



LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES FOR A COMMUNICATIVE CLASSROOM

For Class IX and Class XI

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Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative language teaching is an effective way of engaging learners and helping them to develop their language skills in a natural context. It encourages learners to improve their language in a personalised way and helps them to interact in English in real life situations rather than just learning English grammar rules and word lists. Students develop their skills by “doing”. It can be compared to riding a bicycle – you can’t learn how to ride a bicycle without practising.

So communicative language teaching is about allowing students to practise more and to relate language to their own realities. Activities in Communicative Language Teaching are focused on students in realistic communication. The more practice and success students have using English, the better their motivation to learn.

1. Classroom management

- It is important that students have time to practise using English in the classroom. In the past teachers used to spend more time talking, nowadays students do more of the talking in pairs and groups – this allows all students more opportunities to practise.
- If you have strong students and weaker students in the same class, you can give some of the stronger students the responsibility of helping some of the weaker students.
- If possible, try to arrange the classroom so that students can see each other. Even if students are seated in rows they can still talk to students on either side or in front/behind them. For example, in an information gathering activity, you can use different “stations” or areas around the classroom and put different information on each “station” to encourage the students to interact.
- In a noisy class if you don’t raise your voice, you are automatically modelling good practice for the learners. When you want them to stop talking you can train them to recognise body language e.g. putting your hand on your head to stop students speaking.
- Try to use students’ names to establish a sense of closeness. When you want a student to answer a question, say the question and then your chosen student’s name. This means that all of the students listen to the question and are thinking of the answer.

2. Activities

- Interaction is key – Ensure that students interact meaningfully during through pair work and group work activities.
- It is motivating if students can be encouraged to talk about themselves and to express their thoughts and options, so that they are interacting as naturally as possible.
- Success in the task is more important than student accuracy; successful completion of the task helps motivate the student.
- There has to be a reason to communicate e.g. one student has some information that another student wants (if the student knows the answer, then s/he will not be motivated to ask questions)
- Use exercises such as role-play, creating posters with students’ own ideas, solving puzzles together or creating stories together.
- It is motivating for students to see what they did well. It is also useful to raise some of the language issues that occurred during in the activity e.g. write some of the errors on the board and get the class to correct them – try to get the students to correct their own errors if possible as this helps to keep them motivated.

3. Using coursebooks communicatively

- Using coursebooks communicatively doesn't mean extra preparation – it just means allowing students more time to practise by reinforcing book activities with communicative practice.
- Communicative use of coursebooks could include:
 - o following a reading task from the coursebook with a follow-on group discussion
 - o getting students to ask each other questions to test each other's knowledge of new language
 - o using role-play after a listening exercise
 - o making writing exercises reflect real communication by getting students to write to each other.

The activities given in this document are samples and should be used in the classroom to encourage communicative use of language. The activities were the outcome of a Teacher Development workshop conducted by Trinity College London for CBSE teachers. Teachers who participated in the workshop and contributed activities are:

Alka Rai	Harminder Sethi	Prem Dutta Sharma
Amandeep Kaur	Heemal Handoo Bhat	Rajyasri Narayan
Anita Pandey	K Pankajavalli	Rumpa Bhattacharyya
Anita Saini	Khaleeq Ahmad	Samir Kumar Kanungo
Anita Wadhwa	Manvinder Kaur	Sangeeta Suri
Anupam Nautiyal	Nandita Sinha Roy	Soma Ghoshal
Aruna Dhiman	Neelam Kulshreshtha	Ms. Sonia Jhingran
Bharati Kwatra	Nidhi Kapoor	Sudhir Kumar
Charu Mehta	Nirmal Bhalla	Veena Bhasin
Dinesh Kumar	Ottima Ragazza	Vimmy Singh
Dolly Dhawan	Prabha Sinha	
Gurdarshan Kaur Joshi	Prachi Agarwal	

Activity 1

Activity name	Stories Retold
Level	B1/B2
Skill	Speaking
Time	40 minutes
Grouping of students	Groups of 6 to 8
Materials	Pictures – Each picture represents a topic or theme (listed below).

