

CLT TO DEVELOP COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO  
DEVELOP COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN THE COLOMBIAN EFL SETTING

By

Liseth Carolina Valenzuela Delgado

Advisor:

Mg. Ana Clara Sanchez Solarte

Submitted to the School of Human Sciences in partial

Fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of B.A in English and Spanish

Linguistics and Languages Department

English and Spanish Program

University of Nariño

November, 2015

Las ideas aportadas en el Trabajo de Grado son responsabilidad exclusiva de la autora, artículo 1° acuerdo # 324 del 11 de Octubre de 1966 del Honorable Consejo Directivo de la Universidad de Nariño.

Nota de Aceptación:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Firma Del Presidente De Jurado

---

Firma Del Jurado

---

Firma Del Jurado

## **Acknowledgments**

*First of all, I would like to thank God for giving me patience and wisdom to meet this goal, as well as his protection and guidance during these five years of study.*

*Second, I would like to thank my marvelous family that has supported me all the time, especially I have to express all my gratitude to my father, José, who has been my motivation, my advisor and my loyal friend since the very beginning of my studies.*

*I also have to highlight my mother, Rosario, whose determined personality and dedication was the inspiration that encouraged and fully supported me in every hurdle that came my way.*

*I would like to gratefully acknowledge my little sister Johana who helped when I needed. I have to thank my beloved grandmother Ligia for her blessings. I also have to express my greatest appreciation to my loved ones who rest in peace, mainly my aunt Carmen who was my guardian from heaven. I dedicate this achievement to her.*

*Thanks very much to my dearest friends Martha, Andrea, Roberto, Leonardo and Jefferson for their honest friendship, help and wishes for the successful completion of my project. I wish to express my deep sense of gratitude and love to Angela whose presence, attention, time and love motivated me to continue with this project.*

*Finally, I am highly indebted to professor Ana Clara Sanchez for her guidance and supervision as well as for providing necessary information regarding the project and also for their support in completing the project. Also thanks to my evaluators Magda Caicedo and Helda Alicia Hidalgo who shared their knowledge, their ideas, and tips all of which contribute to the completion of this research paper.*

*LISSETH CAROLINA VALENZUELA DELGADO*

## Resumen

Este documento presenta la importancia de aplicar el enfoque Enseñanza Comunicativa de la Lengua conocido con el nombre de Communicative Language Teaching (CLT por su sigla en Inglés) como una alternativa para desarrollar la competencia comunicativa en inglés como lengua extranjera en el contexto Colombiano. Por consiguiente, se resalta las principales características de este enfoque y algunas de las implicaciones que conlleva la aplicación del mismo. Además se menciona ciertos apartes relacionados al concepto de competencia comunicativa al igual que las principales áreas que la conforman para tener una idea clara sobre este tema. También se hace hincapié en el propósito que tiene el Ministerio Nacional de Educación al implementar un plan de bilingüismo encaminado al desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa en inglés como un requisito para las instituciones educativas colombianas. Adicionalmente se exponen ciertos retos como resultado de la aplicación del enfoque comunicativo (CLT) en el contexto Colombiano. Como prueba de la utilidad y aplicación del mencionado enfoque en otros contextos, algunos estudios de caso serán brevemente descritos. También se propone algunas recomendaciones prácticas que incentiven a los maestros de Inglés a la implementación de este enfoque en las aulas de clase. Finalmente, las conclusiones son presentadas.

**Palabras claves:** Enseñanza Comunicativa de la lengua (CLT), competencia comunicativa, contextos de enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera.

### **Abstract**

This research paper sets forward the importance of applying a communicative approach, namely communicative language teaching (CLT) as an alternative to develop communicative competence in English as a foreign language, specifically in the Colombian context by highlighting the main features of this approach and some of the implications of its application. Additionally, some facts related to the concept of communicative competence as well as the scope of this topic are considered. This document attempts to connect the plan of the National Ministry of Education to implement a plan aimed at developing bilingual communicative competence in English as a requirement for Colombian schools to CLT. Furthermore, the challenges of applying CLT, some descriptions of case studies from other contexts where this approach has been implemented are shown. Some practical recommendations are suggested in order for English teachers to effectively make use of the communicative approach in the classrooms. Finally, the conclusions are presented.

**Key words:** Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), communicative competence, EFL settings.

**Table of Contents**

Communicative Language Teaching: an alternative approach to develop communicative competence in the Colombian EFL setting .....8

The Concept of Communicative Competence.....11

English Communicative competence as a requirement proposed by the National Ministry of Education.....13

CLT principles and important facts.....15

    Misconceptions of Communicative Language Teaching.....23

Possible challenges that must be faced when applying CLT in the Colombian context.....25

The adoption of CLT in other EFL contexts (case studies).....33

Recommendations for incorporating the CLT approach in the Colombian EFL setting.....35

Conclusions.....38

References.....43

## **COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO DEVELOP COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN THE COLOMBIAN EFL SETTING**

The ever growing need of developing effective communication skills, especially in English, has generated a significant demand for learning and teaching this language. In today's world, the desire to improve English proficiency for oral communication is vital for many people with different academic, professional and personal goals. In the same way, learning a second language (L2) has also become something relevant in young people's lives. (Richards, 2006, p. 5). In the words of L. Ene, (n.d), it is stated that those people who really have something to express and whose aim is to share their thoughts, beliefs and opinions around the global context are compelled to speak in English to establish communication (p. 1).

Equally important, Harmer (2007) claims that there exist several reasons for the popularity of English. For instance, historical, economic and cultural factors that are increasingly changing the world into 'a global village' and bringing people from different places around the world into constant communication. Globalization is also reflected in the employment of English language around the world. It has accelerated the need for English communication in business. This is because people involved in this field know the importance to be skilled in English not only to carry out their job's duties efficiently, but also to get a promotion. Furthermore, English is considered as the key to access the global economy since it facilitates interaction and communication to pertain and compete in the international market. According to this view, it can be assumed that English competency is a crucial skill for the workplace (The world of English, p. 1-3).



Another reason for the widespread of English communication has to deal with traveling matters, specifically the aspects related to tourism. Proficiency in an L2 may facilitate access to hospitality services. For example, tourists have used English as a communication tool in order to solve typical situations concerning traveling matters such as making reservations in a hotel or restaurant, buying tickets, reading announcements, shopping, eating outside, having contact with people from another culture and so on (Bobanovic, 2011, p. 11).

Taking the preceding comments in consideration, it can be say that English plays a crucial role in many areas. That is why all around the world, articles and books reveal that efforts are being made in order to implement this language in several contexts as an important part of education. That is the case of Colombian EFL context where the National Ministry of Education is adopting and implementing English in order to insert their citizens within processes of universal communication, in this globalized world (Ministry of National Education-MEN, 2006). Therefore, in order to lead Colombian learners to become communicatively competent, some methods and approaches have been suggested as alternative tools in the field of teaching and learning English.

In that respect, Sanchez and Obando (2008) claim that approaches such as content-based instruction, competency - based language teaching, and communicative language teaching are indispensable in Colombian classroom settings, if the purpose is to enhance foreign language teaching that enable learners to accomplish the demands of the world.

