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Final research work

**Topic: Peculiarities of the Communicative
Method of teaching and its practical application**

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Introduction

The communicative language teaching approach is described, its theoretic history is reviewed, and classroom techniques are presented. The origins of the approach are found in research on the development of linguistic competence. Characteristics of the approach include: the goals of language use for communication; use of real-life communicative situations in classroom learning; emphasis on two-way communication; sufficient exposure to the target language; and development of all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). Links between linguistic and communicative competence are explored, and it is concluded that both are required, and must be taught, for effective communication. The roles of learner, teacher, methods, and materials in the communicative learning process are outlined. The teacher acts as manager of learning activities, advisor during activities, co-communicator, motivator, and evaluator. The student's role is primarily as communicator. Instructional materials serve to promote language use.

Communicative Language Teaching is an approach to teaching of foreign languages that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. The origins of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are to be found in the changes in the British language teaching tradition dating from the late 1960s. Until then, Situational Language represented the major British approach to teaching English as a foreign language. In Situational Language Teaching, language was taught by practicing basic structures in meaningful situation-based activities. British applied linguists emphasized another fundamental dimension of language, i.e. the functional and communicative potential of language. They saw the need to focus in language teaching on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures. The work of the Council of Europe; the writings of Wilkins, Widdowson, Candlin, Christopher Brumfit, Keith Johnson, and other British applied linguists on the theoretical basis for a communicative or functional approach to language teaching; the rapid application of these ideas by textbook writers; and the equally rapid acceptance of these new principles by British language teaching specialists, curriculum development centers, and even governments gave prominence nationally and internationally to what came to be referred to as the Communicative Approach, or simply Communicative Language Teaching. Although the movement began as a largely British innovation, focusing on alternative concepts of a syllabus, since the mid-1970s the scope of Communicative Language Teaching has expanded. Both American and British proponents now see it as an approach (and not a method) that aims to (a) make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and (b) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. The communicative approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as "communicative competence.

" Hymes's theory of communicative competence was a definition of what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community.

An awareness that second-language students can know the grammar and yet be unable to activate that knowledge to communicate has led theorists and teachers to consider what activities might enable students to develop communication skills. Different authors stress different aspects of CLT.

Taylor (1983) lists five characteristics:

- 1 – Students should participate in extended discourse in real context.
- 2 – They should share information that the others do not know.
- 3 – They should have choices about what they are going to say and how they are going to say it.
- 4 – They should communicate with a define purpose in mind.
- 5 – They should talk about real topics in real situations.

Communicative approaches to teaching challenge our understanding of the goals of instruction. According to Sanders, an emphasis on meaningful use over form means that accuracy and acquisition of the formal features of the [second language] are less a measure of successful language learning than are fluency and an ability to get something across comprehensibly to a native speaker. In order to encourage meaningful language use, many popular communicative activities involve elements of puzzle-solving, role play, or simulation. They encourage learners to do things with information such as: guessing, searching, matching, exchanging, collecting, sharing, combining, and arranging. In such an approach, the teacher has two main roles: the first role is to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and texts. The second role is to act as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group. The latter role is closely related to the objectives of the first role and arises from it. These roles imply a set of secondary roles for the teacher; first, as an organizer of resources and as a resource himself, second as a guide within the classroom procedures and activities.

Other roles assumed for teachers are needs analyst, counselor, and group process manager. The CLT teacher assumes a responsibility for determining and responding to learner language needs. Another role assumed by several CLT approaches is that of counselor, similar to the way this role is defined in Community Language Learning. In this role, the teacher-counselor is expected to act as an effective communicator seeking to maximize the meshing of speaker intention and hearer interpretation, through the use of paraphrase, confirmation, and feedback. CLT procedures often require teachers to acquire less teacher-centered classroom management skills. It is the teacher's responsibility to organize the classroom as a setting for communication and communicative activities. Now that the initial wave of enthusiasm has passed, however, some of the claims of CLT are being looked at more critically. The adoption of a communicative approach raises important issues for teacher training, materials development, and testing and evaluation. Questions that have been raised include whether a communicative approach can be applied at all levels in a language program, whether it is equally suited to ESL and EFL situations, whether it requires existing grammar-based syllabuses to be abandoned or merely revised, how such an approach can be evaluated, how suitable it is for non-native teachers, and how it can be adopted in situations where students must continue to take grammar-based tests. Undoubtedly, these kinds of questions require attention.

