

Constructive Alignment in Language Education: Investigating CLT, Critical Listening Development, and Learner Strategy Application

NARGIZA KHODJAKULOVA

Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

The efficacy of language instruction necessitates an intricate alignment of pedagogical methodologies, learner strategies, and evaluative practices. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which prioritizes genuine communication, is extensively implemented to facilitate active language utilization. Nonetheless, the incorporation of critical listening competencies within CLT remains insufficiently examined, particularly concerning learning strategies that bolster this endeavor. This investigation seeks to elucidate the correlation between CLT, the advancement of critical listening capabilities, and the application of learner strategies among second-year students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educational settings. A pre-assessment was conducted with second-year students from TIAME National Research University, Bukhara State Pedagogical Institute, Namangan State Foreign Languages Institute, and Gulistan State University to evaluate their employment of learning strategies, especially in connection with critical listening abilities during CLT-oriented instruction. The participants (120 students) were enrolled in a course focused on Integrated Language Skills and Oral Practice. The research was conducted over a four-month period (September to December 2024), during which participants engaged in CLT activities specifically designed to enhance critical listening. Their utilization of metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies was systematically

monitored, and progress was evaluated through subsequent observations and assessments. Initial findings indicate that students' employment of critical listening strategies demonstrated significant enhancement following the incorporation of CLT-centric tasks. The utilization of metacognitive strategies, including the planning and monitoring of listening assignments, proved particularly efficacious in augmenting their listening comprehension and critical analytical abilities. However, there was variability among students in their strategic engagement, with those employing a wider array of strategies exhibiting more substantial advancements in both linguistic proficiency and listening capabilities. This research underscores the significance of constructive alignment in language education, illustrating that the integration of CLT with focused critical listening activities and strategic learner involvement can markedly enhance students' linguistic competencies. The outcomes imply that language instructors should prioritize the cultivation of metacognitive awareness and strategic application to improve both listening and speaking proficiencies within EFL environments. The limitations of this study encompass a relatively modest sample size and the concentration on a specific academic context (second-year students across four universities). Furthermore, the research was confined to a singular semester, and the long-term ramifications of strategy utilization on language acquisition were not thoroughly investigated. Future inquiries could broaden the sample size and extend the duration to yield a more exhaustive comprehension of the influence of learning strategies on critical listening within CLT classrooms.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), critical listening skills, learning strategies, metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, socio-affective strategies, integrated language skills, oral practice, EFL (English as a Foreign Language), constructive alignment

1. INTRODUCTION

The effective teaching of languages constitutes a complex undertaking that necessitates a meticulously crafted alignment

among pedagogical methodologies, learner involvement, and evaluative techniques. One of the most prevalently embraced methodologies in the realm of language pedagogy is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes the utilization of authentic language through genuine communicative contexts. Although CLT has been empirically demonstrated to enhance students' oral communication and interactive capabilities, the incorporation of critical listening skills within this pedagogical framework remains a domain that warrants further investigation. Critical listening, regarded as an advanced competency, compels learners not only to comprehend spoken discourse but also to engage in the active analysis, evaluation, and judgment of the conveyed information. This skill is indispensable for effective communication and the cultivation of higher-order cognitive processes; however, its integration into language teaching methodologies, particularly within CLT-oriented environments, is frequently neglected.

Furthermore, the significance of learning strategies—metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective—in facilitating critical listening and comprehensive language acquisition is paramount. Metacognitive strategies, including self-regulation and reflective practices, empower learners to assume control over their educational journeys, whereas cognitive strategies such as summarization and elaboration promote enhanced comprehension. Socio-affective strategies, which encompass collaboration and emotional regulation, bolster learners' motivation and engagement in linguistic endeavors. Grasping the manner in which these strategies contribute to the cultivation of critical listening competencies within a CLT framework is essential for augmenting language learning outcomes.

This study aspires to examine the efficacy of amalgamating CLT with critical listening exercises and strategic learner involvement in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) educational settings. By scrutinizing how second-year students at TIAME National Research University, Bukhara State Pedagogical Institute, Namangan State Foreign Languages Institute, and Gulistan State University employ learning strategies to enhance their critical listening skills during Integrated Language Skills

and Oral Practice sessions, this research endeavors to provide significant insights into the pedagogical practices that foster both linguistic proficiency and critical thinking.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) represents a significant pedagogical framework within the realms of second and foreign language education that prioritizes the facilitation of communication and the utilization of language in meaningful contexts, as opposed to mere rote memorization and mechanical practice. Since its inception in the 1970s, CLT has fundamentally transformed instructional practices and has had a profound impact on curriculum design across the globe. This review investigates the interrelationship between the origins of CLT, its foundational principles, and pivotal advancements within the discipline.

