

# COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

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## Abstract

Communication is mostly related to the speaking skill of a person. Most of the learners of English suffer from a 'mental block' which harasses the learners and makes them hurdle while learning to speak English. This block in the minds of the readers is due to the stress and anxiety that they face in the process of learning a foreign language. The anxiety mainly affects the speaking skill of the learners. CLT is one of the recent trends in the field of ELT and it plays a vital role in removing the anxiety from the minds of the learners. This paper discusses in detail about how CLT can be applied to help the English learners acquire the speaking skill comfortably.

Key words: CLT, mental block, anxiety, ELT

## I. Introduction:

Many English learners are good at learning many skills but when it comes to learning to speak English, they suffer from a 'mental block'. This block is due to the anxiety and nervousness that are caused in the process of learning to speak a foreign language. Anxiety and speech are closely linked with one another and this anxiety becomes more intense when the speech is not in the mother tongue. Psychologists term this language anxiety as a vague fear. It is a combined feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry. It is aroused by a particular type of situation where the mind is not at ease. Public speaking, examinations and group participation are examples of such situations. As language anxiety is one of the main hurdles in the path of the English learners many researchers have tried to find out the source of anxiety and they have also suggested measures to eradicate it. It is clearly understood that in order to improve the learners' performance in a classroom, the anxiety of the students should be alleviated and this can be done by making the classroom less anxiety provoking. The atmosphere of the classroom should be amicable and cosy. This can be achieved with the help of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching)

## II. Communicative Language Teaching:

CLT is an ESL (English as second language) methodology. It got introduced in India between 1970 and 1980. At that time the traditional English teaching methods like translation method were being used in the field of ELT. Such traditional methods were aiming at making the learners masters of English. It tried to instill the rules of grammar and vocabulary into the minds of the learners. It expected the learners to be experts in all the elements of the language and to reproduce language like the native speakers. In traditional systems, the performance of the learners was evaluated based on the accuracy and correctness. This prevented the learners from trying to use English as they were afraid of mistakes. Mistakes in grammar were scrutinized and magnified. Thus learning to speak English was a hard task for the foreign learners. The learners started developing an inferiority complex which complicated the entire learning process. The fear of mistakes in the minds of the learners prevented them from attempting to communicate in English. They became too conscious of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and the main goal of reaching the listener was

missed. Linguists realized that a more practical and feasible method of English teaching was needed. It was at this juncture that CLT occupied its strong place.

CLT is a learner centred approach which aims at developing the communicative competence of a learner. Communicative competence enables the speaker to communicate effectively according to the situation. Traditional grammatical teaching methods cannot help in developing this communicative competence. In traditional methods accuracy is given importance whereas in communicative method, the fluency is given importance. In CLT new language techniques are adopted where the learners are made to use the language functionally.

### III. Role of teachers in CLT:

In very olden days teachers were equivalent to God. In guru kula system, the word 'guru' had a magical impact on the students. Students stayed with the teacher and there were students who almost sacrificed their lives to impress the teachers. Teachers were given a divine image. They were literally worshipped and anything advocated by them was unanimously accepted and followed. Later on they were looked on as masters of whom the students were afraid. The students were expected to respect the teacher and it was believed that whatever the teacher said would be the ultimate truth. But now, the trend is totally different. Students are already well informed and teachers are not their only source of knowledge or information. They don't hesitate to question the ideas of teachers. They are not ready to blindly accept things without any proof. They look at teachers as guides who facilitate their learning. In such a scenario CLT will be the best method of teaching.

Many learners who can and know to speak English remain silent and passive because of the presence of criticizing teachers. Teachers involved in CLT should take up the role of facilitators. They should create an atmosphere which is conducive to autonomous learning. Students should be encouraged to communicate freely without any inhibition. The mental block in the minds of the learners is mainly because of the fear of mistakes. The teacher should target at the fear and help the learners shed away the fear on their own. It should be made clear that mistakes indicate progress in the learning process. Initially learners may be permitted to make any number of mistakes while communicating. Mistakes should not be a hurdle for the fluency. The learners will thus aim at making the listener understand what they are communicating. Communication is nothing but sharing of thoughts and ideas. Such communicative contexts should be created by the English teachers where the students will get an opportunity to communicate spontaneously and naturally. Teachers should not be authoritative rather they should give assurance to the learners that they are there to guide and help the learners attain communicative competence. The teacher should almost take up the role of a mother who helps her child in acquiring the mother tongue. Speaking opportunities should be given to the learners and most of the time the teachers have to be silent observers. Any intervention or error correction may obstruct the fluency of the speaker as they become conscious of the presence of the teacher. The teacher should consciously promote the unconscious language acquisition of the learners. Students may be divided into groups because a student may feel easy and comfortable to speak amidst a small group. Another key word for success is 'appreciation'. It works like a health drink in boosting up the energy of the learners. Teachers should be magnanimous enough to wholeheartedly appreciate the learners whenever they make a sincere effort. Both the teachers and the learners should clearly understand that language is a skill which has to be acquired but not taught. Teachers as facilitators can help and guide in this process of acquisition.

### IV. Role of students in CLT:

Students should also understand their roles as they are the protagonists of the system. They should believe that the teachers are not controllers but only participants in the language learning process. They should develop their own interest and actively involve themselves in communication. They should interact as much as possible and get into the practical use of the language. They need not be conscious of the mistakes in grammar, accent, vocabulary or pronunciation. They may be contented if they are able to communicate their ideas in such a way that the listener comprehends. Listening and speaking are closely linked with one another and so they should listen to lot of English. This will automatically make them utter

words and sentences that they often hear. Communication skill can be acquired and fine-tuned by continuous practice. The interest and involvement of the students in communicating in English will effectively promote the learning process. The students should also understand their responsibility in the process and render their cooperation to the teachers. If there is effort from both the teacher and the student the learning will be fruitful.

#### V. Conclusion:

At present people are aware of the growing need of the communicative proficiency in English. If teachers of English enthusiastically incorporate communicative activities in the classroom, students will be free of the 'mental block'. They will be involved in the activities and start communicating in a natural way. Technical advancements also provide both the learners and the teachers with many web resources with which the process of language learning may be made more communicative and functional. The relationship between the teacher and the learner is redefined and reframed in the system of CLT. It is strongly felt that CLT is the best method in developing the communicative competence of the learners.

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