ISSN:2828-6235
Impact factor:13.77

International Journal of Literature and Language Studies(IJLLS)

THE BACKGROUND OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

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doi:https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22765960

Abstract: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged in the 1970s as a response to the limitations of traditional language teaching methods, particularly the Grammar Translation Method and the Audio-Lingual Method. These approaches mainly focused on grammatical accuracy, vocabulary memorisation, and repetitive practice, but they often failed to develop learners' ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations. The development of CLT was influenced by changes in linguistics, especially the concept of communicative competence introduced by Dell Hymes, which emphasized that knowing a language involves not only understanding grammatical rules but also knowing how to use language appropriately in different social contexts.
Key words: development, influence, communicative competence, changes, concept, language.

Introduction

The development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) represents one of the most significant changes in the history of foreign language education. It appeared as a reaction against traditional language teaching approaches that mainly focused on grammatical rules, translation, and mechanical repetition rather than learners' ability to use language effectively in real communication. Before the emergence of CLT, methods such as the Grammar Translation Method and the Audio-Lingual Method dominated language classrooms. Although these methods helped learners develop knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, they were often criticized because students could understand language structures but experienced difficulties when communicating in real-life situations.

During the 1960s and 1970s, developments in the fields of linguistics and language education led to a new understanding of what it means to know a language. Linguists began to argue that language learning should not be limited to mastering grammatical rules; instead, learners should develop the ability to use language appropriately according to different social and cultural contexts. This idea was strongly influenced by the concept of communicative competence introduced by Dell Hymes (1972), who emphasized that successful communication requires knowledge of both linguistic forms and their appropriate use. Another important contribution to the emergence of CLT came from functional theories of language, particularly the work of M. A. K. Halliday, who viewed language as a system for expressing meaning and performing social functions. According to this perspective, language is not simply a collection of grammatical structures but a tool that people use to exchange information, express opinions, establish relationships, and achieve communicative goals.

Literature Review

The development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been widely discussed by researchers and scholars in the field of applied linguistics and English language teaching. The emergence of CLT was based on the recognition that traditional approaches were insufficient for developing learners' ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations. Two influential works that contributed significantly to the theoretical foundation and practical implementation of CLT are Richards and Rodgers' Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching (2014) and Littlewood's Communicative Language Teaching (1981)[1]

In their influential book Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching, Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers (2014) provide a comprehensive analysis of the historical development of

language teaching methods, including the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching[2]. The authors explain that CLT developed as a response to the limitations of earlier methods, particularly the Grammar Translation Method and the Audio-Lingual Method, which emphasized grammatical structures and habit formation rather than meaningful communication.

According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), the central principle of CLT is that language learning should focus on developing communicative competence rather than only linguistic competence. They argue that knowing a language means not only understanding grammar and vocabulary but also being able to use language appropriately in different social and cultural contexts. Therefore, CLT views language as a system for expressing meaning and achieving communicative purposes. The authors highlight several characteristics of CLT, including learner-centred instruction, authentic communication, interaction, and the use of real-world tasks. In contrast to traditional teacher-centred approaches, CLT encourages learners to actively participate in classroom activities through discussions, role plays, problem-solving tasks, and collaborative learning. The teacher's role changes from being the main source of knowledge to becoming a facilitator who supports and guides students during the learning process.

Methodology

This research applies a qualitative research methodology to explore the historical background, theoretical development, and methodological foundations of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The qualitative approach was selected because the study aims to analyse and interpret theoretical ideas, academic perspectives, and previous research related to the emergence of CLT rather than measure statistical data. The main focus of the research is to examine how CLT developed as a response to the limitations of traditional language teaching methods and how it influenced modern English Language Teaching (ELT).

The study is based on library research and document analysis. Relevant academic sources, including books and scholarly works in applied linguistics and language teaching methodology, were analysed to identify the major factors that contributed to the development of CLT. The primary sources used in this research include Richards and Rodgers' Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching (2014) and Littlewood's Communicative Language Teaching (1981). In addition, theoretical concepts from Hymes' (1972) theory of communicative competence and Halliday's (1973) functional view of language were considered to provide a deeper understanding of the linguistic foundations of CLT.

The research procedure involved several stages. First, academic literature related to language teaching approaches was collected and reviewed. Second, important concepts connected with CLT, such as communicative competence, learner-centred education, interaction, fluency, and meaningful communication, were identified and analysed. Third, CLT was compared with previous approaches, particularly the Grammar Translation Method and the Audio-Lingual Method, to understand the reasons for its emergence and popularity.