2.1. *Origins of CLT*

CLT emerged as a response to the recognized shortcomings of preceding methodologies, such as the Audiolingual Method and Situational Language Teaching, both of which predominantly focused on grammatical precision and repetitive practices. Academics such as Dell Hymes (1972) contested these methodologies by introducing the notion of communicative competence, which encompasses not merely grammatical proficiency but also the capacity to employ language suitably across diverse contexts. This represented a significant paradigm shift from the mere understanding of linguistic rules to the effective application of such rules in communicative endeavors.

2.2. *Other influential figures include*

1. Michael Halliday, whose framework of systemic functional linguistics presented language as a social semiotic construct, accentuating the pragmatic application of language in authentic situations (Halliday 1975).
2. Noam Chomsky, who delineated the distinction between linguistic competence and performance, thereby laying the

foundational principles for subsequent communicative theories.

3. Henry Widdowson, who advocated for the incorporation of real-world communicative practices into classroom activities (Widdowson, 1978).

The British Council and English Language Teaching (ELT) practitioners, who facilitated the dissemination of CLT principles through educator training and material innovation.

2.3. *Core principles of CLT*

CLT is underpinned by several interconnected principles:

1. **Emphasis on meaningful communication:** Language acquisition is optimized when learners engage in tasks that hold significance (Littlewood 1981).
2. **Focus on learner-centered instruction:** Learners assume active roles, and pedagogical strategies are tailored to address their communicative requirements.
3. **Integration of the four skills:** Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are instructed as interrelated competencies.
4. **Use of authentic materials and contexts:** Genuine situations and real texts enhance relevance and learner motivation.

2.4. *Tolerance of errors*

Errors are regarded as an inherent aspect of language acquisition and a manifestation of linguistic growth.

- **Functional and notional syllabuses:** Curricula are structured around communicative functions (e.g., requesting, apologizing) and notions (e.g., time, quantity), rather than solely on grammatical structures (Wilkins 1976).

2.5. *Main developments and supporting theories*

CLT is congruent with Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982), which posits that learners achieve optimal language acquisition when exposed to comprehensible input that slightly exceeds their

existing proficiency level (i+1). Although Krashen did not explicitly formulate CLT, his theoretical contributions bolstered the emphasis on naturalistic language exposure and the communicative significance of input.

Furthermore, the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) movement in the 1970s, coupled with seminal policy documents such as the Wilkins Report (1976), provided essential institutional and curricular backing for the transition towards communicative methodologies in language instruction.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was developed primarily in the 1970s, evolving from earlier language teaching methods such as the Audiolingual Method and Situational Language Teaching. CLT emerged as a response to the perceived limitations of these earlier methods, which focused heavily on rote memorization and grammar drills. Moreover, Mardieva indicates in the classroom, attend workshops, conferences, or online webinars to keep abreast of the latest developments in EFL teaching methods. For example, join online communities or professional associations to network with other EFL educators and share resources, best practices, and innovative ideas (Mardieva et al. 2024).

While no single individual can be credited with the exclusive development of CLT, several key figures played important roles in its creation:

1. **Dell Hymes:** Hymes, a sociolinguist, introduced the concept of communicative competence in the 1960s. His work laid the theoretical foundation for CLT by emphasizing that language learners should not only know the rules of grammar but also understand how to use language appropriately in different social contexts.
2. **Michael Halliday:** Halliday's work in systemic functional linguistics also influenced the development of CLT. His approach viewed language as a tool for communication, focusing on how language functions in context, which became a central aspect of CLT.
3. **Noam Chomsky:** Although Chomsky is often associated with generative grammar, his work on competence vs.

performance (the difference between what a speaker knows and how they actually use language in real-life situations) influenced the way CLT views communicative competence, which is integral to the approach.

4. **Henry Widdowson:** Widdowson was another important figure who contributed to CLT, especially with his focus on the role of real-life communication and the importance of language use in authentic contexts.
5. **The British Council and other ELT (English Language Teaching) professionals:** In the 1970s, British linguists and educators, particularly those associated with the British Council, began promoting CLT in their language teaching programs. They sought a more natural and engaging way to teach English, focusing on interaction and real-life situations.
6. **Stephen Krashen:** Although Krashen is more closely associated with Input Hypothesis, his work also indirectly influenced CLT. His emphasis on comprehensible input (i+1) as essential for language acquisition aligns with CLT’s focus on natural, meaningful communication.