Following the previous ideas, for instance, the relevance of learning English, Colombian policies regarding the teaching and learning of foreign languages, this paper will aim at showing

the implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT) as an alternative approach to help learners become efficient users of English by developing their communicative competence.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) can emerge as an alternative approach to teach English in Colombia due to it allows learners to develop their language communicative competences not only to expand their linguistic knowledge but also to increase their knowledge of the world by having international relations in different aspects like culture, economy, business and education as it is required by the National Ministry of Education (MEN) through the Plan de Mejoramiento en Lenguas Extranjeras. In fact, this plan is oriented to educate citizens who will be able to communicate into English and may contribute to incorporate the country into the processes of universal communication, global economy, and cultural aperture, with internationally comparable standards (MEN, 2006c, p. 6).

Communicative language teaching also encourages learners to use the language in real-life situations that necessitate communication. It opens up a broader perspective on language teaching and learning. Larsen-Freeman (2000) says that one of the relevant assumptions of CLT is that “by learning to communicate, students will be more motivated to study a foreign language since they will feel they are learning to do something useful with the language” (p.130). Then, it is when the language becomes an instrument of classroom communication, instead of being a mere object of study. Additionally, Brown (1994) agrees that CLT focuses on a social relationship between the teacher and learner. This is because, CLT is a learner-centered approach that gives students the possibility to express their individuality by allowing them to share their ideas and opinions. At the same time, this is something that increase motivation and encourages cooperative relationships among students. Finally, learners’ security is enhanced by the different opportunities to interact with their fellow students.

Through this document, it will be possible to provide CLT teachers with practical activities, materials, recommendations and suggestions that may help them to enhance learners' communicative competence. Then, the objective of this paper will be achieved by means of presenting and analyzing existent literature related to CLT.

Before starting with the discussion of why CLT can be applied in the Colombian EFL setting, it is necessary to make a brief description about communicative competence as a concept. Thereby a relationship between communicative competence and communicative language teaching can be seen more clearly.

### **The Concept of Communicative Competence**

First of all, it is convenient to highlight that communicative competence is the goal of language teaching. (Larsen-Freeman, 2000) Communicative competence is one of the most controversial terms in the field of applied linguistics due to it has been studied under the perception of several authors. For instance, Hymes (1972) who proposed that communicative competence is what a speaker needs to know in order to communicate in a social world. This author considers that in the everyday contexts, a speaker should be able to communicate rather than mastering linguistic structure. Wilkins (1976) makes an important contribution by saying that communication requires learners who perform some functions like promising, inviting, and declining invitations with in a social context. Through this, learners' reflect their ability to use the language efficiently in real world communication (Ying, 2010)

According to Bagaric (2007, p. 94-96) communicative competence reflects the learner's ability to apply the grammatical knowledge to build up sentences to be told in speech in any communicative situation. On the other hand, Chomsky (1965) distinguishes two concepts as part

of communicative competence. He talks about competence and performance. The first concept reflects the “monolingual speaker- listener’s knowledge of language” and the second word, performance, means “the actual use of language in real situations”. In that sense, it can be understood that besides knowing how the language works itself, it is also necessary to know how to proceed with that language in real settings. To continue with some facts surrounding communicative competence, Widdowson (1983) makes a contribution by introducing the sociolinguistic aspect as an important part in the field of the communicative competence. It is related to learners’ language use in any aspect of society taking into account cultural norms, expectations and the different contexts where they may perform. In addition to this, some other authors like Canale and Swain (1989, 1981) express their points of view regarding the linguistic component. They say that this element has to deal with the mastery of foreign language in relation to phonological and grammatical rules which is a fact that beginner learners of a foreign language need to be good at. Next, the pragmatic competence is explained by Bachman (1990). He understands it as the connection between what one says by means of his or her communicative acts and what functions he or she intends to perform through his or her utterances. That is to say, learners must be aware of what they speak about and what they listen to in a conversation. Finally, Tahun (2012) attributes a different concept to the sociolinguistic area. When talking about sociolinguistics he sees this element as mastery of sociocultural norms. Hence, some tasks are proposed when teaching a language directed to enrich the sociolinguistic competence. For instance, teachers are in charge of giving their learners instructions on cultural awareness and also promoting an interest in the sociocultural context in addition to language learning.

As it was written before, encompassing the term Communicative Competence in just one meaning is not a simple task since it has been studied by different authors. However, in the field of language teaching, it is found that communicative competence encompasses both knowledge and expectations of how foreign language learners must or must not speak in certain contexts, when they can speak and when they have to keep silent, to whom they can speak to, how they should use the language, how they may ask for things, or any information, how they must make a request, how they may give commands, and so on, but all of this has to be closely associated with aspects like the interlocutors' roles.

### **English Communicative competence as a requirement proposed by the National Ministry of Education**

Following with the previous ideas, it is possible to observe that the notion of communicative competence can be divided in several subcomponents. Nevertheless, in this document, just three components of communicative competence are highlighted. This is because in accordance with the main goal of the Colombian National Ministry of Education for English teaching, learners are presumed to enhance their communicative competence based on the linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic skills.

In this section there will be presented a brief description of some reasons why the development of English communicative competence has gained importance in the Colombian EFL context. One of the reasons has to deal with the goal of the National Ministry of Education that aims at allowing citizens to take part in the global market, and reflect about processes of innovation within the context of different international trade agreements being negotiated with other countries in times of competitiveness.

Currently, by acknowledging the importance of English the National Ministry of Education has also introduced the National Bilingual Program (NPB) that sets communicative competence as one of their goals. In this sense, McCroskey, cited by Schmitz 2012), holds that “communicative competence has become a focus in higher education over the past couple of decades emerging as educational policy” (p. 48). For this reason, this concept and its applications are being frequently included in many institutions as a main undergraduate learning objective along with a set of skills and abilities for instance, reading, writing, listening, speaking, critical thinking, and problem solving, that will influence the way in which learners operate with the new language in a specific context.

In order to make the process of enhancing communicative competence effective in the Colombian context, the MEN has established a set of levels of English proficiency (Basic, Pre-intermediate, Intermediate, Upper- intermediate, Advanced) based on the standards initially proposed by the Common European Framework (CEF) (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) to favor a gradual and integrated development of the language through the different levels of education from primary to higher education (Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés, 2006). What is more, these levels of proficiency seek that students take ownership of knowledge gained through language, and then use it adequately in real life (White, 2006).

In this respect, Sanchez and Obando (2008) suggest that it is a fundamental obligation of the National Government to offer learners the conditions for developing this communicative competence in English in order to open frontiers, to interact with other contexts where English is spoken, to have access to better job and education opportunities all of this oriented to ensure the quality of life.

In brief, some facts related to the concept of communicative competence and its influence in the field of foreign language have been described, as well as the interest of National Ministry of Education (MEN). Now, it is time to focus on describing the most important features, implications and limitations of CLT so that readers will observe why communicative language teaching can be a suitable approach for developing learners' communicative competence in the Colombian setting.

### **CLT principles and important facts**

The way in which English is taught has moved from traditional approaches and methods to the communicative ones (Richards, 2006, p. 1). Even though communicative language teaching was first proposed in European countries in the 1970s, and it was favorably included into the English curriculum in other places (Littlewood, 2007; Ozsevik, 2010), it is currently considered as a revolutionary methodology which focuses on communication in language learning classrooms.

