



RE-CONCEPTUALIZING COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR DEVELOPING INTERACTIONAL COMPETENCE AND AUTHENTIC LANGUAGE USE

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Abstract

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has shifted language education from an emphasis on grammatical knowledge toward meaningful communication. However, many classroom implementations continue to rely on controlled dialogues, rehearsed role-plays, and predictable communicative tasks that may not adequately prepare learners for the complexity and unpredictability of authentic interaction. This conceptual study re-conceptualizes CLT by placing interactional competence and authentic language use at the center of language pedagogy. Drawing on a critical synthesis of research on communicative competence, interactional competence, conversation analysis, pragmatic competence, authentic language, task-based language teaching, classroom interaction, and interaction-focused assessment, the study examines the limitations of conventional CLT and identifies key practices required for effective interaction. The analysis emphasizes turn-taking, responsiveness, negotiation of meaning, clarification, repair, disagreement, pragmatic appropriacy, and contextual adaptation as essential dimensions of communicative ability. The study proposes an integrated framework in which authentic language input is followed by interactional noticing, pragmatic awareness, guided practice, task-based interaction, reflection, and interaction-focused assessment. The framework positions interactional competence as a dynamic ability developed through collaborative and context-sensitive language use rather than through linguistic production alone. The study argues that contemporary CLT should move beyond teaching learners what to say toward developing their ability to understand **when, how, why, and in response to what they should communicate**. The proposed framework has implications for English language teaching, curriculum design, textbook development, teacher education, and language assessment.

Keywords: *Authentic Language Use, Classroom Interaction, Communicative Language Teaching, Interactional Competence, Language Assessment, Pragmatic Competence, Task-Based Language Teaching*

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1. Introduction

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) shifted focus from theoretical understanding of grammar to practical use of language. CLT growth is attributed to Hymes' (1972) thought process on communicative competence. It emphasized practical speech and understanding of what is adequate beyond knowing what is grammatically appropriate. Later, Canale and Swain (1980) described communicative competence as consisting of three dimensions: grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic. Canale's (1983) discourse competence was added as a dimension along with pragmatic and strategic elements of language ability in later models (Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996).

Although CLT has developed over the years, the materials used still rely on controlled dialogues and pre-determined speaking activities. These activities allow communication, but unpredictability of real-world communication requires speakers to manage and adjust many more aspects of communication. Speakers must manage their turns and adjust their communication to the needs of the context and audience by understanding when and how to clarify, negotiate, adjust, and repair, among other things.

These concerns led to the development of the conceptual framework of interactional competence (IC). IC has contrasting views to other theories as it is more concerned with social actions and meaning construction through collaboration of interactants, rather than individual language production. The building blocks of interactional competence include pragmatics, linguistics and non-linguistic means, context, and psychology (Supunya & Tangkiengsirisin, 2025).

Authentic language provides an understanding of the surprising elements of actual communication. In addition to flow, natural communication has pauses, repetition, overlaps, interruptions, clarifications, repairs, shifts, and other phenomena that are typically streamlined or absent in the textbook examples. Research has also found that authentic materials can help learners notice the use of interactional phenomena such as listener feedback and repair (Kunitz et al., 2024).

Exposure to authentic communication is critical, but not sufficient, to the development of interactional competence. Considering that interactional competence rests primarily on practices related to the management of turns, responsiveness, and negotiation, it also requires explicit attention to these phenomena (Balaman, 2025).

Pragmatic competence is equally important because communication must be appropriate in different contexts. Understanding how factors associated with social distance, power, and degree of familiarity as well as the purpose of communication, can impact the choice of language is also critically important. Recent research has shown that positive improvement in learners' communicative ability can also be attributed to

instruction in pragmatics (Yalew et al., 2024). Thus, authentic CLT must include both the interactional and pragmatic aspects of language use.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) can also provide an excellent way to incorporate interaction. Tasks as problem-solving and decision-making, conflicts and negotiated outcomes, can encourage spontaneous responses instead of pre-determined language. These tasks can foster the use of turn-taking and clarification, discussion and disagreement and negotiation, and repair as well as gauging the appropriateness of language (Róg, 2025).

In keeping with these objectives, assessment must also be adapted to the situations tasked. Speaking assessments usually focus on accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and speaking performance. Assessing interactive speaking performance receives less focus. Recent studies have shown that interaction-centered rating scales and rubrics can be used to assess interactive speaking performance (Kunitz et al., 2024; Syquia & Leeming, 2024). Interaction, therefore, needs to be considered as a separate assessment dimension from the evaluation of speaking performance.

1.1. Problem Statement

While CLT aims for meaningful communication, many classroom activities are designed to be controlled and predictable. Students memorize forms without developing an awareness for managing spontaneous, complex communication. They may lack pragmatic sensitivity for turn-taking, clarification, repair, and negotiation. They may also be unable to handle and express themselves through contextual language appropriately.

The main problem addressed in this study concerns the integration of interactional performance and authentic language use in standard CLT. Hence, a new viewpoint and a new approach to communication as collaborative, contextual, sequential, and pragmatic are needed.

1.1. Research Gap

1. Many studies have addressed the various components of CLT, communicative competence, pragmatics, and TBLT. These components are often studied individually. When it comes to integrating aspects of task-based language use, communicative interaction, and interaction-oriented assessment in combination with CLT, a conceptual and a pedagogical problem exists.
2. Some recent studies show how significant realia, interactional instruction, pragmatics, and interaction-centered assessment are (Kunitz et al., 2024; Yalew et al., 2024; Balaman, 2025). Although frameworks have addressed these features individually, a fully operationalized framework that systematically integrates them remains to be developed. The current study aims to contribute in that regard by presenting a reworked CLT framework that places interactional competence and natural language use at its core.

1.2. Research Objective

The study aims to:

1. Examine the limitations of conventional CLT in developing authentic interactional competence
2. Identify the key interactional practices required for effective communication;
3. Examine the role of authentic language input and pragmatic awareness in developing interactional competence
4. Explore how task-based interaction facilitates interactional competence
5. Examine approaches to interaction-focused language assessment; and
6. Propose an integrated CLT framework for developing interactional competence and authentic language use.

