

Nayak Niranjana (2026). *Skill Enhancement in Clt Classrooms in the Indian Perspective: Problems and Prospects*. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, 5(1), 21-33.



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH & REVIEWS

journal homepage: www.ijmrr.online/index.php/home

SKILL ENHANCEMENT IN CLT CLASSROOMS IN THE INDIAN PERSPECTIVE: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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How to Cite the Article: Nayak Niranjana (2026). *Skill Enhancement in Clt Classrooms in the Indian Perspective: Problems and Prospects*. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, 5(1), 21-33.



<https://doi.org/10.56815/ijmrr.v5i1.2026.21-33>

Keywords

Communicative
Language Teaching,
English Language
Teaching, Skill
Enhancement, LSRW,
Odisha, Pedagogy,
Classroom Practices,
Language Learning,
Challenges.

Abstract

This study looks at how students' skills improve in Communicative Language Teaching classrooms in India, with a focus on Odisha. It looks at how listening, speaking, reading, and writing develop in CLT classrooms. It also considers the challenges learners and teachers face. There are different types of secondary sources of data, including policy documents, ELT studies, classroom reports, and curriculum guides that have been used to gather insights for the study. All of these sources have largely helped in the matter of explaining the local conditions and the specific teaching practices. It has been found that the skill of speaking and listening enhances much faster than writing and reading. Though the positivity and the effectiveness of the outcomes may differ in response to the level of confidence among different students, readiness among the teachers, and mostly the differences in support from schools. The study suggests practical strategies like task-based learning, peer support, and using digital tools. These findings guide better CLT practice and future research in similar regions.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

English Language Teaching (ELT) has changed rapidly in recent years with the emergence and increasing popularity of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as an effective method of developing learners' skills to communicate effectively [1]. With CLT, the emphasis is placed on



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teaching learners how to use language in real-life situations rather than simply focusing on teaching grammar rules as well as other structural elements of the English language. CLT is seen as a response to the limitations of traditional Grammar-Translation Methods (GTMs) [2]. However, this does not necessarily mean being able to communicate meaningfully. As a language that is widely used as a second language in India and for its association with academic and professional opportunities, CLT methods for enhancing learners' listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities are highly desirable in India. Despite this, CLT is still unevenly implemented throughout India's various regions, linguistic communities, and socioeconomic classes [3].

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite Communicative Language Teaching benefits being championed through advocacy and recognition within education circles, different systemic and contextual conditions in the Indian educational system limit the actualisation of CLT's goals [4]. In addition to large classes and less-than-ideal teacher preparation, the exam-driven nature of most Indian classroom settings makes utilising communicative approaches consistently impossible. Learners also generally lack the necessary confidence to speak and listen well. Lastly, while examining regional contexts like Odisha gives information about additional complexities specific to that region, these obstacles are responsible for creating a gap between CLT theory and what is practised in classrooms [5]. Further, causing inconsistent results in the development of communicative skills.

1.3 Objectives and Research Questions

- To examine the current state of skill enhancement in CLT classrooms in India with a regional focus on Odisha.
- To identify key problems hindering CLT implementation and effective skill development.
- To explore prospects and contextual strategies for improving communicative competence among learners in Odisha.

Research Questions:

- What are the prevailing practices of CLT in Indian and Odishan English classrooms?
- What challenges affect skill enhancement through CLT in these contexts?
- What pedagogical and policy interventions could enhance communicative skill outcomes in Odisha's ELT settings?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical foundations of CLT

The theory behind Communicative Language Teaching is based on the idea of communicative competence. This was first introduced into applied linguistics as a response or alternative to traditionally grammatically oriented approaches. Those were presented in the earlier work of Hymes and in the now well-known model developed by Canale and Swain [6]. These early models of communicative competence indicate that all four of the different sub-competencies, like grammatical, along with the sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic. This must be included as part



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of good practice in the classroom. Not only that, but grammatical accuracy must be prioritised. Therefore, CLT highlights interactions that are focused on developing meaning, as well as tasks requiring students to negotiate with one another [7]. This is done to develop functional listening or speaking skills along with reading or writing. As such, these key foundations of CLT form the basis for the majority of current ELT policies. This prioritises students' skills and abilities over traditional rote learning methods.

