

## **Communicative Language Teaching: A Strategy for Improving First-Year Students' Speaking Skills at the University Level**

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Received: 09-04-2025	Revised: 10-05-2025	Accepted: 15-06-2025	Published: 08-07-2025
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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study investigates the consequences of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) technique on the communicative proficiency of first-year students at Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Shaheed Benazirabad. The primary objective is to evaluate how effective CLT is in improving students' speaking abilities compared to traditional teaching methods. A true experimental design was used, involving 40 Students were split up two groups: an experimental group that was taught CLT utilizing the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and a control group. The outcome displayed that, in comparison to the control group, the group receiving CLT-based teaching significantly improved their communication skills. According to the study findings CLT is a more effective method for enhancing speaking proficiency among undergraduate students, indicating its potential for more widespread application in language instruction. The research adds to this growing body of knowledge on modern language teaching methods and offers valuable insights for educators in higher education.*

**Key words:** CLT, Speaking, Grammar translation method, developing, proficiency, methodologies

### **INTRODUCTION**

Speaking is an essential element of teaching and learning a foreign language. This demonstrates unequivocally how crucial this ability is in foreign language instruction (Rahimi & Yiching Zhang, 2015). Speaking allows us to communicate our thoughts and ideas to others, which facilitates interpersonal engagement. (Crystal David, 2003). When pupils are reluctant to communicate, English teachers may have the same issue. Naturally, a variety of variables contribute to this issue, including a lack of confidence, a limited vocabulary, and the belief that the topic of conversation is uninteresting (Lee & Lee, 2019). To raise the standard of instruction and learning and to have the intended impact on students, many language teaching techniques have been introduced (Abbas & Ali, 2014).

The basic premise of this technique is that language learning prioritizes learning to interact rather than mastering a collection of grammatical rules and structures, as is the case with traditional methods (Harmer, 2025). Many teachers accept that CLT is the best way to learn and apply in the classroom to get students involved in actual-world tasks and authentic interaction. This study will look into how the communicative approach influences and improves students' speaking abilities as well as how CLT can help students who

struggle with speaking. A few techniques Some people view language as a collection of grammatical and lexical rules, whereas others regard it as an abstract collection of lexical, syntactic, and semantic features. Furthermore, ELT techniques prior to the development of CLT can be divided into two categories: pre-communication techniques like the natural approach and whole physical reaction, and conventional ways such as the grammar translation way and the audiolingual way.

### **Communicative Language Teaching Approach**

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has appeared as a well-known way to language instruction, highlighting the significance of valuable communication and interaction in the language learning process (Littlewoods, 2011). The impact of CLT in building speaking abilities is still a hotly debated topic as language teachers continue to investigate creative teaching techniques that improve students' dialect competency.

Communication is a fundamental process through which individuals convey and interpret ideas (Gao, 2020). In the context of the communicative approach, it holds a central role, as communication and the actions arising from it form the foundation of the educational experience (Guado & Mayorga, 2021). According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), communication essentially equates to language. Language proficiency is reflected through four core skills that represent how language is applied in practice. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a framework of strategies and goals designed to support language acquisition by employing classroom tasks that effectively promote the growth of communicative competence (Richards, 2006).

Creating authentic communication in authentic contexts, understanding the student's error because it is essential for him to strengthen his communicative abilities on his own, providing opportunities for him to improve his correctness and smoothness, completing the understanding of the four primary language skills in a thorough and concurrent manner, and ensuring that the learner can infer grammar rules are the methodological tenets of CLT. Classroom activities and language education should be governed by these rules.

### **Problem Statement/Research Gap**

From the literature review and my own experience, it has been observed that students have difficulty speaking when they give a presentation or perform any speaking activity either within or beyond the classroom. Moreover, English language learners face all of the speaking problems after learning for twelve years in their schools or colleges. Therefore, there is a need for research in this field to find out the reason behind the speaking problems of the learners. There might be an issue with teaching pedagogy or the materials and resources. Although the main target of learning a language is to interact with first-language speakers, many teachers continue to employ conventional teaching techniques that place an on instructing a set of grammatical principles. Finding out if teaching communication skills using a communicative language teaching strategy helps students overcome their speaking challenges is the aim of this study. We will also discuss the benefits of incorporating CLT into the teaching and learning process for both teachers and students, as well as how teachers should use it in the classroom during instructional activities.

