

Original Paper

Competitive Team-Based Learning (CTBL): A Revolutionary Approach to Contemporary Language Teaching/Education

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Abstract

This article dissects part of the socio-educational/political background to my innovative approach to Language Teaching/Education namely Competitive Team-Based Learning (CTBL), which he formulated based on his seminal edu-political theories. (See, 2023) It then clarifies certain misgivings regarding integrating the element of competition within cooperative learning settings to pave the way to a to-the-point introduction to CTBL. The article also discusses – at length – distinguishing features and characteristics of CTBL with reference to the present methods and approaches like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and particularly Cooperative Learning (CL) methods. It also throws light on the mechanisms underlying the implementation of CTBL in real classroom situations and illustrates presentations and classroom techniques in classes where this approach may be applied by teachers. Moreover, the article highlights the kind of design, objectives, evaluation system, syllabi, materials, tasks, and activities emphasized by CTBL. Importantly, the significance of motivation in CTBL settings has been thrown into sharp relief. Finally, the article gives a glimpse of the importance of CTBL for today (language) classes in our complicated competitive world context, and elaborates the howabouts of its contribution to significant changes in our societies, for peace making and compassionate civilizations building. CTBL makes it possible via bringing that sort of changes in our students' minds first.

Introduction

Soon after I came to the conclusion that because of his attitude, THEY would not let him continue his study here in Iran, he decided to peruse his Ph.D. in India. In the incredible biggest democracy of the world, he amazed how peaceful people with different backgrounds were living and flourishing together while we, in the Middle East have been living under extreme pressure in highly horrifying stressful

circumstances. As an educator, I thought it is the education system of different nations that is the root of their miseries or prosperities. He thus formulated my revolutionary approach to teaching, based on his edu-political theories, to contribute to peace making and more civilized nations building.

Notwithstanding the idea that every method or approach is composed of certain principles and strategies, it is reasonable for educators, in the post-method area, to make use of different methods/approaches' most effective principles. This is essential for formulating their (eclectic) ones in order to address and meet the specific requirements of different circumstances in their respective classrooms. Among such requirements are our socio-educational-, cultural-, economic-, and political goals. Fortunately, by virtue of their flexibility, most of the present methods/approaches have the potential to draw or crossbreed the best practices out of one another. In this chapter I have essayed to cast light on the process he went through in the course of engineering (i.e., analysing, recasting, mixing, synthesising, modifying, enriching, expanding, and developing) contemporary methods and approaches towards CTBL, my transformative and empowering approach to teaching. Needless to say that he has availed himself of the most effective principles of the present innovative methods and approaches particularly in the arenas of Cooperative Learning (CL) and Language Teaching, in the said process.

Competitive Team-Based Learning (CTBL), My Innovative Approach to Teaching



Before continuing our discussion, search for *Dr Hosseini's Didactic Weapon* in the virtual world and watch the introductory video about the application of his approach in a real classroom situation. Also, watch the videos to my initial thoughts that contributed to CTBL at <https://www.aparat.com/v/mfx1q> and at <https://www.aparat.com/v/aeOoI>, the video on the howabouts of the transforming power of his approach at <https://www.aparat.com/v/fAErU>, and his Ph.D. viva voce video at Mysore University in 2009 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBrb0ySuPH0>. As exhibited in the videos, CTBL

foregrounds the significance of systematic *teamwork in highly competitive* as well as *exciting environments* amidst democratic ambience not only to foster academic progress of students but also to more significantly contribute to their future success, in their interactions, careers and lives. In CTBL environments, students of potentially diverse ethnic-, and socio-political backgrounds with different attitudes, (language) learning strategies and styles, social skills, dispositions, and abilities shape heterogeneous teams of usually four members each. They attempt to work/live together in a highly motivational dialogic-based learning environment, in an atmosphere which emphasises their adherence to some pre-established learning/living culture, which is in point of fact my ethos and manifesto. (See Hosseini, 2023)

As indicated in the above videos, in CTBL settings, the stress is not on translation, repetition, memorization, recitation, and reproduction of factual or descriptive statements in contrived circumstances that are negligent of the majority. Rather the emphasis is on higher order of incisive and analytical thinking skills such as clarification, evaluation of causes and effects, analysis, prediction, comparison, synthesis, elaboration, generalization, and application of concepts during problem solving activities. These happen via activities such as role playing, negotiating, questioning, criticizing, challenging, note taking, outlining, paraphrasing, and summarising, to cite some examples. These activities are scaffold by authentic, interactive, relaxing, and motivating environments which ensure the involvement of *all* learners in the process of shared (language) learning. Such environments are most likely to contribute to the development of not only leaning strategies and language and social skills, but also some crucial habits of mind such as objectivity and critical and creative thinking, which in their turn have positive relationship with language learning. This is possible because, as Angelo (1995) also confirmed, “intentional application of rational higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, problem recognition and problem solving, inference, and evaluation” (p. 6), that are common practices in CTBL situations, are characteristics of critical thinking. Language learning via CTBL is hence viewed as an act of learning to share language learning skills and strategies by equipping students to learn it as an FL or as an L2 through critical and creative thinking, with the scaffold of their teams’ members.

Background to Competitive Team-Based Learning

As we know, group learning is of crucial prominence particularly in the course of (language) learning. The importance of current innovative interactive methods and approaches like Collaborative Learning (CoL), Interactive Learning (IntL), and CL refers to the fact that they have come to prioritise the significance of group work in (language) learning settings. But such methods and approaches, which have been offered by constructivists to Language Teaching /Education, concurrent with the dawn of the third millennium, have many problems with them. Their first critical problem is that they, as their ancestors, fail to consider the realities of the real world that incorporate socio-economic-, and particularly socio-political issues. No one can deny the fact that we still – in the 21st century - have

sources of condescending look, Hitlerian outlook, racism, injustice, corruption, oppression, and destruction among us at local, national, and global levels. In our present uncivilized world, we cannot envision world peace and human security and prosperity as the-said instructional methods and approaches cannot help us to fulfil our holy goals. Therefore, such innovations are doomed to failure.

The second major problem with the current particularly interactive methods and approaches is that they reject any form of *competition* in learning environments, and in doing so neglect its significant contribution to more effective and comprehensive learning, growth, and development. Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD), developed by Slavin (1978) and associates at Johns Hopkins University, is among these methods. STAD focuses on intra-group co-operation only. It has no focus on inter-group relationships—it is neutral in this regard. Even methods like Jigsaw I, developed by Aronson, et al. (1978) at the University of California in the US; Jigsaw II, developed by Slavin (1995) at York University in England, and Group Investigation (GI), developed by Sharan and Sharan (1992) at Tel Aviv University in Israel, have extended cooperation to include *inter-group relationships also*. Learning Together or Circles of Learning or as I have called it *Cooperative Group-Based Learning* (CGBL), developed by Johnson and Johnson (1999) at the University of Minnesota in America, is the epitome of this family of CL methods that overemphasize co-operation. Just as instructional innovations like CoLL and IntL, CGBL, as a pure CL method, highlights patterning pure cooperation *both in intra- and in inter- group relationships and interactions*. There are, however, *few* methods at the end of the continuum of CL methods that have tried to consider the significant role of *competition* in learning environments. Among such rare methods is Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT), developed by DeVries and Edwards (1974) and Slavin (1978). But the problem is that such methods mostly focus on *within- group comparisons only*, ignoring inter-group competitions. Worse yet, as it is also evident from the review of the related literature (Hosseini, 2023), they look upon competition from a narrow angle: The main philosophy behind harnessing competition in such methods, which try to accommodate competition, refers to the idea that motivation is a motivator for involving students in the learning process only.

