules or patterns would not determine the intelligibility to display the language (Nunan, 1999).

As an alternative, therefore, learners have to be provided with much input on language as well as being allowed to display such input in real-life communication, which can escalate their language proficiency, because both input and practice are the same in importance. In addition to this, Rukmini (2017) suggests learners and teachers being able to distinguish between the extent to which grammatical and lexical forms of language might influence the appropriateness of language use in communication because this distinction can frame the fundamental understanding of the nature of language in terms of functioning as both a system of rules and a transmission of meaning. This consideration has been accommodated by the implementation of a well-integrated approach to language methodology, that is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

The notion of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The Communicative Language Teaching can be defined as an approach which is mainly concerned with the use of a target language communicatively. A more elaborated definition

was proposed by Richards (2006) who says that the way of teaching is ‘a set of principles about the goals of teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom’ (p. 2). Therefore, the use of appropriate language methodology can help teaching practitioners integrate various aspects of language teaching and learning mentioned beforehand in order to lead learners to succeed in the process of acquiring knowledge and developing their skills.

The approach, furthermore, outlines the importance of using the target language communicatively on a daily basis. Along with the establishment of this element of knowledge, the improved quantity of utterances and a decrease in reluctance to speak would pass through the improvement of communicative skills (Belchamber, 2007). As a consequence, learners would be able to express their ideas and gain as much information as possible while they also can convey meaning or messages fluently to others without fearing of making mistakes in terms of accuracy. In addition, a basic element of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is that it purports to establish a set of communicative competence of learners in terms of being able to display the target language in such a way that the absence of hesitation, in speaking for instance, seems to be the primary consideration. It means that learners can produce some utterances in a considerable pace. The communicative competence then plays a pivotal role in determining how well the target language can be utilized to convey the meaning. However, there has been a misconception about the communicative approach in which it is seen as only for teaching speaking along with listening and ignoring other macro skills. This might be triggered by the term ‘communicative’ which then ‘...leads [learners] naturally towards thinking about what they will need to communicate [orally] about, and why...’ (Thompson, 1996, pp. 11-12). This amiss understanding has been widely spread in the classroom practices.

To tackle this issue of misbelief, however, Richards (2006) elaborates some fundamental facets of communicative competence: the understanding of the utility of language in various circumstances; the selection of appropriate language in terms of degree of formality; the production of diverse text types;

and the maintenance of interactive communication. In addition to those, the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching has considered both spoken and written forms of language to be utilised in communication because communicating the language, as suggested by Thompson (1996), does not only involve speech. The communication embodies the exchange of information via either spoken utterances or written products. It is even believed that ‘learners reading a text silently to themselves are taking part in communication (assuming that the text has something of relevance to them) just as much as if they were talking to their partner’ (Thompson, 1996, p. 12). Now it is clear that the achievement of the communicative competence embraces both the spoken and written forms of language.

Another essential consideration in promoting the communicative skills is that the classroom practice has to focus on tasks which can facilitate students in displaying the language. The tasks stimulate the learners to communicate regardless of the level of their language proficiencies because the tasks do not require linguistic outcomes to be achieved, but rather the conduct of such activities by the medium of language (www.myenglishpages.com, 2025). For this reason, it is seen that ‘language is best learnt when the learner’s attention is not on language forms but on activities/ tasks carried out using language’ (Patel, 2014, p. 5). Furthermore, the learners have to be provided with ample chances to practice the target language. For this notion, Wiyono, Gipayana, and Ruminati (2017) reveal that classroom practice aims at encouraging communication to be conducted by learners, and the teacher plays a role as the facilitator of such a communication process. By facilitating the learning process, the teacher is expected to direct the students to interactive milieus where conversational interactions can occur. The teacher facilitates the learning processes in which the communication is fully emphasised by the students to convey meaning as well as to express themselves (Graves, 2000; Kustati, 2013). Consequently, the students would be able to establish their independent learning without fully relying on the teacher.

The factors leading to the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching in ELT

The past three decades have witnessed how the Communicative Language Teaching

(CLT) approach evolved in response to some frameworks to the English Language Learning and Teaching setting which were considered not longer applicable and compatible to elevating students' English language proficiency. The first factor which led to this emergence was that traditional approaches tended to focus on grammar and basic rules of English. Nunan (1999) states that, from the perspective of the traditional methods, the fundamental concept of language is systematic structures or rules and a special emphasis is on the mastery of such patterns. He goes on to explain that there has been an effort to reconceptualise language to be a more elaborated one during the 1970s, where the focus was on the importance of the language as a means of voicing meanings (1999). His perspectives about the traditional methods which devote mechanical drills seem reasonable. This reconceptualization occurred because the English language learning and teaching was seen ineffective to increase the understanding of the target language, and was mechanically instructed. According to Musthafa (2001), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged as the response to the previous approaches to language teaching which were presumed to create failure in shaping the students' solid knowledge of the target language. It highlights the importance of being able to use the language in communicative interactions while still being aware of the accuracy. This means that being knowledgeable in the lexical items as well as being skilful in the grammatical structures can be in-line part of the process of learning without dismantling one over another (Sumawartini & Septiyana, 2024).

Another factor stimulating this communicative approach to appear was that most learning and teaching practices were conducted in a way that mastering aspects of language in order to fully acquire the target language was initiated by memorising and drilling exercises. One impact of this mechanical rehearsal would be less or nearly no chance for students to utilise the target language in real conversation. The students had no ability to use language properly in communication because they were taught in [methods focusing on grammar and accuracy] structural syllabi (Vaezi & Abbaspour, 2014).