The main questions of this study are:

- 1) What can CLT help first-year students at shaheed benazir bhutto university, shaheed benazirabad, improve their speaking abilities?
- 2) How do shaheed benazir bhutto university, shaheed benazirabad first-year students, develop their speaking skills through the CLT Approach?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Proficiency in Language**

The four elements of teaching and learning a language are speaking, listening, reading, and writing. One of the most crucial abilities that learners of foreign languages should cultivate is speaking. Speaking is highly valued by both foreign language teachers and students since it is the cornerstone of improving a learner's competency in a foreign language since it is built on engagement and communication.

### **Oral Communication Skills**

According to the Oxford 2009 Pocket Dictionary, speaking is the act of utilizing spoken language to convey thoughts and emotions or to provide information. Speaking ability is often described as the capacity to use language effectively for an exact motive (Saana, 2013). Chaney (1998) explains that communication is a dynamic way that involves constructing and conveying meaning by both verbal and non-verbal cues across diverse contexts. Generally, speaking is a natural way of expressing thoughts and daily experiences for most individuals, typically requiring minimal planning or conscious effort (Chaney, 1998, as cited in Nurkasih, 2010). Richards & Rodgers (2014) view that speaking skills involve the capability to generate the sounds, words, and sentences of the target language fluently, accurately, and appropriately in various communicative contexts. Brown (2007): Speaking skill refers to the ability to reveal oneself orally in a clear, coherent, and culturally appropriate manner, utilizing appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Nation & Newton (2009) state that speaking skills encompass the ability to engage in meaningful spoken interactions, demonstrating comprehension, fluency, and the capacity to negotiate meaning effectively in real-life communicative situations Nation & Newton, 2009, cited in Neupane, 2025).

### **Methods of Teaching**

#### **Grammar –Translation Method**

The Grammar-Translation Method, as its name implies, focuses on teaching the grammar of second languages. Translation into and out of the destination language is one of its primary techniques. In actuality, writing and reading are prioritized while speaking and listening receive little to no systematic attention. The teacher-centered Grammar-Translation Method places a strong focus on applying grammatical rules through translation exercises and learning them deductively. It focuses more on comprehending the target language's structure than on oral communication. Dweik & Abu Shakra (2021).

#### **Teaching Communicative Languages**

The majority of linguists consider communicative dialect instruction to be very accurate, quick and natural method of teaching and learning English, followed by most English language teachers at the tertiary level. CLT focuses more on improving and developing communication skills rather than developing grammatical skills and knowledge in a short period (Seraj & Mamun, 2011).

Curran gave this theory in early 1970 that instructing English as a foreign language. The recently created strategy was based on the psychological counselling hypothesis utilized in language teaching and teaching, i.e., counselling hypothesis. The instructor who utilized this strategy capacities as counsellor to students. Concurring to Larsen-Freeman (2011), the counsellor is a skilful person who understands the effort of students confront as they endeavour to prepare for another language. Richard & Rodgers (2001)

characterized a counsellor is as a helper who provides exhortation, back or help to another individual who has a difficulty ought to solve an issue. The CLL classroom is taken into two parts i.e. understudies and the counsellor (knower). The knower is The Instructor who makes a difference for the understudies to memorize the target 28 dialect. The understudy begins the procedure and informs the knower (the instructor), who deciphers the meaning into L2. The understudy at that point, reiteration the message unless he expert over that or remembers it and likewise imparts it to fellow participants. In a community dialect learning classroom, there is one community (entirety individual). There ought to be exceptionally agreeable relationships among learners and with the instructor and should have an air of companionship and work as a group in which no one has specialists to decrease uneasiness. The student sit-in oval shape.