2.6. *Development timeline*

The early 1970s: CLT began to take shape, influenced by various linguistic theories and ideas about how people actually use language in real-world settings.

1972-1973: Key documents, such as the “English for Specific Purposes” movement and various language policy reports (e.g., the Wilkins Report in 1976), reinforced the move toward communicative approaches in language teaching (See Table 1).

Table 1. *Classification of CLT*

Classification	Details
Period of development	Early 1970s: Emergence of CLT as a response to limitations in previous methods (Audiolingual Method, Situational Language Teaching).
	1972-1973: Key influence from "English for Specific Purposes" movement and reports like the Wilkins Report (1976).

Foundational theories & influences	Communicative competence (Dell Hymes, 1960s): Emphasized using language appropriately in context.
	Systemic functional linguistics (Michael Halliday): Viewed language as functional and contextual.
	Competence vs. performance (Noam Chomsky): Differentiated between language knowledge and actual usage.
Key contributors	Dell Hymes : Introduced “communicative competence,” foundational to CLT.
	Michael Halliday : Stressed language’s social functions and context-based use.
	Noam Chomsky : Influenced the concept of communicative competence indirectly through his competence/performance distinction.
	Henry Widdowson : Advocated for authentic communication and real-life language use in teaching.
	British Council & ELT professionals : Promoted CLT widely in the 1970s through educational reform and practical implementation.
	Stephen Krashen : Indirect influence through Input Hypothesis (comprehensible input), aligning with CLT’s focus on meaningful communication.
Pedagogical shift	From grammar drills and memorization to interactive, real-life communication .
	Emphasis on meaningful input, authentic contexts, and learner-centered communication .

Critical listening is a core skill in both academic and professional contexts, enabling individuals not only to understand spoken messages but also to analyze, evaluate, and judge the information being communicated. As an advanced level of auditory processing, critical listening goes beyond passive reception and requires cognitive engagement with content, context, logic, and intention. This literature review outlines the key principles of critical listening, focusing on its components—analytical thinking, evaluative reasoning, and judgment formation—as discussed in scholarly literature.

1. *Defining critical listening*

Critical listening is defined as the active, disciplined process of interpreting, assessing, and responding to spoken messages (Brownell 2012). Unlike passive or appreciative listening, it requires the listener to determine credibility, bias, logical consistency, and evidential support (Wolvin & Coakley 2000). It shares conceptual ground with critical thinking, as both emphasize skepticism, reasoning, and reflection.

2. *Analytical listening: Breaking down the message*

Analysis in critical listening involves identifying the structure and intent of the speaker's message. According to Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl 2001), analysis entails distinguishing between facts and opinions, recognizing arguments, and identifying logical connections. Listeners must attend to language cues, tone, structure, and supporting evidence to dissect the argument presented.

Example: Analyzing a political speech requires awareness of rhetorical devices, persuasive appeals (ethos, pathos, logos), and the speaker's implicit assumptions.

3. *Evaluative listening: Assessing the message's value*

Evaluation refers to the assessment of the validity, reliability, and relevance of the message. Paul & Elder (2006) argue that critical thinkers evaluate whether the information is factually accurate, logically coherent, and ethically sound. In the context of listening, evaluative skills involve questioning the speaker's credibility, the sufficiency of evidence, and the fairness of the argument.

Key indicators in evaluative listening include:

- Assessing source credibility (Is the speaker knowledgeable and trustworthy?)
- Testing logical consistency (Are conclusions justified by premises?)
- Identifying fallacies or manipulative language (e.g., straw man, ad hominem)

4. *Judgment: Drawing reasoned conclusions*

The ultimate goal of critical listening is to form a reasoned judgment based on the analysis and evaluation of the message. This stage reflects metacognitive awareness, where listeners decide whether to accept, reject, or suspend belief regarding the speaker's point of view (Lundsteen 1979). Making a judgment also involves ethical and contextual reflection, especially in educational or intercultural communication settings. Furthermore, a research study conducted in 2023 (Khodjakulova & Miceikiene 2024) provides valuable insights into the potential of environmental sustainability initiatives to develop critical listening skills, analysing and evaluating judgment principles among students. By capitalizing on student interest, promoting teacher creativity, and fostering active engagement in sustainability projects, educators can create enriching learning experiences that not only enhance environmental awareness but also contribute to the development of essential skills of the 21st century, such as critical listening.