When talking about characteristics of CLT, it is wise to cite Brown (2001) who states relevant facts by which this approach can be understood. Then, such facts can be also considered to support CLT as an effective approach to develop communicative competence in the Colombian EFL.

1. CLT suggest a focus on important aspects of communicative competence. For instance, grammatical, sociolinguistics, discourse and strategic competences. By means of grammar, students have the opportunity to practice pronunciation, and enhancing their lexical capacity. Besides, by understanding the social context learners learn how communicate and what comments are appropriate to say according to the context. In

terms of discourse competence, learners' ability to produce and comprehend messages takes place. Finally, strategic competence requires learners' ability to know how to keep a conversation going, how to finish such conversation, and how to clarify communication breakdown as well as problem solving (Richards, and Rodgers, 1986).

2. Another principle of CLT has to do with a relationship of form and function. Here, learners can experience the pragmatic and authentic use of language for meaningful purposes. In this regards, Hymes (1964) describes different functions of language. He says that learners' can use the language as a tool to get things, control others behavior, establish interaction, express personal feelings, using language to learn and to discover, but especially to use the language to communicate appropriately.
3. In CLT, fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary aspects underlying communicative competence. Accuracy allows learners to focus on correctness. On the contrary, fluency keeps learners meaningfully engaged in language use. That is to say, CLT involves equipping learners with vocabulary, structures and functions, as well as strategies, to enable them to interact successfully.
4. Learners of CLT can perform in real-world contexts by using the language outside the classroom. That is why, classroom tasks that enable students to practice their communicative skills should be included.
5. CLT suggest an autonomous learning due to students are given opportunities to regulate their own learning process. This approach also raises awareness in terms of students' learning styles by finding their strengths, weaknesses and preferences. As a result such awareness and autonomy encourage learners to continue learning the language beyond the classroom.



6. Regarding the role of teachers in the classroom it is seen that CLT needs teachers to perform as facilitators and guiders by knowing that they are not the only font of knowledge. Something important here it that since teachers 'are empathetic "coaches" , learners are urged to built meaning through real linguistic interaction with their classmates and with the teacher too.

By the same token, Richards (2006, p. 3-5) includes some other facts related to teachers' role. To his point of view, teachers assume the role of monitors rather than simply being the model for correcting speech or texts. In this same sense, Breen and Candlin, cited by Richards and Rogers (1986, p. 77), settle down that teachers involved in CLT are in charge of both facilitating the process of communication between all participants in the classroom, and also suggesting and providing them with several activities and materials. This means that teachers act as facilitators and important vehicles that encourage learners to take part in any communicative circumstance. In other words, they guide the process of communication by giving learners a set of resources that could be delivered through out the activities prepared for the class. It is also said that teachers act as organizers of resources who guide the procedures and activities in the classroom. Additionally, the CLT teachers are responsible for determining and attending to learners language necessities. Another relevant aspect of educators has to deal with guidance. That is to say, since they are conducting the process of communication in English, it is of crucial importance that the language that teachers use in the classroom is the one that learners are learning.

7. Finally, as part of the principles of CLT, the role of students is taking in consideration. Students are active participants in their own learning process. They are expected to take

on a greater degree of responsibility for their own learning. Furthermore, aspects such learner-centered, cooperative learning are emphasized.

In this respect, it is relevant to cite Richard (2006). He says that the way in which students have been taught a language has changed. Nowadays, the language is seen as a process that allows the interaction, collaborative creation and negotiation of meaning among learners, and also the experience of saying things in different ways. When talking about CLT, the role of learners is also important. It is observed in CLT that learners become negotiators among themselves and independent learners. There is thus an acknowledgment, that instead of a predominance of teacher-fronted teaching, teachers are required to reorganize the whole class into pairs or small group works. In this way, learners get some benefits like: First, learn from hearing how other members of the class use the language. Second, produce language than they will later employ in teacher-fronted activities. Third, increase learners' motivational level, finally, as a result of all these preceding processes, learners develop fluency (Richards, 2006, p. 20).

In short, as it was possible to see, the CLT principles named above reflect different aspects of language learning. Then, it is important to consider that CLT principles can be applied in different ways, depending on the teaching context, the students' age, levels, learning goals, and educational and cultural backgrounds. Besides they support the idea that CLT is a suitable approach to be used to enhance communicative competence due to almost everything is proposed is done with a communicative intent.

Additionally, in this section it is important to describe the types of activities compatible with the communicative approach as it follows.

### **Activities suggested in CLT**

The kind of activities proposed for learners have changed from traditional aspects to activities based on different aspects of grammar and its practice, for instance, dialogs, drills, role plays, and so on. Richards and Rogers (1986) conclude that there is an unlimited number of activities. However, they are supposed to be meaningful and engage learners in real communication matters.

Richards (2006) distinguishes the main type of activities that best fulfill the principle of a communicative methodology, as it is shown below:

**Fluency activities:** They promote the natural use of language by engaging learners in meaningful interaction and maintain comprehensible and ongoing communication despite limitations in his or her communicative competence. These kinds of activities allow students to negotiate meaning, put in practice communication strategies, correct misunderstandings, and avoid disruptions when communicating.

In order to practice these activities, role plays can be suggested. For instance, a group of learners have to perform different roles and personalities based on cue cards. Then, they are set on a particular situation where the conversation they carry out is totally improvised. Later, in group work students are asked to reproduce the dialog using language items of their choice. Finally, they present their creations in front of the class. In short, this activity can be highly advantageous since learners are required to recreate what they observed from the first performance by maintaining the meaning instead of the exact language.

**Accuracy activities.** They refer to activities that reflect classroom use of language. Something important here is that language is also practice out of context. The objective of

accuracy activities is that students practice dialogs that have examples of falling intonation in Wh questions. So, the class is organized in small groups of two or three learners who practice the dialog. There is also a monitor in the group whose task is checking that the others are having the right intonation patterns and corrects them when it is needed. Students take turns and change their roles between those reading the dialog and those monitoring. Then the teacher moves around and listens to the groups to give feedback.

**Information-Gap Activities.** Through these activities learners have the opportunity to obtain information they do not have by their means, meanwhile they are making use of their linguistic and communicative resources. By these actions, they will also produce vocabulary, grammar, and communication strategies to follow up a task.

For the application of this activity students are divided into A-B pairs. The teacher gives a picture to each group. For instance, A has a picture of a group of people. On the other hand, B has a similar picture but with a number of very little differences from picture A. Then the students have to sit back to back and ask each other to find out the differences between the two pictures.

**Jigsaw activities.** These activities are based on the information-gap activities. For the development of this activity, the class is organized in groups and each part has some pieces of the information required to complete a specific task. The class has to gather the pieces of information together to complete the whole text. During this process learners must use their language resources to communicate significantly and so take part in meaningful communication practice.

Besides the above named activities, Richards (2006) proposes the mechanical, meaningful, and communicative practice as useful activities advocated by CLT.

**Mechanical practice.** They refer to a controlled practice activity which learners carry out without necessarily understanding of the language they are using. Examples of this type of activities would be repetition drills and substitution drills designed to practice particular grammar or other items.