2.2 CLT and language-skill development

Evidence indicates that CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) and variants utilising task-based activities can improve oral fluency as well as interactional strategies and pragmatic competencies [8]. This is done through adequate opportunities to practice and through appropriate authentic input. Listening and speaking typically exhibit the greatest relative improvement when audio resources, paired or group work, and continuing formative feedback are present. On the other hand, reading and writing types of improvements are more predictable when CLT-related tasks are connected to explicit instruction in strategy use, like skimming as well as summarising, and audience awareness [9]. However, results vary a great deal depending upon a teacher's abilities, classroom management, and the number of instructional materials made available. CLT leads to significant LSRW improvements in any environment.

2.3 CLT in the Indian context

The National Policy for Education 2020 (NPE) and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) documents emphasise the importance of using a learner-centred and competencies-based pedagogy [10]. This language must therefore be viewed as a life skill and lead educational systems away from traditional frameworks towards a more communicative model. While there is clear support for this in policy, research indicates there is a large gap between policy and practice in Indian classrooms. Class sizes are generally very large, there is an examination-based culture for assessing students, and teachers generally lack the necessary training [11]. This allows for the effective use of communicative tasks in the classroom on a regular basis. Additionally, the systematic literature reviews of CLT conducted in India identify many of the same structural limitations as well as socio-cultural influences.

2.4 Regional and vernacular contexts: multilingual classrooms & Odia–English interface

Regional multilingual contexts shape the nature of CLT practices [12]. The vast majority of classrooms in eastern India. This includes Odisha, which operates in a trilingual (Odia, Hindi, and English) code-switching environment to realise meaning through different communicative channels like verbal, visual, tone, and body language. Research carried out in Odisha has shown a deep reliance on physical textbooks coupled with widespread instances of code-mixing of languages in classroom discussions [13]. On the other hand, on the other side of the spectrum, there has been minimal use of audio-visual or laboratory materials. Further, transforming the CLT implementation from a traditional "immersive" to a hybrid of scaffolding and bilingual mediation alongside targeted communicative challenges. Intervention pilots like the British Council-Odisha



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Spoken English Programme further show that with the proper resources and continued sustained support.

2.5 Research gap

Although literature at both levels shows the potential theoretical benefit of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), as well as its typical implementation barriers, the overall number of regionally focused empirical skill-based studies conducted in Odisha is conspicuously low compared to other parts of India and around the world. Most skill-based studies conducted in Odisha have involved small samples and have identified similar obstacles. However, it failed to give widespread or generalised information regarding how these obstacles affect the development of Language Skills-by-Skills Basis in an Odisha context or across types of educational institutions.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The current research utilises a qualitative-descriptive and comparative framework to investigate the application of CLT as a means of improving skills within Indian Classrooms, particularly in Odisha [14]. Unlike traditional quantitative studies that assess learning outcomes, this research seeks to understand how teachers practise CLT, the pedagogical orientations of teachers, and how contextual factors affect their ability to implement CLT in the classroom. This approach is appropriate for exploring the ways in which communicative principles are understood and implemented in practice by educators in real-life contexts. The effects of these practices on listening as well as speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW) development.

3.2 Data Sources

This study has utilised secondary data obtained from reputable and established academic sources [15]. This included ELT journals which follow the peer-review process, scholarly books written in CLT, national and state-level policy documents, curriculum frameworks such as syllabi from universities and course outlines, as well as contextual observations made in the classroom from English Departments in Odisha. Those are backed by the written reports or examples of documented best teaching practices, teachers' written reports on the students' progress, and written reflections found in institutional publications.

3.3 Sample Context

The context chosen for this study consists of government and private colleges in Odisha. Those who are giving undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The focus is specifically on college institutions located in rural and semi-urban areas where English is used mostly as a second language, with limited access to infrastructure and few resources for learning, and where the effects of students' backgrounds are particularly evident [16]. A field-based approach will give a regionally specific understanding of how CLT is implemented.

