

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT)
IN DEVELOPING ESL LEARNERS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION: A
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Abstract: Nowadays, teaching a foreign language to students has come a long way since its early days necessitating a lot of skills together with innovative approaches. So, modern teachers are investigating through different methodologies to facilitate learning process emphasizing organic exposure to authentic materials over rote memorization. As a result, educators are giving precedence to CLT (Communicative language teaching) to advance its effectiveness mainly due to a wide range of benefits it offers to learners. Especially, among four fundamental language skills listening is often argued as the most challenging because it deals with both top-down and bottom-up processing. As a consequence the introduction of CLT in teaching receptive skills like listening is gaining worldwide attention though it is a comparatively new phenomenon. This article highlights the implementation of CLT in developing listening comprehension skills effectively in ESL classroom through different strategies and techniques.

Key words: Communicative listening pedagogy, listening comprehension, authentic listening input, task-based listening instruction, top-down and bottom-up listening processing, meaning-focused listening, comprehensible aural input, paralinguistic cues

Introduction

Communicative language teaching (CLT) lays its foundations on linguistic, cognitive and sociocultural approaches which primarily rely on meaningful interaction in L2. The seminal theory of Krashen which is called Krashen's Input Hypothesis laid the groundwork for CLT. He puts forward the idea that the level of materials for developing listening skills should be a bit higher arguing the role of comprehensible input ($i+1$). Having not to be stuck to complex grammar rules, they can develop into fluent listeners just due to the exposure to authentic spoken discourse.

Moreover, learning a language is seen as a social procedure in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory which highlights the importance of peer-assisted learning with different types of exercises such as pair work, discussions and engaging activities. It aligns with his Zone of proximal development theory (ZPD) theory in which students brush up their listening skills with the help of conducted communication with more professional companions and instructors.

Swain's output hypothesis (1985) activates the role of verbal response in order to boost listening comprehension in which the importance of interactive listening activities like information gap exercises and task-based dialogues is stressed as they are considered indispensable part of CLT usage in ESL classroom.

The interplay between bottom-up processing (decoding sounds, words and syntax) and top-down processing (using background knowledge and context) is highlighted by Rost's interactive model of listening. The model composed of pre-listening prediction tasks, contextualized listening activities and real-life conversations leverages CLT based listening and allows students to enhance a holistic meaning of oral speech.

Canale and Swain's communicative competence theory argues that listening is not only about knowing words, but it also combines discourse competence, strategic competence and sociolinguistic awareness. CLT learners are expected to come across different speech registers, conversational norms and real-world interactions.

Methods

The challenges of listening comprehension is offered by cognitive load theory (Sweller 1988) arguing that extra linguistic difficulties can overwhelm learners. The fact students get structured help prior to exposing to complex listening materials counters this idea.

The integration of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) into ESL listening instruction offers a multidimensional framework that significantly enhances learners' communicative competence. Unlike traditional approaches that emphasize bottom-up processing and isolated word recognition, CLT encourages learners to interpret meaning through a combination of linguistic input and contextual inference. One of the key strengths of this method lies in its emphasis on deciphering paralinguistic cues—including intonation, facial expressions, gestures, and situational context. These features enable learners to construct meaning even when they do not understand every single word, promoting a more holistic and realistic approach to listening.

CLT repositions students as active participants rather than passive recipients of language input. Instead of being question-oriented—focused on selecting correct answers in multiple-choice tasks—learners become meaning-oriented, aiming to understand the communicative intent of a speaker within authentic contexts. This transition from mechanical comprehension to functional understanding fosters real-life listening agility, which is essential for effective interaction in spontaneous conversations.

Moreover, CLT nurtures learner autonomy, a cornerstone of lifelong language development. Through self-directed tasks, reflection, and peer collaboration, learners are empowered to take responsibility for their progress. As a result, they develop metacognitive strategies such as self-monitoring and self-evaluation, which help reduce listening fatigue—a common barrier to sustained engagement—and increase their overall resilience in dealing with complex auditory input.

In addition, CLT-based listening activities often involve interactive and task-based components such as role-plays, group discussions, debates, and simulations. These elements not only prevent the monotony of traditional listening classes but also promote critical thinking and negotiation of meaning. Learners are encouraged to engage with content emotionally and intellectually, interpreting and responding to real-life scenarios, which leads to deeper language processing and retention.

Another key benefit of CLT is its ability to create a supportive and anxiety-reducing learning environment. Traditional listening tasks often generate anxiety due to time pressure, fear of

failure, or overly rigid assessment. In contrast, CLT emphasizes communication over perfection, reducing the psychological barriers often associated with listening performance. The Pygmalion effect—where learners internalize low expectations—can be minimized in a CLT setting, as students are valued for their contributions and encouraged to experiment with language freely. This fosters confidence and motivation, which are crucial for long-term language development.

