



## **Communicative Language Teaching – Features and Impact**

**Elena Simona Străchinaru**

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași

No. 11 Carol I Boulevard, 700506, Iași

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-2153-1863>

**Abstract:** Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has significantly influenced language education by prioritizing communicative competence over grammatical accuracy. This paper provides a historical overview of CLT, discussing its evolution from traditional approaches to contemporary methodologies. The study explores key concepts such as communicative competence, interaction, fluency, and the role of grammar within the approach. Additionally, various language teaching methods that have contributed to or evolved from CLT are examined, including the Grammar Translation Method, the Direct Method, the Audio-Lingual Method, and Task-Based Learning. The impact, advantages, and challenges of CLT are also analyzed, offering a comprehensive understanding of its role in modern language pedagogy.

**Keywords:** Communicative Language Teaching; communicative competence; language learning; interaction; fluency; grammar; language pedagogy; language teaching methods.

**How to cite:** Străchinaru, Elena Simona. "Communicative Language Teaching – Features and Impact". *LiBRI. Linguistic and Literary Broad Research and Innovation*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.70594/libri/13.1/4>

## 1. Background

Communicative Approach or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) seems to include things that relate to the goals of language teaching, which are the teacher's and learner's role, the types of activities that help learning and how someone learns a language. Communicative competence is declared the goal of Communicative Language Teaching. It includes a series of abilities related to the language knowledge like: the ability to use language according to various purposes and functions, interlocutors and setting, the way to produce and understand different types of messages.

Along the time or in the last fifty years, language teaching has suffered many changes, different perspectives have been approached regarding it so that Jack C. Richards speaks in his book *Communicative Language Teaching Today*, about three phases:

“Phase 1: traditional approaches (up to the late 1900s)

Phase 2: classic communicative language teaching (1970s to 1990s)

Phase 3: current communicative language teaching (late 1990s to the present)“.

(Richards, 2006, p. 6)

All these three phases are covered by the approaches that have appeared along the time. According to the theoreticians' of the time, different perspectives of these approaches have appeared that saw them in different numbers too.

While Diane Larsen-Freeman (1986) in *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching* speaks about eight methods: The Grammar Translation Method, The Direct Method, The Audio-Lingual Method, The Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning, The Total Physical Response Method and The Communicative Approach, Adriana Vizental (2008) in *Metodica predării limbii engleze (Strategies of Teaching and Testing English as a Foreign Language)* mentions four approaches: The Grammar Translation Method (GTM), The Audio-Lingual Approaches (ALA), The Communicative Approach (CLT) and the Post-Communicative Turn (PCT).

Jeremy Harmer (2007) in *The Practice of English Language Teaching* speaks about the distinction that needs to be made between approach, method, procedure and technique. In his opinion, an “approach” should present theories about the knowledge of language and the way it is used or acquired. It is related to the theoretical part of learning a language. The way is put into practice an approach is called “method”. A ”method” can contain procedures and techniques too. The “procedure” refers to different sequences of a technique, while a “technique” refers to the way a teacher carries out a certain task.

*The Grammar Translation Method* has been used for many years and at the beginning, it was called ”Classical Method” due to the fact that it was used for teaching the classical languages, Latin and Greek. It was based on the idea of

learning a language by using the rules of vocabulary and grammar, while translation remained the main technique used. This method has been used until the 1950s and it was thought that would help students with a better use and learning of the grammar of their native language, appreciate and read more literature, develop more as intellectuals. Reading and writing were the main skills used, while speaking and listening were not considered so important.

Adriana Vizental (2008), in her book, *Metodica predării limbii engleze (Strategies of Teaching and Testing English as a Foreign Language)*, mentions the fact that Grammar Translation Method lacks interaction, acquisition of necessary vocabulary for using it in real communicative situations and the fact that the text is considered the main focus of it. In *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*, Diane Larsen-Freeman (1986) speaks about the necessity to view the principles and techniques for each method or approach, in order to have a clear view of them. For Grammar Translation Method, the goals of learning a foreign language rely on: reading its literature, translate each language into the other, reading and writing should be the dominating skills, the teacher should represent the authority and students execute his or her commands, the grammar rules should be given so that the students apply them deductively, they should need to have equivalents for everything in the native language and memorize all the grammar rules. There is little interaction between students because most of the time the interaction is from teacher to student. Native language is mostly used in the class, the evaluation is made by written tests, where translation and questions about literature of foreign language are used. The correct answers, in case the students do not know them, are always given by the teacher. The techniques used for Grammar Translation Method are: translation of a literary passage, reading comprehension questions, antonyms/synonyms, cognates, deductive application rule, fill-in-the-blanks, memorization, use of words in sentences and finally, compositions.