**Meaningful practice.** For the development of these activities language control is still provided just in case students are required to make meaningful choices when carrying out practice. That is to say, in order to practice the use of prepositions to give directions or describe locations of places, learners might be given a street map with various buildings identified in different locations. Learners also can be given a list of prepositions such as across from, on the corner of, near, on, next to. And then, they can answer some questions like “Where is the book shop? Where is the café?” etc. In this sense, the practice of these activities becomes something meaningful because learners have to respond according to the location of places on the map.

**Communicative practice.** The focus of these activities is the use of language for real communicative contexts where true information is exchanged. Besides, the language is not totally predictable. For instance, students can draw a map of their neighborhood and answer questions about the location of several places, such as the nearest supermarket, the nearest drugstore, etc.

In short, the activities shared above reveal significant aspects of the communicative process. For instance, negotiating meaning, sending and receiving messages and expressing values. In addition, they commonly use techniques of information gaps and information

gathering. In order to practice, these activities can be carried out in pairs or small groups. And what is more, learners will benefit from such activities in several ways. First, learners will learn from hearing what the rest of the group transmits. Second, they will produce and acquire a significant amount of language that they would employ in coming teacher-fronted exercises. Finally, students will put in practice all the communicative competences where they will have the opportunity to enhance their fluency.

Then after knowing the type of activities that may fulfill CLT, it can be assumed that activities to carry on CLT are not the typical ones that suggest repetition, memorization and so on. On the contrary, in applying this approach new activities are needed to encourage learners' negotiation of meaning and meaningful interaction.

### **Materials suggested in CLT**

Additionally to the activities to work with in CLT classes, it is seen the need of talking about the materials that best fulfill the application of CLT. Some of CLT experts such as Richards and Rogers (2001) believe that materials play a primary role of promoting communicative use. They are also a source that influences the quality of classroom interaction. In this respect, they stress three kinds of materials popularly employed as it follows:

**Text-based materials.** They prompt the use of textbooks that promote learners' communication. Since the advent of CLT, the way in which textbooks are presented has been transformed. Currently, this kind of teaching materials possess an "authentic" look; for instance reading passages are created to look like magazine articles. Textbooks are a useful tool that commonly contains visual aids, pictures and reading sections that learners can be based on to start a conversation. There are also some textbooks that enact role plays and pair work activities.

**Task-based materials.** They consist on a variety of role plays, cue cards, and exercise handbooks, materials for drilling, pair work tasks, and so on. These types of materials are meaningful in Communicative Language Teaching Classes and might be used to support real-life tasks such as role playing booking into a hotel, finding a job or presenting an interview.

**Realia materials.** One of the promoted instructional practices by CLT is the extensive integration of authentic materials in the curriculum. Regarding this aspect, Clarke and Silbersteing (1977, p. 51) observed some arguments in favor of the immersion of authentic materials in an EFL context. They say that these types of sources comprise cultural information about the target language, they supply learners with an exposure to real language, thus learners are more closely to cover their needs. Examples of these materials are newspapers, signs, magazines, advertisements, maps, pictures, symbols, graphs and different visual aids around which communicative activities may emerge. (Richards and Rogers, 1986, p. 80)

### **Misconceptions of Communicative Language Teaching**

As it was stated in the previous section, some principles, and important facts that included the application of practical activities and the use of materials in CLT were described. All of them can be considered as major sources that support the implementation of this approach in an EFL context. However, it is also relevant to name some of CLT misconceptions in order to avoid misunderstanding when implementing the communicative approach in classrooms. Wu (2008) describes four misconceptions commonly held by language teachers.

**CLT means an exclusive focus on meaning.** One of the most popular misconceptions sees CLT as an approach to foreign language education which just focuses on meaning and does not give any attention to language forms. However, most applied linguistics have recognized the

importance of a formal language component in CLT. For instance, Savignon (1972) carried out an experimental study to find the contributions of CLT to L2 learning by adding a structure-based teaching to communicative component. . After her research she found that learners performed better on the communicative test as well on the linguistic tasks. Norris and Ortega (2000) and Spada (1997) agree that the inclusion of form-focused instruction also leads learners to improve their knowledge and the ability to use it in different context where English is spoken. According to their understanding, CLT is an educational approach that focuses on communication, without excluding formal structures of the language.

**CLT means no explicit on learner errors.** A second misconception about CLT is that this communicative approach should not involve corrective feedback. Although some specialists like Truscott (1999), have accepted the total rejection of corrective feedback, some others like Lyster (1990) consider that this is an extreme position of how most CLT teachers and researchers perceive feedback on learners' errors. Instead, a type of feedback that does not interfere the process of communication is suggested. That is the case of "Recast", that has been observed to take place in CLT classrooms. This kind of feedback suggests a teacher's reformulation of a learner's incorrect utterance while keeping a focus on meaning. For instance, a student says "his foot are cold" and then the teacher responds "yes, his feet are cold". Therefore, the Recast serves as corrective feedback by giving the learners the correct way of saying things, while at the same time teachers can confirm the content of the learners' utterances and keeping on the conversation.

**CLT means listening and speaking practice.** It is true that CLT gives primacy to oral communication for this reason many teachers say that the emphasis of language teaching may be the development of speaking and listening skills. On the other hand, there are some



researchers such as Savignon (1997) who agrees that linguistics skills and communicative ones should not be treated in an isolated way. Similarly, Widdowson (1978) states that learners also need to know how to write and read to comprehend texts or read to write texts. As well as learning techniques of reading by writing and techniques of writing by reading. Regarding this part, it is important for learners to have in mind that contextual and social factors that contribute to their comprehension (i.e. listening and reading) and production (i.e. speaking and writing) has always been part of the principles and practices of the communicative approach, CLT.

**CLT means avoidance of the learners' L1.** Communicative Language Teaching insists that the less the L1 is used in the classroom, the better the teaching. However, some experts like Swain and Lapkin (2002) recognize that the use of the L1 does not interfere with the development of English communication. In addition, Turnbull (2001) reports several pedagogic benefits by the employment of L1 in the classroom. For instance, saving time, providing clearer and more concise explanation when it is needed. At this point, it is suggested that teachers must be careful about how much L1 use is productive and consequently find the right balance between the use of L1 and L2.

### **Possible challenges that must be faced when applying CLT in a Colombian context**

So far, this paper has dealt with a theoretical frame to support CLT as an alternative approach that can take place in an EFL setting like Colombia. However, it is also pertinent to go over some challenges that teachers might face when they attempt to bring Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) into English classes, especially when educators focus on oral skill practice. Therefore, special attention must be attributed to teachers training, overly large classes and time constraints, classes with disparate skill levels, lack of students' response, assesment and

syllabus design which are elements that may hinder the implementation of CLT in Colombian context.

### **Teachers' background**

Regarding this aspect, Barrera-Osorio, Maldonado, and Rodríguez (2012) agree that it is the quality of teachers that determines how much their learners learn. However, In the Colombian EFL context, it is likely to find teachers that conduct English classes in Spanish, which is something that may happen commonly in the public schools. This can be considered a great disadvantage when implementing the communicative language teaching approach due to it seeks that learners communicate meaningfully in the language they are learning instead of using the language they already know. Regarding this, Sanchez and Obando (2008, p. 187) state that teachers are required to have satisfactory English proficiency since they must conduct a class entirely in the FL. For these authors, it is not admissible for an English teacher to start a class and use Spanish to explain a certain topic or act as just simple-minded translators. This is because, CLT teachers are assumed to have a different role or participation in the class by being analysts and counselors.