Santos (2020) stated that teaching English language with active theories, trends, methods and directions as well as instructions are important in language learning and teaching. The most accurate and suitable learning and teaching methodologies and approaches for given situations are important in language learning. Communicative competence refers to the ability to convey clear, organized messages both orally and in writing (Almanza et al., 2019). Speaking skills involve the interactive method of sharing thoughts and emotions within a specific context in a way that ensures understanding by others (Beltrán, 2018). Essentially, speaking represents oral communication proficiency. Enhancing this skill enables individuals to speak with both fluency and precision. According to Richards (2006), the goal of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is to strengthen key components of speaking, particularly fluency and accuracy, by engaging learners in interactive tasks.

Fluency is demonstrated when a speaker can communicate effectively and smoothly, even with some linguistic limitations, as long as communication remains comprehensible. This is achievable through the application of strategic communication techniques. On the other hand, accuracy pertains to the correct use of grammar, pronunciation, and intonation. From a communicative standpoint, accuracy complements grammatical development (Richards, 2006).

Developing communicative competence is not limited to oral language—it also encompasses written expression or text production (Almanza et al., 2019). Furthermore, listening and understanding are integral to these communicative processes. These skills involve a continuous exchange of roles between the speaker/writer and the listener/reader (Saputra, 2020). The combination of the four core language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—contributes to the enhancement of related sub-skills such as vocabulary acquisition, spelling, pronunciation, syntax, semantics, and language usage (Oxford, 2001).

Tuan (2017) emphasizes that communicative competence includes the language user's understanding of when, where, and how to use language properly in various social contexts. Chomsky (1965), in his theoretical framework, distinguishes between competence and performance. He defines competence as the internalized knowledge of language possessed by an individual, while performance mentions to the actual use of language in real-life situations. In essence, competence is about "knowing" the language, whereas performance is about "using" it.

According to Hymes (1967), a speaker must be able to convey language and use it appropriately for the sociocultural context. Bachman translated this concept into communicative language proficiency. Canale and Swain (1980) conceived communicative competence in terms of four components: grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociocultural competence, and strategic competence.

### **Design of Research**

With two sets of sample subjects—the experimental group and the control group—the current study's design is truly experimental. Two data sets—the pre-test and post-test findings for a control group and an experimental group—were produced in this kind of study design.

According to Chen and Shapiro (2007), a true experimental study design is a very authentic design that can be very challenging at times, and having more alternative approaches is very real and helpful. True experimentation aids in the development of cause-and-effect relationships between various variables.

### **Population & Sampling**

The present research study was drawn from Batch 24 BS English Department, including sections A and B at SBBU SBA, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University. About 100 students made up the population, however the researchers specifically chose 60 individuals from Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University's batch twenty-four BS English students to participate in the study for greater representation. Additionally, 40 first-year students from Batch 24 of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University's English Department were purposefully chosen by the researchers.

### **Instrument**

The speaking skills test, which was created and physically given by the researchers, served as the instrument for this investigation. The researchers administered a speaking skills test to the responders. A range of focused spoken questions were Added to the assessment to evaluate the students' speaking skills. Oral questions and approximated rubrics served as the foundation for the speaking exam. Their friends, family, and society were all mentioned in the inquiries. The researchers also recorded their responses for better assessment after every session according to the estimated rubrics and criteria. (Syed, Samina, Shamsa, 2023).

### **Technique of Data Analysis**

The data gathered were analyzed statistically using SPSS software. Both the experimental and control groups took a speaking skills test as a pre-test. After applying the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach as an intervention, the same assessment tool was used for the post-test. To assess the differences in mean scores for the experimental and control groups as well as their pre-test and post-test differences a paired samples t-test was conducted.

The speaking skill assessment tests and rubric metrics and ratings were used to measure the communication skills of the experimental and control groups. For this, CLT was also employed to create a teaching method. The experimental groups were given the instruments both before and after the treatment as a pre-test and post-test measure. The Pre-test and Post-test also served as measurement instruments used to capture data on the experimental and control groups. The validity and reliability of the instruments were validated statistically (SPSS). The statistical analysis employed for the analysis in this study was statistical methods such standard deviation, t-tests, degrees of freedom, mean, and variation of means.