Overall, it seems this kind of negligence of the invaluable fundamental role of competition originates from, let I, with all due respect, say, the narrow outlooks of the designers and the advocates of the CL methods that stress on the role of pure cooperation in participatory learning settings. They have an extraordinary nebulous argument: They have argued that competition is a stressful factor, promotes negative attitudes among students and discourages them from helping one another, distracts them from basic learning goals, and by creating losers and winners ruptures the cohesion of the learning communities! (See e.g., Ames & Felker, 1979; Bacharach, Hasslen, & Anderson, 1995) But I would like to remind these educators that competition could be harnessed as a motivator for further co-operation and involvement in the course of team learning in competitive environments. But, more importantly, the significance of competition should be looked upon from another different angle also:—*Competition is an inevitable real world phenomenon*. As there are many situations in the real

world that are cooperative, there are also many circumstances that are competitive, especially in the arenas of economics, politics, and education itself. Today world is highly multicultural, incredibly complicated, and of course developmentally and fiercely competitive. The bare truth is thereby that in addition to skills for cooperation, *survival and flourishing in the present world context requires enormous skills and capacities for competition, for working under pressure in stressful competitive circumstances, and for learning, winning, or even losing in such circumstances.*

We therefore should confirm the fact that competition in the present scenario of on-going globalisation is an inevitable real-world oriented natural phenomenon. Educators must thus take into account all the motivational factors—both integrative as well as instrumental—in terms of both interdependence and competition in learning situations. Students/citizens need to internalise the indispensable skills, norms, and realities of the real world, chief among which is competition, in their classrooms. Today world context requires them to be able to compete wherever it is necessary as otherwise they would not be in a position of self-reliance to understand and constructively confront the realities of the tough world they face today and the tougher world they are likely to face in the years to come. Furthermore, as it will be elaborated in the following sections, my research findings (see Hosseini, 2023) are in opposition to the above specialists' findings and claims. I, in my PhD thesis, proved the superiority of his approach over CGBL which has ignored the significant role of competition both in inter- and in intra—group relations. Hence, it is the mechanism under which competition, as an effective extrinsic reinforcement, is implemented in cooperative learning environments that is critical. Today, in short, the question is not whether to infuse competition into cooperative learning settings or not. But rather, the question is *how* to incorporate and appreciate competition, as a motivator, in cooperative learning situations in such a way that it conduces to intrinsic motivation, which is a predictor of real learning. CTBL attempts to consider such issues. What adds to the value of CTBL refers to the point that via its implementation in our classes, we practise our citizens in *fair and humanitarian competition*. This would benefit our people/ nations and particularly the poor also in many ways. To cite an example, competitions among companies lower the prices of their products.

The third main problem with current CL methods and approaches refers to the deficiency in their *evaluation systems*: Students, in such methods and approaches, could earn rewards, certificates, and recognitions based on the average of their group scores. In other words, most of such innovations create situations whereby individual personal goals can be achieved *only if the group is successful* because individuals are recognized based on their group performances! This, I reckon, is not fair. The evaluation systems of such interactive methods and approaches overlook the fact that the level of individual group members' desire for hard work and for sharing their knowledge and expertise differ in many ways. Such evaluation systems ergo hazard the effectiveness of these methods and approaches by virtue of the fact that they create situations where:

- 1) The clever and more hard working students feel not adequately evaluated and appreciated, and
- 2) There is room for social loafers and free riders or those who are in the habit of abdicating their

responsibilities by putting the burden of their tasks on others, i.e., by hitchhiking on the work of others. This, in the long run though, contributes to the formation of unhealthy, if not maimed, societies.

A number of specialists like Slavin (1995) and Sharan (1994) have confirmed the above-mentioned devastating problems. Keeping such deficiencies in mind, it is interesting to repeat researchers' - like that of Topping (2000)—ideas who have argued that whether there is a need for extrinsic reinforcement in cooperative learning situations for motivating all participants to participate in the course of learning. But I should like to remind these specialists once again that today the question is not whether to appreciate extrinsic reinforcement like competition in cooperative learning settings. Rather, the question, this time, with regard to the aforementioned glitches, is *which kind of extrinsic reinforcement strategies* would more effectively contribute not only to intrinsic motivation but to the satisfaction of hard working students, and more importantly to *individual accountability of all group members* as well. All these issues of critical importance are being ignored in the present innovative interactive methods of learning and teaching. These issues are vital as it is not easy to imagine interactive group learning wherein e.g., the clever students are not willing to coordinate their efforts to the success of their group members and yet expect them and their groups to thrive.

I am therefore of the view that the present methods and approaches, as their ancestors, are doomed to failure since they have not the potential to prepare our citizens for today real world environments, by empowering them to face the challenges of on-going globalisation, a phenomenon no one can stay aloof from any more; by empowering them to keep going in the face of untoward circumstances in today complex world. They cannot assist our citizens to shine forth academically, socially and in life, and so have not the capacity to contribute to compassionate civilizations, world peace, and human security and prosperity. It was partly against such a backdrop that I designed and presented CTBL, my transformative and emancipatory approach, based on his edu-political theories. His theories are known as *Political Socio-Cognitive Language Learning Theory* (PSCLL Theory) and *Multiple Input, Output, and Feedback Hypothesis* (MIOF Hypothesis). (See Hosseini, 2023) I insists on the idea that the inclusion of CTBL into the arena of Education in general and Language Teaching in particular is a must; it is the need of the hour. Or else our dreams will vanish faster than we will repent, if we do not come to terms and do not consider this his suggestion.

Competitive Team-Based Learning in Practice⁵ / Classroom Procedure

In opposition to the traditional classes, the introduction sessions are very important to I. He thereby tries to establish mutual rapport between his people and him on the one hand, and among his people on the other to bring a warm social climate that involves trust and respect in his classroom from the beginning.

Generally, in the first session, I introduces himself and casts light on important educational terms, from his view point, so that students would have a realistic grasp of his beliefs in the field of Language Teaching/Education. Importantly, he introduces CTBL and elaborates its principles and objectives to

his students. Likewise, after an overview of the units which are to be covered during the semester, I sheds light on the objectives of the course and clearly clarify the rationale for using CTBL, the criteria for success, and the desired behaviors during class activities. An instruction sheet that points out the essential elements of the culture for working in CTBL classes is pasted as a poster on the classroom wall shortly thereafter. Students' responsibilities are also explained to them. At the end of class time, I administers a language proficiency test and based on students' scores, we form heterogeneous teams. During a reading course, for example, each unit—at the university level, is covered within two sessions/phases of 45 minutes each: *teaching phase* and *assessment phase*. The common regular cycle for the activities in both the sessions incorporates the following steps:

Phase I (Teaching)

Allocated Time: 45 minutes

1. Warm up.....1 (minute)
2. Review of the foregoing unit.....2
3. Correction of homework.....2
4. Overview.....2
5. View
 - A. Pre-reading activities
 - a. Activating the students' minds on the topic.....5
 - b. Discussing the guiding questions in teams.....5
 - B. Reading activities
 - a. Practicing the reading passage by individual members of teams.....8
 - b. Working in dyads.....5
 - c. Teamwork.....5
 - C. Post-reading/Follow-up activities
 - a. Discussing the topic class-wide.....6
 - b. Summary of the new lesson2
 - c. Assigning homework.....1
6. Preview.....1

Phase II (Assessment) – 45 (minutes):

1. Warm up.....1 (minute)
2. Checking through the students' homework.....3
3. Working of individual members of teams on the quiz/test, and evaluation of individuals.....15
4. Pair work and peer pre-assessment.....10
5. Teamwork and evaluation of teams.....8
6. Providing the students with the correct answers.....5
7. Preview, of the next unit.....3

Below is a depiction of the abovementioned procedures in classes run via CTBL, in a reading class, for undergraduate students.

