

# Learner-Centered English Language Teaching Using L1 Cultural Context

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## Editorial history

**Received:** 20.03.2026

**Accepted:** 21.04.2026

**Published Online:** 08.05.2026

## Cite this article

Nawaz, Shaik Khader (2026). Learner-Centered English Language Teaching Using L1 Cultural Context. *Journal of Advanced Research and Innovation*, 2(3), 1-5.



<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20230609>

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## Abstract

The focus of this work is on different approaches used in second language (L2) learning and teaching. The study aims to understand how learners think, learn, and respond while acquiring a second language. It also explores how learners' native language and cultural background can support English language learning.

## Communicative Language Teaching and Learner Autonomy Using L1 Context

Second language teaching-learning set up involves a blend of techniques to accomplish the language, content and culture objectives. They reflect the integrated sociocultural aspects through L2 acquisition.

Teaching English as a second language is carried out using successful methods like Communicative Language Teaching, Project Based Learning, Form-based instruction and other Second Language Acquisition techniques. Each of these methods taps a specific cognition process in Second Language Acquisition process. Enhancing the learner psychology by using his current knowledge will keep the learner comfortable in L2 teaching-learning set up. When CLT was a breakthrough in second language teaching - strategic, linguistic, sociocultural and discourse competences were identified as parts of CLT framework.

Using the L1 sociocultural context as themes to impart the second language components provides the learners a double edge. They will be able to relate the native language component or cultural context to the target language. This empowers the learners with autonomy as they will not feel estranged in L2 classes. Engaging the learners with such a strategy will provide the motivation and attraction for L2.

When a language like English which is the popularly taught across the world as a second language, it is important that the teaching strategy upholds learner autonomy as an important principle for the success of the second language acquisition. To attain this, using L1 components and themes will be very helpful.

This paper establishes the effectiveness of using native language sociocultural context for L2 learners. The paper discusses the efficacy with which L2 objective can be attained with L1 theme.

## Background

### Role of Linguistic Diversity in Multicultural Education

To broaden the framework for linguistic diversity, it is necessary to redefine it as a component of multicultural education. In the same way that ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender are often regarded as vital to multicultural education, linguistic variety should also be included, despite not

fitting neatly into any of these categories. It is one of the primary objectives of intercultural education to maximise the abilities of students, yet, language diversity is not always considered a positive in multicultural education. Language variety must be regarded as an essential distinction in and of itself. Students' native languages, with all their associated social connotations and affirmations, should not be marginalized or pushed to a secondary place. Because culture and language are inextricably intertwined, and because both multi-cultural and bi-lingual methods aim to engage and empower the most vulnerable pupils in our classrooms, it is crucial that their natural connections be developed.

Effective teaching is based on the idea that new knowledge and experiences build on what has already been learned. In the case of children from minority languages, we seem to miss this fact since schools routinely restrict students' access to their earlier learning in languages other than English. In his work [2] Cummins eloquently explains why this method contradicts how learning takes place and the vital function of language, stating, "there is general agreement among cognitive psychologists that we learn by integrating new input into our existing cognitive structures or schemata. Our prior experience provides the foundation for interpreting new information. No learner is a blank slate." When instructors and institutions disrespect the native cultures and languages of language minority populations because they believe it's for a good cause. Students' ability to communicate in English is typically linked to their future success in the workplace and in society; hence, kids who converse in any language other than English are considered "handicapped" and are encouraged, both subtly and directly, to forsake their home tongue. Usually, in the guise of preserving kids' futures, the educational system penalizes youngsters for speaking their native language at home and requires parents to speak English to their children at all times or defer instruction until the children have acquired enough grasp on English. These techniques have immeasurable harmful effects on language minority people.

In [3], the study of variables that encouraged or inhibited academic performance among high school students of Mexican origin in California, the author discovered that the school environment emphasized English-language monolingualism as a goal, dismissing the advantages of bilingualism. Instead of emphasizing pupils' native language skills, instructors pushed them to converse in English to exclude as much Spanish as they could. Gibson termed this assumption among educators "English-only attitudes". The research report in [4] suggests that when such attitudes are prevalent, pupils rapidly absorb disempowering ideas like: "The members of some social groups, as a result, come to believe that their educational failure, rather than coming from their lowly esteemed social or cultural status, results from their natural inability: their lack of giftedness" (p. 11).

It is often tempting to see English immersion programs as the answer to language minority kids' scholastic issues. However, the lack of English proficiency alone cannot account for the low academic performance of language minority pupils. The correlation between English language proficiency and academic success is, at best, simple. Contrary to popular belief, a large-scale examination of the academic accomplishment of Puerto Rican and Mexican American pupils with diverse English-language skills showed that Spanish was not a barrier to achievement. In several instances, the researchers discovered that increased English competence was associated with worse academic achievement [5].

Peer pressure may have weakened the conventional relationship between English competence and academic success in this instance, according to the researchers. There is strong evidence that learning a second language has a positive influence on one's overall well-being. It is possible to protect children from academic failure by promoting literacy in their most developed language. Research reported in [6] found that parents who had children who performed well in school were more likely to provide their children with a home environment in which they could communicate in their native tongue than parents who had children who performed poorly in school. Only 16% of Mexican American individuals who were raised in poverty knew English as their first language, according to the work documented in [7]. The author then examined the excellent scholastic accomplishments of these people.