The hypotheses proposed for this study served as the foundation for the development, discussion, analysis, and presentation of the study's findings. Descriptive statistics are numerical values that summarize and characterize a given data set, which may represent either an entire population or a sample. This fundamental type of statistics is primarily employed to analyze Metrics like frequency, percentages, mean, mode, and median are among the demographic details of the chosen respondents.

## DATA ANALYSIS

### Inferential statistics

In this investigation, the researchers concluded the phenomenon at hand. Using the compare means method, the researchers discovered that the overall mean The findings of the pre-test and post-test showed significant differences. The data were evaluated using a t-test to see if the average scores of the experimental group (N=20) sample and the control group (N=20) (20) differed significantly.

### Controlled and Experimental Groups Pre-Test Scores

Table 4.1 Pre-Test Scores

	Control & Experiment Group	N	Mean	Std. Division	Std. Mean	Error
Pre-Test	Control	20	10.70	1.418	.317	
	Experimental	20	11.25	1.517	.339	

Table 4.1 shows that the pre-test mean score for the control group was 10.70 with a standard deviation of 1.418. The pre-test mean score for the control group was 11.25 with a standard deviation of 1.517, is somewhat higher for the experimental group. Consistency within each group is indicated by the standard error of the mean for both groups, which points to a small score distribution.

### Controlled and Experimental Groups Post-Test Scores

Table 4.1 Post-Test Scores

	Control & Experiment Group	N	Mean	Std. Division	Std. Mean	Error
Post-Test	Control	20	12.85	1.631	.365	
	Experimental	20	18.00	1.835	.410	

Table 4.2 indicates that the control group had an average post-test score of 12.85 (SD=1.631), while the experimental group, which utilized the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) treatment, had a much higher mean score of 18.00 (SD=1.835). The difference in outcomes suggests the CLT approach may have proven effective in improving speaking skills. The comparison of post-test outcomes of the experimental and control groups reflect on the CLT treatment, specifically its impact on the experimental group's speaking performance. The discussion is rooted in the differences between mean scores, variability in scores, and the potential significance of the observed differences. The discussion will reflect on the potential effects of the instructional treatment on speaking proficiency.

### Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Outcomes

An integral component of the analysis involves comparing the pre-test and the post-test, which asks how much the experimental and control groups' speaking skills improved after the intervention. This comparison additionally highlights how the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach is superior to the traditional Grammar Translation Method (GTM).

Table 4.3: Comparison between the Pre-Test and the Post-Test Results.

Group	Test	N	mean	std. Division	std. mean	error
Control	pre-Test	20	10.70	1.418	.317	
	Post-Test	20	12.85	1.631	.0365	
Experimental	Pre-Test	20	11.25	1.517	.339	
	Post-Test	20	18.00	1.835	.410	

Figure 4.3 shows a small increment in the control group's mean scores from 10.70 in the pre-test to 12.85 in the post-test. Experimental Group: There was a noticeable progress in the experimental group's mean scores, which went from 11.25 in the pre-test to 18.00 in the post-test.

The results show that speaking abilities are considerably enhanced by the Communicative Language Teaching method compared to the Grammar Translation Method. These results emphasize the need for educational institutions to incorporate communicative methodologies into their language teaching practices to meet the demands of effective language use in academic and professional contexts.

## DISCUSSION

The first and second goals of this study were to improve students' speaking abilities, especially their undergraduate-level speaking abilities. Pre- and post-tests given to the control and experimental groups helped us accomplish our goals.

These three stages of CLT language acquisition approach were pre-, during-, and post-task. Three brainstorming projects, a summary of the work phases, and a theme were all part of the pre-task phase. A whole task must be involved for a task to be finished. After that, the third step—post-task assessment, which comprises practice, review, and linguistic emphasis—was finished. To reinforce vocabulary items used in speaking skills, it is crucial to use visual aids such as audio and video clips, photographs, posters, group projects, stickers, or other authentic materials.