The role of the teacher is to be facilitator of his students' learning. Teachers are the managers of classroom activities. They are charged with the responsibility of establishing situations likely to promote communication. This paper is premised on a study which set out to determine if the role of the teacher in a Listening and Speaking class is relevant to the tenets of CLT. A descriptive research design was adopted using direct observation and interview methods for data collection. Note-taking and tape-recording were used to record class proceedings and interviews. A total of twelve secondary schools were selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Fourteen teachers of English were involved.

A descriptive analysis of data was done. Frequency tables were used to highlight the data. The findings revealed that while learners were passive participants in the process of learning the listening and speaking skills, the teacher played a very active role. He took centre stage. The teacher concentrated on instructing the learner. He planned the lesson alone, and while in class he talked, asked questions, demonstrated, gave notes, answered questions, explained, narrated, described, responded and even read extracts. The learner was hardly involved. For communicative competence to be achieved, there needs to be less teacher control and more pupil centeredness in any listening and speaking task. The findings of the study may provide impetus for the teacher to reflect upon his own, and other colleagues choice of methodology in the teaching of not only Listening and Speaking but also Reading and Writing. This indeed will boost the performance of English language and make it more acceptable as a language of communication. The role of the teacher is to be facilitator of his students' learning . He is the manager of classroom activities. The teacher is charged with the responsibility of establishing situations likely to promote communication. The students are communicators. They learn to communicate by communicating. In CLT, learning activities are selected according to the interests of the learner. Widdowson observes that the „natural“ way of acquiring a language is slow and inefficient and the purpose of language teaching is to make this process fast and simple. He suggests that language teachers need to assist learners by providing them with frameworks, patterns and rules to develop their communicative language skills. He recommends the use of lexical phrases in language teaching, as they are pragmatic and functional and have a clearly defined role, so they guide students in the flow of conversation and assist them in conveying meaning. The teacher also has the duty of structuring classrooms in a manner that motivates students. He should focus on both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Discussing topics of genuine interest for learners is a useful tool for maintaining and increasing learner motivation.

It is important that learners discuss topics of genuine interest to them while learning and practicing in English. The teacher is also charged with the responsibility of creating a conducive classroom environment.

Learners' communicative skills can be developed if they are motivated and provided an opportunity to express their identity and relate their feelings to the people around them. They should feel secure and valuable as individuals in their learning atmosphere because a secure learning atmosphere fosters growth of interpersonal relationships between learners themselves and between the learner and the teacher thereby making the class atmosphere safe, encouraging, and accommodating. Hendrickson believes that CLT should include activities that are interesting to the learners and challenge their linguistic abilities while at the same time, capturing their imagination and motivating them to continue to acquire and use foreign language beyond the textbook and classroom. Language teachers should provide diverse, interesting and abundant communicative activities. Language teachers assist learners in developing their communicative ability and help them to express themselves and understand others in social settings. It is observed that the communicative approach puts emphasis on listening, which implies an active will to try to understand others. "In summary, the role of the teacher as one of listener rather than speaker comes out in CLT". The teacher should be a patient listener is the basic requirement. Since the teacher talks less and listens more, he becomes an active facilitator of his students learning. 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. A classroom during a communicative activity is far from quiet. The students do most of the speaking, and frequently the scene of a classroom during a communicative exercise is active. 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. The study sought to establish if indeed in the English language classrooms in Lugari District, the CLT approach was used.

CLT enhances listening and speaking through interactive tasks such as role-play, public speaking, dictation, debates, among others. These imply learner-centred lessons where the learners perform most of the tasks leaving the teacher as a facilitator.

The study, therefore, sought to confirm if this is what happens in Lugari District.

CLT teachers choose classroom activities based on what they believe is going to be most effective for students developing communicative abilities in the target language (TL). Oral activities are popular among CLT teachers, as opposed to grammar drills or reading and writing activities, because they include active conversation and creative, unpredicted responses from students. Activities vary based on the level of language class they are being used in. They promote collaboration, fluency, and comfort in the TL. The six activities listed and explained below are commonly used in CLT classrooms.