Due to the fact that the Grammar Translation Method could not help students to use the language in order to communicate, the Direct Method began to become more famous. It was named “direct” because no translation was allowed, the meaning needed to be connected directly with the target language, as Diane Larsen-Freeman (1986) said in her book, *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. The goal of this method is represented by communication. Students learn to think in the target language and thus to communicate. The teacher’s role and the students’ role are that of partners. No translation is allowed and the new notions are introduced by the help of realia, pictures, drawings or pantomime. Students speak all the time in the target language and are exposed to real situations. The inductive way is used to learn the grammar rules. All the three types of interaction are present

as students interact with the teacher, the teacher interacts with the students and there is also interaction student to student. Students are exposed to everyday conversations, so that spoken language is more used than the written form. Vocabulary, oral communication and pronunciation are paid most of the attention to. For evaluation, there is not any kind of formal type, although the students are asked to use the target language using their oral and written skills. All the time, the teacher encourages students to use self-correction and they try to correct themselves whenever it is the case. The techniques that appear used by this method are: reading aloud, question and answer exercise, conversation practice, fill-in-the-blanks exercise, dictation, map drawing and paragraph writing.

*The Audio-Lingual Approach* is a result of the appearance of descriptive linguistics and behavioural psychology. It appeared in the second quarter of the 20th century and was developed during World War II in the USA, when people needed to learn languages for military purposes too. The need for the knowledge of a common language became more and more important, in order to assure interaction. The goal of this approach is to make students learn the target language automatically, in order to use it communicatively. The teacher has the role of a model that students try to imitate. Imitation and repetition are used to learn new vocabulary and grammatical items. Drills are used all the time, grammar is learned inductively and all the time the new items are presented by the help of dialogues. Cultural elements are present too and the teacher is the one responsible for presenting them. Most of the interaction is between teacher-student, which is also initiated by the teacher. This approach focuses on the structures of language while vocabulary items are limited. Oral skills are presented just like the natural order of these: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Pronunciation is very important too. Audio-Lingual Approach makes use of techniques like: dialogue memorization, backward build-up (expansion) drill, repetition drill, chain drill, single-slot substitution drill, multiple-slot drill, transformation drill, question-and-answer drill, use of minimal pairs, complete the dialogue, grammar game.

The early 1960s, cognitive psychologists and transformational generative linguists argued about the fact that learning cannot be acquired by repeating what has been heard around, it is not a “product of habit formation, but rather of rule formation”. (Larsen-Freeman, 1986, p. 51) It was emphasized the fact that people use their own thinking to create rules for learning a language, they use their own cognition.

The new Caleb Gattegno’s *Silent Way* approach shares some common principles with this new cognitive perspective upon the acquisition of the target language. The Silent Way shows that students are independent, they become able to express themselves without relying on the teacher, but on their own ideas, thoughts and feelings. The teacher is the one who just helps them to become independent,

and has the role of a kind of “technician or engineer”. (Larsen-Freeman, 1986, p. 62)

The students engage actively on the basis of their knowledge. The teaching/learning process is made step by step. Students begin with sounds that are associated with a colour chart. The teacher provides all kinds of situations and students are guided to produce structures that are practised. Most of the time, the teacher is silent and the interaction student-student is encouraged and thus it is intended to create a comfortable atmosphere during the lessons. Language and culture seem inseparable, as each language belongs to a certain group of people with its unique features. All the four skills are used, although there is a focus on pronunciation and structures of language too. The new knowledge will rely on the existing one and in order to get a clearer meaning, there will be a focus on students’ perceptions. Native language is also used. The evaluation consists of the constant teacher’s observation. The teacher will always be attentive to the students’ needs and to their ability to use what they have learned in the new situations. Errors are seen as something very natural, the teacher even uses the fact that students can make errors, in order to give them more exercises to solve. Self-correctness is encouraged and the teacher corrects the students’ errors and shows them the correct answers only in the situation they cannot do this thing or their peers cannot help them. Silent Way is an approach that uses the following techniques and materials: sound-colour-chart, teacher’ silence, peer correction, rods, self-correction, gestures, word chart, Fidel Charts and structured feedback.