The majority of speaking activities, including role-plays, dramatizations, presentations, and oral storytelling, can help students become more proficient speakers and promote English-language communication. The ability of students to write and speak, along with other useful skills, was the study's main objective. They were examining how well the CLT assisted students in developing their effective communication skills. Within the experimental group, it was discovered that the CLT paradigm was useful in assisting students in achieving these goals. The findings displayed that students in the experimental groups did better than those in the control groups that were taught the translated grammar method. The CLT technique improves students' speaking skills at the undergraduate level. When students engage with native speakers through the CLT style of instruction, they can gain a significant amount of exposure With relation to the language and its users.

Students in the experimental group and those who got instruction using the CLT model were more proficient speakers compared to the control group's, based on the outcomes of the investigation. Pre-task, task phase, and post-task exercises were found to have a positive impact on students' English talking abilities. Authentic materials, language exercises, mind mapping, brainstorming, clustering, outlining, questioning, and a presentation of the reports were used to motivate and inspire students to engage in class activities.

Students who receive instruction using a translated grammar method instead of a traditional one develop

fluency rather than accuracy. In the grammar translation method in education, students who struggle with shyness and a lack of desire are given additional opportunities to succeed. They learn English and gain many benefits from this teaching approach. The CLT Method of instruction helps students overcome a variety of issues and challenges, including stress, hesitancy, anxiety, and nervousness. According to Lever and Willis (2004), the CLT approach helps students improve their speaking abilities. With this method, they can use a second language more quickly in everyday situations and everyday life. Students who take the CLT improve their speaking abilities more rapidly, become more fluent presenters, become eloquent speakers, and receive assistance in correcting their mistakes. The CLT stimulates their interest for learning and increases their English language effectiveness. CLT also allows students to be more engaged in classroom activities.

## **CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

The purpose of the study was to assess the change in students' performance with the intervention by comparing the experimental and control groups using a pre-test and post-test. The results from the study showed that the differences in performance between the groups were quite pronounced, and the experimental group showed clear progress (exhibited learning) as a consequence of the intervention. The results from the pre-test confirmed no noteworthy performance differences between the two groups, thus allowing for comparison of the groups on an equivalent basis. Nevertheless, the experimental group performed significantly better than the control group after the intervention as indicated by the post-test results. It was also worth noting that statistically significant results provided further evidence of the importance of these findings, which ultimately spoke to the effectiveness of the intervention shape in increasing students' performance. The results are supportive of the hypothesis that the experimental form of intervention did improve better learning than the traditional approach. This also reinforcing the findings from earlier studies, which indicated a position of potential in the academic achievement potential of innovation. This research not only glimpses a snapshot of educational positionality, but supports the claim of the relevance of a particular intervention for enhanced learning experiences.

Building on the limitations and conclusions of the study, there are a number of possibilities for future research. First, larger and more diverse samples from different communities and types of educational settings would enhance the generalizability of the results. Second, extending the length of the intervention would poise the study to examine the sustainability and the effects of the intervention over longer periods of time. Third, while quantitative research has its importance, adding qualitative approaches to quantitative data - such as focus groups or interviews - can provide a more in-depth understanding of the subjectivity and experiences of the participants. To evaluate whether this intervention has broader applicability, research studies should also consider how the intervention might be implemented within different disciplines. Additionally, consideration of both external factors and the factors relating to students' motivation may provide a fuller picture of their impact on learning outcomes. Finally, researchers should also consider a hybrid or technological approach to instruction to continue to examine instructional approaches and their comparative effectiveness. These suggestions for future research would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of effective pedagogical approaches.

## **LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY**

While this study has produced some positive results, it is also prudent to examine the limitations of the study. First, the sample was limited to student participants from a single institution, which might restrict the applicability of results and conclusions.

Secondly, the study is a singular subject in a particular topic and is not generalizable to other topics and disciplines. Thirdly, the short length of and the potential of the intervention may not have effectively captured the experimental method in the long term to measure achievement and learning outcomes.

Also, the study's use of only quantitative data, with pre- and post-tests, and neglecting qualitative data and their experiences and perceptions might have limited the study from gathering valuable insights from the students.

Finally, some external factors that, although they are potential influences, such as participants prior knowledge, motivation levels, and the environment were not controlled and may have impacted results. Recognizing and addressing these limitations suggests ways for studies in the immediate future to fill in the gaps and improve on the findings of this study.

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