

COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING - A TOOL FOR ENHANCING THE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

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Abstract: Communication is the basic attribute of human life and Language is the main tool of human communication. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) refers to the processes and goals in classroom learning. The central theoretical concept in communicative language teaching is “communicative competence,” a term introduced into discussions of language use and second or foreign language learning. Competence is defined in terms of expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning.

I. INTRODUCTION

Communication is the basic attribute of human life and Language is the main tool of human communication. The world has started becoming a global village. There was a great need and pressure of adopting a common lingua franca for this global village. English was accorded this privilege and it became the language of international communication or international language. Its acquisition can guarantee the availability of opportunities to employment, travelling, higher education and even better life. English is playing a vital role in political, social, educational and economic concerns of the nations. The number of people who have some familiarity with English is growing and macro-acquisition of the language is also increasing. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) refers to the processes and goals in classroom learning.

II. DOMAINS OF ENGLISH IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA

- English is the working language of international organizations and conference.
- International language of science and technology.
- Used in international banking, economic affairs and commerce.
- Advertising for global brands is done in English.
- Language of audio-visual and cultural products.
- Language of international tourism.
- Language of international safety in the fields of aeronautics and sea.
- Language of tertiary education, international law, technology transfer and internet communication.

It is an ample indication that English is being used as Lingua- Franca in all spheres of international activity.

III. BACKGROUND OF CLT

CLT has its roots in the idea that the goal of language learning is to become good at using language for communication. Beginning in the 1960s, British Applied Linguists developed the communicative approach as a reaction away from grammar- based approaches such as the aural-oral (audio-lingual approach). CLT enables learners to acquire a language by focusing on the development of communicative competence. Communicative Language Teachers use materials that focus on the language needed to express and understand different kinds of functions. They encourage students to use their second language to perform different kinds of tasks like solving puzzles and getting information.

IV. THE THEORY BEHIND CLT

The theory behind CLT suggests that we learn language by using it. However, we use language in four different ways which we can think of as competencies. The best way to develop communicative competence is for learners to strengthen these areas of competencies.

- **Discourse Competence:** refers to the learner's ability to use the new language in spoken and written discourse. Teachers often call them the **student's fluency**.
- **Grammatical Competence:** refers to the ability to use the language correctly, how well a person has learned features and rules of the language. Teachers call this **accuracy** in language use. Fluency and accuracy are traditional measures of effective language learning. The other two competencies are less obvious.
- **Sociolinguistic Competence:** refers to the learner's ability to use language correctly in specific social situations. This is about **appropriacy** in using language.
- **Strategic Competence:** is about how well the person uses both verbal and non-verbal communication to compensate for lack of knowledge in the other three competencies.

V. WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF COMMUNICATIVE EXERCISES?

In a communicative classroom for beginners, the teacher might begin by passing out cards, each with a different name printed on it. They do not know the answers beforehand, as they are each holding cards with their new identities written on them; hence is an **authentic exchange of information**. The following exercise is taken from a 1987 workshop on communicative foreign language teaching, given for **Delaware language teachers** by **Karen Willets** and **Lynn Thompson** of the centre for **Applied Linguistics**.

The exercise called "Eavesdropping" is aimed at advanced students.

"Instructions to students" – Listen to the conversation somewhere in a public place and be prepared to answer, some general questions about what was said.

- Who was talking?
- About how old were they?
- Where were they when you eavesdropped?
- What were they talking about?
- What did they say?
- Did they become aware that you were listening to them?

The exercise puts students in a real- world listening situation where they must report information overheard.

VI. HOW DO THE ROLES OF THE TEACHER AND STUDENT CHANGE IN COMMUNICATIVE TEACHING?

Teachers in communicative classrooms will find themselves talking less and listening more- becoming active facilitators of their students' learning. (**Larsen- Freeman**). The teacher sets up the exercise, but because the students' performance is the goal, the teacher must step back and observe, sometimes acting as referee or monitor. Because of the increased responsibility to participate, students may find they gain confidence in using the target language in general. Students are more responsible managers of their own learning (Larsen -Freeman).

An overview of Language Teaching Methods and Approaches:

In attempting to define what "method" is, we can consider **Edward Anthony's tripartite distinction** of **Approach, Method and Technique**. This distinction was developed and recast by **Richards and Rodgers** as, **Approach, Design and Procedure**, encompassed within the overall concept of Method.

- **Approach** refers to the beliefs and theories about language, language learning and teaching.
- **Design** relates the theories of language and learning the form and function of teaching materials and activities in the classroom.
- **Procedure** concerns the technique and practices employed in the classroom as consequences of particular approaches and designs.