Georgi Lozanov is the one who thinks that people impose themselves all kinds of barriers to learning, they do not use their full mental powers and think that they will fail all the time. His method, *Suggestopedia* refers to the idea of “desuggesting” all these mental limitations and consequently, the study to apply suggestion to pedagogy. One of the principles related to this method shows that the teacher tries to make his or her students to fasten their ability to learn to use a foreign language. Desuggestion of these limitations is the teacher’s mission and he or she represents the authority in the classroom. The students must have confidence and trust their teacher in order to be able to get rid of their psychological limitations. The relaxing atmosphere in the classroom is very important and students get new identities, names in the target language too. The teaching process has two major phases: the receptive phase and the activation phase. The interaction is teacher-student, student-teacher, but then becomes student-student too. Students’ feelings must be positive and direct and indirect positive suggestions are used too. Confidence and relaxation are the major factors that will help students to desuggest their psychological barriers and perceive learning as a natural phenomenon. Cultural elements are used to and communication is viewed as made of two planes:

language and the presence of various factors that have an influence upon the linguistic message. Reading and writing are used too, although the focus is on vocabulary and speaking. Formal tests do not represent the necessary form of evaluation. Students' performance in the class is the most important. Communication is encouraged in the class and the teacher does not correct the students' errors all the time. Suggestopedia is a method that uses techniques as: classroom-set-up, peripheral learning, positive suggestion, visualization, choose a new identity, role-play, first concert, second concert, primary activation and secondary activation.

Another method is *Community Language Learning*. Charles A. Curran's Counselling-Learning Approach generated the principles for this method. Community Language Learning tries to determine teachers to see their students as a "whole person" and pay attention to their physical and "instinctive protective reactions and their desire to learn". (Larsen-Freeman, 1986, p. 89)

According to Charles A. Curran, students begin to have a lot of fears when they are exposed to acquire a new language and the teacher should have the role of "language counsellor". Teachers should be able to help students to overcome these negative attitudes and transform them into positive elements, which will help students go further with this learning process. While using Community Language Learning, students are shown how to use the target language communicatively and learn it in a non-defensive way. Teacher and student need to treat each other as a "whole person", which implies intellectual features and feelings grouped together. Teacher's role is that of "counsellor", although it does not refer to a psychological one. He or she is the one who understands the student's struggle that tries to acquire a new language. At the beginning, the student seems to depend on the teacher, but after the fifth stage of the passing from dependency to independency, the student is already independent. Non defensive learning is used and Charles A. Curran claims that for this type of learning six elements are necessary: security, aggression (involvement), attention, reflection, retention and discrimination. This type of method encourages cooperation and although teacher-student interaction changes all the time, it remains the centred one. A special attention is paid to student's feelings. The teacher is interested in their personal feelings towards the process of learning and encourages them to express their feelings too. Culture is part of the language and the main use of language is for communication. The centred skills are listening and speaking, but reading and writing are taken into consideration too. Native language is used only with the intention to get more confidence and express the personal feelings, but most of the time the target language is used. Evaluation does not refer to some formal tests, although students could have some tests if it is necessary. Self-evaluation is encouraged, so that students should be aware of their progress and level or stage of their learning process. Community Language

Learning uses techniques like: tape-recording, student conversation, transcription, reflection on experience, reflective listening, human computer and small group tasks.

James Asher's *Total Physical Response Method* is an example of a new approach, which was named "the comprehension approach". (Larsen-Freeman, 1986, p. 109) This type of approach focuses on listening comprehension and generates the appearance of different methods, according to the different perspective that methodologists had towards the observations of the early stages of a baby who spends a lot of time listening before he or she is ready to speak. By using the Total Physical Response Method, teachers think that most important of all is to have students enjoy this fact of learning to communicate in a foreign language. James Asher's method is based on the "children learn their native language". (Larsen-Freeman, 1986, p. 116)

In the first phases of this method, the teacher is the director or instructor and students should imitate him or her, but in the end students become directors too. Initially, the interaction is between teacher and students, but later on there are interactions between student-student and student- teacher too. Total Physical Response shows that students should enjoy learning a foreign language, thus the stress must not exist or must be reduced, the atmosphere and the elements used during the process should be humorous and allow students to speak the moment they feel ready. Vocabulary and grammar predominate as well as the use of spoken language rather than the written form. One form of evaluation is the performance of actions by the use of body movements. Meaning becomes clear or unclear, according to the students' performance of these actions. In the case of errors that are natural to appear in the beginning, the teacher should correct only the major ones and should have a positive tone when he or she does such error corrections. The following techniques may appear in the Total Physical Response Method: using commands to direct behaviour, role reversal and action sequence.