Objectives:

- Asking questions for clarifications.
- Summarising and explaining.

Instructions:

- The teacher asks the students if:
 - they have heard any interesting stories lately or
 - they know of any stories of their parents' childhood.
- The teacher elicits one story of each type.
- The teacher explains to the students that they will be listening to and telling stories during the class.
- The teacher will organise the class to form groups of 6–8. Each group will choose a topic and pick a picture that matches their topic. The topics include:
 - School
 - Work
 - Childhood
 - Birth
 - Marriage
 - Travel
 - Family
 - Weekend plans
 - Sports
- One of the group members will begin by sharing a story about a topic relating to the picture with the other group members. The student sharing the story will have about ten minutes to narrate it. The students will begin by stating how their story is similar to or different from the picture.
- At the end of the narration, the rest of the group will ask wh- questions to check their understanding of the story.
- After the first person has finished sharing their story the listener will summarise and explain the story to the class.

Teacher will circulate among the groups monitoring their communication in an informal way, providing assistance when required.

Stages:

- Setting up (forming of groups, giving instructions – guidelines, objectives, rules, time limit and rubric for assessment.): 5 minutes
- Warm up and activity: 30 minutes
- Evaluation and feedback to students: 5 minutes

Activity 2

Activity name	Radio Show
Level	B2
Skill	Speaking
Time	40 minutes
Grouping of students	Groups of 6
Materials	Placards, poster, music system, musical instruments (guitar, keyboard etc), paper, pen, charts

Objectives:

- Developing the script, planning the activity as a team and building on presentation skills.
- Learning to speak with appropriate intonation, voice modulation and body language while communicating.

Instructions:

- The students work in groups of six.
- The students prepare a script for presenting a radio programme five days in advance.
- The radio show must have a radio jockey. There should be an interview session with a famous personality, as well as fillers (e.g. jokes, advertisements, jingles, songs/music).
- The team will be given 10 minutes to present their show.
- Each team has to adhere to the time limit and meet the deadline.
- At the end of three sessions, the class indicates which performance they liked best and why.

Stages:

- Setting up (forming of groups, giving instructions – guidelines, objectives, rules, time limit and rubric for assessment.): 5 minutes
- Warm up and activity: 30 minutes
- Evaluation and feedback to students: 5 minutes

Activity 3

Activity name	Two-Minute Debate
Level	B2
Skill	Speaking
Time	40 minutes
Grouping of students	Groups of 6 to 8
Materials	Board

Objectives:

1. Presenting opinions and arguments
2. Using expressions like "I would like to argue that..."
"I admit that...", "It does not follow from what was said earlier...", "In my view ... I disagree with ..."

Instructions:

- The class works in groups.
- The teacher writes 4–5 simple topics on the blackboard; allows two minutes for discussion.
Possible topics are
 - *A bike is better than a car*
 - *It's more interesting to watch a soap opera than watch the news*
 - *It's better to be a student than a teacher*
- Two students from each group must present an argument for and against the motion.
- After one student from Group A presents an argument for the motion, another from Group B presents against. The teacher ensures that every group is represented.
- The teacher provides feedback at the end.

Stages:

- Setting up (forming of groups, giving instructions – guidelines, objectives, rules, time limit and rubric for assessment.): 5 minutes
- Warm up and activity: 30 minutes
- Evaluation and feedback to students: 5 minutes

Activity 4

Activity name	Role-Play
Level	B1/B2
Skill	Speaking
Time	40 minutes
Grouping of students	Pairs
Materials	Four job advertisements cut from a newspaper/magazine (enough copies of each ad.)