5. *Pedagogical implications and skill development*

Researchers emphasize that critical listening is teachable and learnable. Instructional methods include:

Listening journals (Vandergrift & Goh 2012)

- Debate and discussion activities that promote evaluation
- Question-based frameworks such as the RED Model: Recognize assumptions, Evaluate arguments, and Draw conclusions (Watson-Glaser 2012)
- In EFL and ESL contexts, fostering critical listening requires integrating authentic listening tasks with critical thinking prompts (Field 2008).

The principles of critical listening – analysis, evaluation, and judgment – are interconnected processes that empower listeners to engage actively and thoughtfully with spoken information. These skills are crucial not only for academic success but also for informed citizenship and ethical communication. As supported by a growing body of literature, critical listening is a cognitive-

communicative competence that can and should be nurtured through targeted educational practices. (See Table 2)

Table 2. *Classification of critical listening principles*

Category	Description	Key authors/theories	Examples/indicators
Definition of Critical Listening	An active, disciplined process involving interpreting, assessing, and responding to spoken messages. It requires reasoning, skepticism, and reflection.	Brownell (2012), Wolvin & Coakley (2000)	Distinguishing bias, checking credibility, assessing logical consistency.
Analytical listening	Breaking down the message into components to understand its structure, tone, purpose, and evidence. Focuses on distinguishing facts vs. opinions and identifying arguments.	Anderson & Krathwohl (2001) - Bloom's Taxonomy	Rhetorical analysis (ethos, pathos, logos), recognizing logical flow, identifying hidden assumptions.
Evaluative listening	Assessing the reliability, validity, and ethical quality of information. Involves critical thinking to question speaker intentions, logic, and argument strength.	Paul & Elder (2006)	Evaluating source credibility, testing logical consistency, spotting fallacies (e.g., ad hominem, straw man).
Judgment formation	Drawing conclusions based on analysis and evaluation. This reflects higher-order thinking and metacognition, where listeners decide to accept,	Lundsteen (1979)	Forming personal conclusions, ethical reflection, acknowledging uncertainty in argument validity.

	reject, or suspend belief based on reasoned evidence.		
Pedagogical applications	Critical listening can be taught through methods like listening journals, debates, and frameworks (e.g., RED Model). Authentic listening and critical tasks are key in ESL/EFL settings.	Vandergrift & Goh (2012), Field (2008)	RED Model: Recognize assumptions, Evaluate arguments, Draw conclusions; use of real-world materials, group evaluations, scaffolded reflections.
Overall educational significance	Encourages cognitive engagement, ethical reflection, and informed decision-making. Essential for academic success, communication competence, and citizenship.	Multidisciplinary consensus	Integration into language and communication curricula; lifelong relevance in media literacy, academic discourse, and cross-cultural understanding.

Learning strategies are defined as deliberate, goal-directed behaviors and thoughts that learners use to process, organize, and retain information (Oxford 1990; Weinstein & Mayer 1986). These strategies are essential for academic performance and self-regulated learning. Broadly, learning strategies fall into three main categories: metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective. The effectiveness of these strategies often depends on the type of learner employing them – namely surface, deep, or strategic learners (Biggs 1987).

3. CATEGORIES OF LEARNING STRATEGIES

3.1. *Metacognitive strategies*

Metacognitive strategies involve thinking about one's own learning process, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning tasks (Flavell 1979; O'Malley & Chamot 1990). These

strategies help learners become self-regulated, enabling them to take control of their study approaches.

Key components:

- **Planning** (e.g., goal setting, time management)
- **Monitoring** (e.g., self-questioning, comprehension checks)
- **Evaluating** (e.g., reflecting on performance, adjusting strategies)

Metacognitive strategies are particularly effective for enhancing academic success because they develop learners' awareness and autonomy (Zimmerman 2002).

2.2. *Cognitive strategies*

Cognitive strategies are mental processes used to manipulate learning materials directly. These include strategies such as:

- **Repetition** (rote memorization)
- **Elaboration** (connecting new knowledge to prior knowledge)
- **Organization** (using outlines, diagrams, or note-taking)
- **Summarizing and inferencing**

These strategies are typically employed during the learning process to process, transform, and structure new information (Weinstein & Mayer 1986).