3.4 Data Analysis Method

Through thematic analysis, the study was able to analyse the data to find patterns related to CLT implementation, CLT-related challenges, and the CLT skill outcomes of the four language skills



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[17]. The results of the data analysis give a comparative framework between the CLT and the traditional form-based approach to language instruction. The findings were assessed based on the CLT skills as referenced above.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Because no primary data was collected for this study using human subjects, it has very few ethical risks associated with its findings [18]. All information sources utilised in this study were sourced from publicly available datasets. Therefore, the analysis contained within this report has been performed objectively and without bias or criticism, in accordance with academic integrity standards and responsible scholarship practices.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Overview of Thematic Findings

Thematic analysis revealed recurring themes in the secondary literature and classroom documentation in Odisha. Coding has focused on references to skill enhancement (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing), teaching methodologies, institutional barriers, and potential future developments. The themes were inductively derived and refined through the use of constant comparison with and triangulation of the study's data with other sources. This includes policy documentation related to English Language Teaching (ELT), ELT research studies on Odisha's educational institutions and other ELT studies, and report submissions from Odisha's educational institutions [19]. The approach of this analysis was to derive evidence-based results while remaining sensitive to the specific context (based on regional validation) of both Odisha and other Indian States.

4.2 Theme 1: Skill-wise Impact of CLT on Language Learning

According to the analysis of CLT's different impacts on all four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening), it was noted that CLT provides opportunities for students to interact in an English-speaking environment through cooperative pairs, group discussions and role-playing [20]. Students from Odisha have limited opportunities to practise English in an informal manner due to fears of being judged by their peers when they attempt to speak English [21]. In terms of reading skills, students using CLT have shown marked improvement in their reading ability based upon being exposed to various types of written material such as letters, as well as emails, media articles and other functional texts. Despite this, the use of a defined syllabus and reading tasks influenced by exams limits the ability to fully implement Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in classrooms in Odisha [22]. The use of CLT-based tasks has had a positive impact on the fluency and generation of ideas. The reason for this may be due to the practice of students learning by heart and being dependent on memorised formats. As a result, productive skills are behind receptive skills and reflect the national research findings on English Language Teaching.

Table 4.1: Skill-wise Impact of CLT in Odisha Classrooms



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Skill	CLT Outcome	Odisha-specific Observation
Listening	Increased exposure	Limited authentic input
Speaking	More interaction	High hesitation, low confidence
Reading	Functional literacy improved	Exam-driven reading
Writing	Better fluency	Dependence on memorised formats

4.3 Theme 2: Classroom Practices and Teacher Mediation

Teachers support Communicative Language Teaching and also use many traditional lecture-style techniques in their classrooms [23]. There are other techniques too, but instead of using purely Communicative Language Teaching methods, they adopt a mixed style of teaching. This includes both Communicative Language Teaching practices as well as traditional lecture teaching. A common pattern of teaching is through pre-scripted lessons from textbooks rather than having more time for sustained task-based interactions. In the state of Odisha, there is not an adequate amount of Structured or Systematic Teacher Training in Communicative Language Teaching [24]. Teachers have high workloads, and the class size for teachers is large. In examination-driven contexts, many teachers prefer to use the practice of using grammar-focused methods. As a result, many teachers apply elements of the CLT-based pedagogical approach [25]. Therefore, the role of teacher mediation in how a teacher uses their own belief system, as well as training, and school environment to determine how communicative practices become a reality in their classroom, plays a key role.

Table 4.2: Classroom Practices under CLT in Odisha

Aspect	Observed Practice
Teaching style	Hybrid
Task-based learning	Limited
Teacher training	Inadequate
Class size	Large

4.4 Theme 3: Learner-related Challenges in CLT Classrooms



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The learner-related factors that are important to the successful implementation of CLT are clearly identified in this research [26]. Many learners often experience ongoing fear of making mistakes and anxiety based on the judgment of their peers. Both of which hinder their ability to participate actively in communicative tasks. The socio-cultural attitudes prevalent in many classrooms discourage learners from taking risks with spoken English, perpetuating silence rather than language-taking [27]. The high percentage of first-generation English language learners in Odisha makes these issues even more pronounced. For many of them, English is largely restricted to an academic setting, and they utilise code-switching between their native language of Odia and English as a coping mechanism. This is limiting their use of English in the classroom. Furthermore, the focus on writing accuracy as well as memorisation for examinations creates a disparity between CLT's emphasis on communication and learners' expectations based on their coursework and exam experience.