Phase I (Teaching)

In the teaching session, after the warm up 6, while a piece of soft music is already on the go, I review the main points of the foregoing unit and check a few students' homework, in an atmosphere that encourages mutual interaction, negotiation, and inquiry. Then, to set the stage, I introduce the topic of the new unit, that is going to be covered, and try to activate the deeper layers of his students' apparatus (brains) by relating the topic to their background knowledge. my interest in such an activity originates from his belief in meaningful learning theory/the schema theory which holds the view that "new meaning is acquired by the interaction of new knowledge with previously learned concepts or propositions". Class-wide question and answer are invigorated at this point, that is usually supported by any other kind of demonstration like brainstorming techniques through a slide, or an audio or video program, or an internet show. In the process, a few key vocabularies along with important grammatical points are introduced and highlighted. In contrast to the traditional methods and approaches, vocabulary and grammar are taught inductively and of course with focus on the contexts they are used in. Subsequently, within five minutes, I ask a few more detailed guiding questions from his wards and wants them to work in teams to guess what the answers might be. These advance organizer questions are expected to motivate them to actively engage in the learning process, explore and improve their background knowledge on the topic through different angles, and solicit their immediate oral answers. Using strategies that enable the linking of text content to prior knowledge is also accentuated here for the construction of meaning.

Students are then allocated eight minutes to read the passage individually and as fast as possible to get a picture of the topic and in the process prove or reject their predictions by locating the probable answers to the questions in the passage. They are, at this point, strongly advised to practise silent reading as an effective skill for a deeper comprehension of the text and improving the speed of their reading. Likewise, they are asked to highlight key vocabularies and take notes or paraphrase main ideas. Obtaining an overall meaning of the passage is stressed at this stage. Then, at the next juncture, students are asked to share and discuss their answers to the questions in their dyads, within six minutes. Detection of incongruities between their understandings with those of their partners is fortified here. Students are likewise told to discuss their uncertainties about unfamiliar vocabularies and confusing sentences or ideas. The primary aim, at this stage, is to supply opportunities to the students to achieve more knowledge of the text. By the end of this phase, students have a moderate level of understanding of the passage and are thus ready to start the next stage. Subsequently, I ask them to pull chairs into close circles for further discussion about the text content and also about the problems they had come along on the path of comprehending the text. Clarification of the semantic relationships among different parts of the text and assimilation of difficult concepts and intricacies are emphasized as well. Moreover, *to personalize learning*, students are recommended to essay relate the text content to their

personal experiences and life. They are also motivated to outline the text content for the next stage. Students, at this juncture, have the chance to gain a thorough insight into their teammates' processes, approaches, and styles of thinking and also to test the quality and value of what they know by trying to make sense of it to their team members. As realized, this stage provides his students with a bigger thinking space to mobilize all their innate knowledge and skills for the class-wide discussion.

In the last six minutes of the class time, the topic is put on the stage for a class/nation-wide debate. At the initial stages at this point, I try to activate further the discussants' critical attitudes of minds by going beyond the text, by comparing the author's ideas with the realities of the world through different vantage points, to cite an example. I implements various strategies and techniques such as group brainstorming to elicit new ideas from his students for a discussion of the material, through different dimensions. I motivates citizenries to discuss their ideas and castigate others freely, in a democratic atmosphere. Meanwhile, I tries to engross in critical engagement with them and stimulate and enhance their evolutionary development through accepting, clarifying, and supporting challenging ideas. The significance of this juncture is that the publicly derived talks and negotiations here complete the privately initiated thoughts at the foregoing stages. In other words, this stage affords students the opportunity to modify/assimilate their information, understandings, and ideas in the course of challenging, criticizing, and defending one another. Teams/states are suggested to endeavour to come to a consensus by the end of this stage. The class-wide debate activity, as a collaborative venture, provides opportunities for students to, if necessary, unlearn, learn, relearn, further explore, deepen their understandings and knowledge, and above all *consolidate* them not merely from class participants' ideas, knowledge, and experiences, but from actively reflecting upon them. They do so through activities like elaborating, questioning, discussing, and comparing the validity of their understandings and knowledge. The class-wide debate activity also affords him too genuine opportunities to evaluate the students' level of understanding of the material in an insensible non-threatening mode. Finally, with an eye to the theme of the text, I attempts to give a fair summation of the discussions.

At the end of the class time, the students are asked to summarize the passage and raise up to five critical questions in relation to the incongruity of the text content with the realities of the real-world settings, for example, for the following session, and get ready for the quiz. The names of some specific related websites are also supplied so that the students could do follow-up reading after his exposition. Students are also reminded to continue their learning and discussions through the class blog/wiki and freely put their opinions there. It should be noted that team leaders or the captains as well as the highest achievers, who are known as the brains, are of great help to him for the successful management of his classrooms. They are aware that their contribution to the success of others has not been overlooked. (See the section on CTBL and Evaluation System) Figure 1 shows the summary of the procedure followed in CTBL reading class.

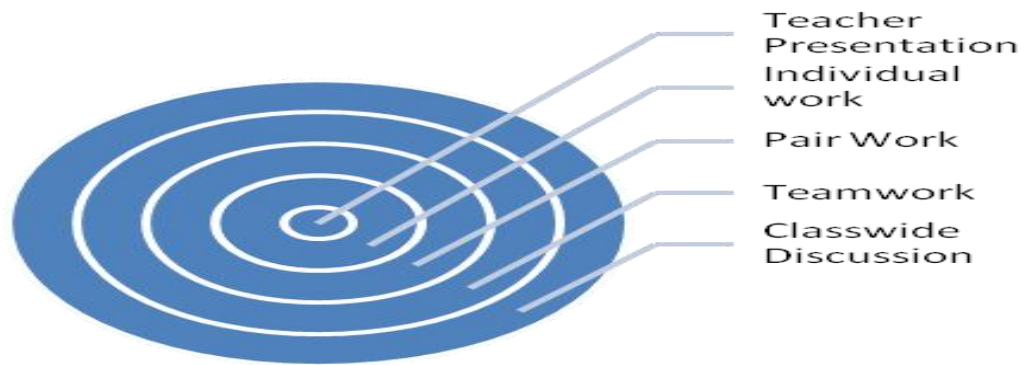


Figure 1. Activities in Teaching Phase in (Reading) Classes Run via CTBL

As illustrated in the above scenario and in the above Figure, CTBL entails five main components in the teaching session: After I present the lesson, individual students are endowed with the opportunity to go over the reading passage mentally and try to comprehend it individually. They are then allocated the time to negotiate and compare their understandings verbally with their partners, in pairs. The discussants are then provided with the opportunities to analyze their thoughts and create a permanent record of the encoded information and, in fact, store the information, with the scaffold of their team members before being asked to share publicly. This lessens their anxiety level and increases their confidence level. At the class-wide discussion time, students have the opportunity to discuss others' thoughts, ideas, and solutions, and castigate each other. Likewise, they have to call back the stored information in response to their partners, in course of learning.

In CTBL situations, through negotiation of their understandings to their peers, students deepen their learning and acquire learning strategies and communication skills. Through team discussions, they learn collaborative skills, learn how to learn, and also consolidate what they have learned. Through class-wide discussions, they learn how to use what they have learned, and develop the quality of their thinking, reasoning, and ideations. In sum, in my active, exiting, enjoyable, and meaningful classes, our citizens learn what they could not otherwise. They learn critical, analytical, and creative thinking as well as team working skill, and improve their behaviour, emotional and social skills, self-esteem and disposition all of which are essential requirements for academic, employment, career, and life success.

