



# Building a Good Relationship Between Teachers and Students on CLT

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**Abstract.** The theory of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been widely applied in western countries. How it can be applied in our college English teaching has become a focus of domestic Communicative Language Teaching researches. This paper analyzes the strategies of applying Communicative Language Teaching in our college English teaching to help build a good relationship between teachers and students by studying the concepts and advantages of Communicative Language Teaching, the characteristics of the relationship between teachers and students under the present teaching mode on the basis of observation.

**Keywords:** Communicative language teaching · Relationship · Teachers and students

## 1 Introduction

According to Jack C. Richards, in his book named *Communicative Language Teaching Today*, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) can be understood as a set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom (Jack, 2006) [1]. And according to the free encyclopedia—Wikipedia, Communicative Language Teaching or the communicative approach, is an approach to language teaching that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study (See, <http>) [2]. Wikipedia gave a general and abstract definition for CLT while Jack C. Richards gave a relatively detailed and concrete description of CLT.

From the two definitions above, teachers can conclude that CLT is a teaching method which focuses on the interaction between the teachers and students in classroom activities, which will change the roles of them. In the past, within the traditional grammar framework, teachers focused on explaining the grammatical rules for the students to follow in order to make sure that they can learn the language in a correct way. In this way, teachers are the instructors to the students. Now that the goal of CLT is the interaction between teachers and students, the role of the teachers cannot be the instructors any more, and the students cannot be the followers any more. The teachers will become the guide, the partner and the facilitator; and the students will be the partners as well. It not

just focuses on the written language but the spoken language too. After all, language is the means of the communication.

In the book, *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning* (Volume II), by Eli Hinkel, the author gave readers some reports with CLT around the world. The author shared us with some other authors' ideas about CLT. Take Chow and Mok-cheung for example, they thought that CLT is a huge improvement for Hong Kong schools. And they thought that CLT is the "quantum leap" [3].

## 2 The Advantages of CLT

First, CLT highlights the improvement of students' ability to use the language they are learning, which is beneficial for them to put what they have already learned into practice. Learning can not happen in vacuum, especially for language learning. It is not enough to learn the words, expressions, grammar or any other theories for language learning, for it is a communication tool. Language learners need to communicate with each other with the help of language. In this sense, language is really very powerful. Because others can get the information about who they are, where they are from, what kind of education they have already received, what their purposes of this or that conversation are through the language they are using. If language learners highlight the focus of communicative role played by CLT, it is beneficial for the students to develop their ability they are learning.

Second, CLT is helpful for the teachers to stimulate the students' interest to participate in the classroom activities with initiative, which is good for them to develop their ability of self-study in the long run [4]. Sometimes, it is really boring to learn language. Because language learners have to admit that there are a lot of words, expressions, patterns to remember. It takes time and it is not that interesting sometimes. And if they do it alone, they can not enjoy the achievement of learning in the short run. But if they communicate with others, including the teachers and the classmates through discussion, role play or some other similar activities, in this way, they can develop their language abilities unconsciously but effectively. Language learners can not master a language all at once. It's a long journey, even life-long journey to learn a language. With the basis of their language abilities, they can make it come true.

Third, CLT focuses on the interaction between teachers and students [5]. And interaction is the key point of learning a language. Teaching is a mutual thing. Teaching cannot be teacher-centered. It is not good to motivate the students' interest to participate in the classroom activities in this way. Instead, teaching should be student-centered. If the students get some power in class, they will definitely play a good role in classroom activities. Let them speak, speak out loud. And then, they will speak well.

Fourth, CLT breaks the whole set of grammatical rules with the rearrangement of "new" rule-function [6]. It is aiming at cultivating students' communicative abilities. Without the limitations of the rules, the students would take the first step, that is, feeling free to express themselves without the consideration of the accuracy. Sometimes, having rules is a good thing, while sometimes, it is not. If the students have too much consideration for the limitations, they dare not to put what they have already learned into practice.

Fifth, CLT encourages the students to express themselves without any preparation, which can improve the students' ability to use the target language to express themselves.

It is especially important and necessary for English learners in China. Under the long-term of teacher-centered and exam-oriented English teaching in China, many English learners in China just learned the “dumb” or “deaf” English, that is to say, they can get good grades in the examinations, but they have relatively poor ability in listening comprehension and speaking ability. It is no point of learning a language if you cannot use it to express yourself.