Mejia (2001) also recognizes that English teachers are required to have an appropriate teacher training and development in this area. But, this does not mean that educators are autonomous to achieve their professional development objectives without taking into consideration their students and institutional needs. Similarly, Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) say that a balance must be sought between “collegiality and individuality” .

Another challenge for teachers who apply CLT has to deal with frequent updating. Nowadays, teachers and professionals that work with English have the opportunity to access to

different teachers training programs, online courses and even scholarship for novice teachers. For instance, English Language Fellow Program, Webinars, Fullbright scholarships, etc (Embassy of United States, Bogota-Colombia, nd.); online courses offered by Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA) addressed to teachers or professionals whose desire is improving their cognitive skills. In short, all of these courses point out to increase teachers' quality and their subsequent performance in classroom.

In this respect, Sanchez and Obando (2008) agree that teachers need constant updating aside from training in improving speaking to make the process of developing English communication worthy. That is to say, teachers need to reinvent themselves by changing the format of their classroom instructions, using new techniques for learners' work, defining student's skills to achieve language success, and maintaining high levels of learners self-esteem, too (Stryker and Leaver, 1993).

Finally, educators have to be aware that the main goal of applying CLT in the Colombian context points out to develop L2 communicative competence in order to succeed in different contexts. So then, teachers are in charge of conducting their CLT classes based on this objective.

### **Overly large classes and time constraints**

When addressing class size issues, Snow (2007) makes some comments regarding this aspect. He states that in many countries it is very common to find classes where the number exceeds thirty to fifty or more students. This is something perceived as a higher obstacle to the adoption of CLT or any student-centered teaching approaches. In most of Colombian public institutions, to carry out a class under these conditions becomes a real challenge for teachers because they cannot give much individual attention to their learners. At first thinking, the

solution to this shortcoming would be to reduce the number of students but this is impossible since large classes are a result of lack of resources rather than an education trend. Teachers can assume that it is not possible to apply a communicative approach such CLT with such overly large classes. However, instead of seeing class size as a critical situation, teachers should be open minded and try to find other ways to work with these classes.

In this respect, Fang-an Ju (2013) claims that one of the ways to overcome the issue previously mentioned could be a compromising way to cater for most students as a whole group or even organize the class in small groups or pair groups that allow learners to talk to their partners rather than to their teacher.

Another challenge when implementing CLT is the time scheduled for English classes. *Estándares Básicos en Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés* (MEN, 2006: 31) proves that in Colombia the only environments to be in contact with English are the classrooms and the schools where the time devoted to English practice is limited. That is the case of public schools whose exposure to English classes is confined to one or two hours per week and four hours in the case of high schools. Since the time conditions in class are not sufficient, teachers can stress activities such as projects or research out of class. For large classes where the lack of time is a disadvantage, Snow (2007) highly recommends teachers to make sure that students practice, prepare, edit and polish their works as much as they can before classes, then time class is devoted to present, share or discuss learners' findings with their partners while receiving teachers' feedback. Through this strategy, teachers stimulate autonomous learning

Additionally, they can take advantage of several resources that the world offers in light of technologies, new inventions and a variety of new instruments that give them the opportunities to practice, experience and improve their English communicative skills at different levels.

### **Classes With Disparate Skill Levels**

The diversity of learners' skill levels has been also considered a challenge when incorporating the Communicative Approach, CLT. About this fact, Snow (2007) thinks that in lessons in which some learners have better English skills than others is a situation that makes the process of lesson planning more difficult. This is because it is hard to fulfill the needs of every single learner especially if their skills vary significantly. What is more, motivation drawbacks can emerge in the class. For example, students with more English proficiency could be bored while their partners with less knowledge are feeling frustrated and confused towards teachers' instructions. For teachers who are facing this obstacle, it is necessary to be conscious that the activities and materials they plan for the class could be already known for some students while others are completely disoriented.

Apparently, the situations described above make the implementation of CLT something critical. However, Snow (2007) provides useful strategies to work with mixed classes where English skill levels vary. A useful strategy is to establish special public relations work between students at the high and lower levels. That is, giving students of strong English skills the opportunity to be challenged by developing activities or projects that require more responsibilities. That could be, assigning them as a discussion group leaders or monitors who encourage and help students with weaker English skills to speak. It is important, that the teacher motivates less advanced level learners to make an effort into catching up with the rest of the

class without making them feel overdue. This can be a productive task since all learners have a role to perform in the class therefore the class becomes student-centered instead of teacher-centered which is one of the principles of CLT.

### **Lack of response and reluctance to Speak English**

These are two common drawbacks whose similarity lies on the fact that learners are not willing to talk in English at least at first. This is something that often happens with beginner learners as they are not confident or have little experience speaking in the FL. For them, it may be very difficult to respond to teachers by using English. About this, Snow (2007) claims that the fear of speaking in public is a usual case of many cultures because students do not want to sound incompetent or even doltish as a result of their mistakes made in public. To get over this trouble it is advisable to reduce the level of difficulty when asking questions. For example, avoid students feeling forced to answer questions by giving reasons or arguments in its place it should be an alternative to formulate questions that require a yes/no, true/false responses or questions that can be solved with a body gesture like moving heads or raising hands.

Another way to motivate students to communicate in English could be giving them extra time to prepare their answers by first discussing in pairs or groups about their questions thinking. A last strategy to decrease students' reluctance to use English has to deal with teachers' roles. Since CLT teachers' are required to offer their students enough resources to develop English communication they are also in charge of offering them a warm positive class environment by smiling, giving constant praise and encouragement, and why not, bringing some humor into the classroom consequently students will feel safer and start to use the language whenever possible.

To conclude this part, it is possible to say all the last aspects showed possible limitations and consequently some recommendations and solutions properly oriented to accomplish an effective developing of learner's English communicative competence. However, it has been found that facts related to syllabus design and students' assessment when incorporating CLT can turn into a challenge too.

### **Syllabus design**

The implementation of CLT approach demands teachers to pay attention to the syllabus used for programming and conducting their English classes. Concerning syllabus design it has been observed that there is no particular type that has been globally accepted to be applied in all settings. Yalden (1993) states that there are at present many proposals for what a syllabus may look like in Communicative Language Teaching. However, it is asserted that a language syllabus may include systematic coverage of the different components of communicative competence, incorporating language skills, content, grammar, vocabulary, and functions. Equally important, Rhalmi (2009) underlines that CLT syllabus organizes the teaching depending on the notional and functional categories of language instead of depending on its structures. Although there are at present many proposals and formats for what a syllabus might look like in Communicative Language Teaching, it has been found that the most appropriate syllabus type for CLT should be functional-notional.

A functional-notional syllabus demonstrates a wide view of language. It puts the learners' communicative goals at the core of the curriculum. This syllabus focuses on realistic learning tasks, everyday real-world language, as well as receptive activities. Through this syllabus learners have the possibility to recognize and express the communicative function of

language. In other words, learners learn how to use language to express authentic communication while they are being motivated by the opportunity to use language to express their own ideas and emotions from the very beginning without losing sight of grammatical and situational factors.