The Grammar – Translation Method:

- The classical or Grammar – Translation method represents the tradition of language teaching adopted in western society.
- The focus was on studying grammatical rules and morphology, doing written exercises, memorizing vocabulary, translating texts form and prose passages into the language.
- It remained popular in modern language pedagogy, even after the introduction of newer methods.
- In America, the **Coleman Report** in 1929 recommended an emphasis on the skill of reading in schools and colleges as it was felt at that time that there would be few opportunities to practice the spoken language.

Major Characteristics of Grammar – Translation: (Prator and Celce- Murcia)

- Classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language.
- Much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.
- Long, elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.
- Little or no attention is given to pronunciation.

Decoo attributes the grammar- translation method's fall from favour to its lack of potential for lively communication.

The Direct Method:

This method emphasized oral interaction, spontaneous use of language, no translation between first and second languages and little or no analysis of grammar rules.

Principles of the Direct Method as follows: (Richards and Rodgers)

- Classroom instruction was conducted exclusively in the target language.
- Only everyday vocabulary and sentences were taught.
- Grammar was taught inductively.
- New teaching points were taught through modeling and practice.
- Correct pronunciation and grammar were emphasized.

The Audio- Method:

The Audio-lingual / Audiovisual Method is derived from "The Army Method", so called because it was developed through a U.S Army programme devised after the World War II to produce speakers proficient in the languages of friend and foes.

Characteristics of the Audio-Method:

- New material is presented in dialogue form.
- Structural pattern are taught using repetitive drills.
- Vocabulary is strictly limited and learnt in context.

- There is much use of tapes, language labs and visual aids.
- Great importance is attached to pronunciation.
- Very little use of the mother tongue by teachers is permitted.
- There is a great effort to get students to produce error-free utterances.

David Nunan's Overview of the Natural Approach:

Theory of language: The essence of language is meaning. Vocabulary, not grammar is the heart of language.

Theory of Learning: There are two ways of L2 Language development.

- **Acquisition** - a natural sub-conscious process.
- **Learning** - a conscious process. Learning cannot lead to acquisition.

Objectives - Designed to give beginners / intermediate learner communicative skills.

Syllabus - Based on a selection of communicative activities and topics derived from learner needs.

Activity Types - Activities allowing comprehensible input. Focus on meaning not form.

Learner Roles - Should not try and learn language in the usual sense, but should try and lose themselves in activities involving meaningful communication.

Teachers Roles – the teacher is the primary source of comprehensible input. Must create positive low-anxiety climate. Must choose and orchestrate a rich mixture of classroom activities.

Roles of Materials – Materials come from realia rather than text books. Primary aim is to promote comprehension and communication.

The Natural Approach was based upon **Krashen's Five Hypotheses:**

Krashen's Five Hypotheses:

- 1. The acquisition / Learning Hypothesis:** claims that there are two distinctive ways of developing second language competence.
Acquisition – that is by using language for “real communication”.
Learning - “knowing about or formal knowledge of a language”.
- 2. The Natural order Hypothesis:** We acquire the rules of language in a predictable order.
- 3. The Monitor Hypothesis:** ‘Conscious learning’, can only be used as a monitor and cannot lead to fluency.
- 4. The input Hypothesis:** Humans acquire language in only one way – by understanding messages or by receiving “comprehensible input”.
- 5. The affective Filter Hypothesis:** ‘a mental block, caused by affective factors... that prevents input from reaching the language acquisition device.

Communicative Language Teaching:

Influenced by Krashen, approaches emerged during the 1980s and 1990s on the communicative functions of language.

Characteristics of CLT – Brown.

- Classroom goals are focused on all the components of communicative competence.
- Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes.
- Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles of communicative techniques.

- Students in a communicative class ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively.
- Students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an understanding of their own styles of learning.
- The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide, not an all knowing bestower of knowledge.

VII. CONCLUSION

Communicative Language Teaching is best considered an approach rather than a method. Thus although a reasonable degree of theoretical consistency can be discerned at the levels of language and learning theory, at the levels of design and procedure there is much greater room for individual interpretation and variation than most methods permit. Communicative Language Teaching appeared at a time when British language teaching was ready for a paradigm shift. Situational Language Teaching was no longer felt to reflect a methodology appropriate for the seventies and beyond. Communicative Language teaching appealed to those who sought a more humanistic approach to teaching, one in which the interactive processes of communication received priority. The adoption of a communicative approach raises important issues for teacher training, materials development, and testing and evaluation.

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