The Communicative Language Teaching, in contrast, devotes the communication using language. The communicative utility of additional language can make it plausible for

learners to acquire the target language in such a way that the learners can practice directly. This can boost the communicative competence of the students in learning second (and foreign) language (Graves, 2000). In addition, there ought to be the creation of contexts in which students are required to communicate the target language to convey meaning or messages. In this case, the ability to deliver the meaning in communicative interactions is importantly emphasized because this will greatly help students encounter real-life situations outside the classroom where they will need such the communicative skills.

In the English Language Learning and Teaching context, moreover, there is an importance of understanding meaning beyond form of language. A case in point is the use of indirect speech which sometimes causes ambiguous interpretations for second or foreign language learners. Yule (2017) ascertains that the indirect speech helps the learners understand that 'communication depends on not only recognising the structure and meaning of words in an utterance, but also recognising what speakers mean by their utterances in a particular context' (p. 149). This speech act is prominently used even to indicate command; however, some hearers might not be really aware of such type of communication for the fact that it is not grammatically an indication for requiring someone to perform such commands. The speakers might intend to have others do something, but the form of utterances does not portrait such intentions. For example, when a speaker says 'the door is open', one might interpret that the speaker intends to tell the one that the door is open; however, this is an example of indirect speech act that considers the statement mentioned beforehand as a command or request (Kroeger, 2019). To increase the understanding of such issue, speakers need to be thoughtful that 'all kinds of utterances, we are reminded, can express intentions which are not made explicit by the grammatical form in which the utterance is couched' (Swan, 1985, p. 3). Therefore, the teacher has to consider the importance of both form and meaning of language and use an interactive way to cater this consideration in the classroom practice.

Implications

Several implications can be withdrawn from the abovementioned notion of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

approach as well as the factors leading to the emergence of the contemporary approach. First of all, communication is the key to the English Language Learning and Teaching (ELT) practices. The CLT suggests the communicative competence being the core emphasis in the process of facilitating the student in fully immersing themselves in the language classroom instruction (Yano, 2003; Richard, 2006). Hence, the classroom activities have to provide chances for the pupils to use the language in context so that the improvement of their knowledge and skills can be considerably boosted. Additionally, having an adequate knowledge of word choices and grammatical structures is also a fundamental thing in the learning process. The learners can enrich their lexicon and improve their understanding of how to use such lexical items to communicate through both oral and written ways.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is complementary to previous approaches, and this new changing paradigm in the way English as a second or foreign language is taught has brought about remarkable impacts on language teaching methodology. With this in mind, language classroom practitioners are challenged to boost the students' knowledge achievement and skills development by forging a context in which numerous communicative facets are embodied in the language instruction as well as facilitating the flexible use of language in the communicative settings.

REFERENCES

- (n.d.). What is the difference between a task and an exercise? www.myenglishpages.com. Retrieved September 4, 2025, from <https://www.myenglishpages.com/what-is-the-difference-between-a-task-and-an-exercise/>
- Belchamber, R. (2007). The Advantages of Communicative Language Teaching. *The Internet TESL Journal*, XIII (2).
- Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approach to Second Language Teaching and Testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1 (1), 1-47.
- Graves, K. (2000). *Designing Language Courses: A Guide for Teachers*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
- Jin, L., & Cortazzi, M. (2011). Re-evaluating Traditional Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Learning. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning* (Vol. II, pp. 558-575). New York: Routledge.
- Kroeger, P. (2019). *Analyzing Meaning - An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics* (2nd ed.). Berlin: Language Science Press. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2538330>.
- Kustati, M. (2013). The Shifting Paradigms in the Implementation of CLT in Southeast Asia Countries. *Jurnal Al-Ta'lim*, 1 (4), 267-277. <https://doi.org/10.15548/jt.v20i1.23>
- Mattarima, K., & Hamdan, A. R. (2011). The Teaching Constraints of English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia: The Context of School Based Curriculum. *SOSIOHUMANIKA*, 4 (2), 287-300.
- Musthafa, B. (2001). Communicative Language Teaching in Indonesia: Issues of Theoretical Assumptions and Challenges in the Classroom Practice. *Journal of Southeast Asian Education*, 2 (2), 1-10.
- Nunan, D. (1999). *Second Language Teaching and Learning*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
- Patel, J. M. (2014). Effectiveness of Communicative Approach, Structural Approach and Conventional Method of ELT at Secondary Level. (Doctoral Dissertation), Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. 10099309.
- Rachman, Arif., Yochanan, E., Samanlangi, Andi Ilham., Purnomo, Hery. (2024). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R&D*. Karawang: CV. Saba Jaya Publisher.
- Richards, J. C. (2006). *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Rukmini, S. (2017). Content-Based Language Learning and Communicative Approach to English Language Teaching for Technology and Management Courses: Integration and Implications. *The IUP Journal of English Studies* XII (4), 84-88.
- Snyder, Hannah. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and

- guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333-339.
- Sumawartini & Septiyana, H. (2024). The Importance of Communicative Competence Assessment and Measurement in Language Teaching and Learning. *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan*, 9 (1), 699-704.
- Swan, M. (1985). A critical look at the Communicative Approach (1). *ELT Journal*, 39 (1), 2-12.
- Thompson, G. (1996). Some misconceptions about communicative language teaching. *ELT Journal*, 50 (1).
- Vaezi, S., & Abbaspour, E. (2014). Implementing CLT in the Iranian Context: “Reality” versus Theory. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 98, 1905 – 1911.
- Wiyono, B. B., Gipayana, M., & Ruminiati. (2017). The Influence of Implementing Communicative Approach in the Language Teaching Process on Students’ Academic Achievement. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 8 (5), 902-908.
- Yano, Y. (2003). Communicative competence and English as an international language. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 12 (3), 75-83.
- Yule, G. (2017). *The study of language* (6th ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.