Due to the changes that took place in the late 1960s, in the British language teaching tradition, the immigration to Common Market countries for work and other reasons, the opportunity to study foreign languages in an increasing number of secondary schools, the appearance of comprehensive schools in Britain determined an increasing demand for language of *Communicative Language Teaching* in the 1970s and early 1980s. All the traditional approaches or methods that have been used by this moment could no longer cover the people's needs for communication in real life situations. An important contribution to this new approach was the Council of Europe that created a new language syllabus for the needs of its European immigrants. This new syllabus focused on the idea of real interaction. Communicative Language Teaching or Communicative Approach as it

was named at the beginning implies not only the knowledge of “the rules of language usage, but (...) use the language” too. (Larsen-Freeman, 1986, p. 123)

According to this perspective, this approach is based on the idea of “Communicative Competence”, which implies the ability of using the language that is appropriate to a certain social context. In order that students become communicative competent, they need to have notions about linguistic forms, meanings and function. (Larsen-Freeman, 1986) The negotiation of meaning is also important. The teacher’s roles are numerous. He or she can be advisor, facilitator, manager of classroom activities and “<co-communicator>”, as Littlewood named him or her. (Larsen-Freeman, 1986, p. 131) He or she is less dominant and students become responsible for their own process of learning. The main feature of this approach is that everything is done with a communicative intention. Language is used by students while they perform communicative activities like: games or role-plays. All the communicative activities should have the three features: information gap, choice and feedback, in order to be truly communicative. The use of authentic materials and the division of students into small groups are some other features of Communicative Language Teaching. Most of the interactions are between students, as they work most of the time in pairs, small groups or as a whole group. Motivation is increased as students see that they can do useful things using the language they learn and they can express their feelings and share their personal opinions. All the four skills are used by this approach at the same time although functions become more important than forms. Target language is used all the time and students learn that “the target language is a vehicle for communication not just an object to be studied” (Larsen-Freeman, 1986, p. 135). Evaluation implies accuracy and fluency too. Form errors are permitted as the main goal is communication. Some techniques used by Communicative Language Teaching are: scrambled sentences, language games, picture strip story and role play.

## **2. Features**

If we think of our lessons, in general, the goal should be the ability to perform a certain action or to communicate something which before that lesson was impossible to do. The same thing happens in the Communicative Language Teaching, where students learn to use language communicatively, in real life situations, thus the development of their Communicative Competence becomes the main focus of this approach. Since everything has a communicative intent, the activities must be communicative too. In order to have such a feature, these communicative activities must have three characteristics, according to Morrow, (Larsen-Freeman, 1986):

1. *information gap*
2. *choice*



### 3. *feedback*

1. *Information gap* refers to the fact that in a conversation someone knows something that the other one does not know and when this information gap is fulfilled then we can speak about a communicative activity.

2. *Choice* makes reference to the speaker's choice of his or her message and how he or she will say it.

3. *Feedback* is implicit both in the information gap and choice. Normally, each act of communication has an aim and in what way the other person reacts, is evaluated according to this aim. The interaction or the exchange becomes communicative only when the listener provides feedback to the speaker.

Some of the features are dynamism and spontaneity, as interaction is the basic means of using this Communicative Competence, which happens daily, in various contexts, with different types of people and all sorts of real situations. Students should be encouraged to use everyday language, to improvise, in order to interact and thus oral skills should take a primary position in teachers' concerns, but not to neglect the other skills either. Although the learning process starts with imitation, during time, students must become creative and move on to "the stage of free production". (Vizental, 2008, p. 36)

Teacher's role is of a manager, a facilitator and of an advisor. He or she needs to manage the activities in the classroom and to offer students various types of activities that help them to practice, learn and produce appropriate messages similar to real life situations. Students become responsible managers of their own learning, "communicators. They learn to communicate by communicating". (Larsen-Freeman, 1986, p. 131)

Language skills development is another feature of Communicative Language Teaching. Students must know how to use language according to their strategic competence, i.e. functional and strategic use of language. For Communicative Language Teaching, meaning comes first place. Form of the language does not seem so important, so vocabulary and grammar are taught only when they become necessary. Consequently, meaning is the one that Communicative Language Teaching is focused on. Due to the fact that errors are viewed as a natural phenomenon, the teacher does not correct students in case they manage with the message and thus fluency is assured and becomes another important feature of this approach. Each interaction takes place in a certain setting, with different types of interlocutors, in a specific social context, so that appropriacy is necessary too. Students must know how to choose their language according to all these social-cultural elements. They need to know how to adapt a certain context, to choose an appropriate type of discourse and manage to interact with various kinds of interlocutors.

Motivation in learning a foreign language is enhanced by some other features of this approach like “active participation and affective involvement”. (Vizental, 2008, p. 36). If students become interested in their act of learning, they manage to relate it to their own lives and adapt it to their needs while they participate actively, in groups or pair work in the classroom, then the acquisition becomes easier and more motivating. It is a step for passing to the next feature of Communicative Language Teaching which is the purpose.