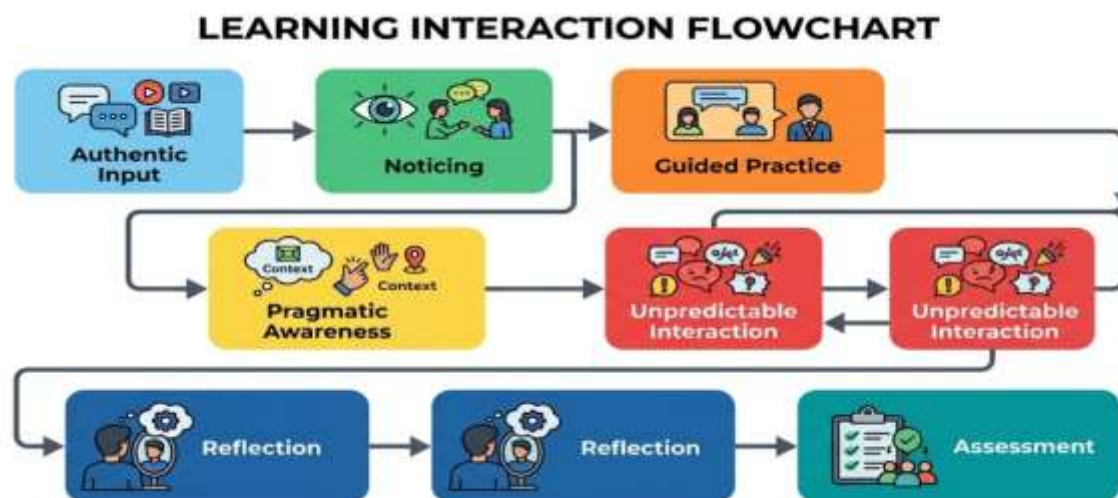
1.3. Research Questions

1. What are the major limitations of conventional CLT in developing authentic interactional competence?
2. What interactional practices are essential for effective language communication?
3. How do authentic language input and pragmatic awareness contribute to interactional competence?
4. How can task-based interaction facilitate the development of interactional competence?
5. How can interactional competence be incorporated into language assessment?
6. What CLT framework can integrate interactional competence and authentic language use?

1.4. Scope and Significance

The study focuses on CLT within second- and foreign-language education, particularly English language teaching. It examines communicative competence, interactional competence, authentic language use, pragmatics, task-based interaction, conversation management, negotiation, repair, and interaction-focused assessment.

The study is significant for teachers, curriculum designers, textbook writers, teacher educators, and assessment developers. It provides a basis for designing learning outcomes and classroom tasks that focus not only on what learners say but also on how they participate in interaction. For textbook development, the proposed approach encourages a progression from:



The study therefore extends CLT from a focus on communicative activities toward a stronger focus on interactional performance.



The central argument is that effective communicative language teaching should prepare learners not merely to produce correct sentences but to participate appropriately, responsively, strategically, and collaboratively in authentic interaction.

2. Literature Review

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) begins with a different view of how applied linguistics deals with social communication vs. a formal system of language. Hymes (1972) critiqued the narrow view of linguistic competence by maintaining that in addition to knowing the forms of language, speakers and hearers must discern the social contexts, purpose, etc. of the language and know the

appropriate way to utilize the language. This positioned communicative language teaching in a strong place because it altered the goal of language teaching to go beyond linguistic accuracy.

As a consequence of their work, Canale and Swain (1980) introduced the triad of communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. Some years later, Canale (1983) introduced discourse competence, or the ability to construct linguistically cohesive and coherent text. These models of communicative competence expected more of language teaching than just the knowledge of linguistic structures.

Bachman (1990) pointed out the importance of having the knowledge of language with an additional component of discourse, strategic competence along with organizational and pragmatic knowledge. Bachman and Palmer (1996) endorsed the view of using communicative knowledge in different contexts of real-life communication. The work outlined the principles of CLT and continues to influence contemporary construction of language teaching frames and assessments.

The competence frameworks of CLT, however, view language ability largely as an individual trait. More recent studies emerging from a focus on interaction have challenged this trait orientation. They maintain that communication is truly a joint, contextual, and interactive process. This influences the theoretical basis of CLT to be interactional competence.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was developed in opposition to teaching methods that promoted grammar-translation and drill and practice. It argues that learners have to have the opportunity to use language for meaningful communication-related practices. For Richards (2006), CLT is a teaching methodology that focuses on helping learners gain the framework to communicate adequately. Savignon (2002) suggests that learning occurs through the process of meaningful interaction.

CLT tends towards learner-centered instruction, authentic communication, and activities structured around problem solving and information exchange, all of which have made CLT one of the more powerful teaching methodologies around the world.

However, there have been problems in the implementation of CLT. In some situations, so-called “communicative” activities may mean that learners produce certain grammatical structures in pairs. In others, communicating may actually involve significant interaction and the mutual accomplishment of a goal. The difference is important because an activity can involve a considerable degree of learner talk, yet may not facilitate communication. CLT tends to confuse activity-based communication in the classroom and communication viewed as the ability to interact.

The concept of communicative competence continues to be a dominant focus in language education. The models that have adapted communicative competence have shown a successful approach in terms of language ability by the addition of dimensions, including grammar, sociolinguistics, discourse, pragmatics, and strategy (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; Bachman, 1990). These models have been used to critique traditional approaches to language teaching for their focus on the linear nature of interaction.

In authentic communication, participants do not merely use pre-existing knowledge separately. They change their contributions according to what other participants say and do. Unlike a speaker who passes on pre-existing meaning, participants negotiate meaning through their interaction.

This is particularly meaningful to language learners. While a learner may know how to make a request, a learner may not know how to respond to a request being declined. Similarly, a learner may know how to state an opinion, but a learner may not know how to interrupt politely, defend an opinion, respond to an opposed opinion, or address a misunderstanding. The management of communication as it occurs is what differentiates interactional competence from communicative competence.

In second language acquisition and applied linguistics especially, interactional competence has been a focus of recent research. Hall (1993) and other scholars who emphasized interaction positioned participatory social interaction as a crucial factor in language learning. Young (2011) argues that communicative competence is relative to the interactional contexts where language is employed, instead of it being a composite of separate skills.

In the broader context, interactional competence is the collaboration of participants in performing social action using linguistic and other semiotic means. This competence relates to the coordination of turn-taking, the sequencing of actions, the management of a topic, difficulties in communication, pragmatic issues, and the use of contextual clues.

The recent focus of research has extended this competence even further. Within this context, Supunya and Tangkiengsirisin (2025) view interactional competence as a combination of linguistic, interactional, sociopragmatic, psychological, substantive, and non-linguistic elements. This is an appropriate response to the intricacies of contemporary communication. Interactional competence involves more than having a skill for a language. It is a skill for a variety of flexible, and creative, skills and resources that can be used to manage an activity and an interaction at any given moment.

Conversation Analysis (CA) focuses on describing how participants in a conversation structure their turns and talk and how they construct, manage, and

organize their activities and tasks in a conversation. It describes how participants in a conversation organize the beginning and ending of a conversation, control the flow, and manage and organize the activities and tasks involved in a conversation.