Phase II (Assessment)

In the second phase, after the warm up, with the help of the brains, I arbitrarily checks through a few students' homework, while, as usual, the soft music is already on the go. Then, the quiz papers are distributed among classroom participants to answer individually. At the end of the allotted time, the brains collect all the answer sheets to randomly select a few papers for the evaluation of the respective individuals' understandings of the material previously taught. This strategy makes all students' attention more focused on his presentations in the following sessions. Soon after this juncture, the students are asked to take the same quiz with their partners in their pairs, in 10 minutes. Afterwards, the

two dyads of each team have another eight minutes to join together and share their answers. They compare and dissect their responses to items/questions and decide on more acceptable answers for their teams. They are encouraged to give reasons to their teammates as to how they come to their answers, at this stage which, as the forgoing stage, intends to fill the gaps in the individual team members' understandings. Only one answer sheet of each team is haphazardly selected for the evaluation of not just that individual team member but his team as well. Also, if needed, the owner of the selected paper should provide reasons for his answers to certain items/questions in front of my nation/class participants. This strategy makes all team members more motivated, more active, and more responsible both for their own learning and for the learning of the members of their respective teams. Lastly, to fill the gaps more comprehensively, the teams are supplied with the correct answer sheets to see how effective their understandings of the material and their discussions have been. This strategy also contributes to more effective learning as students, after their evaluation, are eager to know the correct answer in order to fill the gaps in their minds. At the end of the class time, I introduces the next session's topic, which is going to be covered in the following session, to students.

As indicated in the below Figure, the activities in this session followed a regular cycle.

Figure 2 Activities in assessment phase in (reading) classes run via CTBL

As indicated, activities in the assessment phase included independent work of students on quizzes, my evaluation of individual team members, pair work and peer pre-assessment, teamwork, which involved further discussion and additional practice, and team recognition. The main philosophy beyond allowing students to take quizzes collaboratively in his classes is to subject them to more opportunities for transference of test-taking as well as (language) learning strategies, thinking styles and methods, attitudes, social skills, and so forth in a meta-cognitive way (e.g., through listening to their teammates who are in actual fact thinking aloud). This strategy thereby broadens students' strategies and outlook, deepens their understandings of the subject, and contributes to their thinking and reasoning abilities and more effective social interaction.

As it is in the teaching phase, here also team members work together on the given tasks partly with the intention of proving their fair ascendancy to other states. In CTBL, testing is thus, in effect subordinated, to the maximum extent, to teaching, to facilitate the attainment of teaching objectives. The procedure for the main/final evaluation of the individuals and their teams will be shed light upon later in the section on CTBL and Evaluation System. For the summary of the procedure followed in a (reading) class run through CTBL, see Figure 3.

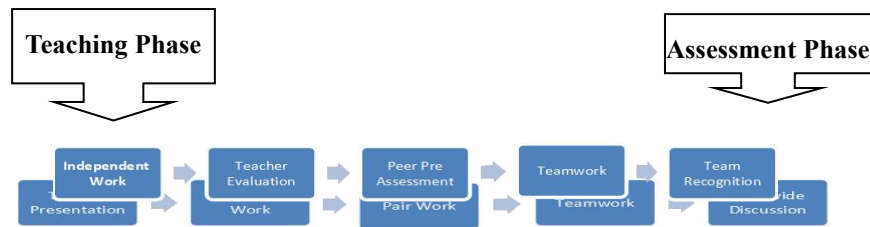


Figure 3 Main components of CTBL

In conclusion, the procedure in classes run through CTBL is not a “loose anything goes” one as it is with other so-called innovative interactive methods and approaches. It is highly structured, strategic, and effective. The activities follow a regular systematic cycle. The procedure for presenting a unit/lesson, in CTBL classes, follows two phases each of which incorporates five main components. It is such a multi-layered mechanism underlying CTBL settings that provides an ideal matrix for team discussion and interaction, and outpouring of the variety of opinions, strategies, thoughts, ideas, and of course solutions to problems. Therefore, contrary to the traditional methods and approaches which consider language learning as a simple shallow exercise that could be learned through passively listening, emulating, and reproducing the material already memorized in contrived environments, CTBL deems language learning as a complicated process. This process involves the active involvement of the students in interactive semi/authentic environments that cheer ambiguity, doubt, critical and creative thinking, risk taking, and conflict, and democratic managements of conflicts.. Such environments are highly contributive to the development of higher-quality cognitive strategies, higher order of incisive and analytical thinking skills such as abstract thinking and critical reasoning, rather than survival strategies, and lower forms of mental behavior/thinking (e.g., syllogistic reasoning). They also lead to objectivity and social skills for more effective negotiation of meaning, learning, and living. Meaning is appreciated as the key to successful (language) learning/living. The point is that language is the instrument for negotiating meaning, and discussing understandings and ideas, and criticizing one another for more comprehensive and effective achievement, growth, and development. This is because—as I have explicated in his edu-political theories (Hosseini, 2022; 2023)—language is a means for thinking. This means language contributes to more powerful minds, and so to more civilized nations. For sample lesson plans for classes run through CTBL, see Appendices C and D.

Competitive Team-Based Learning *Evaluation Systems*

Today students, even at higher education, are really sensitive to their grades. This is by virtue of the fact that grades play a critical role in their future success in the present real world of competition.

Those who secure higher marks will get higher positions, more comfortable houses and cars, more beautiful and charming wives, and so forth. And I have addressed this area via CTBL evaluation system. I have made CTBL evaluation system avail of grades as an efficient motivating tool for structuring active and live social learning environments in such a way that they maximize the needs of engagement in the learning process and communication among classroom participants, thereby ensuring the attainment of my pedagogical objectives.

Two sorts of evaluation systems are used in classes run via CTBL:

1. *Evaluation system for applying in the course of class activities and/or after quizzes, and*
2. *Evaluation system for midterm- and/ or final exams.*

Evaluation System for Applying in the Course of Class activities and/or After Quizzes

This educationist uses *Numbered Heads Together technique* of Kagan (1989) to evaluate his students' understanding of the material he has presented. In this technique, individual members of teams are numbered (e.g., 1, 2, 3, & 4, in the case of teams with four members) prior to the class by the captains. In the course of teaching, or at the end of each class presentation or discussion panels, in a reading course, for example, I asks a question or a series of content bound questions. Then he requires students come together to find answers. Then, in due course, he calls a number of a team arbitrarily, and only the student with that number should answer (orally) on behalf of the team. Most important, the select member should be ready to substantiate his answer(s) with logic/ reasons. To put it another way, if, in a team of four members, the randomly-selected member's mark is 80 (out of 100), and the three other team members' are 70, 60, and 50 respectively (an average of 60), then the arbitrarily selected member's grade would be 70 (the average of 80 & 60). This grade could also be considered for his team. In such cases, it is better to select the individual haphazardly. Selecting social loafers and free riders, if any, for representing their teams, could also be effective as this strategy makes team members guard against these groups of students' unfair contribution to the success of their team and so encourage them to cooperate more attentively. *Team recognition* could also be done by averaging the score of the randomly-selected member of the team on his performance in the same test/exam and the average of his other teammates' performances in the last test/exam. Class-wide discussions could also be conducted through this technique. Rather than arbitrarily selecting one member to orally answer on behalf of his team, it is also possible to make all members respond in written form, and then randomly select one student to submit his paper for *team recognition*. This kind of evaluation system also compensates for the lack of sufficient emphasis on positive interdependence in the evaluation system of CTBL. Furthermore, that students take the quizzes cooperatively in CTBL classes re-enhances positive interdependence among teams' members. For some more strategies for bringing positive interdependence and individual responsibility in CTBL settings see Chapter 6.

Evaluation System for Midterm- and/ or Final Exams

In CTBL classes, the evaluation of each team member – for midterm and/or final exams - is computed based on the following four criteria, which should be explained to students at the initial stages of the course:

- 1) 40% concerning the individual's own score in the same test/exam;
- 2) 10% concerning the individual's improvement score (i.e., the difference between his score in the same test/exam and his base score, which is the average of his past scores);
- 3) 20% concerning the level the individual outperforms the average of his same-level opponents in other teams, and 30% concerning the individual's team performance in the same team/exam, which is calculated by averaging the individual's team members' scores.