Most of these successful people were up in households where only Spanish was spoken, and the bulk of them attended school in Spanish-speaking countries. School dropout rates are higher among students with limited bilingualism than those who are skilled in both languages, according to the research documented in [8]. A variety of studies on the adjustment and academic performance of immigrants from varied backgrounds were examined. When it comes to academic success, bilingualism isn't a hindrance. As a result of these findings, parents of linguistic minorities should disregard the recommendation to "speak English with your children at home."

Virginia Collier [9], challenging conventional wisdom, claims that when kids are more adept in another language, speaking English solely at home might delay their cognitive growth as a child's "level of cognitive maturity" can only be determined by the use of the language by themselves and their child(ren). Catherine Snow [10], a well-known language acquisition and literacy researcher, agrees with this by saying: "the greatest contribution immigrant parents can make to their children's success is to ensure they maintain fluency and continue to develop the home language."

This approach to the topic of language minority education leads to the fact that linguistic diversity must be considered in a socio-political framework. That is considerations about how schools view language usage and language diversity, as well as whether or not curriculum changes, are more important than language differences themselves. The widespread belief that "bilingualism is a liability for language minority kids but a benefit for students from affluent and privileged families is based on the socio-political environment of education, not on the relative qualities of the many languages involved". Having one group of kids' native language destroyed while another group attempts to learn a foreign language in an artificial and pressured setting is not unusual in the same high school, for example. There are more affirming techniques to educating language minority pupils that should be adopted more broadly than they are today.

### **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is about involving learners in communicative activities that will improve their language ability. It is acknowledged as a method of teaching that is globally understood and applied. CLT is characterized as process-oriented, task based and inductive [1]. The most important objective of CLT is the significant and lasting reorganization of classroom language teaching. It acknowledges the socio-cultural context of L2 learners and imbibes it into language teaching practices. It is oriented about identifying the communication needs of the learner which should form the basis for curriculum drafting.

### **Teachers and L2 Teaching**

Teachers are encouraged to design lesson plans encompassing CLT objectives. This gives them an ownership on the lessons where they plan the objectives and outcomes. This provides a platform for the teachers to be independent and imaginative to come up with components that employ creative use of language forms and expressions. In the view of socio-cultural staging of language teaching objectives, inclusion of local materials and involvement of local teachers have a major role in curriculum design. Teachers who are fluent in learners' L1 have a greater advantage of relating L1 and L2 components on suitable language components.

When a global language like English is taught as L2, it is imperative for teachers to identify and appreciate native and native-like competence. Learners respond differently to learning a new language. As language is a tool of expression, learners may struggle to express in a new language. This with insufficient facilitation will result in the alienation of the language. Memorizing grammar rules and word lists may not be adequate and effective. Socio-cultural effect on language instruction programs will help. This is because culture plays an influential role in shaping learner's ability in both first and

second language [1]. The argument does not defy the significance of grammar but rather states that it is best imparted with a broadly defined communicative proficiency. Learners should be encouraged to use the language for a variety of purposes.

As the teachers are independent to plan the lessons for a CLT based language class, it is imperative to keep them aware of a lot of resources from web. We as teachers are addressing the first generation of internet users who are always connected. Teachers can take the advantage of technology to plan for interactive classroom, forums to provide offline support and monitored interaction among learners. Online references, submissions and other digitized tasks can both tap their skill and induce their interest for the language. Teachers can plan a lesson as a visually enriched content with pictures, charts, images, collages, maps, videos which can get the undivided attention from the learners. When such visually enriched lesson plans are integrated with critical thinking ideas, language classrooms become all the more effective and interesting.

Intuitively, CLT puts the focus on learner. This poses an important obligation of appropriate learner assessment. Teachers and linguists advocate for a holistic assessment of learners. The output from learners are in the form of learner portfolios, poem, stories, songs, stories and the CLT tasks that lead to these encourage learner interest and participation. Despite, elaborate assessment procedures remain an important issue for CLT. Developing appropriate rubrics with components relevant to the language tasks performed helps with the assessment. Learning tasks that demands assessment of productive and receptive skills can be better evaluated with a carefully prepared rubric. It is important to identify the specific technical component that needs to be assessed. Exclusive open source applications are available that support the creation of rubrics. Sharing the rubric with students gives them a good insight of the task and component evaluated. This can positively influence the learning curve and help students to work around the pitfalls.

CLT based classroom activities can include individual tasks and team coordinated tasks. This renders the dual benefit of individual's interaction with others in the team and all the glory of team playing skills. Learners get to learn from and influence peers in a positive way in a carefully controlled classroom task.

### **English Language Teaching in India**

During the early 1600s English came to India through the British East India Company. The following decades witnessed major socio-political transformations and English which began as a language for the upper class went on to become an opportunity to take on the challenges and opportunities of twenty first century. The status of the language underwent constant change and so did the ELT paradigm. The liberalization of the India economy instated a whole bunch of potential opportunities to learn the language [11]. ELT in India is evolving, integrating Conversational AI, Large Language Models and reaching out to educational institutions as policy-makers, administrators, teachers and parents see it as the need of the hour.

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