Seedhouse (2004) outlined the role of CA in elucidating how the design of classroom activities and the goals and requirements of an institution define and shape teaching activities and classroom interactions. Walsh (2011) emphasized the importance of the interactional space and the activities conducted by the teacher in the classroom.

CA-based pedagogy focuses on analyzing and understanding everyday interaction, preferably in a video format, rather than the textbook dialogues. Here, learners are able to study how speakers initiate conversations, how they address questions, how they respond to disagreements, how they clarify and how they explain the meaning of messages.

Evidence provided in many recent studies shows that CA provides a platform for teaching. Balaman (2025) indicated that CA has the potential for analysis, video-recorded tasks, and learner reflection, towards the development of interaction awareness. Such studies provide considerable support for the integration of CA in a redefined CLT.

Authentic exposure to real-world language constitutes a vital element of obtaining communication competence. Traditional textbook publications of spoken language simplify spoken language by removing hesitation, repetitions, overlaps, false starts, and repair. Although simplification can help understanding, excessive simplification eliminates the ability to understand the complexities of real spoken language.

There are many advantages to incorporating real text examples into teaching materials. First, they present students with real-world examples of text complexity. Real examples help students practice identifying participation frameworks, which may be challenging to explain or identify with isolated sentences.

Kunitz et al. (2024) demonstrate an approach to using real materials to teach participation frameworks, which include listener responses and repairs. They suggest that a particular approach is needed to identify the interactive structures within the available materials in order to transform them into teaching materials.

When we speak of authenticity, we cannot restrict ourselves to materials that were not created for teaching. We also are trying to create a situation where the participants have communicative purposes and hence, genuine reasons to listen, respond, negotiate, clarify, and adjust to one another.

In the process of authentic communication, pragmatic competence plays a particularly important role. This is due to the fact that, in different contexts, social meaning attaches to linguistic forms to differing degrees. It is therefore important to teach the learners to express requests and directives with varying degrees of politeness.

Requests can be given in a variety of forms across a pragmalinguistic spectrum, ranging from an English imperative to a highly mitigated and indirect request.

“Open the window.”

“Could you open the window?”

“Would you mind opening the window?”

Education in pragmatics becomes necessary because second-language learners lack the pragmatic competence that is acquired through exposure to first-language speech. In their pragmatics instruction meta-analysis study, Yalaw et al. (2024) concluded that a variety of teaching methods support instructional interventions, and the most effective pragmatics instruction employs an explicit approach. CLT must include pragmatic competence.

Notice how participants of an interaction recognize the end of a speaker’s turn and what is expected to happen next to contribute to the interaction. Interactional competence is necessary for second language learners, as challenges may occur, due to a lack of awareness in interactional norms, even in the presence of sufficient linguistic knowledge.

Learners must develop resources for:

- initiating a turn;
- holding the floor;
- yielding the floor;
- interrupting appropriately;
- responding to another speaker;
- returning to a previous topic;
- closing an interaction.

Turn-taking and sequential organizations are related in that each contribution of the activity serves to respond to and set expectations for the next. Helping participants learn to recognize these patterns helps them to become more involved in the activity.

The recent focus of interactional research is on the pedagogy of turn-taking and the structure of interactive organization, highlighting the need to make these elements visible to learners (Balaman, 2025), as most researchers do not assume that these will be learned without intervention.

Meaning negotiation is another aspect of competence. When communication is not clear, participants must craft strategies to reach understanding. These include

Strategies to clarify such as confirmation checks, repetition, reformulation, and correction.

For example:

A: The meeting is in the main hall.

B: Sorry, the what?

A: The main hall, next to the library.

B: Oh, okay.

This short example illustrates participants working together to resolve a comprehension problem.

Repair can't just be a response to a learner's error. It is a normal component of interaction that allows communication to continue. Kunitz et al. (2024) also confirm that it has a role in pedagogy to help learners identify and use repair strategies. For this reason, a revised CLT would give learners the chance to practice communication breakdown instead of designing activities where comprehension is deliberately avoided.

Speakers employ language to perform many social actions beyond the exchange of information. These social actions may include agreeing and disagreeing, persuading, refusing, apologizing, requesting, complaining, and expressing hesitancy.

Among these, disagreeing is of particular interest to learners because they need to have the ability to express different views and opinions without negatively impacting interpersonal relationships. Compare: "You are wrong." "I understand your viewpoint and I can see your reasoning and logic, however, I believe there is another way of viewing this that may be applicable as well." Here, the second statement expresses disagreement; however, the interpersonal relationships are preserved.

Interactive discourse practices, pragmatics, and context come into play to teach such practices. In addition to knowing how to disagree in the language, learners also need to understand the levels of directness and how to manage interpersonal relationships. This further supports the claim that interacting with language cannot be made synonymous with accurate grammar.

There are many principles that CLT and TBLT share in common, the most notable of which is the principle of meaningful language use and communicative functions. However, of the two, TBLT has a distinct advantage in facilitating interaction, for tasks can result in information gaps, the need for problem-solving, the need to make deliberate choices, and the accomplishment of a joint goal.

Ellis (2003) and Long (2015) both note the role of meaningful tasks in second-language acquisition. The degree of interaction prompted by a task is task-specific.

Highly inhibited tasks may facilitate little interaction, whereas more open-ended tasks may stimulate a greater degree of interaction and a spontaneous response.

Consider, for example, the task where students are asked to identify the most deserving candidate for a university scholarship. In doing so, students may be asked to justify their answers, explain their reasoning, provide their rationale, as well as the opportunity to clarify and challenge others' assumptions in order to arrive at a consensus. Róg (2025) provides further support to Long's (2015) hypothesis. Task-based instruction is shown to be a valuable addition to CLT as it promotes interaction.

Classroom interaction plays a significant role in facilitating language learning. Learning opportunities can be enhanced when matrixes of classroom interaction and teaching frameworks are better aligned. In classrooms that primarily focus on the teacher, student interaction is limited to the teacher segmented question-response-evaluative feedback framework used to check for understanding. While these frameworks provide teaching opportunities, they limit the potential for interaction. Interaction-centered teaching strives to facilitate learner-centered interactions as opposed to teaching centered frameworks.

Interaction can be expressed through various expressions such as body language, images, Digital Mediated Communication symbols, casting, gestures, and writing. The field of interactional competence has started addressing these tools (Supunya & Tangkiengsirisin, 2025).

The digital world provides a broad variety of interactional contexts and resources that learners of foreign languages can access. Opportunities for foreign language communication can extend beyond the classroom through online discussion forums, video calls, messaging systems, and Conversational Artificial Intelligence (AI), among others.