To cite an example, if, in an average team of four members, Mohammad (as a high achiever) gets 90, Ali and Peter (as an average scorer) secure 70 and 60 respectively, and Milad (as a low performer) receives 35, the procedure for calculating Ali's score would be as below:

- 1) 28 points for his score in the same test/exam ($70 \times 40\% = 28$);
- 2) 2.5 points for his improvement score ($70 - 45 = 25$, and $25 \times 10\% = 2.5$);
- 3) 6 points for outperforming the average of his same-level opponents in other teams ($70 - 40 = 30$, and $30 \times 20\% = 6$), and
- 4) 19 point twelve points for his team performance in the same test/exam ($63.75 \times 30\% = 19.12$).—This has been calculated by averaging the individual's team members' scores.

Note: The above evaluation has been done with the presumption that Ali's base score, the average of his same-level opponents' scores in other teams, and the average of his team members' scores in the same test/exam, are 45, 40, and 63.75 respectively.

Therefore, Ali's score will be 55.62 ($28 + 2.5 + 6 + 19.12 = 55.62$ or 56). The evaluation of Ali's team could be computed by averaging its members' scores, which are calculated based on the above procedure. The recognition of each team, that is usually done twice or thrice a semester, is through comparing the average of its performance with the average of other teams' performances. The average of each team's performance is calculated by the average of the sum-total of its members' scores. As it is realized, the evaluation of individual members and their teams are interrelated in CTBL evaluation system.

As it is realized, in CTBL evaluation system, the first two criteria emphasize on bringing individual responsibility of all team members and inspire them for further perseverance. The third criterion contributes simultaneously to the individual accountability of all team members as well as to their positive interdependence. It enhances positive interdependence among team members because all members acquiesce to the idea that if they help one another, they would improve their chances of outperforming their opponents in other teams which in its turn facilitates the success of their team. And the success of their team contributes to their own success. Especially weak students like this criterion on the grounds that they find it more feasible to compete with their same-level opponents. The fourth

criterion intends to pattern positive interdependence among team members. It is a good motive, particularly for gifted students to share their capabilities with their team members. Almost 70% of each individual's success depends on his own diligence and willingness, and the remaining 30% correlates to the performance of other team members. In CTBL situations, thereby, individual teams' members come to the conclusion that the level of their own efforts will, in the first place, affect their own fate. This enforces them to take more responsibility for their own success.

In classes run via CTBL, teams are evaluated not just on their members' improvements over their own past performances, as it is in Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC), developed by Stevens et al. (1978), and STAD. Nor are they evaluated merely over their same-level opponents in other teams, as it is in TGT. But they are also recognized based on the extent to which they outgain other teams. Furthermore, special rewards are also awarded to the best teams with the highest averages in order to motivate team members for more effective cooperation in the course of competing with other teams. To cite an example, teams that prove their superiority for three periods will receive 'A' marks for their members' final exam regardless of their actual grades – on the condition that they secure the minimum standard. Although appreciation of the best team(s) is also valued in some methods like STAD, TGT, and Teams Tournaments (TT), developed by I (Hosseini, 2009, 2012), this component is not as much seriously and directly injected in these methods as it is in CTBL. Recognition of the best team(s) is a *formal* part of CTBL's evaluation system. CTBL's evaluation system, thereby, not only pushes team members to make any effort to improve their own performances and outperform their peer-level opponents in other teams. But it also encourages them to pool their efforts together to surpass other teams as well in order to prove their fair superiority in the class and *get the special rewards*. Such rewards may include securing the highest mark for all team members in recognition of their effective perseverance and collaboration.

Likewise, to maximize the contribution of the captains or team leaders (i.e., the class high achievers) to the success of their teams, they will be rewarded with highest marks as the recognition of their devotion, perseverance, and commitment to their responsibilities and tasks, for the success of their teams. They will be rewarded if all their team members shine on tests and exams and prove an acceptable progress in comparison to their past performances. Teams' performances are also regularly reported on a teams' recognition chart on the notice board of the classroom which announces the names of outstanding and most challenging individuals also. Besides, the first two to six, depending on the number of class, participants, best students are recognised as *the brains* who will assist I, as the teacher, in the course of class management, teaching and testing. When teams have problems, for instance, they must consult the brains first - the teacher is the last resource. The brains openly receive the teams' representatives for any kind of academic help. *The important point* is that every main exam's results lead unto the replacement of these brains as well as teams' leaders by those who prove their superiority over them, in CTBL's learning-for-all fair environments. To lessen individuals' anxiety levels or to contribute further to lowering their affective filters, teams that secure the least acceptable rank would pass the

course—provided their members should not be below the minimum standard. The average of teams' members' grades is the basis for this decision.

One more point that should be reminded is that although, in CTBL settings, team members take *final* exams individually as it is in CIRC, STAD, and TGT, they take quizzes, tests, and even mid-term exams cooperatively. The main philosophy beyond allowing students to take some exams, tests, or quizzes collaboratively is to *subordinate testing to teaching*: Apart from its contribution to positive interdependence, this strategy subjects students to more opportunities for transference of social skills, learning strategies, thinking styles and approaches, attitudes, and so forth in a meta-cognitive way (e.g., through listening to their teammates who are in actual fact thinking aloud).

Competitive Team-Based Learning as a *Motivating Agent in Evaluation System*

To motivate students is to afford them a motive, a need, or a desire that has the capacity to inspire them not merely to act but to sustain their determination and perseverance towards achieving their goals also. As noted, given the importance attributed to the role of motivation in (language) learning, CTBL employs various strategies to motivate students and bestow greater willpower on them to involve themselves deeper in the process of learning. Providing challenging and engaging tasks, activities, and materials for team performance, scaffoldings within a relaxed ambience, ensuring equal opportunities for giving and receiving feedback, and offering attractive incentives are part of the strategies of CTBL. However, creation of dynamic academic goals, as indicated in Figure 4, through applying a specific grading system is the main strategy in CTBL for motivating students.

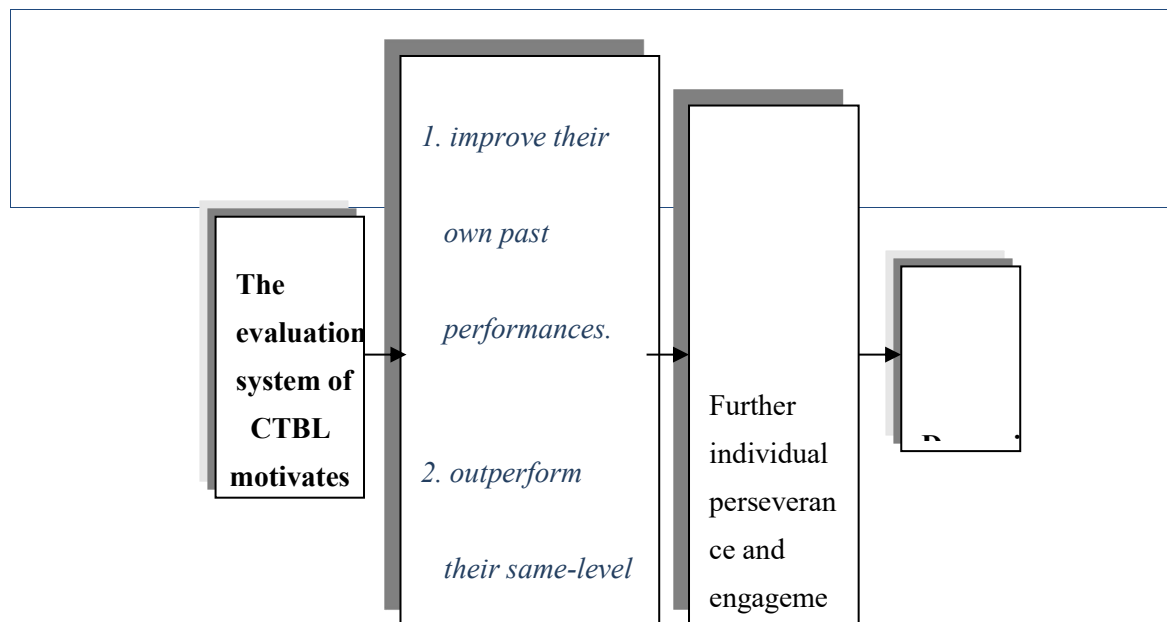


Figure 4. Motivators in CTBL Graded Evaluation System

As it is illustrated in the above Figure, based on his belief that the immediate achievement of goals, as desire-driven devices, is likely to de-motivate students from the further effort, I have designed five developmentally progressive drives/goals (no. 1–5) in CTBL system of evaluation. This was done with the intention of not only motivating students but also sustaining their zest for active (language) learning and cooperation with their team members in class activities during the whole semester. Reinforcement, thereby, in CTBL evaluation system, has been considered as one of the major factors that provide sustainable motivation and immersion of students in the learning process. Engagement in the process of learning per se, as the result of this evaluation system is conducive to more effective learning and retention of information.