Sixth, CLT will change the roles of the teachers and the students as the author concluded above. Then it is a good way to bridge the gap between them. Like the generation which is inevitable, the gap between the teachers and students is inevitable, too. It cannot be ignored. And it should be dealt with in an appropriate way.

In conclusion, learning the grammatical rules alone is not enough for learning a language. Because language is the means to communicate, language learners need to put it into practice. And CLT gives this opportunity to take a shot.

### **3 The Introduction of the Relationship Between Teachers and Students in China**

With all these advantages listed above, CLT should have already been popular everywhere. But it's not, esp. in some regions in China. In the past, English teaching in China was under the traditional grammar framework. And recently, even though, teachers have already realized the shortcomings of it, and they have already tried some other ways to change it, they are still focused too much on the exam-oriented English teaching. Teachers highlight the significance of the grades the students make and they ignore their competence of using English. I think the reasons are:

The first is the internal reasons. Chinese people prefer rules, which are written in their blood. There is an old Chinese saying, which goes like this-Nothing can be accomplished without norms or standards. It is regarded as a good traditional culture and inherited and passed on from one generation to another. Therefore, even though teachers have already realized its shortcomings, it's still difficult for them to change it.

The second is the external reasons. Teachers stick to the traditional way of teaching which is exam-oriented, because there are not enough opportunities even possibilities for the students to communicate others in English, especially in some countryside or in remote or mountainous regions. They had few opportunities to use English as a communicating tool. The ones who should communicate with them are their English teachers who keep giving them the grammatical rules.

### **4 Strategies for it on CLT**

And to build a good relationship between them, teachers have made a lot of corresponding changes and some of them are big challenges to them. Now that teachers have already realized the advantages of CLT and the disadvantages of traditional way, it's the time to make a combination. Fortunately, teachers have already taken the first step, for example, some colleges in China are experimenting “flipped class” which is students-oriented instead of teachers-oriented. And it focuses on improving students' competence in English. Here are some strategies to do it:

#### 4.1 Getting to Know About Students' Personality

If you want to build a good relationship between you and someone else, you need to get to know about them firstly. And there is no exception for the relationship between teachers and students. If teachers want to build up a good relationship with their students, they'd better know about their students. Taking the author's students for example, the personality of the author's students is being introverted for most of them. Because they are public-funded normal students, most of them come from remote mountainous areas. And most of their families are not in a very good condition. From their childhood, they failed to enjoy better education and life compared with their peers living in big cities. Therefore, they cherish this precious opportunity for their education very much. But on the other hand, they are not confident enough to express themselves. While speaking ability is very important for language learners. On the basis of all these information, teachers should help them build up their confidence to express themselves and give them the opportunities to train their skills and abilities that they need most to be a qualified teacher in the future. In this way, they can be the main force to foster the development and improvement of the education in their homeland.

#### 4.2 Figuring Out the Components of Students' Maximal Ability

In order to build up a good relationship between the teachers and the students, it is important and necessary for the teachers to make clear of the components of typical performance and maximal ability of the students. The components of typical performance and maximal ability the author found which were related to students' learning success are:

- Being positive—Positive for the problems and difficulties standing in their way of learning;
- Being active—Involved in classroom activities and online learning, etc.;
- Being grateful—Grateful for this precious opportunity for further education in College with the support of the government;
- Being accustomed to the new environment as soon as possible—Adjusting themselves to the new environment, taking advantage of the resources on and off campus;
- Being determined—Being determined to make a change for themselves, their families and the society as a whole by equipping themselves with knowledge;
- Being conscious enough to encounter a better self-making clear of their strong points and weak point by highlighting the strong ones and getting rid of the weak ones to make themselves better.
- Being creative—Trying to develop their creativity to learn more and learn better.

Now that the teachers make clear of the components of students maximal ability and competence, they can take the corresponding measures to develop them to help build up a good relationship between them.

## 5 Conclusion

Even though some of the students failed to lay a solid foundation for their English learning, they take a very positive and active attitude towards their learning, which means that they are trying their best to gain this maximal ability, including aptitude, achievement and proficiency. Just as the old saying goes, “Where there is a will, there is a way.” And if teachers see all these, they’ll build a good relationship with their students.

**Authors’ Contributions.** This paper is independently completed by Xiaoyan Li.

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