Objectives:

- Learning how to ask and answer questions in a formal setting.
- Learning the principles of role-play

Instructions:

- Students will form groups of four.
- Teacher gives one job advertisement from a newspaper or magazine to each group, and asks them to spend a few minutes discussing the ad.
- They have to play the roles of interviewer and candidate.
- Students perform the role-play in front of the class, using wh- questions.
- Teacher provides general feedback and sums up.

Stages:

- Students in groups discuss the job advertisements. Students from each group write two biodata for suitable candidates (10 minutes)
- Half of each group would be the interviewers and should look at the job profile sheets. The rest are the candidates and should look at the biodata. They familiarise themselves with their roles for some time. (15 minutes)
- The interviewers enact an interview with each of the candidates in turn. (15 minutes)

Activity 5

Activity name	Story Writing
Level	B1/B2
Skill	Speaking
Time	40 minutes
Grouping of students	Groups of 10
Materials	A pen and paper for each student

Objective:

Collaborative writing

Instructions:

- A group of ten students sit in a circle. Each student in the group must have a pen and a sheet of paper.
- The teacher reads out a question to which the students write the answer (e.g. *Describe an astronaut.*)
- Each student would then pass the sheet to the student sitting on their right.
- The teacher would then read out the second question (e.g. *Describe the spaceship.*)
- The students would write the answer and the process would continue. (*The astronaut reaches an alien planet – describe it. Meets an alien – describe it. What happened next?... What happened at the end?*)
- The teacher would read out ten questions during the activity and at the end of the activity the student should get back the paper they started with.
- Some of the stories are read out and the teacher provides feedback on the features of collaborative work.

Stages:

- Setting up (forming of groups, giving instructions – guidelines, objectives, rules, time limit and rubric for assessment.): 5 minutes
- Warm up and activity: 30 minutes
- Evaluation and feedback to students: 5 minutes

Activity 6

Activity name	Spin a Yarn–Weaving a story based on newspaper headlines
Level	B1/B2
Skill	Speaking
Time	5 minutes for each team
Grouping of students	Groups of 4–6
Materials	Newspapers, scissors, a box or bowl [to keep the slips]

Objectives:

- Connecting ideas and expressing them as narrative
- Collaborating to write

Instructions:

- The teacher places 10–15 newspaper/magazine cuttings of headlines in a bowl.
- One student picks up a headline, prepares for one minute and begins a narrative, which can last for about 2 minutes.
- Another student picks up another headline and continues the narrative. Students take their turn one after the other till all the headlines are exhausted and the students have constructed one story out of diverse headlines. The last person has to conclude the narrative.
- The students will be evaluated based on the following criteria: *content, connectivity with the previous clue, diction, logical sequencing of the story and coherence.*

Stages:

- Setting up (forming of groups, giving instructions – guidelines, objectives, rules, time limit and rubric for assessment.): 5 minutes
- Warm up and activity: 30 minutes
- Evaluation and feedback to students: 5 minutes

Activity 7

Activity name	Listening comprehension
Level	B1/B2
Skill	Listening
Time	30 minutes
Grouping of students	Individual
Materials	Audio equipment, Worksheets, stationery

Objective:

Improving listening and comprehension skills

Instructions:

- Students are given a worksheet and asked to read its contents.
- They are briefed about the passages that they are going to listen to.
- They are asked to listen attentively to the passages read and fill in the first and second columns in their worksheets
- They are asked to listen to the article when the passages are read a second time. At this stage they should not be writing anything.
- After listening for the second time 10 minutes are given to recall and fill in the third and fourth columns

Stages:

- Setting up (forming of groups, giving instructions – guidelines, objectives, rules, time limit and rubric for assessment.): 5 minutes
- Warm up and activity: 30 minutes
- Evaluation and feedback to students: 5 minutes

Sample Passage:

Listening Task

Variety is the spice of life

A group of 3 food companies have just published some research about healthy eating. They surveyed 100 doctors internationally about their views of what everyone can do to have a healthy diet. All of the doctors surveyed agreed that eating a range of fruit and vegetables can help us stay healthy, so it's important that we get enough of them every day.

