

You may have noticed that the goal of most of the methods we have looked at so far is for students to learn to communicate in the target language. Applying the theoretical perspective of the Communicative Approach, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) aims broadly to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching. Indeed, Klapper (2003) makes the point that because CLT lacks closely prescribed classroom techniques, as compared with some of the other methods we have just looked at, CLT is 'fuzzy' in teachers' understanding. Some observed that students could produce sentences accurately in a lesson, but could not use them appropriately when genuinely communicating outside of the classroom. Within a social context, language users needed to perform certain functions, such as promising, inviting, and declining invitations (Wilkins 1976). Such observations contributed to a shift in the field in the late 1970s and early 1980s from a linguistic structure-centered approach to a Communicative Approach (Widdowson 1990; Savignon 1997). However, its flexibility also means that classroom practices differ widely even when teachers report that they are practicing CLT. Others noted that being able to communicate required more than mastering linguistic structure, due to the fact that language was fundamentally social (Halliday 1973). In short, being able to communicate required more than linguistic competence; it required communicative competence (Hymes 1971)—knowing when and how to say what to whom. Nevertheless, we will follow our usual way of understanding the theory and associated practices by visiting a class in which a form of Communicative Language Teaching is being practiced. All the paraphrases the students suggest are evaluated by the teacher and the other students to make sure they convey the same degree of certainty as the reporter's original prediction. Students may know the rules of linguistic usage, but be unable to use the language (Widdowson 1978). What this looks like in the classroom may depend on how the principles are interpreted and applied. This fuzziness has given CLT a flexibility which has allowed it to endure for thirty years. Experience The teacher greets the class and distributes a handout. For example, the first two sentences on this side of the handout are: Argentina may have an outside chance. Germany probably won't be a contender next time.