While the field is still unexplored, some studies have recently begun to examine the role of AI combined with role-playing in interaction as a resource for language learning (Eguchi et al., 2025; Su & Chen, 2026). Current research demonstrates that AI-based interactions should be complementary to actual human interaction.

Grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency are some of the areas in which speaking is traditionally assessed and, as a result, the assessment of interactional skills has been largely neglected. Interaction-centered speaking assessment should evaluate speaking in the context of the participation of learners in interaction, which would include dimensions such as:

- Responsiveness
- Turn-taking
- Knowing when to speak
- Managing comprehension

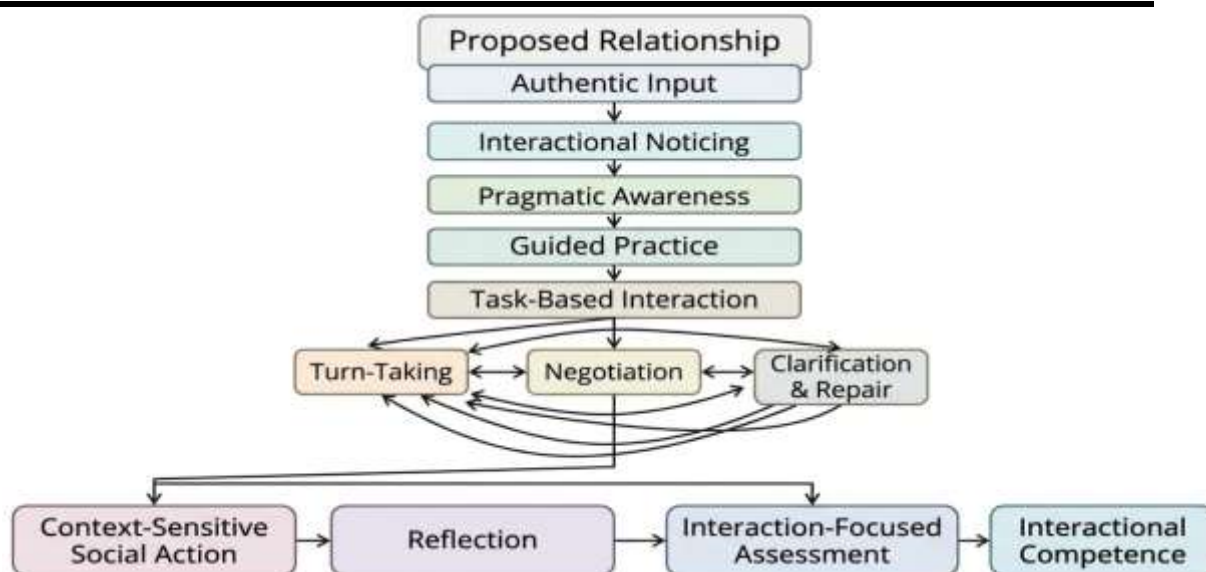
Identifying when to modify what is being said
Determining when to change the subject/topic
Knowing what is appropriate
Knowing how to adapt what is being said based on the context
Sense-making together with others

Preliminary research has shown that the evaluation of interaction can be based on a specific set of interactional competencies. Kunitz et al. (2024) assessed the practice of interaction-centered assessment while Syquia and Leeming (2024) developed an interactional competence rating scale for group discussions. These studies and others show that it is possible to advance the development of interactional assessment in which language learners are not exclusively assessed based on their production of a language but on their management of interaction.

Competences of language use in the reviewed literature evolve from language competency, to communicative, to interactional. Initially, grammar was the focus; later CLT focused on meaningful and contextual communicative acts; currently interactional research focuses on the communicative activities of partners and their dynamic and collaborative involvement.

It is also noted in the reviewed literature that having the communicative activities is not enough for authentic interaction. Interactional practices should be noticed. Participation in interactional practices is necessary. Pragmatic awareness should be developed while meanings should be negotiated, communication breakdowns should be clarified and the interactional acts should be evaluated.

Yet these dimensions are still treated as discrete. CLT focuses on communication and pragmatic research on contextual appropriateness. TBLT focuses on meaningful tasks, CA looks at interactional organization and assessment research is concerned with measurable acts of performance. The main purpose of this study is to bring these perspectives together within a revised CLT approach to interactional competence and authentic language use.



The literature consequently supports the central argument of this study: the effectiveness of CLT should be evaluated not simply by how much learners speak, but by how effectively they participate in authentic interaction.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This paper employs a qualitative, conceptual design to perform a critical and integrative literature review of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), interactional competence, authentic language use, pragmatic competence, task-based language teaching, classroom interaction, conversation analysis, and language assessment. This research does not aim to examine the result of a specific teaching intervention. Rather, it aims to integrate and synthesize available theoretical and empirical research and constructs to build a new framework for CLT.

A qualitative conceptual framework is appropriate. This study does not aim to test hypotheses through the application of existing theory. This study aims to synthesize existing literature to explain and produce a new theory for CLT. The recent focus in literature on classroom interaction has prompted researchers to analyze naturally occurring assessment and classroom interaction to describe the development of interactional practices.

3.2. Research Approach

The study employs an integrative literature-review approach. Rather than limiting the analysis to one theoretical tradition, the study brings together findings from several interconnected areas:

- Communicative Language Teaching;
- communicative competence;

- interactional competence;
- conversation analysis;
- authentic language use;
- pragmatic competence;
- task-based language teaching;
- classroom interaction;
- multimodal communication; and
- interaction-focused assessment.

This approach enables the study to identify common themes across traditionally separate areas of language-teaching research and use those themes to develop a coherent conceptual framework.

3.3. Sources of Literature

The literature in this study includes peer-reviewed articles, scholarly books, research reports, and major theories in second and foreign language education publishing. Recent literature (2020-2026) is given more consideration and classic literature is held where it provides fundamental ideas and theories.

The literature includes both fundamental studies (Hymes, 1972; Canale and Swain, 1980; Bachman, 1990; Long, 2015) and recent studies of interactional competence, authentic interaction, pragmatic teaching, and interactivity and assessment.

Because interaction is being examined in more and more multimodal, digital, and technology-based settings, recent studies are particularly important. For instance, recent research has studied online L2 interaction and accompanying resources; assessment of interactional competence in a multimodal context; and interaction in virtual exchange (Uyar & Balaman, 2024; Balaman et al., 2025).

3.4. Literature Selection Criteria

The literature was selected according to its relevance to the objectives and research questions of the study. Priority was given to sources that:

1. directly address CLT or communicative competence;
2. conceptualize or investigate interactional competence;
3. examine authentic language or naturally occurring interaction;
4. investigate pragmatic competence or contextual language use;
5. examine task-based or interaction-oriented pedagogy;
6. analyze classroom interaction or conversation;
7. address interactional competence in language assessment; or
8. investigate multimodal or digitally mediated interaction.