Role-play

Role-play is an oral activity usually done in pairs, whose main goal is to develop students' communicative abilities in a certain setting.

Example:

1. The instructor sets the scene: where is the conversation taking place? (E.g., in a cafe, in a park, etc.)
2. The instructor defines the goal of the students' conversation. (E.g., the speaker is asking for directions, the speaker is ordering coffee, the speaker is talking about a movie they recently saw, etc.)
3. The students converse in pairs for a designated amount of time.

This activity gives students the chance to improve their communication skills in the TL in a low-pressure situation. Most students are more comfortable speaking in pairs rather than in front of the entire class. Instructors need to be aware of the differences between a conversation and an utterance. Students may use the same utterances repeatedly when doing this activity and not actually have a creative conversation.

If instructors do not regulate what kinds of conversations students are having, then the students might not be truly improving their communication skills.

Interviews

An interview is an oral activity done in pairs, whose main goal is to develop students' interpersonal skills in the TL.

Example:

1. The instructor gives each student the same set of questions to ask a partner.
2. Students take turns asking and answering the questions in pairs.

This activity, since it is highly structured, allows for the instructor to more closely monitor students' responses. It can zone in on one specific aspect of grammar or vocabulary, while still being a primarily communicative activity and giving the students communicative benefits. This is an activity that should be used primarily in the lower levels of language classes, because it will be most beneficial to lower-level speakers. Higher-level speakers should be having unpredictable conversations in the TL, where neither the questions nor the answers are scripted or expected. If this activity were used with higher-level speakers it wouldn't have many benefits

Group work

Group work is a collaborative activity whose purpose is to foster communication in the TL, in a larger group setting.

Example:

1. Students are assigned a group of no more than six people.
2. Students are assigned a specific role within the group. (E.g., member A, member B, etc.)
3. The instructor gives each group the same task to complete.

4. Each member of the group takes a designated amount of time to work on the part of the task to which they are assigned.
5. The members of the group discuss the information they have found, with each other and put it all together to complete the task.

Students can feel overwhelmed in language classes, but this activity can take away from that feeling. Students are asked to focus on one piece of information only, which increases their comprehension of that information. Better comprehension leads to better communication with the rest of the group, which improves students' communicative abilities in the TL. Instructors should be sure to monitor that each student is contributing equally to the group effort. It takes a good instructor to design the activity well, so that students will contribute equally, and benefit equally from the activity.

Information gap

Information gap is a collaborative activity, whose purpose is for students to effectively obtain information that was previously unknown to them, in the TL.

Example:

1. The class is paired up. One partner in each pair is Partner A, and the other is Partner B.
2. All the students that are Partner A are given a sheet of paper with a time-table on it. The time-table is filled in half-way, but some of the boxes are empty.
3. All the students that are Partner B are given a sheet of paper with a time-table on it. The boxes that are empty on Partner A's time-table are filled in on Partner B's. There are also empty boxes on Partner B's time-table, but they are filled in on Partner A's.
4. The partners must work together to ask about and supply each other with the information they are both missing, to complete each other's time-tables.

Completing information gap activities improves students' abilities to communicate about unknown information in the TL. These abilities are directly applicable to many real-world conversations, where the goal is to find out some new piece of information, or simply to exchange information.

Instructors should not overlook the fact that their students need to be prepared to communicate effectively for this activity. They need to know certain vocabulary words, certain structures of grammar, etc. If the students have not been well prepared for the task at hand, then they will not communicate effectively.

Opinion sharing

Opinion sharing is a content-based activity, whose purpose is to engage students' conversational skills, while talking about something they care about.

Example:

1. The instructor introduces a topic and asks students to contemplate their opinions about it. (E.g., dating, school dress codes, global warming)
2. The students talk in pairs or small groups, debating their opinions on the topic.

Opinion sharing is a great way to get more introverted students to open up and share their opinions. If a student has a strong opinion about a certain topic, then they will speak up and share. Respect is key with this activity. If a student does not feel like their opinion is respected by the instructor or their peers, then they will not feel comfortable sharing, and they will not receive the communicative benefits of this activity.

Scavenger hunt

A scavenger hunt is a mingling activity that promotes open interaction between students. Example:

1. The instructor gives students a sheet with instructions on it. (e.g. Find someone who has a birthday in the same month as yours.)