The research points out that fruit and vegetable taste really good and that there is so much to choose from. Fruit and vegetables are a food source of vitamins and minerals that help us to stay healthy. The doctors suggested that we should try to eat at least 5 different types of fruit and vegetables every day.

Answer Key

<p><i>Title of article (1)</i> Variety is the spice of life</p>	<p><i>Reliability of the article: Who funded it? How big was the sample? (2)</i> The research was funded by 3 food producers and 100 doctors were interviewed about their thoughts regarding healthy diets</p>	<p><i>The health message in the article (3)</i> Try to eat at least five different types of fruit and vegetables every day</p>	<p><i>Would you take any notice of the advice? Why? (4)</i> Students to complete their thoughts</p>
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Activity 8

Activity name	Rescue
Level	B2
Skill	Speaking
Time	15–25 minutes
Grouping of students	Groups of 5 to 8
Materials	-

Objective:

Stating opinions, offering and asking for reasons, agreeing and disagreeing, comparing

Instructions:

The teacher explains a situation: (2–3 minutes)

The earth is going to be destroyed over the next two days due to radiation. Aliens from another planet have come to our rescue but they can only rescue twelve people and move them to a planet which is very similar to our earth. These twelve people will start a new world there. Imagine that you have been asked to draw up this list. What criteria would you use to make your decision and why. Discuss this within the group and arrive at a consensus, choosing ten criteria.

- Each group presents its list of criteria to the class. The lists are discussed. (8–10 minutes)
1. The task can be made more specific like asking the students to list fifteen criteria.
 2. After the criteria are decided the groups can also write a list of ten things they would like to take with them.

Stages:

- Setting up (forming of groups, giving instructions – guidelines, objectives, rules, time limit and rubric for assessment.): 5 minutes
- Warm up and activity: 30 minutes
- Evaluation and feedback to students: 5 minutes

Activity 9

Activity name	Sports Commentary
Level	B1/B2
Skill	Speaking
Time	50 minutes
Grouping of students	Groups of 3
Materials	Video for the commentary and one sample commentary audio/video recording

Objective:

Reporting events; using appropriate vocabulary and grammar to report events

Instructions:

- Students watch a video of a portion of any match or hear an audio recording of a sports commentary. Alternatively, two students read out the text.
- Students may work in groups of 3. Each group will listen, discuss and present a commentary for the video chosen by the teacher. (Alternatively, with advanced planning, students may be allowed to bring videos of their choice to class.)
- Two members of each group would present the commentary while the third member will introduce the team, the details of the match or previous matches and conclude the presentation.
- While a group presents, peers evaluate their performance. Feedback will be shared at the end of the session.

Stages:

1. Warm up and introduction: 5 minutes
2. Activity: 30 minutes
3. Tools and techniques
 - Tools: video/audio sample
 - + video for commentary
 - + rubric
 - Technique: group writing + individual contributions to the spoken presentation
4. Feedback and evaluation: 5 minutes – Peer evaluation and feedback. Teacher's feedback to sum up

Activity 10

Activity name	Creative Monologue
Level	B2
Skill	Speaking
Time	45 minutes
Grouping of students	Individual
Materials	Textbook

Objective:

Creative Writing

Instructions:

Teacher refers to a story in the Literature Reader. The students have to prepare and present a monologue written from the point of view of one of the characters. Teacher may present a sample creative monologue based on either a chapter or a well-known novel/fairy tale.

- Students choose a character from any of the chapters studied and prepare a monologue based on the character's perspective. (15 mins)
- The students present their monologues while their peers give feedback on the performance and how well the character's emotional perspective was understood / interpreted. (30 mins)
- The teacher shares feedback to sum up the session.