Foundational publications were included when they established concepts that remain central to contemporary research. More recent publications were prioritized when discussing current developments and pedagogical applications.

3.5. Analytical Procedure

The literature was analyzed through thematic synthesis. The analysis proceeded through four interconnected stages.

Stage 1: Identification of Major Concepts

The first stage identified the principal concepts appearing across the literature. These included:

- communicative competence;
- interactional competence;
- authentic language;
- pragmatic competence;
- turn-taking;
- responsiveness;
- negotiation;
- clarification;
- repair;
- social action;
- task-based interaction; and
- interaction-focused assessment.

Stage 2: Comparative Analysis

The identified concepts were then compared across different theoretical and empirical perspectives. Particular attention was given to differences between approaches that conceptualize communication primarily as individual language production and approaches that conceptualize communication as collaborative interaction.

Stage 3: Identification of Pedagogical Principles

The analysis subsequently identified pedagogical principles that could translate interactional theory into classroom practice. These included authentic input, interactional noticing, explicit pragmatic awareness, guided practice, unpredictable tasks, negotiation, repair, reflection, and interaction-focused assessment.

Stage 4: Framework Development

Finally, the findings were synthesized into a re-conceptualized CLT framework. The framework establishes relationships among authentic input, interactional awareness, pragmatic competence, task-based interaction, interactional practices, reflection, and assessment.

3.6. Analytical Categories

To ensure systematic interpretation, the literature was organized into the following analytical categories:

Category	Central Focus
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Communicative competence	What learners need to know for effective communication
Interactional competence	How learners participate in unfolding interaction
Authentic language	How language occurs in natural communicative contexts
Pragmatic competence	How language is adapted to social and contextual conditions
Interactional practices	Turn-taking, responsiveness, negotiation, clarification and repair
Task-based interaction	How tasks generate meaningful and unpredictable communication
Classroom interaction	How teachers and learners jointly construct classroom discourse
Multimodality	How speech interacts with gesture, gaze and other semiotic resources
Assessment	How interactional performance can be evaluated
Digital interaction	How online and technology-mediated communication affects interaction

This categorization allows the study to move from individual concepts toward an integrated model.

3.7. Conversation-Analytic Orientation

Although the study does not conduct an original Conversation Analysis (CA) of recorded conversations, CA provides an important analytical orientation for understanding interaction. CA emphasizes the sequential organization of talk and examines how participants accomplish actions through their turns.

This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study because interactional competence cannot be adequately understood through isolated sentences. Practices such as clarification and repair become meaningful only when examined within the interactional sequence in which they occur.

Recent pedagogical research demonstrates the value of CA-informed approaches. Balaman (2025) shows how video-based reflection can help learners or teachers notice interactional practices, while recent research on conversational repair demonstrates that repair becomes fully visible through analysis of interaction in context.

3.8. Synthesis of Recent Evidence

Recent empirical research was given particular attention to determine whether the proposed framework reflects current developments in the field. Studies have increasingly demonstrated that interactional competence involves multimodal and embodied resources in addition to verbal language. Uyar and Balaman (2024), for instance, examined learners' gaze behavior during paired role-play assessment and demonstrated the relevance of non-verbal resources to interactional performance.

Similarly, research on online L2 interaction has investigated embodied resources and conversational repair, suggesting that proficiency cannot be understood solely through the quantity of verbal language produced (2024).

Recent research has also examined virtual-exchange interactional competence, particularly the management of topic transitions in online intercultural interaction. Such findings broaden the relevance of interactional competence beyond conventional face-to-face classroom communication.

These developments support the present study's decision to conceptualize interactional competence as linguistic, pragmatic, sequential, contextual, and multimodal.

3.9. Trustworthiness of the Synthesis

The credibility of the conceptual synthesis was strengthened through source triangulation. Evidence was considered across multiple research traditions rather than relying on a single theoretical perspective. Foundational CLT scholarship was compared with contemporary research on interactional competence, pragmatics, classroom interaction, task-based pedagogy, and assessment.

Greater weight was given to peer-reviewed empirical studies and established theoretical works, while recent publications were used to identify emerging developments. The synthesis also distinguishes between established findings and the study's own conceptual propositions.

Because this is a conceptual review rather than a systematic review with a meta-analysis, the purpose is interpretive integration rather than statistical aggregation. PRISMA 2020 provides reporting guidance for systematic reviews and requires transparent reporting of search, selection, and synthesis procedures; however, the present study does not claim to be a formal systematic review.

3.10. Ethical Considerations

The study does not involve human participants, interviews, questionnaires, experiments, or identifiable personal data. Therefore, no participant recruitment or informed-consent procedure was required. The study relies exclusively on published scholarly literature and appropriately acknowledges the intellectual contributions of previous researchers through in-text citations and references.

3.11. Methodological Limitations

The conceptual nature of the study imposes several limitations. First, the proposed framework is derived from existing literature rather than tested through an experimental classroom intervention. Second, the synthesis cannot establish causal relationships between particular teaching practices and improvements in interactional competence. Third, interactional practices may vary across languages, cultures, proficiency levels, educational contexts, and communicative settings.

The framework should therefore be considered a theoretically informed pedagogical model requiring empirical validation. Future studies could test it through classroom interventions, longitudinal research, learner-performance analysis, teacher-action research, and interaction-focused assessment.

The methodology therefore provides a systematic conceptual basis for the subsequent analysis. It enables the study to move from a critical examination of conventional CLT toward a framework in which interaction itself becomes a central object, process, and outcome of language learning.

4. Analysis and Discussion

The literary analyses in this research propose that CLT should advance beyond the general notion of “learning to communicate” by specifying it as the facilitation of learners to communicate successfully through engagement in interaction. In the past, movement in communicative competence included teaching beyond grammar with sociolinguistic, discourse, pragmatic and strategic elements (Canale & Swain, 1980, Canale, 1983, Bachman, 1990). Interactional competence expands on these by focusing on the management of resources in communication.

The distinction between these two learners illustrates this. Learner A constructs correctly but is unable to commit to conversation when it takes a turn in another direction. Learner B tends to make mistakes with grammar, but is able to request clarification, respond in an appropriate fashion, resolve disagreements, and address communication breakdowns. In real communication, Learner B would exhibit more interactional competence.

This proves that grammatical accuracy is just one part of a more complex element in producing communicative output. CLT would therefore locate learners’ interactional competence in their ability to utilize language resources contextually and collaboratively.