2. Students go around the classroom asking and answering questions about each other.
3. The students wish to find all of the answers they need to complete the scavenger hunt.

In doing this activity, students have the opportunity to speak with a number of classmates, while still being in a low-pressure situation, and talking to only one person at a time. After learning more about each other, and getting to share about themselves, students will feel more comfortable talking and sharing during other communicative activities. Since this activity is not as structured as some of the others, it is important for instructors to add structure. If certain vocabulary should be used in students' conversations, or a certain grammar is necessary to complete the activity, then instructors should incorporate that into the scavenger hunt.

Criticism

Although CLT has been extremely influential in the field of language teaching, it is not universally accepted and has been subject to significant critique. In his critique of CLT, Michael Swan addresses both the theoretical and practical problems with CLT. He mentions that CLT is not an altogether cohesive subject but one in which theoretical understandings (by linguists) and practical understandings (by language teachers) differ greatly. Criticism of the theory of CLT includes that it makes broad claims regarding the usefulness of CLT while citing little data, it uses a large amount of confusing vocabulary, and it assumes knowledge that is predominately not language-specific (such as the ability to make educated guesses) to be language-specific. Swan suggests that those theoretical issues lead to confusion in the application of CLT techniques. Where confusion in the application of CLT techniques is readily apparent is in classroom settings. Swan suggests that CLT techniques often suggest prioritizing the "function" of a language (what one can do with the language knowledge one has) over the "structure" of a language (the grammatical systems of the language). That priority can leave learners with serious gaps in their knowledge of the formal aspects of their target language.

Swan also suggests that in CLT techniques, the languages that a student might already know are not valued or employed in instructional techniques.

Further critique of CLT techniques in classroom teaching can be attributed to Elaine Ridge. One of her criticisms of CLT is that it falsely implies that there is a general consensus regarding the definition of "communicative competence," which CLT claims to facilitate. Because there is not such agreement, students may be seen to be in possession of "communicative competence" without being able to make full or even adequate use of the language. That individuals are proficient in a language does not necessarily entail that they can make full use of that language, which can limit an individual's potential with that language, especially if that language is an endangered language. That criticism largely has to do with the fact that CLT is often highly praised and is popular though it may not necessarily be the best method of language teaching. Ridge also notes that CLT has nonspecific requirements of its teachers, as there is no completely standard definition of what CLT is, which is especially true for the teaching of grammar, the formal rules governing the standardized version of the language in question. Some critics of CLT suggest that the method does not put enough emphasis on the teaching of grammar and instead allows students to produce utterances, despite being grammatically incorrect, as long as the interlocutor can get some meaning from them. Stephen Bax's critique of CLT has to do with the context of its implementation. Bax asserts that many researchers associate the use of CLT techniques with modernity and so the lack of CLT techniques as a lack of modernism. That way, those researchers consider teachers or school systems that fail to use CLT techniques as outdated and suggest that their students learn the target language "in spite of" the absence of CLT techniques, as if CLT were the only way to learn a language, and everyone who fails to implement its techniques is ignorant and cannot teach the target language.

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. It could be that one version among the various proposals for syllabus models, exercise types, and classroom activities may gain wider approval in the future, giving Communicative Language Teaching a status similar to other teaching methods. On the other hand, divergent interpretations might lead to homogeneous subgroups. 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. CLT appealed to those who sought a more humanistic approach to teaching, one in which the interactive processes of communication received priority. The rapid adoption and implementation of the communicative approach also resulted from the fact that it quickly assumed the status of orthodoxy in British language teaching circles, receiving the sanction and support of leading British applied linguists, language specialists, publishers, as well as institutions, such as the British Council (Richards 1985). Now that the initial wave of enthusiasm has passed, however, some of the claims of CLT are being looked at more critically (Swan 1985). The adoption of a communicative approach raises important issues for teacher training, materials development, and testing and evaluation. Questions that have been raised include whether a communicative approach can be applied at all levels in a language program, whether it is equally suited to ESL and EFL situations, whether it requires existing grammar-based syllabuses to be abandoned or merely revised, how such an approach can be evaluated, how suitable it is for non-native teachers, and how it can be adopted in situations where students must continue to take grammar-based tests. These kinds of questions will doubtless require attention if the communicative movement in language teaching continues to gain momentum in the future.

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