The collected data were analysed through thematic analysis, focusing on the main themes related to the development of CLT. These themes included the shift from grammatical knowledge to communicative ability, the importance of authentic language use, the changing role of teachers and learners, and the introduction of communicative classroom activities. Through this analysis, the study demonstrates how CLT transformed the objectives, principles, and practices of foreign language teaching[3]. To ensure reliability and validity, the research uses well-established academic sources written by influential scholars in applied linguistics. Different theoretical perspectives were compared to provide a balanced understanding of CLT. All sources were appropriately acknowledged according to academic research standards.

Analysis

The emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) marked a significant transformation in the field of foreign language education. The analysis of CLT development shows that this

approach appeared because traditional teaching methods could not fully prepare learners for real-life communication. Before CLT, language teaching mainly concentrated on grammatical rules, vocabulary memorisation, and translation exercises. Although these methods helped students develop knowledge about language structures, many learners were unable to use English effectively in authentic situations.

One of the main reasons for the development of CLT was the limitation of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM). This method considered grammar knowledge and translation ability as the main indicators of language proficiency. Students usually spent much time analysing sentence structures and translating texts from one language into another. For example, learners might be able to translate the sentence:

"She has been studying English for five years."

and explain its grammatical structure, but they might struggle to answer a simple real-life question:

"How long have you been learning English?"

This situation demonstrated that knowing grammatical rules does not always mean being able to communicate successfully. Therefore, language educators began searching for an approach that would connect language knowledge with practical use.

Another important factor in the development of CLT was the concept of communicative competence introduced by Dell Hymes (1972). Hymes argued that language ability involves more than grammatical accuracy. A competent language user should know what to say, how to say it, when to say it, and to whom it should be said. For example, a learner should understand the difference between formal and informal expressions[4]:

Formal:

"Could you possibly help me with this task?"

Informal:

"Can you help me with this?"

Both sentences are grammatically correct, but the choice depends on the social context. This idea became one of the theoretical foundations of CLT.

The analysis of CLT also shows a significant change in the role of the teacher and the learner. In traditional classrooms, the teacher was considered the main source of knowledge, while students were passive receivers of information. However, CLT introduced a learner-centred approach where students actively participate in communication. The teacher becomes a facilitator who creates opportunities for interaction.

For example, instead of explaining the structure of "going to" for future plans and asking students to complete written exercises, a CLT-based lesson may include a speaking activity:

Situation:

"You and your partner are planning your weekend activities."

Student A:

"What are you going to do on Saturday?"

Student B:

"I am going to visit my grandparents. What about you?"

Through this activity, students practise grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction skills simultaneously.

Another important aspect of CLT is the use of authentic communication activities. According to Littlewood (1981), communication activities allow learners to use language creatively rather than simply repeat memorised sentences. Activities such as role plays, discussions, information-gap tasks, and problem-solving activities provide learners with opportunities to negotiate meaning.

For instance, in an information-gap activity, Student A has information about a train schedule, while Student B has information about a travel plan. They must communicate with each other to find the best journey. The focus is not only on producing correct sentences but also on achieving a

communicative goal. Furthermore, CLT changed the understanding of language itself. Traditional methods often viewed language as a collection of grammatical structures. However, CLT considers language as a social tool used for different purposes. According to Halliday's functional view of language, people use language to perform functions such as requesting, suggesting, apologising, agreeing, and expressing opinions.

For example:

Requesting:

"Could you open the window, please?"

Giving advice:

"If I were you, I would practise speaking every day."

Expressing opinion:

"In my opinion, technology makes learning easier."

These examples demonstrate that language learning should include not only forms but also functions and purposes. However, the implementation of CLT also has some challenges. In large classrooms, it can be difficult for teachers to provide equal speaking opportunities for all students. Additionally, some learners and teachers may prefer traditional methods because they provide clear grammatical explanations and controlled practice. Therefore, many modern educators suggest combining communicative activities with explicit grammar instruction rather than completely rejecting traditional approaches.

In the context of English language teaching in Uzbekistan, CLT can play an important role in improving students' speaking abilities. Many learners have strong knowledge of grammar and vocabulary but experience difficulties in spontaneous communication. By introducing pair work, group discussions, presentations, and real-life tasks, teachers can help students develop confidence and practical language skills.

For example, instead of teaching the topic "Shopping" through vocabulary translation only:

Traditional approach:

Learn 20 shopping words.

Translate sentences.

Complete grammar exercises.

CLT approach:

Students act as customers and shop assistants.

They ask about prices, sizes, and preferences.

Customer:

"How much is this jacket?"

Shop assistant:

"It costs 50 dollars. Would you like to try it on?"

This type of activity connects classroom learning with real communication.

Conclusion

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that Communicative Language Teaching developed as a response to the weaknesses of traditional methods and introduced a new understanding of language learning. CLT emphasises communication, interaction, learner involvement, and practical language use. Although it has certain limitations, it remains one of the most influential approaches in modern English Language Teaching because it prepares learners to use English effectively in real-world contexts.

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