In communication, the purpose is represented by interaction. Language must be taught in this direction of sending and receiving messages, so that the learner must be given a purpose, in order to produce messages. A foreign language is not taught for its forms, but for the way these forms can be used in interactions and in order to transfer meanings, i.e. to communicate. Since interaction is the basis of communication, interactivity is another feature of Communicative Language Teaching. In the classroom, the activities should be a reflection of real life situations, where students’ interactions should imitate all these real contexts and teachers should use interactive techniques, in order to create real social contexts for the students. During interactions, if the students perform actions, are given tasks by the teacher and they do it by the use of language, then another feature appears. It is the necessity of language learning to be task-oriented. If students have to perform tasks by using the language just like in real life situations, then it is clear that their acquisition of the new language will become much closer to reality and their real needs.

For Communicative Language Teaching, a textbook is just a helpful material, a framework and thus encourages teachers to use imagination, to improvise and use authentic materials. This way teachers will bring students closer to real life contexts, will encourage them to predict meaning from unknown items and will adapt to students’ interests and needs.

Although the target language is used most of the time, Communicative Language Teaching allows the teacher to use students’ mother tongue too. This represents another feature and thus translation can be used in some cases too. The idea is to predominate the use of target language. All these features show that the goal of Communicative Language Teaching is to improve the learner’s communicative proficiency “rather than his/her mastery of structures”. (Vizental, 2008, p. 37)

While traditional teaching views the teacher as an authority, an instructor, the language teaching is based on content, information, accuracy, the communicative teaching is based on skills development, views the teacher as a model, negotiator and focuses on meaning, appropriacy and efficiency of the act of communication.

### 3. Techniques and materials

As Communicative Language Teaching is an approach that encourages communication, its goal is communicative competence and tries to make students become communicative competent, the techniques and materials that are used must have the same purpose. For C. Jack Richards and Theodore Rogers (2001), there are three types of materials that are used in Communicative Language Teaching:

1. *text-based materials*
2. *task-based materials*
3. *realia*

1. *Text-based materials* can refer to textbooks. These represent materials that students can use for conversations. They can contain visual cues, pictures or parts of some sentences which can be considered as starting points for a conversation. Some other books can be used too.

2. Exercise handbooks, cue cards, activity cards, pair-communication practice booklets belong to *task-based materials*.

3. The third category of communicative materials is represented by *realia*, which actually refers to authentic material. Maps, newspapers, articles, photos are some examples of authentic material, which make learning become more “concrete and meaningful” as it is written on: [www.teflpedia.com](http://www.teflpedia.com). (“Communicative Approach”, Web. 29 June 2023. < [www.teflpedia.com](http://www.teflpedia.com) .>)

For Diane Larsen-Freeman (1986), the list of techniques and materials contains: *authentic materials*, *the scrambled sentences*, *language games*, *picture strip story* and the *role play*. The use of *authentic materials* is one of the features of Communicative Language Teaching. Students need to overcome the difficulty of transferring their learning from inside of the class outside, into the real world. *Realia* seems to have the same purpose and even more than that, it can also help students with a lower level to manage this transfer better. Usually, all the materials that are used in the class must be adapted to the type of class and the level of the class too.

*Scrambled sentences* are a technique that makes the students aware of their linguistic competence and teaches them how to use linguistic devices at the suprasentential level in order to make their message become cohesive and coherent.

*Games* are another technique used in Communicative Language Teaching. Students like them a lot and represent a good way for practice. In order to become communicative, they must have the three features that all the communicative activities have, as Morrow said. (Larsen-Freeman, 1986) They must present some information gap, have a choice and feedback too.

*Picture strip story* is used in many activities and represents a source for another communicative technique named problem-solving-task. The advantage of

this technique is that students work together, share information and practice cooperation and negotiation of meaning, in order to find a solution in the end.

Another important technique is *role play*. It provides students the opportunity to practice communication in different social contexts and using various social roles. Usually, these role plays are very well structured but in case they are less structured, the information gap is more present, students have more the opportunity of choice and feedback will definitely be present completing the three features of communication.

#### **4. Communicative Activities**

All the time teachers and writers have tried to find out the best activities for the classroom, in order to reflect the features of Communicative Language Teaching. As fluency is one of the features of this approach, the activities by which students become more fluent are the ones where they can “negotiate meaning, use communication strategies, correct misunderstandings and work to avoid communication breakdowns”. (Richards, 2006, p. 14) Although this feature is important, accuracy cannot be neglected. Teachers are usually advised to find a balance between the two features, although the focus remains on fluency. Pair and group activities seem to help students to develop their fluency and practice more their use of language and teachers are encouraged to use this type of activities too.