Stages:

1. Introduction - 5 minutes
2. Methodology of the progress of the activity - 30 minutes
3. Tools and techniques
 - Tools: textbook + rubric
 - Technique: individual speeches
4. Working with people (feedback and evaluation) - peer evaluation and feedback
 - Teacher's feedback to sum up

Activity 11

Activity name	The Big Fight
Level	B2
Skill	Speaking
Time	45 minutes
Grouping of students	Individual
Materials	Textbook

Objective:

Expressing opinions; using appropriate language to agree and disagree

Instructions:

- The teacher chooses the topic for the discussion and a moderator. Four panelists may be chosen by a draw of lots and assigned roles by the teacher based on the topic chosen.
- The remainder of the class is the audience. The panelists begin the discussion with inputs/questions from the audience, all moderated by the chosen moderator.
- The teacher shares feedback to sum up the session.
- A possible variation is to use the format of a press conference.

Stages:

1. Introduction, seating, rules, time limits: 10 minutes
2. Activity - 30 minutes
3. Tools and techniques
Tools: rubric
Technique: panel interview
4. Teacher's feedback to sum up: 3 minutes

Activity 12

Activity name	Solve My Problem
Level	B1/B2
Skill	Speaking
Time	10 minutes per group
Grouping of students	Groups of 5 or 6
Materials	-

Objective:

Making suggestions and offering solutions using appropriate lexicon and tense.

Instructions:

- Students sit in a semicircle in groups of 5–6.
- One person in each group will put forward a problem he/she faces. Examples are, *My neighbour plays music very loudly... or I want to try and exercise but don't seem to be able to decide what form of exercise I should do.*
- The others in the group will offer a variety of solutions, one at a time. The student accepts or debates the solution offered.
- Teacher offers feedback.

Stages:

- Stating the problem (1–2 minutes)
- Offering solutions; accepting or debating them (8 minutes)

Activity 13

Activity name	One Day in your City
Level	B1
Skill	Speaking, Writing
Time	40 minutes
Grouping of students	Pairs
Materials	None

Objective:

Stating an opinion, giving and asking for reasons, agreeing and disagreeing, comparisons etc

Instructions:

- The teacher provides the situation:

Your friend is visiting your city for the first time. He/She has time from 9 am to 9 pm. Decide what you would both like to do.

- The candidates work in pairs. They find out from each other what they would and would not like to do. They give reasons for their choices. Then they work out a timetable for the day.
- The pair then works with another pair and exchange partners. Similarities and differences between individual suggestions are discussed.
- (*Optional*) The teacher/ trainer finds out how the timetables were agreed on: Did one partner dominate? Did one partner try to persuade the other one? Was there a lot of arguing? Did one of the pair have to give up a lot of ideas?

Stages

- Setting up (forming of groups, giving instructions – guidelines, objectives, rules, time limit and rubric for assessment.): 5 minutes
- Warm up and activity: 30 minutes
- Evaluation and feedback to students: 5 minutes

Activity 14

Activity name	Do As I Say!
Level	B1
Skill	Listening
Time	40 minutes
Grouping of students	Pairs
Materials	Paper, pencil/pen

Objective:

Comprehending and following instructions

Instructions:

- The students work in pairs. Each student draws something, such as a map, a difficult shape or a view of the landscape or place (e.g. a garden: the picture should be detailed and should include garden pots, trees, benches etc.)
- Student A describes his/her picture step by step, while Student B draws. (For example, in my picture, there is a tree on the right side behind the man.)
- Then Student B gives instructions about his picture while Student A draws.
- After they finish, the students analyse the drawings to check if they match the original.
- Discuss with the students how to give clear instructions.

Stages:

- Setting up (forming of groups, giving instructions – guidelines, objectives, rules time limit and rubric for assessment.): 5 minutes
- Warm up and activity: 30 minutes
- Evaluation and feedback to students: 5 minutes

Activity 15

Activity name	Agree, Disagree or in between Be
Level	B2
Skill	Speaking
Time	45 Minutes
Grouping of students	Individual and groups
Materials	Chalk to mark on floor

Objective:

Eliciting responses showing agreement/disagreement; agree/disagree with conditions.