2.3. *Socio-affective strategies*

Socio-affective strategies help learners manage emotions and interact with others to facilitate learning (Oxford, 1990). These include:

- **Asking questions or seeking clarification**
- **Collaborative learning** (group discussions, peer teaching)
- **Positive self-talk and anxiety reduction techniques**

These strategies are especially crucial in language learning and collaborative educational contexts (Chamot & O'Malley 1994).

4. LEARNER TYPES AND STRATEGY USE

The effectiveness of learning strategies often correlates with a learner's approach to learning, which can be categorized as surface, deep, or strategic (Biggs 1987; Entwistle 2000).

3.1. *Surface learners*

Surface learners focus on memorization and minimal effort, often learning only what is required for assessments. They typically use:

- Rote memorization
- Little integration or reflection
- Low use of metacognitive strategies

Surface learning is often triggered by external pressures and is associated with poorer academic outcomes (Entwistle & Ramsden 1983).

3.2. *Deep learners*

Deep learners aim to understand underlying meaning and are intrinsically motivated. They use strategies like:

- Critical thinking
- Elaboration and integration of new information
- Reflective learning and self-assessment

They frequently use both cognitive and metacognitive strategies, resulting in higher academic achievement and long-term retention (Marton & Säljö 1976).

3.3. *Strategic learners (achieving learners)*

Strategic learners adopt a blend of deep and surface strategies, tailored to achieve high grades. They:

- Set clear goals
- Use time efficiently
- Monitor their own progress
- Adjust their strategies based on outcomes

Strategic learners are goal-oriented and often outperform others by choosing methods that fit the task demands (Biggs 1987).

5. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Understanding both learning strategies and learner types allows educators to:

- Design **targeted interventions**
- Encourage **metacognitive reflection**
- Promote **self-regulated learning**
- Match teaching styles to **learner preferences and needs**

Training students in the flexible use of strategies and helping them shift from surface to deep approaches is shown to improve academic outcomes and learner autonomy (Zimmerman 2002; Pintrich 2000).

Effective learning is not just about what is learned, but how it is learned. The strategic use of metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies plays a vital role in academic achievement. Furthermore, understanding the types of learners helps in tailoring educational practices that foster deeper and more meaningful learning. A shift from surface to deep or strategic learning – facilitated by explicit strategy training – can significantly enhance educational success (See Table 3, 4, 5).

Table 3. *Categories of learning strategies*

Category	Definition	Key components/strategies	Key scholars
Metacognitive	Thinking about one's own learning process to plan, monitor, and evaluate	- Planning (goal setting, time management) - Monitoring (self-questioning, comprehension checks) - Evaluating (reflection, adjustment)	Flavell (1979); O'Malley & Chamot (1990); Zimmerman (2002)

Cognitive	Mental manipulation of learning material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repetition - Elaboration (linking to prior knowledge) - Organization (outlines, note-taking) - Summarizing & inferencing 	Weinstein & Mayer (1986)
Socio-Affective	Strategies involving interaction and emotional regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asking questions - Group work and peer teaching - Positive self-talk - Anxiety reduction techniques 	Oxford (1990); Chamot & O'Malley (1994)

Table 4. *Types of learners and their strategy use*

Learner type	Motivation & focus	Typical strategies used	Learning outcome	Key scholars
Surface learner	Extrinsic motivation; focus on memorization & exams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rote memorization - Low integration - Minimal metacognition 	Short-term learning; poor deep understanding	Entwistle & Ramsden (1983)
Deep learner	Intrinsic motivation; focus on understanding meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Critical thinking - Elaboration - Reflective learning and self-assessment 	Long-term retention; high academic performance	Marton & Säljö (1976)
Strategic learner	Goal-oriented; combines surface and deep approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goal setting - Time management - Monitoring & adapting strategies 	High academic achievement through efficiency	Biggs (1987)

Table 5. *Educational implications*

Area	Implication
Curriculum design	Align teaching with learner types and promote flexible strategy use
Instructional methods	Teach metacognitive strategies explicitly; integrate group tasks and reflection activities

Learner Development	Encourage shift from surface to deep/strategic learning through feedback, guidance, and training
Assessment Practices	Include formative assessments that promote reflection and strategic application of knowledge

6. METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to investigate the impact of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on the development of critical listening skills and the application of learning strategies among 120 second-year students enrolled in the Integrated Language Skills and Oral Practice courses at four different universities in Uzbekistan: TIAME National Research University, Bukhara State Pedagogical Institute, Namangan State Foreign Languages Institute, and Gulistan State University. The study was conducted over four months, from September to December 2024.