The other main distinguishing feature of CTBL evaluation system, which makes it a success, lies in the fact that it is against undifferentiated group grading for groupwork as it is in most CL methods particularly in the Johnsons' methods where all team members receive the same grade regardless of differences in contributions to the total-team effort. The significance of focusing on individual accountability of the students in CTBL settings, which is neglected in the evaluation systems of the present interactive methods and approaches but is the focal point of the evaluation system of CTBL, is that it ensures the limit of the scope for free riders and social loafers or those who abdicate their responsibilities and tend to hitchhike on the work of others and so have the potential to endanger societies, let alone learning environments. That CTBL, in its evaluation system, tries to give the grades properly for the benefit of deserving individual members as well as teams is very important because it escalates students' motivation for further perseverance and diligence. On the other hand, in CTBL evaluation system, grades are tried to be sufficient, specific, and authentic in such a way that students interpret them as recognition of achievement. This is so as otherwise if students come to think of grades/rewards as manipulated, there is a danger that they may feel that they are treated as objects. And this may weaken their motivation and change their attitudes in negative ways, which hazard the success of CTBL. For a comprehensive understanding of the approaches through which CTBL appreciates the intrinsic motivation of the students, see Chapter 8.

A Bit More About CTBL

As noted, teams' members, in CTBL environments, are systematically spurred into further collaboration and scaffolding the learning of each other to compete not merely against their same-level opponents in other teams, as it is in TGT, but also against their opponents' teams. All team members, therefore, engage themselves fully (i.e., cognitively, emotionally and intellectually), actively participate, and tactfully contribute in the process of shared learning in order to solve problems, complete tasks, and/or create products. They do such through activities like exchanging ideas, clarification of meanings to each other, and diplomatic resolution of discrepancies. They make any effort to ensure that each member has mastered the assigned material. The other reason for teams' members' collaborations is because I, at times, randomly calls upon a student to represent his team. If so, the select member of the

respective team should also provide *reasons* for his answer(s) before my nation, in his classroom. This technique motivates all team members to encourage one another to do their work, and inspires them to ensure their partners' comprehensive understanding of the material. In other words, this technique encourages all the members to make their best both in the learning process and in the course of tutoring one another. The mechanism underlying CTBL ergo holds each team member accountable for his own learning, growth, and development, and inspires them to do their part of the work effectively for the win of their teams also. It, at the same time, spurs teams' members to ask other members to do the same and also help them enthusiastically to improve their learning towards achieving their common learning goals.

Considering the nature and the mechanisms underlying the innovative methods and approaches like CoIL as well as the traditional teacher-centred methods, which are cherished by our present antediluvian dictatorial didactic regimes, CTBL implies a middle path. It does so with the presumption that balance is a word of order. CTBL thus comes to mediate between the traditional teacher-centred methods that merely put the accent on competition and CL learner-centred methods that lay the stress on pure cooperation both in inter- and intra- group relations. In addition to emphasizing on intra-group cooperation, CTBL, as a *learning-centred approach* to teaching, cherishes *inter-group competitions* in lieu of inter-group cooperation, and within-group comparisons also. CTBL does so in order to motivate individuals for further perseverance and co-operation with their team members to vie with other teams. In contrast with methods like TGT and STAD, and up to some extent TT whereby the key is to spur individuals to help their teammates to achieve their individual goals, one of the main keys in CTBL's environments is thus to win the competition against other teams. The importance and of course the synergy of winning is among the main variables in classes run via CTBL that bring team members together. Team members are cognizant of the fact that their success is – to a considerable extent – correlated with that of their teams. This also, in its turn, encourages them to coordinate their efforts for fulfilling their shared learning goals.

As noted, another distinguishing feature of my approach to teamwork and capacity building is that, unlike the present innovative methods and approaches to Language Teaching/Education, it pays special attention to the levels of contribution of individual team members (i.e., individual responsibility) to the success of their teams. CTBL does so through the application of especially its specific evaluation system, to cite an example. In CTBL settings, motivational incentives are underscored to sustain the individuals' efforts and immersion in the process of learning in team activities, and increase cooperation of team members in the course of competing with other teams for more effective learning. In brief, healthy competition—as a magic motivator, and fair evaluation—as a motivation-driven device, are underlined in CTBL's settings in order to inspire all of students for further perseverance, achievement, progress, growth, and development. These happen in engaging learning/living-for-all environments that ensure fairness to all rather than considering merely the clever/ powerful minority. CTBL, in sum, focuses upon addressing and solving certain damaging problems of conventional

methods and approaches so as to suit the specific requirements of (language) learning/living environments in the present world context.

Design of CTBL

“Being able to perform technical skills such as reading, writing or even other problem solving activities” and applying them in interaction with others is essential but of little use when the dominant minority is not willing to listen to, let alone communicate with, the Other (i.e., the impoverished, the oppressed, the marginalized, the deprived, and the betrayed who are almost always the majority). “Teaching students how to function as responsible members of their societies and gain the ability to work with others” is essential but of little use if they are living in a dog-eat-dog world corrupt context of tyranny and bloodshed. The main objective of CTBL, as a totally different approach, is thus *not merely* to contribute to academic success of our citizens as it is in traditional behaviouristic methods and approaches. Nor is CTBL’s aim to escalate individuals’ communication abilities, as it is in the so-called modern methods and approaches like CLT which—in words—claim that they are against behaviourism. That they, in the last analysis, are only able to develop merely communication abilities of students suffices it enough to put forward the counter argument that they—in action—deem students nothing more than animals: Merely enabling students to articulate their thoughts, understandings, etc. in a language is a condescending look upon human race because animals too are able to communicate. CTBL also does not merely accentuates developing social skills of students in order to enable them to perform and apply them in society, as it is in CoIL, IntL, and CL. CTBL has a much more realistic and beneficial-to-human being objective: Besides contributing to academic success, communication abilities, social skills, and social behaviours of today reticent bench-bound adaptable-to-the-world recipients/objects/sheep, *CTBL aims at critically awakening them. It then essays to unlock, de-occupy, and turbo charge their minds with critical approaches to analytical and divergent thinking/reasoning skills.* To fulfil such goals, CTBL provides equal conducive-to-input-, output-, and feedback-rich environments/opportunities for *all* class participants to articulate and share their thoughts, believes, solutions, and approaches to thinking, to cite some examples. These are possible because from the vantage point of I language, as a liberating tool, is a means for thinking also. (See Hosseini, 2023) Moreover, in CTBL’s environments students have enormous opportunities to acquire and learn their more capable peers’ approaches to more effective thinking in the course of negotiations, discussions and sharing their solutions, etc. This way, CTBL de facto empowers/weaponizes our citizens with whatever they need for successful survival and for combating the hegemony of the totalitarians, for improving the conditions of their lives.

Competitive Team-Based Learning and the Syllabus

In its communicative syllabus, CTBL prioritises the significance of the “interactional” view of language, the developed combination of structural and functional views of language inherent in

functional-notional syllabus. *CTBL, hence, appreciates both the knowledge of “appropriate and purposeful use of meaningful language” and the ability to “manage discourse interactions” in edu-, socio-political contexts which encourages dialogue, negotiation, and discussions.* For a more comprehensive discerning the sort of the syllabus suggested for CTBL, see Hosseini, 2022.