One of the primary outcomes of this synthesis is making a distinction between productive language and competent participation within interactive processes. A significant limitation of many speaking tasks within current language teaching methodology is the measuring of how much language learners produce. In contrast, with regard to creating successful communication, competent participation relies on how learners respond to communication-initiating stimuli. The following sequence illustrates this distinction:

A: What do you think about the proposal?

B: I think it is useful, but I have one concern.

A: What concern?

B: It may be too expensive.

Speaker B does not merely produce grammatically correct language. B responds directly to A, introduces a concern, and creates an opportunity for further interaction.

Therefore, classroom activities should create response dependency. Learners should need to listen to what their partners say before deciding what to say next.

This principle represents an important shift:

Traditional CLT:

Language input → Practice → Language production

Re-conceptualized CLT:



The second model more closely reflects the collaborative nature of communication.

4.1. Interactional Competence as a Multidimensional Construct

The analysis indicates that interactional competence should be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct rather than a single speaking ability. It consists of interconnected resources that learners coordinate during communication.

4.1.1. Core Dimensions

Dimension	Learner Ability
Turn-taking	Enter, maintain and yield turns appropriately
Responsiveness	Respond meaningfully to previous contributions
Negotiation	Develop shared understanding
Clarification	Request and provide clarification
Repair	Resolve communication problems

Pragmatic competence	Adapt language to context
Topic management	Introduce, maintain and shift topics
Social action	Agree, disagree, request, refuse, persuade and apologize
Multimodality	Coordinate verbal and non-verbal resources
Flexibility	Adapt to unexpected interaction

This multidimensional conceptualization is consistent with recent research that views interactional competence as involving linguistic, pragmatic, interactional, contextual, and non-linguistic resources (Supunya & Tangkiengsirisin, 2025).

4.2. Authenticity Should Mean Authentic Interaction

The literature suggests that authenticity should not be reduced to the use of materials taken directly from real-world sources. A video from a real conversation may be authentic, but simply watching it does not guarantee interactional development.

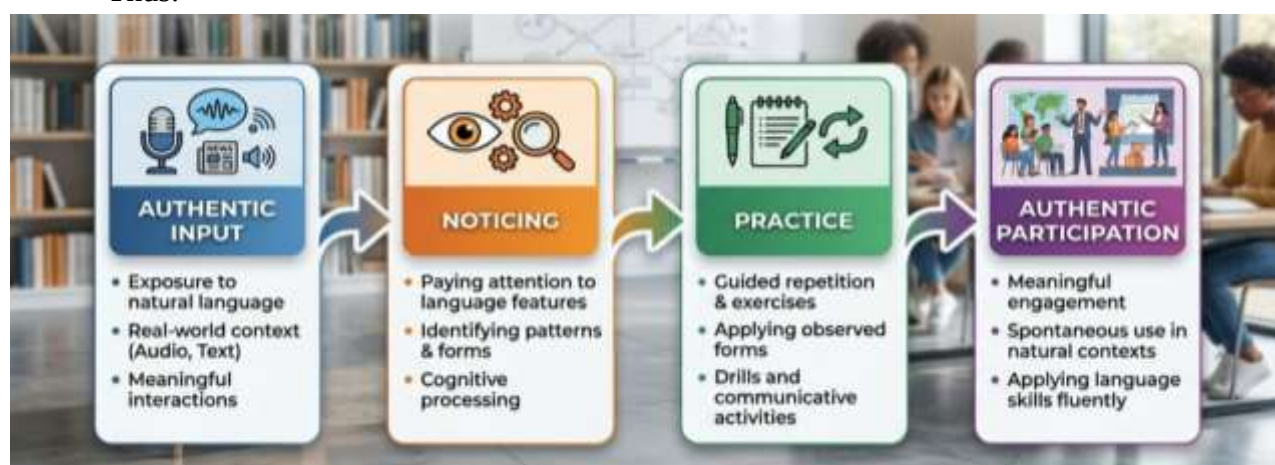
Authenticity should operate at two levels:

Authentic input — learners encounter language that reflects real communication.

Authentic participation — learners experience communicative situations requiring genuine responses.

For example, students watching a recorded disagreement can identify how speakers express disagreement. They can then participate in a task where they must disagree with a partner and reach a compromise.

Thus:



This principle is supported by research demonstrating the pedagogical value of authentic materials for teaching interactional practices (Kunitz et al., 2024).

4.3. Teaching Interactional Practices Explicitly

A central implication of the study is that interactional competence should be explicitly taught rather than treated as an automatic outcome of communicative activities. Teachers can introduce short interactional expressions and examine their functions:

Initiating

- “Can I ask you something?”
- “What do you think?”

Holding the floor

- “Let me explain.”
- “There are two reasons for this.”

Clarifying

- “What do you mean by that?”
- “Could you explain that again?”

Repairing

- “Sorry, I meant Thursday.”
- “Let me put that another way.”

Disagreeing

- “I understand your point, but...”
- “I’m not sure I agree.”

Closing

- “So, shall we move on?”
- “I think we have covered everything.”

Learners should not merely memorize these expressions. They should analyze when and why they are appropriate and then use them in unpredictable interaction. This approach is consistent with recent research supporting interactionally oriented instruction and learner reflection (Balaman, 2025).

4.4. The Role of Noticing

The analysis further indicates that noticing can serve as a bridge between authentic input and interactional performance. Learners frequently notice vocabulary and grammar but may overlook interactional features. For example, when listening to a conversation, learners may focus on the meaning of words but fail to notice that one speaker uses:

“Really?”

as a listener response rather than as a genuine information question.

Teachers can therefore design noticing activities that direct attention toward:

- how speakers enter conversations;
- how listeners respond;
- how speakers signal agreement;

- how disagreement is softened;
- how misunderstandings are repaired;
- how topics are changed;
- how conversations are closed.

Such activities make normally implicit interactional knowledge visible.

4.5. Task Design for Interactional Development

The findings suggest that task design is critical. Not every communicative task produces meaningful interaction.

A task is more interactionally productive when it contains:

1. a genuine information or opinion gap;
2. an outcome requiring collaboration;
3. opportunities for different viewpoints;
4. potential disagreement;
5. opportunities for clarification;
6. an element of unpredictability.

Example

Instead of asking:

“Discuss your favourite city.”

a teacher could provide the following task:

“Your university can organize one educational trip. Your group must choose between Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi, and Hunza. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages and reach a unanimous decision.”

This task creates a genuine need for interaction. Learners must:



Such interaction more closely resembles real communication than a sequence of predetermined questions and answers.