1. *Participants*

The total number of participants was 120 students, divided into four groups based on their respective universities. The students were enrolled in the Integrated Language Skills and Oral Practice courses, where they received instruction in listening, speaking, and other language skills. The study focused on second-year students, who were at an intermediate level of proficiency in English.

2. *Research design*

The study employed a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test/post-test structure to assess changes in students' critical listening skills and their use of learning strategies before and after the intervention. This design allowed for comparisons between students' initial skills and their skills after the intervention.

3. *Data collection instruments*

The following instruments were used for data collection:

- **Pre-test and post-test:** To assess the students' critical listening skills and the application of learning strategies

before and after the intervention. These tests included listening comprehension tasks, critical listening questions (evaluating arguments, identifying bias, and assessing evidence), and prompts to reflect on the strategies used during listening activities.

- **Classroom observations:** Throughout the four months, researchers observed students' participation in CLT-based activities, such as group discussions, debates, and role-plays, to monitor the application of critical listening skills in real-time communication.
- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 30 students to gather qualitative insights into their experiences with critical listening and learning strategies. The interviews aimed to understand students' perceptions of how CLT activities affected their listening skills and strategy use.
- **Reflection questionnaires:** These questionnaires were administered to all participants to assess their self-regulation in learning, their use of metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies, and their perceived improvement in critical listening.

4. *Intervention*

The intervention consisted of CLT-based teaching methods integrated with critical listening tasks and strategy instruction. The instructional activities included:

- **Interactive listening activities:** Students participated in role-plays, debates, and group discussions, which required active listening, critical analysis of spoken content, and collaborative decision-making.
- **Strategy training:** Students were explicitly taught learning strategies: metacognitive (e.g., goal-setting, self-monitoring), cognitive (e.g., summarizing, organizing), and socio-affective (e.g., peer interaction, emotional regulation) to enhance their engagement and reflection during listening tasks.

- **Critical listening workshops:** In addition to regular classes, workshops focusing on critical listening were organized, where students were taught to evaluate arguments, assess credibility, and identify logical fallacies in spoken texts.

5. *Data analysis*

- **Quantitative data:** The data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean scores) and paired sample t-tests to determine whether there were significant changes in students' critical listening skills and their use of learning strategies.
- **Qualitative data:** The interviews and reflection questionnaires were transcribed and analyzed thematically to identify patterns related to students' perceptions of the impact of CLT on their learning strategies and critical listening abilities.

6. *Ethical considerations*

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their voluntary participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their anonymity was ensured. Students were assured that their responses would not affect their academic performance.

This methodology enabled a comprehensive assessment of the impact of CLT on students' critical listening skills and learning strategy application, providing valuable insights for further research and curriculum development in language education.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. *Results*

This study, conducted with 120 second-year students across four universities in Uzbekistan, aimed to explore the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in enhancing critical listening skills and promoting the application of learning strategies. The data obtained from pre-test and post-test assessments, classroom observations, interviews, and reflection

questionnaires provide valuable insights into the impact of the CLT-based intervention.

- **Pre-test and post-test analysis:** Analysis of the pre-test and post-test results revealed a significant improvement in students' critical listening skills. On average, students' critical listening scores increased from 58% (pre-test) to 82% (post-test), a change that was statistically significant ($p = 0.001$). This demonstrates that the CLT-based approach successfully enhanced students' ability to analyze, evaluate, and judge spoken messages.

In terms of learning strategies, the results indicated substantial growth in students' use of metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies. Metacognitive strategies such as goal-setting and self-monitoring saw an increase from 60% to 85%, while the use of cognitive strategies (e.g., summarizing and organizing) grew from 55% to 80%. The application of socio-affective strategies (e.g., peer interaction, emotional regulation) also improved, rising from 45% to 75%. These findings highlight the effectiveness of strategy training combined with CLT in enhancing students' self-regulation and active learning.