The Significance of *Motivation* in CTBL Settings

Recently the focus of a number of researches is on the key role of motivation in (language) learning. Lack of motivation among students has been claimed to be one of the main reasons for their low or under-performance in many countries. The significance of motivation lies in the fact that it determines learners’ attitudes towards learning and the extent of their active personal involvements. More importantly, motivation can be a powerful propeller towards overcoming deficiencies in one’s (language) proficiency and accomplishing long-term goals. The primary assumption, in CTBL’s settings, is that mutual communication and negotiation of meaning, understandings, thoughts, ideas, and so on will be facilitated once the instructional environment supplies adequate motivation. It is based on such a premise that I prioritises the significance of motivation through different dimensions, mechanisms and strategies. CTBL’s specific evaluation system, instructional materials, tasks, activities, etc. have been designed in such a way that they contribute to students’ motivation effectively. To cite an example, CTBL’s evaluation system makes learning an endless race that keeps and even boosts all teams’ members’ s’ motivations for engaging in the process of learning and contributing their efforts throughout the semester/academic year. This motor (e.g., competition-driven extrinsic motivation) propels students to accomplish their goals and succeed. This, in its turn, promotes their attitudes and *intrinsic motivation*, which is of a very high and critical importance for their further success and achievements. This is part of the reason as to why I have availed particularly his evaluation system of *extrinsic motivation*, for the final goal of the success of his classes/ CTBL.

Competitive Team-Based Learning and *Instructional Materials*

Students will not get motivated unless they feel stimulated and engaged in the (language) learning situations. Materials have significant roles in fulfilling such goals. Therefore, the materials used in CTBL environments should have the capacity to expose students to the target language and hearten them to put it into practice. They should have the potential to increase the quantity, quality, frequency, and variety of language/knowledge practice. More importantly, they should bolster the power of team learning via generating mutual interaction among team members and encouraging their active involvement in the process of shared learning. Such materials enhance students’ course of acquisition/learning of (language) skills and strategies and refinement of their knowledge more effectively. In sum, the materials, in CTBL settings, should be interesting, varied, conceptual, appropriately authentic, communicative, interactive, goal oriented, and engaging. The important point that should be born in mind is that this kind of materials needs to be supported with specific tasks,

activities, and evaluation system in an environment that encourages adherence of participants to CTBL's learning culture if we want to reap the best results out of the implementation of CTBL.

Competitive Team-Based Learning and Tasks

Negotiation for meaning (NFM) is the central focused area of most language classrooms. NFM will only be effective once the instructional environment provides enough motivation and exposure to the target language. And the fact is that students will not get motivated unless they feel engaged, stimulated, and challenged in learning situations. It is in such a context that the importance of tasks comes to light. The abundant use of the term 'task' in ELT sphere came to play with the Communicative Approach and assessment. Johnson (1979) made the linkage between the two very clear by saying that fluency in the communicative process can only develop within a 'task-orientated teaching'-- one which provides 'actual meaning' by focusing on tasks to be mediated through language, and where success or failure is seen to be judged in terms of whether or not these tasks are performed. (p. 200)

A considerable number of educationists as well as research studies tout the effectiveness of tasks especially in ELT sphere. (See Hosseini, 2007) The fact, however, is that tasks differ in nature to a high extent and therefore the recognition of effective tasks with regard to the results we are likely to reap out of their implementation in real classroom situations is of high importance.

“Pedagogic tasks” or activities which can be undertaken in the classroom can be twofold: those which are planned for individual work and those which are designed for group work (Long, 1989, p. 6). The importance of pedagogic tasks lies in the fact that they, like incentives, have the potential to change the pattern of interaction in classes. Therefore, teachers, based on their goals, classes' conditions, and the type of interactions they desire to pattern amongst their students, may design different kinds of task structures so as to pursue their pre-established goals. For example, individual task structures can be designed to bring individualistic and/or competitive learning whereas cooperative task structures, which solicit the cooperation of learners for their accomplishment, can be harnessed to pose or enhance cooperative learning. The most significant body of research which has attempted to link the task to second language (L2) acquisition, however, has been connected with group tasks, which are believed to have paramount significance to actual SLA. Group tasks encourage members to negotiate the meaning of the tasks mutually. This mutual negotiation of meaning in a semi-authentic environment makes learners notice and focus upon not only the content but also the form to complete the tasks.

Jacobs and Jessica (1996) have proposed three types of tasks for groups: “one-way tasks” versus “two-way tasks”; “closed tasks” versus “open tasks”, and “planned tasks” versus “unplanned tasks”. One-way and two-way tasks involve an information gap, so that information must flow between team members for the task to be completed. The difference between the two types of tasks lies in whether each team member needs to send as well as to receive information. While in two-way tasks each participant has unique information which exacts the exchange of information between participants for successful task completion, in one-way tasks only one participant who possesses the relevant

information provides information to the other, in order to complete the task (Knight, 2005). Jacobs and Jessica (1996) state that two-way tasks better promote negotiation of meaning and bring more modified interaction than one-way tasks. Closed tasks refer to the tasks which have one predetermined correct answer or result or even, as Long (1989) also confirms, several correct answers with the exception that only one is expected to arrive at. Conversely, open tasks refer to the tasks for which there is no predetermined correct answer; it is not necessary to reach a consensus with this kind of task. Long (1989) has argued that “closed tasks” stimulate more useful interaction for negotiation of meaning between group members than open tasks. This is because, as he has reasoned, in closed tasks group members essay find the best possible answer rather than settling for a weaker alternative. According to Jacobs and Jessica, planned tasks, as opposed to unplanned tasks, are those for which students have time to prepare the language they are going to use before interacting with other group members. In other words, they are provided with more wait time. As Long (1989) puts it, compared to unplanned tasks, “planned tasks” can further increase the quantity and quality of the language that learners generate.

In his quantitative study, I (Hosseini, 2007) combined the above-mentioned tasks and formulated them into ‘unplanned open-’ and ‘unplanned closed-’ tasks. Subsequently, I compared his own formulated tasks in terms of their effectiveness on the writing abilities of Iranian university students. After comparing the achievement of the two groups at the end of the experiment, statistics brought it into the light that the experimental class, with a focus upon unplanned closed tasks, highly outperformed the comparison group. It seemed to him that unplanned closed tasks led to more complex output. This may be in view of the fact that they rendered students to focus upon the task with more concentration, collect their thoughts, and stretch their inter-language resources to produce more rich, complex, and accurate language. I concluded that despite the importance of ‘planned tasks’—as opposed to ‘unplanned tasks’, teachers have to appreciate the significance of ‘unplanned closed tasks’ as well since they better reflect the realities of our classrooms -- like that of time limitation. Thus, the nature of the task is of critical magnitude -- they should be authentic, realistic, motivating, communicative, and goal oriented. Well-designed tasks have the potential not just to increase the quantity, quality, frequency, and variety of language practice, but also to enhance the possibility for the development or use of language in ways that support cognitive development and increased language skills. Additionally, they assure a more active role of the participants in their learning.

Learners, in CTBL situations, thus learn language by, in point of actual fact, working with it on tasks. Tasks thus play a privileged role in CTBL environments. Generally, in classes run via CTBL, tasks should integrate life experiences of students, and heighten interest. They should have the capacity for infinite interpretations. They should also have the capacity to render students to focus on them more precisely and collect their thoughts more effectively, with more concentration. Importantly, they should be discursive and challenging in nature, incorporate an *information gap*, ensure and scaffold immersion of all learners in the process of shared (language) learning, and exact the flow of information between

those involved/discussants. They should also have the capacity to stimulate more *useful* interaction and purposeful communication among team members/class participants.

