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Developing Speaking Skills through Communicative Language Teaching among B1-Level English Learners

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Abstract: Speaking is one of the most important skills in English language learning because it enables learners to express ideas, exchange information, cand participate in real-life communication. However, many intermediate English learners experience difficulties speaking confidently, organizing their thoughts, using appropriate vocabulary, and responding naturally during conversations. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach that emphasizes meaningful interaction, learner participation, and the practical use of language. This article examines the application of CLT in developing speaking skills among B1-level English learners through three essential dimensions of language teaching: understanding the target learners, selecting appropriate teaching content, and applying effective classroom techniques. It discusses the characteristics and needs of intermediate learners, identifies suitable speaking activities, and proposes a practical teaching framework based on discussions, role-plays, problem-solving tasks, and collaborative learning. The article also critically examines the strengths and limitations of CLT and argues that communicative activities should be supported by appropriate language instruction, teacher guidance, and formative asses sment. As a literature-based article, it presents a theoretically informed teaching proposal rather than reporting results from an empirical classroom experiment.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, speaking skills, B1-level learners, English language teaching, communicative competence, learner-centered approach, classroom interaction.

Introduction: English has become an important language for international communication, education, business, tourism, and technology. As a result, learning English involves more than memorizing vocabulary and grammatical rules. Learners also need to develop the ability to use language appropriately in different communicative situations. Among the four main language skills, speaking plays a particularly important role because it allows individuals to express their opinions, share experiences, ask questions, and interact with other people. Despite its importance, speaking is often considered one of the most challenging skills for English learners. Some students understand grammatical structures and possess sufficient vocabulary but hesitate when they are required to communicate orally. They may experience a lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, limited fluency, or difficulties organizing their ideas. Traditional teaching approaches that focus mainly on grammar explanations and written exercises may not provide enough opportunities for learners to develop spontaneous communication. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged as an influential approach in language education during the 1970s. It emphasizes the development of communicative competence rather than the isolated memorization of linguistic forms. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), communicative language teaching focuses on language as a means of communication and encourages learners to use it for meaningful purposes. The approach is particularly relevant to B1-level learners because students at this stage are generally capable of discussing familiar topics, describing experiences, expressing opinions, and explaining their plans. However, they still need opportunities to improve fluency, accuracy, vocabulary range, and confidence. This article addresses the following research question: How can Communicative Language Teaching be applied to develop speaking skills among B1-level English

learners through appropriate learning content, interactive classroom activities, and effective teaching strategies? The central argument is that CLT can create meaningful opportunities for speaking development when teachers select activities according to learners' needs and balance communicative practice with appropriate language support and feedback.

Understanding the Target Learners: B1-Level English Students: Understanding learners is an essential part of successful language teaching. Before choosing a teaching method, teachers should consider students' age, language proficiency, interests, motivation, previous learning experiences, and educational needs. These characteristics influence how students participate in lessons and which teaching techniques are likely to be effective. The proposed target group for this article consists of intermediate English learners at the B1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). These learners may be secondary school students, university students, or young adults studying English for academic and personal purposes. According to the Council of Europe (2020), B1-level learners can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters, deal with most situations that may arise while travelling, produce simple connected texts, and describe experiences, events, dreams, and ambitions. They can also briefly explain opinions and plans. Nevertheless, B1 learners may experience several difficulties when speaking English. For example, they may hesitate when expressing personal opinions, have difficulty using more advanced vocabulary, make grammatical mistakes while speaking, struggle to maintain conversations for an extended period, feel nervous when speaking in front of classmates, or depend too much on prepared sentences instead of responding naturally. These difficulties suggest that learners need a classroom environment where communication is encouraged and mistakes are treated as a natural part of the learning process. Communicative Language Teaching is appropriate for this group because it gives learners opportunities to use their existing language knowledge in

meaningful situations. Instead of simply repeating sentences provided by the teacher, students actively participate in conversations, discussions, interviews, and collaborative activities. To identify learners' needs, I would begin with a short speaking assessment. Students could introduce themselves, describe a memorable experience, and express their opinions about a familiar topic. Through this activity, I could identify their strengths and weaknesses in fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and interaction. It is also important to recognize that students at the same proficiency level may have different abilities and learning needs. Some learners may communicate confidently but make frequent grammatical errors, while others may have good grammatical knowledge but hesitate to speak. Therefore, the teacher should provide different forms of support, including vocabulary lists, discussion questions, visual materials, and additional preparation time.