- **Classroom observations:** Observations during CLT activities revealed significant engagement from students, particularly during debates, role-plays, and group discussions. Students actively applied critical listening skills to evaluate arguments, identify biases, and reflect on the logical coherence of the information presented. This indicates that CLT activities provided ample opportunities for students to practice critical listening in dynamic, real-world contexts.
- **Interviews and reflection questionnaires:** In-depth interviews with 30 students provided qualitative insights into their perceptions of the CLT-based instruction. Most students reported a clearer understanding of how to evaluate the credibility of information and identify underlying assumptions in spoken texts. One student remarked, "Before

this course, I focused on understanding the basic meaning, but now I pay more attention to whether the information is logical and credible." Additionally, reflection questionnaires revealed that 80% of students felt their critical listening abilities had improved, and 75% reported an increase in the use of metacognitive strategies such as self-monitoring during listening activities. (See Table 6)

Table 6. *More detailed and constructive analysis*

Category	Pre-test (%)	Post-test (%)	Change (%)	Statistical significance	Analysis
Critical listening skills	58%	82%	+24%	p = 0.001	The significant increase in critical listening skills demonstrates the success of CLT in enhancing students' ability to analyze, evaluate, and make judgments about spoken texts. This improvement indicates that students became more adept at distinguishing between factual and opinion-based information, as well as identifying biases and logical fallacies.
Metacognitive strategy use	60%	85%	+25%	p = 0.002	The substantial improvement in metacognitive strategies reflects an enhanced awareness of the learning process. Students showed better self-monitoring, planning, and evaluation, which are key components of self-regulated learning. This suggests that CLT

					not only focuses on communicative competence but also nurtures learners' autonomy and reflective thinking.
Cognitive strategy use	55%	80%	+25%	p = 0.003	The increase in cognitive strategy use indicates that students became more active in processing and organizing information. By engaging in strategies such as summarizing, elaboration, and organization, students developed stronger analytical skills, directly benefiting their overall comprehension and retention of the material.
Socio-affective strategy use	45%	75%	+30%	p = 0.004	The greatest increase was seen in the use of socio-affective strategies, including peer interaction and emotional regulation. This finding highlights the importance of collaborative learning and emotional management in language learning. The improvement here suggests that students are better equipped to work with others and manage the affective challenges

					of language learning, contributing to an overall positive learning environment.
Student engagement in CLT activities	70% (average)	85% (average)	+15%	n/a	The increase in student engagement suggests that CLT activities, such as debates, group discussions, and role-plays, were highly effective in motivating students. These activities provided a platform for active participation, allowing students to practice critical listening in a dynamic, interactive environment.
Use of reflection and self-monitoring	65%	90%	+25%	p = 0.005	The improvement in reflection and self-monitoring highlights that students increasingly took ownership of their learning. By engaging in reflective practices, such as journaling and self-assessment, students became more attuned to their progress and better equipped to adjust their strategies, which aligns with findings on metacognitive awareness and self-regulation (Zimmerman, 2002).

2. *Analysis*

- **Significant skill development:** The most notable change occurred in critical listening skills, with an average increase of 24%. This reflects the core aim of CLT – to provide students with real-world communication scenarios where critical listening and thinking are essential. The statistically significant improvement ($p = 0.001$) confirms that the integration of critical listening tasks in the CLT framework significantly contributes to skill enhancement.
- **Increased strategy use:** Both metacognitive and cognitive strategies saw substantial increases, reinforcing the idea that students are becoming more aware of their learning processes and are actively engaging with the content. The increase in metacognitive strategies (25%) suggests that students are not only aware of their progress but are also adapting their approach to meet learning goals effectively. Similarly, the 25% increase in cognitive strategies shows that students are enhancing their information processing capabilities, such as through summarizing and elaborating on the material.
- **Socio-affective strategy growth:** The rise in socio-affective strategies (30%) is particularly noteworthy. This increase suggests that students are more comfortable in collaborative learning environments, utilizing their peers for support, employing emotional regulation techniques to manage learning challenges. It highlights the importance of social dimension in language learning, which is a core feature of CLT.
- **Engagement and active participation:** The increase in student engagement (15%) demonstrates that the CLT-based activities fostered active participation. When students engage in discussions, debates, and role-plays, they not only practice language but also develop the ability to critically assess and evaluate spoken language in real time. This shift in engagement suggests that the CLT approach effectively enhances both the cognitive and affective aspects of learning.
- **Reflection and self-monitoring:** The increase in self-monitoring and reflection (25%) indicates that students are better equipped to evaluate their performance and identify

areas for improvement. The ability to reflect on one's learning is crucial for developing self-regulated learning (Zimmerman 2002), and the growth in this area suggests that the intervention encouraged students to take responsibility for their learning and make adjustments as needed.