Considering the case of the Colombian context, it is convenient to comment that when teaching English, teachers are not aware of what to teach. In this regards, Sanchez and Obando (2006) argue that “no assumptions must be made when it comes to teaching and learning. Clarity is key for designing a curriculum, a course, a syllabus, a lesson plan” (p. 184). In the same way, Klapper (2006, p. 109) believes that the creation of syllabus ought to be a consideration of learners’ needs in addition to what learners are likely to do with the language in terms of function.

To conclude this part, it is important to say that a syllabus is not the result of improvisation, neither the act of including topics to be taught in the class randomly. By contrast, a syllabus is the result of organization and planning out activities in advance, based on considering the principles of the methodology and approach to be applied. All of this addresses to meet students’ needs. In this regard, Rhalmi (2009) establishes that since CLT syllabuses are designed according to the notional and functional categories, it must be mandatory for teachers to know what to do and why by concentrating on three elements: first, interactions (using language to communicate), second, tasks (using language to perform in meaningful assignments), finally, learners’ needs (placing learner’s interests in the forefront).

### **Learners’ assessment**

Lastly, it is wise to go over the challenges that teachers of CLT must face with respect to assessment. Communicative approaches also make use of different types of assessment that



move beyond the traditional paper-and-pencil tests which commonly feature multiple-choice items, to a focus on receptive skills and questions with only one right answer (Brown 2004). Foreign language programs that intend to develop communicative competence or bilingualism tend to focus more on alternative assessment and/or performance-based assessment.

Sanchez and Obando (2008) consider that this step related to assessment can be something difficult to take in the Colombian context where directions are given in Spanish and the exercises focus on translations which is something that is not specified and required in CLT assessment. For this reason, the former authors agree that it is paramount that Colombian teachers will be trained in performance-based assessment since it goes hand-in-hand with communicative approaches. In the same direction, Tannenbaum (1996), cited by Sanchez and Obando (2008), explains a couple of activities that Colombian educators can use in their assessment as a way to foster the use of second language. This author suggests collections of students' essays, reports, journals, notes, observations, presentation, self-assessment and peer assessment. By means of these strategies students are supposed to do something with the language rather than manifesting their knowledge about the formal aspects of language.

### **The adoption of CLT in other EFL contexts (case studies)**

Li (1984), Liao (2004) and Maley (1984) agree that other contexts have taken a strong position for adopting CLT. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been incorporated in the English language syllabus in many countries. For instance, Akram and Mehmood (2011, p. 175) made a report of a case study conducted to know the importance of implementing the communicative approach in ELT in teacher training programs in Pakistan. They claim that CLT encourages learners' confidence and it also causes a sense of satisfaction for teachers in the sense

that they are successfully allowing their learners to use the foreign language in their conversations. These authors recognize CLT as the tool for the expression. In the same way, they think that the communicative approach is better than other methods of language teaching especially the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) that focuses on teaching formal facts about language rather than language itself whereas communicative approach establishes a direct bond between the experience and the expression.

In a study that investigated twenty-two Japanese students, Aubrey (2010) found that the CLT approach increased willingness to communicate when students had a positive attitude towards CLT. This shows that developing learners' attitudes towards CLT enhances their willingness to communicate in EFL classrooms. Parallel to this study, Matsuura, Chiba, and Hilderbrandt (2001) explored the performance of three hundred and one Japanese students and eighty-two Japanese college and university English teachers under CLT training. The findings demonstrated that Japanese students tended to consider functions, speaking, grammar, listening, cultural differences, reading, non-verbal cues, pronunciation, and writing as important facts for learning communicative English.

Another study carried out by Alkhayat (2009) found that Jordanian EFL teachers are conscious of some features of CLT and their implementation by using questionnaires demonstrated that the study participants “had good knowledge in different degrees” of the characteristics addressed (ibid, p. 399) despite the hindering obstacles EFL teachers had in CLT implementation. Considering Bangladeshi context, Karim (2004) analyzed thirty-six EFL teachers' attitudes, and perceptions of CLT. The results obtained through administering written surveys and questionnaires indicated that there exists a positive attitude towards the use of communicative activities as well as principles of CLT. Additionally, it has been found some

samples that reveal an interest to apply CLT in some institutions in Colombia as it is shown in the document provided by Cuesta (2013), the school of Education at Universidad del Atlántico has also concerned on the use of language in “real situations” through this communicative approach which centers its effort and resources in developing a communicative competence on learners. Parallel to this, it can be understood that the whole Colombian EFL setting is interested in applying a communicative approach through the implementation of bilingual programs that pursue the development of communicative competence in order to give their learners the opportunity to be competent citizens in a globalized society.

### **Recommendations for incorporating the CLT approach in the Colombian EFL setting**

Before moving on possible practical recommendations of this approach, it is relevant to mention that CLT brings learners of a foreign language some benefits as it follows: First, students learn how to communicate by using the language instead of memorizing the language, which is what they truly want. Second, learners make use of broad range of language functions. And third, students can experience with the language in real contexts which is something that enables them to develop their communicative competence.

Since CLT seeks effective communication by means of contextualization as its basic premise, it can result interesting for teachers to take advantage of the students’ local culture. That is to say, in the Colombian context there is a diversity of cultures with their own customs, tradition and celebration as well as the great touristic attractions. For instance, Carnivals of Barranquilla and Pasto, Flowers Festival of Medellin, etc. Regarding the touristic places it is possible to find The Catedral de Sal, The Castillo San Felipe and so on. So then, teachers can base their class discussions on these aspects or even assign their students certain projects in which they choose a culture of their interest and then share their findings with their classmates.

In terms of materials to be used in CLT there are no excuses. That is to say, if teachers have no text-based materials for all of their learners because of lack of resources, they can take advantages of the DIY materials (do it yourself) and create, design or even download from the internet materials like printable worksheets, pictures, wall charts, flashcards, images (Sanchez, 2014) and then make those materials adjustable to the learners' context. In this sense, it can be assumed that in terms of materials the lack of resources it is not an excuse for using any of those materials. Having this in mind, it is convenient to cite Widdowson (1987) who argues that "it is not important if classroom materials themselves are derived from authentic texts and other forms of input, as long as the learning processes they facilitate will be authentic" (p. 21). In this respect, it can be said that teachers should be able to consider some other possibilities to address the adequate material in CLT settings.

Another practical recommendation when applying CLT has to deal with Psychological factors. In this regard, it should be helpful for learners if teachers create a learning environment which gives them a sense of safety and value as individuals. In words of So'n (n.d.), it is a well known fact that this atmosphere depends on the existence of interaction among the class participants to evade self-restraint. The emphasis on this kind of interaction is an essential fact of the communicative approach. This is because communicative interaction offers learners several opportunities for cooperative relationship among learners and between the teacher and learners.

By means of communicative interaction learners can express their own individuality and personality by using the foreign language. Consequently, they feel more emotionally secure with it. These points can be reinforced through the practice of activities where students are divided into groups or pairs, which interact independently from the teacher. This is a way to break down

tension and barriers between them. Furthermore, errors are assumed with great tolerance as a complete normal phenomenon in the development of communicative skills.