Most importantly, tasks, in CTBL environments, should be beyond the developmental level of some, if not all, of team members if we want them to have the potential to:

- 1) Generate authentic opportunities for learning;
- 2) Provide the need for co-operation and joint activity;
- 3) Cause a motive for competition among teams and keep all teams in a state of dynamic perseverance;
- 4) Be favourable to critical and divergent thinking/reasoning and creativity of mind, and
- 5) Contribute to higher level thinking, learning and reasoning strategies, quality of performance, and long-term retention.

Hence, the use of tasks that can be completed by independent individual work is strongly prohibited in CTBL settings in view of the fact that they decrease the level of team interaction and so have adverse effects on team functioning. By contrast, tasks that require students to use course concepts to make difficult choices, for example, are recommended since they are believed to produce high levels of interaction, cognitive, learning and social development. It goes without saying that such tasks enable students to stretch their inter language resources to the extent possible in order to produce more rich, complex, accurate, and purposeful/to-the-point language, which has interwoven relations with more higher order and effective thinking. Reflecting upon reflective discussions, lectures, and interviews in (online) journals and in videos, for instance, are among tasks that could be used by educators who employ CTBL. (See Hosseini, 2007)

Activities in CTBL Classes

Just as it is with the roles of instructional materials and tasks, the role of class activities is also of crucial importance in CTBL environments. Team goal-directed activities which are directly relevant to the students' practical needs are emphasised. Such activities naturally involve exchanging ideas, clarification of meanings to each other, risk taking, hypothesis testing, plan/decision making, problem solving, resolution of discrepancies, and making judgments about the achieved progress (i.e., developmental evaluation). Among such activities are describing pictures, games, role plays, team tournaments, class-wide discussions, and of course real-life oriented activities such as shopping, camping, delivering interactive lectures, and so forth. All team members should be encouraged to immerse themselves fully in the process of shared learning through such transactional/interactional activities in order to solve a problem, complete a task, and/or create a product. Internet is a goldmine of appropriate-to-CTBL-objectives materials, tasks, activities, etc.

Furthermore, whenever I find an appropriate opportunity, he endeavours to aware his students of some socio-political issues like the below:

- 1) Democracy, Dictatorship, and Islam;
- 2) Iran's Elections and Hobson's Choice;

- 3) Dictators' Clergymen and Our Miseries;
- 4) Why 90% of the Iranian Youth have left Islam?!
- 5) Why, in countries like Iran, the poor get poorer and the rich get richer day by day?
- 6) Are TV satellite channels or our rulers' systems of governing the roots of our catastrophes
- 7) What was the philosophy beyond Imam Hossein's revolution?
- 8) What is the philosophy beyond the removal of Critical Thinkers and agents of critical awareness in dictatorial regimes?

To sum up our discussion in the above three sections, materials, tasks, and activities in CTBL environments should have the capacity to:

- 1) Contribute to the sort of shared leaning environments that encourage the implementation of effective (language) learning/test taking strategies and versatile communication skills, both verbal and written;
 - 2) Activate students' thinking inspiration constantly;
 - 3) Facilitate students to reach the deep layers of whatever the teacher introduces conscientiously;
- 1) Stimulate students' higher order thinking desire, and more importantly
 - 2) Make more effective transitions to real world settings—even at the global level.

Therefore, not only could materials, tasks, and activities in CTBL environments enhance the communicative language use of the students as it is in approaches like CLT, but they also have the capacity to develop students' quality of thinking, reasoning, ideation, and of course social skills, social behaviour, and dispositions.

Conclusion

More than 50 researches have proved the superiority of CTBL. (See Hosseini, 2023) I designed and offered *CTBL to bring the sort of change he dreams to have in our societies in our students'/citizens' minds first. CTBL has been offered as the foundation of modern democracy, for drawing/shaping a better, brighter, and more sustainable and peaceful world.* It has been put forward to reduce the discrepancy between what the present methods and approaches make out of our nations and what the realities of today world context exacts them to be. CTBL aims at achieving such goals by emphasizing on learner, learning process, learning environment, and other effective variables in (language) learning such as students' attitudes and sociocultural/political expectations. But it also accentuates on considering and reflecting the real world holism in semi-authentic civilized environments that contribute to instilling democratic norms, principles and core values. Such environments make learning more meaningful, interesting, motivating, and goal oriented. CTBL makes these possible via enhancing the process of (language) learning through a win-for-all dynamics ushered in by the role of the teacher as learning facilitator, and creator and orchestrator of opportunities for comprehensible input-output and feedback treatment. This is for learners' comprehensive growth and development, which come

about with their active involvement, participation, and contribution in class activities. (Language) learning via CTBL has been viewed as an act of learning (the language) together through activities like negotiation, clarification, expansion, elaboration, personalisation, and castigating one another's ideas and solutions.

Competitive Team-Based Learning has been designed in such a way that the mechanisms underlying it provide all team members not just with equal opportunities but with the need for perseverance, collaboration, and joint activity as well. In CTBL's environments all class participants have enormous opportunities for articulating and sharing their thoughts, understandings and solutions to problems, etc., and for giving and receiving feedback alike. These occur in learning and social atmospheres which are highly supportive, relaxing, communicative, referential, effective, and developmentally motivating and appropriate. CTBL's mechanisms keep all teams in a state of dynamic diligence. Such productive and engaging learning conditions, that ensure and scaffold total involvement of all learners in the process of shared (language) learning, are conducive to high quality learning and cognitive strategies, communicative competencies, long-term retention, academic success, social behaviours, and higher order analytical thinking/reasoning savvies as well. Another feature of CTBL refers to the point that it exacts (semi-authentic) real-world environments where students have the opportunities to experience learning by losing. This is a valuable process for citizens preparing for professions where working under pressure in socio-political environments is compulsory. The significance of CTBL for the present world context refers to the fact that, as a more reasonable pedagogic innovation, it has the capacity to enable our citizenry to work, learn, win, live, lose, and develop together. This is possible in the spirit of co-operation and fair competition on the basis of a respect for the culture of learning, living, and growing together. In CTBL situations, which exercise students in humanitarian ways for interaction and competition, our citizens develop more essential social skills and habits of mind and capabilities for more effective inter-personal relationships in the real world environments.

Thus, the outcomes likely to be reaped out of CTBL, that highlights competitive teamwork as the very demand of our citizenry, are immense. I believe that CTBL potentially addresses and solves the deficiencies found in the conventional ways of teaching in Education in general and in Language Teaching sphere in particular. This is in view of the emphasis it lays on socio-political context of learning/living and systematic implementation of teamwork in semi/authentic learning situations. As realised, CTBL has a broader and much more realistic outlook as I am of the opinion that successful survival in the present real world settings and being able to face the realities of this dynamic and complicated competitive world demands something more than the appropriate use of the language in benign environments. All I mean to say is that the importance of CTBL goes beyond academic achievement of participants. That is, what highly differentiates his approach from the conventional methods and approaches lies in the point that it focuses upon foundational facets of contemporary education by aiming at forming and moulding interdependent competent life-long learners who would be able to flourish academically, socially, and in life and career as well. In addition to developing

learning strategies, subject matter, communication abilities, social/interpersonal skills, and thinking/reasoning savvies of our citizens, CTBL intends to teach them how to work in teams, manage conflicts, as well as judgship and leadership skills for the final goal of *transforming* them: *CTBL aims at transforming our sheeple/objects into People, into Agents of critical awareness and change or the Subjects* who would have the capacity to influence their milieus at local, societal, and international levels. CTBL aims at fulfilling such goals to enable our citizens to transform the conditions of not only their own existence but that of the humanity the world over also, for peace making and compassionate civilizations building. What adds to the significance of CTBL refers to the fact that it is in essence an approach to the empowerment of the Other also who have been betrayed by the powerful minority in today's world context of injustice, corruption, treachery, racism, and despotism. This is of a very high *strategic* prominence as the empowerment of the Other contributes to their emancipation which means the elimination of those totalitarians who are in the habit of treating us as their possessions! For the howabouts of transforming power of CTBL, see Hosseini, 2020 and 2023.

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