4.5 Theme 4: Institutional and Infrastructural Constraints

Institutional and infrastructural limitations emerge as significant barriers to effective CLT implementation [28]. Most colleges do not have functional language laboratories, as well as multimedia classrooms or reliable digital tools. This helps to develop listening and speaking abilities. On the other hand, many colleges continue to use written assessments as the predominant means of measuring achievement. This reinforces the emphasis on memorisation and grammatical accuracy instead of assessed communicative competency. This subsequently results in minimal institutional support for teachers' innovative redesign of classroom practice. These constraints are exacerbated by a notable disparity in resources between urban and rural institutions within the Odisha Environment. Where basic digital facilities exist, but there is a lack of sufficient training and administrative support to utilise these facilities. Further, these limitations result in inhibiting sustainable communicative interaction as well as significantly limiting the practical impact of CLT on students' skill improvement.

Table 4.3: Institutional Constraints Affecting CLT Implementation

Constraint	Impact on CLT
Lack of labs	Weak listening & speaking
Written exams	Memorisation over communication
Digital gap	Unequal access
Training shortage	Limited innovation



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4.6 Integrative Discussion

These findings have strong ties to the literature discussed in the literature review and confirm previous researchers' assertion that the effectiveness of CLT is dependent on the context within which it operates. Although CLT gives a strong framework for the development of learners' literacy skills as well as promotes student-centred learning, many of the factors that influence the success of CLT are the extent to which teachers are prepared. The attitudes of students toward language learning, and the support systems available in the institution where they will use CLT. Teachers lack adequate training in CLT, many students are anxious about learning due to the focus on testing in their education, and the lack of resources has been acknowledged as barriers to the successful implementation of CLT in Indian ELT. Odisha exemplifies the national trends described above, as well as experiencing some regional factors related to limited exposure to English, unequal participation in class, and an overall lack of resources at all levels of education. There are also significant new possibilities, such as digital or blended learning methods available to students and teachers, the development of localised CLT methods, and increased use of students working together in pairs or groups to improve their skills. Therefore, for CLT to provide substantial skill improvements for students in Odisha, CLT must be developed through systematic as well as comprehensive support from the education system, a revised curriculum to support CLT practices, and ongoing teacher preparation.

5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Communicative Language Teaching can enhance language abilities when applied carefully. Interactive activities support listening and speaking the most. On the other hand, reading and writing improve moderately because of limitations in the syllabus and assessment. Learners' confidence, teacher readiness, and the support of institutions strongly influence learning outcomes. In Odisha, factors such as limited English exposure outside school, large classrooms, and unequal access to digital resources affect how CLT works and how much skills develop. These conditions show the need for teaching approaches that suit the local context.

From a teaching perspective, practical tasks and activities that involve real communication are essential. Formative assessment should guide learners and encourage them to take risks in using English. Teacher training must emphasise the ability to facilitate learning rather than only knowing grammar or literature. Schools should create environments and provide resources that allow interactive learning to grow.

In Odisha, teachers can support learning by using bilingual methods, creating peer-learning groups, and bringing in digital tools. Schools that adopt these strategies can help students overcome existing challenges. This is why it is expected that future research will explore the development of language skills over a specific period of time. They also need to make a clear comparison between the results gathered from different areas. The approach of studying the effects of blended learning may also be helpful. Factors like practical teaching, a good curriculum, supportive schools, and trained teachers are some of the most crucial elements for stronger English learning skills. A



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proper blend of these specific approaches largely helps the students in the matter of adopting confident and effective English learning.

6. AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

The writers affirm that they have no connections to, or engagement with, any group or body that provides financial or non-financial assistance for the topics or resources covered in this manuscript.

7. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

8. PLAGIARISM POLICY

All authors declare that any kind of violation of plagiarism, copyright and ethical matters will take care by all authors. Journal and editors are not liable for aforesaid matters.

9. SOURCES OF FUNDING

The authors received no financial aid to support for the research.

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