Instructions:

- The teacher writes a statement on the board that invites diverse views on debatable issues drawn from the text or issues that are prevalent in the society. Examples:

"It is the responsibility of the parents to bridge the generation gap" ('Father to Son', a poem by Elizabeth Jennings, from 'Hornbill', Class XI text book)

"Helping a common man from an enemy country displays lack of patriotism to the mother land." ('Enemy' by Pearl S. Buck, from the book 'Vistas', Cl. XII)

"Industrialization alone holds the key to a nation's development."

- The teacher asks students to read the statement carefully and think about it, and then form opinions. Brainstorm in the class on what their opinions are on the debatable issue.
- Mark out five squares in the classroom numbered 1 to 5 to indicate the following:
 - 1=Disagree totally (0%)
 - 2=Partially disagree (25%)
 - 3=Neither agree nor disagree (50%)
 - 4=Partially agree (75%)
 - 5=Agree totally (100%)
- The teacher writes out this key on the blackboard.
- The teacher then asks the students what they think and to take their stand near the numbers representing their opinion.
- There would be varying numbers of students in each group; ask each group to discuss their views and find out the strong points for justifying their stand. The teacher gives support to groups which have very few students.
- One person from the group presents the viewpoint of the group.
- Teacher can add points to the discussion when necessary and sum up.

Stages:

- Brainstorming followed by reflection stage 8 min.
- The grouping stage as students group around different standpoints 2 min.
- The discussion stage 10 min.
- The summarising stage 20 min.
- Feedback/comments 5 min.

Activity 16

Activity name	Citizens' Forum—the Problem of Traffic Jams in your City/Town
Level	B2
Skill	Speaking
Time	40 minutes
Grouping of students	Groups of 6
Materials	Cue cards for each speaker

Objectives:

- Sensitising students to local issues
- Generating ideas and using language functions appropriate to stating of problems, giving suggestions, concluding and summarising.

Instructions:

- Teacher asks the class to form groups of six. Each group gets a set of six cue cards.
- Teacher announces the topic and explains the task.
 - You are going to discuss the traffic problems in your city
 - The local councillor has invited representatives of different organizations to discuss this issue.
 - You will be given your cue cards. Play the role allotted to you
 - At the end of the meeting the councillors will share the ideas of their groups with the rest of the class.
- Teacher hands over the cue cards to each member in the group
- Teacher regulates timings by saying *time up* or clap of hands
- Teacher monitors each group
- The person who is the local councillor sums up the discussion; other group members about the difficulties they faced during the discussion.
- Teacher gives feedback

Stages:

- Preparation: 3 minutes
- Holding the meeting: 15 minutes
- Sharing summarized ideas with whole class: 10–12 minutes (2 minutes for each group)
- Feedback: 10 minutes

Cue Cards

You are the Local Councillor

- Welcome everyone to the forum
- Ask each member to introduce him/herself
- State the purpose of the meeting
- Moderate the meeting by inviting one member at a time to give his views and suggestions. The member of the town planning commission should be invited last.
- Conclude the meeting:
 - i. offer a positive assurance
 - ii. thank the invitees

You are a senior traffic police officer

- Introduce yourself
- State any two problems that you face
- Make one suggestion

You are a member of the Residents Welfare Association

- Introduce yourself
- State two problems faced by citizens
- Make one suggestion

You are the Administrative Officer at a local hospital

- Introduce yourself
- State two problems that you face
- Make one suggestion

You are President of the Local Schools Forum

- Introduce yourself
- State two problems that you face
- Make one suggestion

You are a member of the Town Planning Commission

- Introduce yourself
- You have heard the problems
- State two problems that you face
- Suggest one solution