A much clearer image for communicative activities appears as a result of a distinction that is made between the three types of practice: *mechanical*, *meaningful* and *communicative*. Controlled activities like repetition drills or substitution drills represent the category that belongs to *mechanical practice*. Usually, certain grammatical patterns are taught by using such types of activities, although sometimes students do not understand the language they use. Now, if I think of my students and the grammatical structures they must learn for verbal tenses, for example, the same thing happens to them too. Some of them are able to reproduce the grammatical structure, but they do not understand the language they use. They memorize these grammatical structures in a mechanical way, without paying attention to its logic.

As for *meaningful practice*, the activities must give students the opportunity to make “meaningful choices”, (Richards, 2006, p. 16). Some examples would be a list of prepositions of place or of some quantifiers that the students need to choose in order to answer certain questions based on a map or a recipe.

The practice of use of language in a real life situation represents a *communicative type of practice*. If students have the opportunity to practice real exchanges in various real social contexts, then they have the chance to use the language communicatively.

This distinction between these three types of practices is said to be “similar to that given by Littlewood (1981)”. (Richards, 2006, p. 18) Littlewood speaks about two groups of activities. The first one is pre-communicative activities that refer to Structural activities and Quasi-communicative activities and the second one is communicative activities that contain Functional communication activities and Social interactional activities. While Functional communication activities are based on solving a problem or passing an information gap by students’ use of language, the Social interactional activities involve students’ attention to context, the interlocutors’ roles and the use of a formal or informal language.

Since one of the three features of a communicative activity is information gap, Jack C. Richards writes about it too. Information gap activities, jigsaw activities and other types of activities that belong to Communicative Language Teaching appear explained in his book. Information gap activities are based on the fact that one of the interlocutors knows more than the other or knows things that the other one does not know. Thus, their exchange will be based on completing this information gap. Pair work and role plays are the most common examples of exercises for this type of activity.

For jigsaw activities, the information gap remains the basic principle, but this time the class is divided into groups and each group gets a part of information that is needed to complete the task. In order to bring all the pieces of information together, students need to cooperate, to use their language and make meaningful choices too. Some other activity types that belong to Communicative Language Teaching, according to Jack C. Richards (2006) are: task-completion activities, information-gathering activities, opinion-sharing activities, information-transfer activities, reasoning-gap activities and role plays.

Most of the communicative activities are carried out into small groups. It is also a feature of this type of activity. So, pair work and group work is present most of the time because they also bring many benefits: students have the opportunity to practice more their language, motivation and confidence are at high levels and fluency is developed too.

According to Jeremy Harmer (2007), in *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, the communicative activities are divided into several groups. He speaks about *oral communicative activities*, *written communicative activities*, *correcting written work*, *projects* and *learner training*. All the activities that are mentioned in Jeremy Harmer’s book (2007) have those features that make them communicative.

*The oral communicative activities* have the intention to generate communication, interaction between students and between teacher and students too. They are grouped into seven categories according to Jeremy Harmer (2007):

1. reaching a consensus,

2. discussion ,
3. relaying instructions,
4. communicative games,
5. problem solving,
6. talking about yourself ,
7. simulation and role play .

1. Reaching a consensus refers to activities where at the end of some discussions, students must agree with each other. This type of activity encourages free and unplanned speaking and uses pair and group work too.

2. Discussion is a type of activity that involves one by one each student in the classroom. It becomes an efficient activity when the discussions are not planned and students react to a certain topic. Still, there is the situation when some students do not seem interested in the subject and all the time they find a reason not to participate. An efficient discussion would be one very well organized by arranging the students into groups, letting time for students to prepare and by giving them a task. “Buzz groups”, controversial topics and debate are three types of discussion activity.

3. When the students give each other instructions, the type of oral communicative activity is named: relaying instructions. These activities become efficient only when those who receive the instructions understood their task and performed it well. Some examples of these relying instructions activities are those related to physical exercises, making models and describing and drawing.

4. Communicative games refer to activities that imply information gaps and the use of all or any of the language that is necessary to fulfil a task that looks like a game. Examples of such types of communication games are: find the differences or similarities, describe and arrange, story reconstruction and poem reconstruction.

5. If the students are encouraged to talk to each other so that a solution can be found to a problem or a task, then the type of activity is named problem solving.