Finally, the communicative approach closely mirrors authentic language use by incorporating real-world texts, natural speech, and spontaneous interaction. Through consistent exposure to varied speech types and functional language, learners bridge the gap between classroom instruction and real-world application. In doing so, they cultivate both fluency and accuracy in listening, preparing them not only for academic settings but also for social and professional communication outside the classroom.

Results

In terms of educating students through CLT, we can come up with different methods and strategies which are considered to be of use during this process. The first one is task-based listening activities which are also referred as TBL(Task based learning) whose target learners are given diverse activities based on tasks in which you may be asked to make authentic announcement with a phone call. Or students will engage in role plays and dialogues to improve the comprehension and interpretation of the situation and instill pragmatic awareness into students.

Another possible effective activity relates to choosing authentic listening materials as they do not focus on finding the correct answer to the question but it is important to form basic understanding of the context. Students are exposed to the speech without any scripts or subtitles such as interviews, news reports, podcasts to strengthen phonemic awareness and develop ambiguity resolution skills especially when you confront unfamiliar words or prosodic variation in oral context. For example, students are divided into small groups and then given a news report to listen and discuss the context itself which is a part of andragogy and different from didactic teaching strategies. This method is also supported by inference-making procedure.

The third method is called interactive and collaborative listening in which students are given tasks to complete either individually or in pairs. It is mostly based on interlocutor dynamics and goes far beyond metacognition process. For example, if students are given gap filling exercises mainly targeting speech segmentation to complete, they are asked to finish it together. Even if one of them faces processing bottleneck and misses some details, the other one will support them thereby strengthening teamwork and collaboration. As a result, learners do not lag behind this task because of listening comprehension breakdown.

The next strategy is pre-, while-, and post-listening activities which require students to go beyond just audio itself. With this strategy students quickly recap the information that they have already acquired laying foundation for the next process and summarize at the end. Specifically, in pre-listening part students are to activate background knowledge by predicting what they can expect from this listening task according to the topic itself or a few related key words. Then, they take notes, summarize or answer some audio related questions based on the listening track in while-listening process. Finally, after the listening comes to an end they are asked to organize debates or simulated role plays about the very topic to extend it further.

The last listening methods are referred as bottom-up skills and top-down skills. The former refers to recognizing sounds, words and grammar and understanding speech by decoding speech elements or prosody with the latter one focusing on using background knowledge to interpret meaning. For example, students listen to the audio for main key words, key meaning and emotional tone rather than translating everything word for word.

Discussions

No matter how rewarding it is, there are a few possible difficulties that facilitators are highly likely to face when they incorporate CLT into listening section. The first and foremost one is that because of cognitive fatigue, learners may experience fatigue which results from exposing oneself to listening to a particular audio again and again. Sometimes fast pace of speech and dense input interfere students to keep up with the task which overwhelms them as a result. Especially, this reaches its peak when they encounter a new vocabulary, rapid speech or different accents as if the whole meaning of this context were related to these elements. Anxiety and disengagement resulting from this case are just a few examples of its negative impacts. In order to curb this issue, it is advised to the instructors to expose students to engaging, supportive and stress-free learning environment in order to raise their interests to learn a new language. It is evident that the more pressure you put on them, the more unwilling they will be to learn a new language as they formulate the stereotypical image of strict grammar and endless vocabulary when they think about language learning process. Different types of activities such as pair and group work, peer support and the integration of colorful visual aids play a major role to alleviate fear and tension. Additionally, activities like predicting or summarizing make learners eligible to approach even difficult contexts with confidence.

Another challenge to face is the level of teacher training and to make sure that whether they can facilitate the classroom or not. As CLT is a method of 21st century in most countries, it is vivid that most teachers are way far from what is included in this method. Particularly, using this method to develop students' listening skills is another big problem here. Because they have already made their own teaching methods based on teacher-centered approach whose focus lies more towards accuracy rather than engagement and context. To solve this problem, professional workshops and continuous training to develop communicative methodologies of students are important. Teacher should be offered some practical tools to devise interactive listening activities. Moreover, checking students understanding of this context using discussions and task completion rather than simply with test should be involved in the process of assessment.

As using CLT in listening takes relatively much time than other methods, it may be limited with a few constraints like curriculum or standardized time limit for each class. For example, 45 minutes spent on an average class in Uzbekistan is not enough to embrace the class into the process considering big sizes of classrooms in Uzbekistan which at least consists of 25 students. In order to curb this issue, teachers come up with a universal approach. That is, they should adapt textbooks into existing curricula which helps to maximize the amount of advantages we can take from a class within a limited time. More specifically, they may skip comprehension related questions as an individual work. Instead, it is better to turn them into group discussions or problem-solving related tasks.

Conclusion

The problem going to be explained now is beyond human factor. In many under-resourced schools there is no or very limited access to special equipment such as audio equipment,

internet or etc. It relies more on government spending and school budget to organize these facilities. As a solution to the problem, we can take the best of existing resources like recorded tracks and set up storytelling or peer-generated audio activities. If it is possible, their mobile phones or shared audio equipment can be used as low-tech solutions.

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