4.6. Negotiation and Repair as Indicators of Communicative Success

A significant finding is that communication breakdown should not necessarily be treated as failure. In authentic interaction, misunderstandings are expected. Competent speakers demonstrate their ability to manage these problems.

Consider:

A: We should meet on Thursday.

B: Tuesday?

A: No, Thursday.

B: Oh, Thursday. Okay.

The interaction contains misunderstanding and repair, yet communication succeeds. This suggests that learners should be assessed not only on whether misunderstandings occur but also on how effectively they resolve them. Therefore, a classroom culture that treats every misunderstanding as an error may unintentionally discourage authentic communication. Learners need to see clarification and repair as normal communicative resources.

4.7. Pragmatic and Contextual Adaptation

The study further demonstrates that interactional competence cannot be separated from pragmatics. Learners must adapt their language to relationships and situations.

For example, the expression: “Give me your report” may be acceptable in some contexts but inappropriate in others. A learner communicating with a close colleague might use a relatively direct expression, whereas communication with a senior institutional figure may require greater mitigation.

Consequently, learners should practice the same communicative function across different contexts.

Example: Requesting Information

Friend:

“Can you send me the file?”

Teacher:

“Could you please send me the file?”

Formal institutional context:

“I would appreciate it if you could send me the file at your convenience.”

The objective is not to teach one “correct” sentence but to develop context-sensitive choice. Evidence supporting explicit pragmatic instruction strengthens this pedagogical direction (Yalew et al., 2024).

4.9. Interaction-Focused Assessment

The reconceptualized model requires assessment practices aligned with its objectives. A learner who speaks fluently but ignores partners, interrupts excessively, or cannot respond to unexpected contributions should not necessarily receive the highest interactional score.

An interactional assessment rubric could include:

Criterion	Indicators
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Responsiveness	Responds meaningfully to partners
Turn-taking	Manages turns appropriately
Negotiation	Develops shared understanding
Clarification	Requests/provides clarification
Repair	Resolves misunderstandings
Pragmatics	Uses context-appropriate language
Flexibility	Responds effectively to unexpected turns
Collaboration	Supports joint meaning-making

A simple four-level scale can be used:

4 – Effective: Consistently manages interaction independently and appropriately.

3 – Competent: Generally manages interaction with occasional difficulty.

2 – Developing: Participates but frequently requires support.

1 – Limited: Has substantial difficulty responding and sustaining interaction.

Recent work on interaction-oriented rubrics and rating scales supports the feasibility of this approach (Kunitz et al., 2024; Syquia & Leeming, 2024).

4.10. Implications for Textbook Development

The reconceptualization has direct implications for language textbooks. Textbooks should move beyond dialogues that are perfectly structured and predictable.

A conventional textbook dialogue might present:

A: What do you do in your free time?

B: I play cricket.

A: How often do you play?

B: Twice a week.

An interaction-oriented textbook could instead present:

A: What do you usually do at weekends?

B: Mostly cricket.

A: Cricket? I thought you preferred football.

B: I used to, but I stopped playing.

A: Why?

B: Well, actually, I injured my knee.

The second dialogue provides opportunities to notice:

- repetition;

-
- topic development;
 - clarification;
 - contrast;
 - follow-up questions;
 - reformulation;
 - personal response.

Textbook tasks can then require learners to create their own unpredictable conversations.

4.11. Teacher's Role in Re-conceptualized CLT

The teacher's role also changes. Instead of functioning primarily as a provider of linguistic input or evaluator of correct answers, the teacher becomes a designer, facilitator, observer, and analyst of interaction.

Teachers can:

- create interactionally rich tasks;
- provide authentic input;
- draw attention to interactional practices;
- model repair and clarification;
- encourage learner responsiveness;
- reduce unnecessary teacher control;
- provide feedback on interactional performance;
- use recordings for learner reflection.

This approach does not eliminate explicit language teaching. Grammar and vocabulary remain important, but they are taught as resources that support interaction.

4.12. Digital and AI-Mediated Interaction

Digital communication provides additional possibilities for developing interactional competence. Online role-plays, video discussions, virtual exchanges, and AI-supported conversational activities can expose learners to different interactional conditions.

However, technology should not be treated as a substitute for authentic human communication. Human interaction involves interpersonal relationships, shared histories, social expectations, and contextual factors that may not be fully reproduced by artificial systems.

Emerging research suggests that AI-mediated environments can provide useful opportunities for conversational practice, but their pedagogical value depends on how activities are designed and integrated with broader interactional learning objectives (Eguchi et al., 2025; Su & Chen, 2026).

4.13. Proposed Reconceptualized CLT Framework

Based on the literature and analysis, this study proposes the following framework:

Stage 1: Authentic Input

Learners encounter naturally occurring or authenticity-oriented language.

Stage 2: Interactional Noticing

Learners identify how speakers take turns, respond, clarify, disagree, and repair.

Stage 3: Pragmatic Awareness

Learners examine how language choices change according to context, relationship, and communicative purpose.

Stage 4: Guided Practice

Learners practice interactional expressions and strategies.

Stage 5: Unpredictable Task-Based Interaction

Learners participate in tasks requiring genuine responses and collaboration.

Stage 6: Negotiation and Repair

Learners manage misunderstanding, disagreement, clarification, and meaning negotiation.

Stage 7: Reflection

Learners analyze their own interactional performance.

Stage 8: Interaction-Focused Assessment

Learners are assessed on responsiveness, turn-taking, negotiation, repair, pragmatic appropriacy, and collaborative communication.

Outcome: Interactional Competence

The distinctive feature of this model is that interaction is simultaneously the medium, object, process, and outcome of language learning.

4.14. Synthesis of the Discussion

The analysis indicates that CLT does not need to be replaced; rather, it needs to be re-conceptualized and deepened. Its original commitment to meaningful communication remains valuable, but communication needs to be understood more precisely as collaborative interaction.

The proposed reconceptualization shifts the pedagogical focus:

Conventional CLT	Re-conceptualized CLT
Communicative activity	Interactional participation
Predetermined dialogue	Authentic/unpredictable interaction
Language production	Responsive participation
Fluency and accuracy	Interactional effectiveness
Teacher-led practice	Collaborative interaction
Grammar-focused feedback	Interaction-focused feedback

Implicit pragmatics	Explicit contextual awareness
Speaking assessment	Interactional assessment

The central argument is therefore that learners should not simply be taught to speak; they should be taught to participate. Effective communication requires the ability to listen, respond, adapt, negotiate, clarify, repair, and collaborate in real time. This reconceptualization provides the theoretical foundation for the proposed framework and establishes its implications for language teaching, curriculum design, textbook development, teacher education, and assessment.