In summary, the results demonstrate that the CLT-based intervention significantly improved critical listening skills and fostered a deeper engagement with learning strategies. The findings underscore the importance of integrating active learning, self-regulation, and collaborative activities in language education to enhance not only students' communicative competence but also their ability to critically engage with and evaluate spoken texts.

3. *Discussion*

The findings of this study demonstrate that the CLT approach, when combined with learning strategy instruction, significantly enhances students' critical listening skills and fosters the development of self-regulated learning. The substantial improvement in critical listening from pre-test to post-test reflects the CLT-based instruction's ability to engage students in more thoughtful and evaluative listening. By actively participating in debates, discussions, and role-plays, students not only improved their ability to comprehend spoken messages but also developed the analytical and evaluative skills necessary for critical listening.

The marked increase in the use of metacognitive strategies suggests that students became more aware of their own learning processes. As Zimmerman (2002) emphasizes, metacognitive awareness is crucial for self-regulated learning and academic success. The training in self-monitoring and goal-setting allowed students to take control of their learning, optimizing their listening strategies and improving their academic performance.

Furthermore, the rise in the use of socio-affective strategies highlights the role of social interaction and emotional regulation in language learning. These findings are consistent with previous research that suggests peer interactions and emotional self-regulation are critical to language acquisition (Oxford 1990).

Collaborative learning in CLT environments provides students with the opportunity to engage in meaningful communication, fostering both cognitive and emotional growth.

However, while the majority of students demonstrated significant improvement, a small group (approximately 15%) showed minimal progress in their critical listening abilities. This could be attributed to individual differences such as varying prior knowledge of listening skills or personal learning preferences. Moreover, the relatively short duration of the study (four months) may have limited the extent of change in some students' listening habits, suggesting that longer interventions might yield more pronounced results.

In conclusion, this study affirms that CLT, when paired with explicit strategy instruction, effectively enhances critical listening skills and supports the development of self-regulated learning. The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on the importance of active listening in language education and underscore the need for a holistic approach to teaching that integrates cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies. Future research could explore long-term effects and investigate how individual learner characteristics influence strategy use and critical listening skill development.

8. LIMITATIONS

Despite the promising results of this study, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the relatively short duration of the intervention (four months) may have limited the depth of the changes observed in students' critical listening skills and learning strategies. A longer-term study would provide more comprehensive insights into the sustained effects of CLT and strategy instruction on critical listening and overall academic performance.

Second, the study focused on a specific group of students (120 second-year university students from four institutions), which may limit the generalizability of the results to other contexts or student populations. The findings may not be directly applicable to students from different cultural or academic

backgrounds, or to those with varying levels of language proficiency.

Additionally, while the use of pre-test and post-test assessments provided a quantitative measure of improvement, the subjective nature of critical listening and learning strategies makes it difficult to capture all aspects of students' growth. Self-reported data from the reflection questionnaires and interviews could be influenced by personal biases or the students' desire to report positive outcomes. Future studies could benefit from incorporating more objective measures of listening and strategy use, such as task-based assessments or peer evaluations.

Finally, the study did not account for potential external factors – such as students' prior experiences with language learning, individual study habits, or differences in teaching styles across instructors – that may have influenced the results.

9. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides strong evidence that the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, when combined with explicit instruction on learning strategies, can significantly enhance students' critical listening skills and foster self-regulated learning. The results show that CLT activities, such as debates, group discussions, and role-plays, not only improve students' ability to comprehend and evaluate spoken messages but also encourage active, reflective engagement with the learning process.

The development of metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies was evident among students, suggesting that CLT, when paired with strategic training, enhances learners' autonomy and critical thinking abilities. The findings highlight the importance of incorporating active listening and learning strategies into language education to better prepare students for both academic and real-world challenges.

While the study's results are promising, further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of CLT on critical listening and learning strategy application. Future studies could also investigate the impact of individual learner differences and

teaching contexts, providing more nuanced insights into how different students benefit from these approaches.

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NARGIZA KHODJAKULOVA

TASHKENT INSTITUTE OF IRRIGATION AND
AGRICULTURAL MECHANIZATION ENGINEERS,
NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY,
TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN.

E-MAIL: <NARGIZA.KHODJAQULOVA.TUIT@GMAIL.COM>