Additionally, it can be recommended for CLT teachers to include language games as part of their classes. According to Larsen-Freeman (2000) games are commonly used in CLT. This is because learners can find them something enjoyable. Most of all, games motivate students to become effective communicators and encourage them to use the language in a more spontaneous and natural way. Here, two types of games are discussed. For example, guessing games whose role is very simple. One person knows something that another one wants to find out. The thing to be guessed can be a word, an object, an activity or a different thing. By this game learners can practice logical thinking and asking questions. Another game can be picture games. They involve comparing and contrasting pictures, finding differences or similarities, or creating a story according to the given picture. Then, learners are expected to use the language in a free way, and at the same they have the opportunity to practice their speaking and listening, as well as making improvisation (Zhu, 2012, p. 803).

Lucky numbers, picture strip story, scrambled sentences, role-plays, etc, are more examples of games whose purpose points out at learners' exchange of information by using the language. An extra recommendation for teacher who want to apply CLT has to deal with the application of techniques to exchange information. For example, information gap, discussions and interviews. As long as the game has a learning purpose any activity will be beneficial to engage learners in the process of communication.

A final comment resides on the fact of class organization in CLT. Since this approach highly promotes group work it is necessary for teachers to find a way to maintain the control of

classes to avoid discipline-related issues. Regarding this, it is wise to cite Sanchez (2012) who proposes a list of tips to deal with classroom management. First, it is advisable to get learners quiet before the class starts. Second, to have control over students' behaviour it is a good alternative to use students' names. Third, to check student's performance in the classroom it is necessary that teachers just walk around to supervise students' activities. Fourth, it is required for teachers to have an acceptable tone of voice, use comprehension questions to make sure that students understand teachers' explanations or directions. Finally, treat learners with respect and establish a good interaction with them by being friendly. These suggestions can help teachers to have an effective environment for teaching and learning.

To conclude this section, it is possible to say that all the recommendations suggested above will be suitable for Colombian English teachers since they are not difficult to follow. In addition, they suggest that teachers reinvent and design their own materials and activities by considering their learners' needs. As a result, the Communicative approach can be applied in a proper way by considering all these practical recommendations.

### **Conclusions**

The main purpose of this document was to describe relevant aspects concerning communicative language teaching (CLT) in order to support its suitability as an alternative approach to develop learners' English communicative competence in the Colombian EFL context.

As it was shown within this work, CLT is an effective approach to teach EFL in Colombian schools due to it meets the goal suggested by the National Ministry of Education that is to have citizens who are able to communicate and be competent in the use of English language in order to have social interaction and perform successfully in any given social context.

Therefore, bearing this in mind, it was found that CLT is an approach that also focuses on learners' linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences and gives attention to the improvement of four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) as the governments requires. In this part, it is convenient to highlight the importance that the grammatical component could have when implementing the CLT, this is because in the Colombian contexts the government demands learners' to present standardized test like "Pruebas Saber" and ICFES, that test students' knowledge in different subject matters including a section for English, where both the grammatical component and the formal structure of language are the basis.

Regarding the principles of CLT, it was possible to see that they provide students different opportunities to learn the language. For instance, through CLT students have the possibility to increase their fluency since they are involved in real communication activities where they have to deal with unrehearsed situation under teacher's guide. CLT brings learners the opportunity to regulate their own learning process out of the classroom due to it suggests an autonomous learning from students as well as the use of their four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). It allows learners to figure out meanings and explore the language. This is a great advantage considering that in Colombian the time devoted to English lessons is limited. That is why it is necessary that learners prepared themselves and correct their works outside the classroom. Another benefit of CLT is that it promotes cooperative and collaborative learning among students. Moreover, students are allowed to act as active participants of the class. Therefore, considering that in EFL classrooms in Colombia, especially in public institutions, the number of students exceeds thirty or even more, this work strategies settle down by CLT can be highly considered for teachers who work with large classes.

In this paper it was also possible to explain that some issues encountered by teachers when trying to develop communicative competence are usually related to learners' lack of response and reluctance to speak English. This is a common situation that happens in Colombian classrooms due to learners have been exposed to traditional approaches or methods that promotes accuracy and mastery of language forms. At first, it is difficult for students to use the language for communicative purposes. Besides, learners become accustomed to receive teacher-centered instructions. However, CLT in addition to offer learners the chance of using the language, it also enhances the learners' confidence since in CLT errors are tolerated and seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills. At this point, it is important to mention that in CLT teachers are in charge of providing feedback due to they act as facilitators in setting up communicative activities and as advisors during the activities.

In addition, it is advisable for teachers who want to apply CLT in the Colombian contexts to considered activities proposed in this work because they can provide them with several ideas that can be adapted to any teaching situation and used with all kind of learners. For instance, for large classes, jigsaw, information gap and communication practice activities that require group work and information exchange among students can be implemented. And for lessons that seek individual work and focusing on grammatical aspects, accuracy activities can be employed. This is because their emphasis has to deal with language forms.

CLT also proposes some strategies to avoid boredom in the classroom. In this sense, games that motives learners' use of English, can be a good alternative to be included for lessons.

By the same token, materials and resources are relevant aspects to take into account when applying the CLT. Since most learners of public institutions in Colombia do not have enough



resources to buy a textbook or get expensive materials to be used in classes. CLT also name different material that can be created for teachers. For instance, the use of realia materials such as passages printed form internet, or copied from magazines or newspapers, about current events or regarding students´ interests, even pictures that can be described by learners can be a useful source to develop communication in English lessons.

Within this work it was also possible to see that CLT also offers an alternative for syllabus design. Since the they way to teach English is changing due to the requirements of the social context, it has seen the need of organizing the syllabus based on the principles of the communicative approach, in addition to knowing students needs and expectations for the class. Accordingly, the National Ministry of Education of Colombia is making an effort to improve foreign language teaching and learning focus on the development of communicative competence, the “functional-notional” syllabus type proposed in this paper can be applied in the Colombia context due to it puts the learner´s communicative goals at the core of the curriculum. Furthermore, it promotes the application of real tasks.

In respect to assessment, CLT can be an advantage due to it suggests different ways of evaluating students´ knowledge. Since CLT teachers evaluate not only their learners´ accuracy, but also their fluency. Two types of assessment can be accepted. For instance, informally a teacher can evaluate his/her student´s performance by observing learners´ role in class. And for more formal evaluation teachers are likely to include an integrative test which contains a real communicative function. For instance, asking them to write a letter for a friend.

To conclude, it is wise to say after revising all the available literature related to CLT, it can be considered that this approach is indeed an alternative vehicle of instruction regarding the

Colombian EFL situation. Then, the experiences proposed in this document may be suitable for teachers who tend to distance from the traditional way of teaching English that aims the mastery of structures and start to focus on language teaching communicative proficiency. In other words, CLT aids learners in creating meaning rather than developing grammatical structures or acquiring native –like pronunciation. Regarding this, Littlewood (1981) agrees by saying that in the use of everyday language, people normally focus their attention on the meaning of what we say or hear rather than on its formal structure. This means that the mastery of a foreign language may be the result of how well learners have developed their communicative competence and how competent they are at putting them into practice in a real EFL context. Although, its application does not constitute a simple task considering the implications and challenges that this approach may reveal, CLT clearly brings learners the opportunity to work on activities and materials that allow them to put in practice the main components of communicative competence in an integrated way.