Selecting Appropriate Teaching Content: The content of instruction should be connected to learners' proficiency levels, interests, communicative needs, and learning objectives. For B1-level students, speaking lessons should focus on familiar and meaningful topics that encourage them to express ideas and exchange information.

3.1. Vocabulary Development. Vocabulary is an essential component of speaking because learners need appropriate words and expressions to communicate their ideas. For B1-level students, vocabulary should be selected from familiar topics such as education, technology, travel, health, environment, hobbies, and everyday experiences.

For example, when discussing technology, students may learn expressions such as "advantages and disadvantages," "social media platforms," "digital communication," "online learning," "protect personal information," and "have a positive or negative influence." These expressions can be introduced through short texts, pictures, videos, and classroom discussions. Students should then use the new

vocabulary in their own sentences and conversations. 3.2. Functional Language and Grammar Communicative competence requires learners to know how to perform different language functions. At B1 level, students should practise expressing opinions, agreeing and disagreeing, giving suggestions, making comparisons, explaining reasons, and describing experiences. Useful expressions include "In my opinion…," "I strongly believe that…," "From my point of view…," "I agree with you because…," "I understand your opinion, but…," "One possible solution could be…," and "The main reason is that…". Grammar should support communication rather than become the only focus of instruction. Teachers can integrate structures such as past simple, present perfect, future forms, comparative structures, and modal verbs into speaking activities. For example, students discussing environmental problems could use modal verbs to make suggestions: "People should recycle more plastic," "Governments must protect natural resources," and "We could use public transportation more often. 3.3. Developing Fluency and Pronunciation. Speaking fluency refers to the ability to express ideas with reasonable continuity and without excessive hesitation. B1 learners should have opportunities to speak for longer periods while maintaining understandable communication. Pronunciation instruction should include word stress, sentence stress, intonation, connected speech, and clear articulation. The objective is not to eliminate every accent difference but to help learners communicate intelligibly.

Short presentations, storytelling, interviews, and pair discussions can provide useful opportunities to practise these areas. 3.4. Communicative Learning Outcomes

By the end of the proposed teaching sequence, learners should be able to express personal opinions about familiar topics; participate in discussions and exchange information; agree and disagree politely; describe past experiences and future plans; use appropriate vocabulary and functional expressions; maintain conversations with classmates; and speak with greater confidence and improved

fluency. These outcomes should be aligned with relevant CEFR descriptors and the institution's curriculum.

Applying Communicative Language Teaching in the Classroom: Communicative Language Teaching can be implemented through activities that require learners to exchange information, express opinions, solve problems, and interact with others. The teacher acts as a facilitator who creates opportunities for communication and provides guidance when necessary. The following teaching framework is proposed for a speaking lesson designed for B1-level learners. 4.1. Step One: Warm-Up and Introduction: I would begin the lesson with a short warm-up activity to activate students' previous knowledge and introduce the topic. The lesson topic could be "Technology in Our Daily Lives." I would display several pictures showing smartphones, computers, online education, and social media. Students would answer questions such as: How often do you use technology? What is your favourite technological device? How has technology changed education? Can people live without smartphones nowadays? This activity encourages students to express their initial ideas and prepares them for the main speaking tasks. 4.2. Step Two: Introducing Useful Vocabulary: Before starting the main speaking activity, I would introduce several useful words and expressions related to technology. Students would match vocabulary items with their definitions, discuss examples, and create their own sentences. For instance, they could explain how online learning is different from traditional classroom learning. This stage provides linguistic support and helps learners participate more confidently in the following activities. 4.3. Step Three: Pair Discussion: Students would work in pairs and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of modern technology. Each pair would receive several questions:

1. What are the main advantages of using technology?
2. Does social media influence young people positively or negatively?
3. Can online education replace traditional education?
4. How can people use technology responsibly?