6. Talking about yourself is an activity that is based on an interpersonal exchange, where students express their feelings and speak about them. “Warmers” and “icebreakers” are used because they help teachers to put into action his or her students at the beginning of a lesson or to create a comfortable and nice atmosphere, especially for the new groups of students. Some examples of such activities are: “your name”, “what we have in common?” and “musical associations”. (Harmer, 1991, p. 131- 132)

7. Simulation refers to an imitation of a real life situation in the classroom, where students can practice their use of language. The efficiency of such an activity consists in the presence of characteristics like: “reality of function”, the presence of a “simulated environment” and “structure”, as Jones (1982) said, as Jeremy Harmer shows in his book *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. (1991, p. 132-133)

The moments the students are asked to pretend to be someone else, role play appears. It represents a simulation too. Although there were some controversies about the use of simulations, especially where students took role plays, teachers considered them very useful. They noticed that shy students became more talkative and all students felt more relaxed as they had not any responsibility for their words, the character was the responsible one. During role plays or simulations, the teacher could be a participant or a prompter. The idea was to assure the fluency of the simulation, of the activity. At the end of each simulation, the teacher is the one who conducts feedback with the students. Simulations are important oral communicative activities because they provide the real life context where students can practice the use of real English.

Although the second group of communicative activities mentioned by Jeremy Harmer, the *written communicative activities* play an important part, they are usually seen as homework. In this book, Jeremy Harmer (1991) divided the written communicative activities into these categories:

1. Relaying instructions,
2. Writing reports and advertisements,
3. Co-operative writing,
4. Exchanging letters and
5. Writing journals.

1. Relaying instructions refer to students that have information in order to do something and they must give written instructions to other students in order to do the same thing they have done before. Examples for this category of activities are those that make reference to: making models, giving directions or writing commands.

2. Writing reports and advertisements include activities that are related to: news broadcasts, tourist brochures and advertising.

3. When students write something together, the activity is named co-operative writing. The cooperation element becomes very important. Examples of activities for cooperative writing are: the fairy story, the story reconstruction and the word processor.

4. Exchanging letters is a category of written communicative activities that provide a more realistic situation to exercise real English. It may refer to examples of activities like: writing messages, the agony column, the complaining customer and job application.

5. Writing journals is a way to bring teacher and student much closer. Students have the opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings, opinions, experiences using English and the teacher interacts with them as individuals. For this type of activity, content feedback becomes more important. The teacher should

be interested in the content in order to have a certain reaction to it and not in the form.

Usually, *correcting written work* has as main focus accuracy. Teachers correct the mistakes and are interested more in accuracy and less in the content. It is intended that the teacher should be interested in the content too as his or her reactions to the student's work are very important too. Teachers and students too can do a correction of a written work. According to the type of mistake, the teacher may use a system of symbols that the student is familiar with. It also may appear student-student correction, which is considered a communicative activity too. Teachers may also take a photo of a student's work, but without his or her name on it. The attention would be paid to the common mistakes that they will comment and explain together, in the classroom and it will also represent a source for remedial work too. Another example for a correction of a written work is where the teacher asks the students that a particular thing will be corrected in the work. Students would pay attention to this particular thing and their work would not be so full of mistakes.

*Projects* represent a category that is based on investigation and reporting. It is used both in oral and in written communicative activities. The final product is the most important one.

*Learner training* refers to the way students become aware and responsible of the way they learn. There are three aspects taken into consideration, according to Jeremy Harmer: "Personal assessment, Learning strategies and Language awareness". (Harmer, 1991, p. 148) The main goal of learner training is to make students aware of the type of learners they belong to, to think of how they learn and how they can help themselves.

"Personal assessment" is one of the ways for students to find the answers to all these questions and the teacher's mission is to help them. Another way to make students think of their learning behaviour is by "learning strategies". These learning strategies contain personal assessment and some student training too. Usually, students are trained to behave in a particular way. In *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, Jeremy Harmer mentions that, this student training includes:

1. training students to use textbooks...
2. training students to use communicative activities properly...
3. training students to read for gist...
4. training students to deal with unfamiliar vocabulary...
5. training students to use dictionaries..." (Harmer, 1991, p. 149)

Language awareness makes reference to the way students become aware of the use of the language. If they manage to do some exercises about the language the same way they do for some other topics, they will become more aware of the way language functions.



All communicative activities have as the main goal the students' ability to do things with language. Teacher's feedback remains very important as it will help students to become more effective.

### **5. Impact**

The new direction of Communicative Language Teaching came with an "explosion" at a certain moment of a multitude of publications that tried to over-emphasize its principles in all sorts of teaching materials. This perspective came with a negative impact, as an incorrect balance between grammar and communication has appeared. Functions of language seem to look more important than its structures. It was a wrong position, because later on, many authors like Seedhouse, Newmark and Reibel (McDonough and Shaw, 2003) showed in their works that grammar and communication should be combined and one without the other is insufficient.