In brief, this approach is indeed an effective tool for developing communicative competence due to it pays more attention to what learners are expected to do with the new language instead of what learners know about it. Additionally, it emphasizes on the output of learning in the development of language rather than the input of language learning as most of the methods do.

### References

- Altablero, (October-December 2005). El Periodico De Un Pais Que Educa Y Se Educa: *Bases para una nación bilingüe y competitiva*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1621/article-97498.html>.
- Ansarey, D. (2011). Communicative Language Teaching in EFL Contexts: *Teachers Attitude and Perception in Bangladesh*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.asaub.edu.bd/data/asaubreview/v6n1sl6.pdf>
- Bagarić, V., Mihaljević Djigunović J. (2007). Defining Communicative competence. Volume. 8  
Retrieved from:  
[file:///C:/Users/MiPc/Downloads/Bagaric i Mihaljevic Djigunovic ENG.pdf](file:///C:/Users/MiPc/Downloads/Bagaric%20i%20Mihaljevic%20Djigunovic%20ENG.pdf)
- Boghani, S. (December 2012) English: *The Need Of Today's World*. The dawn journal.  
Volume 1. Retrieved from: <http://thedawnjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/15-Samina.pdf>
- Brown, (2000). Teaching by principles: *an interactive approach to language pedagogy*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).  
Retrieved from: <https://pedufopenglish.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/teaching-by-principles-douglas-brown.pdf>
- Clarke, M., & Silberstein, S. (1977). Toward a realization of psycholinguistic principles in the ESL reading class. *University of Michigan*. Retrieved from:  
<http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/98335/j.1467-1770.1977.tb00297.x.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, CEF. (2001). Learning, teaching, assessment. Retrieved from:

[http://www.coe.int/t/DG4/Portfolio/documents/Framework\\_EN.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/DG4/Portfolio/documents/Framework_EN.pdf)

De Mejia, A., (2006) Bilingual Education in Colombia: Towards a Recognition of Languages, Cultures and Identities. Journal. Retrieved from:

<http://revistas.udistrital.edu.co/ojs/index.php/calj/article/view/176>.

De Mejía, A. (2011). The National Bilingual Programme in Colombia: *Imposition or opportunity*. Journal of Applied Language Studies. Volume. 5. Retrieved from:

[https://jyx.jyu.fi/dspace/bitstream/handle/123456789/37104/v5-3\\_p7-17\\_deMejia.pdf?sequence=1](https://jyx.jyu.fi/dspace/bitstream/handle/123456789/37104/v5-3_p7-17_deMejia.pdf?sequence=1)

De Mejía, A., López, A., & Peña, B. (2011). Bilingüismo en el contexto colombiano. *Iniciativas y perspectivas en el siglo XXI*. (1<sup>ST</sup> ed.) Universidad de los Andes, Colombia.

Harmer, J. (2007). The Practice of English Language Teaching. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) Lognman. Retrieved from:

[http://www.lenguasvivas.com.ar/upload/Didactica\\_1/The-Practice-of-English-Language-Teaching-Jeremy-Harmer.pdf](http://www.lenguasvivas.com.ar/upload/Didactica_1/The-Practice-of-English-Language-Teaching-Jeremy-Harmer.pdf)

Jiménez, I. (2013-2014). La competencia comunicativa: *Habilidades y destrezas comunicativas*.

Retrieved from:

[http://1314-procesos-infantil.weebly.com/uploads/9/6/4/6/9646574/tema\\_3\\_la\\_competencia\\_comunicativa\\_habilidades\\_y\\_destrezas\\_comunicativas.pdf](http://1314-procesos-infantil.weebly.com/uploads/9/6/4/6/9646574/tema_3_la_competencia_comunicativa_habilidades_y_destrezas_comunicativas.pdf)

Larsen-Freeman Techniques and Principles and in Language Teaching. Retrieved from:

<https://let590.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/larsen-freeman-techniques-and-principles-in-language-teaching.pdf>

Macías D. F. (2011). Towards the Use of Focus on Form Instruction in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching in Colombia. Retrieved from

<https://aprendeenlinea.udea.edu.co/revistas/index.php/ikala/article/download/9644/10151>

Mahdi, F. (n.d). The Notion of Communicative Competence and Some Basic Criteria for the Development of Learners' Communicative Competence. Retrieved from:

<http://www.iasj.net/iasj?func=fulltext&aId=30301>

Ministerio de Educación Nacional. (2006). Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: *Inglés. Colombia: Ministerio de Educación Nacional*. Retrieved from:

[http://www.mineduacion.gov.co/1621/articles-115174\\_archivo\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.mineduacion.gov.co/1621/articles-115174_archivo_pdf.pdf)

Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo Colombia. (2004 – 2019). *Inglés como lengua extranjera: Una estrategia para la competitividad*. Retrieved from

<http://www.colombiaaprende.edu.co/html/productos/1685/w3-article-312132.html>

Richards, Jack C., Rodgers Theodore S., (1986) Approaches and Methods In Language Teaching: *A description and Analysis*. Cambridge University Press

Richards, J. C. (2006). Communicative Language Teaching Today. New York: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from:

[file:///C:/Users/MiPc/Downloads/Richards-Communicative-Language%20\(3\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/MiPc/Downloads/Richards-Communicative-Language%20(3).pdf)

Salama, E. (2013). Understanding Communicative Competence. *Zawia University University Bulletin*: volume 3.

Sanchez, A. C., Obando, G., (2008). Is Colombia ready for bilingualism? Retrieved from: <http://www.revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/profile/article/view/10715>.

Sanchez, A. C. (2012) Classroom management in the postmethod era (PowerPoint-slides). Retrieve from: <https://languageandpedagogy.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/classroom-management-in-the-postmethod-era.pdf>

Schmitz, A. (2012). A primer on Communication Studies. Retrieved from: <http://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/a-primer-on-communication-studies/>

Snow, D. (2007). From Language Learner to Language Teacher: *An Introduction to Teaching English as a Second Language*. Alexandria, Virginia: TESOL, 2007. Retrieved from: [http://www.tesol.org/docs/books/bk\\_FromLangLearnToTeacher\\_387](http://www.tesol.org/docs/books/bk_FromLangLearnToTeacher_387)

Vélez, W. (2006). Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras- Inglés. Ministerio de Educacion (1st ed.) Retrieved from: [http://www.colombiaaprende.edu.co/html/mediateca/1607/articles-115375\\_archivo.pdf](http://www.colombiaaprende.edu.co/html/mediateca/1607/articles-115375_archivo.pdf)

Wilches, U. (2009). Education and Language Policy in Colombia: *Exploring Processes of Inclusion, Exclusion, and Stratification in Times of Global Reform*.

Wong, Y. W. (2007). Competency-based English Teaching and Learning: *Investigating Pre-service teachers of Chinese's Learning Experience*, 181

Wu, W. (2008). Misunderstandings of Communicative Language Teaching. *Journal*. Volume 1. Retrieved from: <http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/elt/article/download/509/491>.