Students would take turns expressing their opinions and responding to their partners. This activity develops interaction, critical thinking, and the ability to support opinions with reasons and examples. 4.4. Step Four: Role-Play Activity: Role-play is an effective communicative technique because it allows learners to practise language in realistic situations. For this activity, students would work in groups of three. They would imagine that they are participating in a school meeting about introducing more technology into the classroom. The roles would be: Student A supports the use of technology in education; Student B believes traditional teaching methods are more effective; Student C acts as the meeting leader and tries to find a solution. Students should explain their positions, ask questions, agree or disagree politely, and suggest possible solutions. After the activity, selected groups could perform their conversations in front of the class. This activity helps learners develop confidence, spontaneous speaking, negotiation skills, and the ability to use functional language. 4.5. Step Five: Problem-Solving Activity: In this stage, students would work in small groups to solve a realistic problem. The situation could be: "Your university wants to improve students' English-speaking abilities. However, students have limited opportunities to practise English outside the classroom. What solutions would you suggest?" Students would discuss possible solutions, such as organizing English-speaking clubs, conversation competitions, language exchange programs, and online speaking sessions. Each group would select its three best suggestions and present them to the class. This task encourages cooperation, creativity, critical thinking, and meaningful communication. 4.6. Step Six: Feedback and Assessment: Assessment should focus on the learning objectives and the communicative performance of students. I would observe learners during pair discussions, role-plays, and group presentations. The main assessment criteria would include fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, interaction, and confidence. I would provide constructive feedback after the activities rather than interrupting every time a student makes a mistake. Important errors could be discussed with the

whole class using examples without identifying individual students. Students could also complete a short self-assessment to reflect on their speaking performance and identify areas for improvement.

Critical Discussion: Strengths, Limitations, and Methodological Implications. Communicative Language Teaching offers several advantages for developing speaking skills. First, it creates opportunities for learners to use English for meaningful communication rather than focusing exclusively on memorizing grammatical rules. Second, pair and group activities increase student participation and provide opportunities to practise interaction. Third, realistic communicative situations can help learners connect classroom learning with everyday language use. Another important strength is its learner-centered nature. Students become active participants in the learning process, while teachers organize activities, provide language support, and guide classroom interaction. This can create a more engaging learning environment and encourage learners to take responsibility for their progress. Richards and Rodgers (2014) explain that communicative language teaching emphasizes communicative competence and the use of language for meaningful purposes. Similarly, Brown and Lee (2015) discuss the importance of interaction and meaningful language use in contemporary language teaching. However, CLT also has certain limitations. One possible difficulty is that some learners may dominate group discussions while quieter students participate less actively. In addition, students with limited vocabulary may struggle to express complex ideas during communicative activities. Another challenge concerns grammatical accuracy. If teachers focus only on fluency and communication, learners may continue making the same mistakes without receiving sufficient correction. Therefore, communicative activities should not replace explicit language instruction completely. To address these limitations, I would combine communicative activities with short grammar explanations, vocabulary preparation, pronunciation practice, and constructive feedback. I would also organize groups

carefully to ensure that all learners have opportunities to participate. The teacher's role is particularly important in this approach. Effective communicative teaching requires careful lesson planning, suitable materials, clear instructions, and appropriate classroom management. Teachers should select activities according to learners' proficiency levels and provide additional support when necessary. The CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2020) offers useful descriptors for evaluating learners' communicative activities and language proficiency. These descriptors can help teachers connect speaking tasks with realistic learning outcomes. Overall, CLT should not be understood as simply allowing students to talk freely throughout a lesson. It requires purposeful communication, structured activities, appropriate linguistic support, and assessment. Its effectiveness depends on how carefully teachers connect communicative objectives with classroom practice.

Conclusion: This article has examined the application of Communicative Language Teaching in developing speaking skills among B1-level English learners. The discussion has demonstrated that effective language instruction requires teachers to understand learners' characteristics, select appropriate learning content, and apply teaching techniques that support meaningful communication. The proposed target group consists of intermediate English learners who can communicate about familiar topics but may still experience difficulties with fluency, vocabulary, confidence, and spontaneous interaction. The selected teaching content includes vocabulary development, functional language, grammatical structures, pronunciation, and communicative strategies. The proposed classroom framework includes warm-up activities, vocabulary preparation, pair discussions, role-plays, problem-solving tasks, and formative assessment. These activities provide learners with opportunities to express opinions, exchange information, cooperate with classmates, and use English in realistic situations. The main argument is that Communicative Language Teaching can provide a valuable framework for

developing speaking skills because it emphasizes interaction and meaningful language use. Nevertheless, successful implementation requires appropriate teacher guidance, balanced attention to fluency and accuracy, and activities that consider individual learner differences. Ultimately, speaking development is not achieved through memorizing words and grammatical rules alone. Learners need regular opportunities to use language, communicate their ideas, and participate actively in the learning process. By applying communicative principles and selecting activities according to learners' needs, English teachers can create a supportive environment that encourages confidence, interaction, and communicative competence.

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