5. Conclusion

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has had a positive impact on how we view teaching and learning of second and foreign languages. It has placed emphasis on active and meaningful communication rather than on grammar. However, contemporary communication requires us to think further. Acquiring linguistic knowledge and the ability to engage in various communicative activities does not ensure that learners are able to cope with the spontaneous and unpredictable, and often ambiguous, nature of real world communication. Knowing how to procedurally handle communicative activities and how to manage and control interaction, including the ability to exchange information, clarify, repair, refuse and agree, and to adjust and adapt to differing situations is what real communication is about.

The study, therefore, incorporates CLT as the theory of interactional competence. Based on studies and literature in communicative competence, communication as a process, pragmatics, task-based language teaching, and language assessment, among others, interaction is proposed to be the central focus and outcome of language teaching. This extends the models of communicative competence and the notion of collaboration in the construction of communication rather than the individual production of communication (Young, 2011; Canale & Swain, 1980).

The integration of authentic input and interaction-centered tasks suggests a pedagogical sequence that is intended to help learners develop the skills and strategies to communicate in real-life situations. Activities for interactional noticing and guided practice are accommodated in the assessment as well. The combination of various tasks stimulates interaction and communication, and helps learners understand the pragmatic rules of the language. The ultimate goal of this framework is to help learners become confident communicators.

The research shows that the design of a task is critical for the development of interactional ability. The goal of a task is to create a real-world communicative need, rather than to make learners repeat language that has been provided. Tasks or activities

that include information gaps, problems to be solved or decisions to be made, discussions, simulations, and cooperative activities, all have the advantage of inducing learners to interact and negotiate meaning. The activities or tasks mentioned above can provide opportunities for interactional practices and interactional functioning that controlled exercises or tasks cannot.

Another finding of the study is the analysis of communication breakdown. Hesitations, repetitions, clarifications, misunderstandings and the repair of communication breakdown should not be considered failures. They are natural elements of all real-world communication and should be viewed as opportunities for learners to develop their communication skills. Interactional ability will depend on a learner's ability to use the correct language to communicate, as opposed to a learner's ability to approach the task with grammatically correct but interactionally ineffective communication. Therefore, successful communication should be considered to include the repair of failed communication as an integral part of communication.

The study emphasizes the need for pragmatic and contextual ability. The use of the correct grammar is certainly needed for effective communication, but this is just one of the elements for effective communication. The impact of social relationships, degree of social closeness or formality, and the power relationships are factors that impact language and communication. Therefore, teaching pragmatics is necessary and complementary to CLT.

Another point has to do with assessment. If interactional competence is an objective of learning, then it needs to be assessed. Speaking tests with an exclusive focus on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency, may miss the learners' collaborative participation. Responsiveness, turn-taking, clarification, negotiation and repair as well as pragmatic case appropriacy, flexibility and collaborative meaning-making should be considered in assessment. Recent published studies on interaction-centered assessment suggest that these dimensions of assessment are feasible (Kunitz et al, 2024; Syquia and Leeming, 2024).

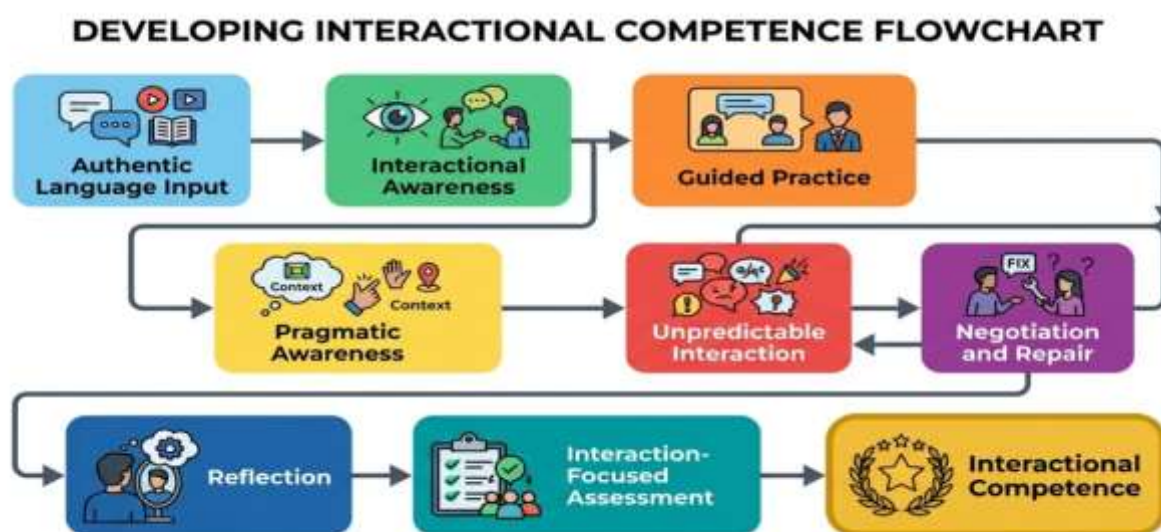
The impact of the proposed framework on the development of English textbooks is significant. Textbooks should go beyond the use of constructs where dialogues are fully structured and where answering questions is a repetitive exercise. Activities that require noticing should be based on real-world, authentic interactions. Textbooks should also include role-plays that are unpredictable and task-based that incorporates one or more of the following: problem-solving, role negotiation, and reflection. Likewise, SLOs should concentrate on the description of observable interactional competence rather than knowledge of language. For example, instead of "use polite expressions," an SLO may state that learners will "navigate social interactions by addressing and responding to requests."

In conclusion, the author states that the future of CLT is not about losing the significance of its communicative principles and practices, it is about appreciating the depth and the extent of what it means to communicate. Therefore, the fundamental pedagogical concern changes from “can learners pronounce the target language?” to “can learners use the language to engage in purposeful interactions?” The main argument of this research can be outlined as:

The aim of successful language teaching should be to help learners to speak accurately and with confidence, but also to listen attentively and with understanding, to negotiate meaning, ability to monitor and manage the discourse flow, to identify and manage breakdowns in discourse, and to adjust language and communication to authentic discourse situations.

Thus, the re-conceptualized model can be expressed as:

The study contributes a theoretically integrated perspective that positions



interactional competence at the heart of contemporary CLT. Nevertheless, because the proposed framework is conceptual, its effectiveness requires empirical validation. Future research should examine the framework through classroom interventions, longitudinal studies, learner interaction data, teacher action research, and experimental comparisons between conventional CLT and interaction-oriented CLT.

Ultimately, CLT should move from teaching learners how to produce language toward teaching them how to participate in language-mediated social life. This reconceptualization can contribute to more authentic, context-sensitive, interactionally responsive, and pedagogically meaningful language education.

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