The seven implications mentioned in *Materials and Methods in ELT-Second Edition, A Teacher's Guide*, by Jo McDonough and Christopher Shaw show how they have been helpful to create teaching materials that can be worked with and form our necessary attitudes in order to know how to deal with our classes. (McDonough and Shaw, 2003) These seven implications are:

1. "*Communicative* implies 'semantic', a concern with the meaning potential of language.
2. There is a complex relationship between language form and language function.
3. Form and function operate as part of a wider network of factors.
4. Appropriacy of language use has to be considered alongside accuracy. This has implications for attitudes to error.
5. *Communicative* is relevant to all four language skills.
6. The concept of communication takes us beyond the level of the sentence.
7. *Communicative* can refer both to the properties of language and to behaviour".

(McDonough and Shaw, 2003, p. 21)

Since in the previous chapters all these aspects have been already discussed, there is not any need to insist upon them. Communicative Approach or Communicative Language Teaching is an approach that comes with a lot of challenges, especially for the teacher. He or she will need to come with all sorts of new situations for his or her students, in order to encourage them to use language in real life contexts. Creativity becomes one of the challenges for the teacher.

Group work or pair work represents an important element for each activity, but it also implies some inconveniences. The teacher must monitor that each

member of the group will contribute with something, which is a difficult mission sometimes. There are also students that usually do not work so much and in a group they might take advantage and work even less. The good and hardworking students may reject the idea to help some other students in the group or be satisfied with a lower score or grade due to the peers that work less than them. Sometimes, it becomes a difficult situation for the teacher when the other teachers may complain about the noise that is made by the desks that are being moved. Another challenge for the teacher can be related to some rewards which students may get in order to move faster, quietly or the way they accomplished their task. It is even more difficult when the teacher must offer enough time for the students' individual work so that his or her students get some grades.

If it is taken into consideration that some communicative activities need special places where they can be performed, like a library or a place outside the classroom, then the teacher should think of all these situations before he or she chooses this type of activity. Lack of space or lack of different necessary materials or technology may represent another challenge for the teacher. It is very difficult when the teacher works with large classes in a limited space. Sometimes, it is frustrating when the access to an info lab is limited, when the teacher cannot afford different types of materials that are needed, when the internet does not work properly or the video projectors are fewer in the school and not all the classes have access to them.

All these challenges make the teacher's mission harder and sometimes all these barriers have a negative impact, especially on the teachers who are beginners in their career. After the graduation of the faculty, they usually all dream that they will teach in a nice school, where everything is prepared for them, where they can have access to everything and the classes come with all equipment and space that is needed and the students are eager to participate in all the activities. Some of these teachers even give up this job, especially when the challenges imply things like the distance too big between the school and the place where the teacher lives and a lot of time and money are lost. Still, with all these challenges implied, those teachers who really love and enjoy their work never give up. The students' wonderful feedback, the beautiful activities that are made together, the parents' satisfaction that their children became wonderful speakers of English or able to use English in different situations, the prizes won at different contests, the community that appreciates all the results and activities made together with the students represent a marvellous reason for the teacher to continue his or her mission and forget all these challenges that seem to put all kinds of barriers. It depends on the teacher's reason why he or she chose this career and what he or she is willing to face in order to fulfil his or her mission.

## 6. Conclusion

Communicative Language Teaching has revolutionized language instruction by emphasizing real-life communication and meaningful interaction. Unlike traditional methods that focus heavily on grammar and vocabulary, CLT encourages students to develop fluency and communicative competence. However, the approach presents challenges, including the balance between fluency and accuracy, the need for well-trained teachers, and the demand for appropriate materials and classroom settings. Despite these obstacles, CLT remains a dominant and effective approach to language teaching, inspiring subsequent methodologies such as Task-Based Learning, Cooperative Language Learning, and Content-Based Instruction. By integrating communicative principles with emerging pedagogical strategies, language educators can create dynamic and engaging learning environments that enhance students' language acquisition.

## 7. References

- Bowman, Brenda, Burkart, Grace, Robson, Barbara. *TEFL/TESL Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language*, Peace Corps of United States of America Information Collection & Exchange, 1989.
- Harmer, Jeremy. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Pearson Longman, 2007.
- Larsen-Freeman, Diane. *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Richards, Jack C., Rodgers, Theodore. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Richards, Jack C. *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Swan, Michael. *A Critical Look at the Communicative Approach*. ELT Journal. Volume 39/1 January 1985.
- Vizental, Adriana. *Metodica predării limbii engleze (Strategies of Teaching and Testing English, as a Foreign Language)*. Polirom, 2008.