

The Peculiarities of the Communicative Method of Teaching (CLT)

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High School 142

2021

Introduction

Language belongs to each of us. We live in and by language. Everybody knows their own language. But to know one language more is a great advantage. If we want to contact foreigners, to know international trade, science and art, being able to communicate in English is vital. Communication not only conveys information but it encourages effort, modifies attitudes and stimulates thinking. If the teacher wants the learners at school to have a good command of English communicative language teaching (CLT) or a communicative approach is the best method.

Communicative language teaching emerged in the 1980s as a response to the growing demand for a language curriculum that would enable learners to use the second language in real-life situations. Previously, foreign language teaching has predominantly had its emphasis on grammatical competence, rather than actually focusing on developing students' communication and interaction skills.

One of the most significant features of communication is that it is a dynamic and developing phenomenon. A crucial feature of a communicative method is that it operates with stretches of language above the sentence level, and operates with real language in real situations. Language used in the whole context is more useful than only studying the parts of it.

1.The processes are as important as the forms

A method which aims at developing the capacity of the learners to communicate in a second language will focus on repeating continuously until they are able to communicate well in a target language. So that the learners are able to practice the forms of the target language, i.e. English within a given framework. It simply means when the language is used for communication, the language forms are used for a process of communication. There are three such processes (tuavance.com) –

Information gap

Communication is part and parcel of every human being. When two or more people are conversing in day-to-day life, one may know something which is not known to the other. The purpose of the communication is to bridge this information gap. In classroom situations pair work undertaken to complete an incomplete picture is the best example of transferring information as each member of the pair has a part of total information and attempts to convey it verbally to the other.

Choice

Another crucial feature of communication is that the learners have options, both in terms of what they will say and, more particularly, how they will say it. From the point of view of the speaker this means that s/he must choose the ideas which s/he wants to express with appropriate linguistic forms. Foreign language learners may face problems in making choices in this regard.

Feed back

This process is implicit in the above two processes. When two persons take part in an interaction, there is normally some aim behind communicating and in what way the other person reacts is evaluated in terms of that aim. So, the strategies involved in this process are important.

Learning by doing

It is now widely accepted that education must be ultimately learner-centred more than teacher-centered. The teacher may go on teaching, but if the learner is not making any effort, then there is no point in teaching. The teacher must involve the learner and must be judged in terms of its effects on him/her. Another consequence is that learning becomes to a large extent the learner's responsibility. The teacher helps, advises, and teaches, guides, the learners themselves have to learn. The learner has to be involved in the activity. Only by practicing, acting, and actually doing, can learners learn to communicate.

Mistakes are not always mistakes

While developing communicative ability of the learners, trivial mistakes of grammar or pronunciation does not matter as long as the learner gets his/her message across. In the initial stage of learning to communicate in a foreign language, mistakes are bound to happen. The learners commit mistakes because they are trying to do something which they have not been told or shown how to do, or how to speak which they have not mastered. It means they are not really making mistakes. If the teacher corrects each and everything at every level, the learners may lose their confidence in using the language for communication.

2.Principles of Communicative Language Teaching

The principles of CLT should be paid great attention to if the teacher wants his/her learners to have a good basic understanding of the language and later on to speak it well. Below are given the most important principles

- 'Authentic language' in real context should be introduced in the classroom whenever possible. It is the language used for day-to-day communication or functional purposes.

- By teaching language, the learner should be able to make out the speaker's or writer's intention. So that they will be communicatively competent.
- There should be connectivity among all the language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing together since they are regularly used in real life.
- The target language is a vehicle for classroom communication, not just the object of study. Hence, attention should be given to teaching language for communication.
- One function may have different linguistic forms. As the language is taught for functional purposes, a variety of linguistic forms are presented together.
- Students have to learn language properties i.e. cohesion and coherence which are helpful to combine sentences together. It is essential for them as they work with language at the discourse or super sentential (above sentence) level.
- In CLT, games, role plays, group work, pair work, etc. play an important role as they have certain features in common to learn language effectively.
- Errors are tolerated and treated as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills.
- Proper situations should be created by the teacher so as to promote communication in the classroom.
- The social contexts of the communicative situations are essential for giving meaning to the utterances.
- The grammar and vocabulary that the students learn follow from the functions, situational context and the role of the interlocutors.

3.Classroom Activities in CLT

Every teacher knows that classroom activities or methods help the teacher to broaden his/her qualities, which give the learners the opportunity to communicate more fluently. There are various types of exercises and activities in the

communicative approach which «help students to achieve the communicative competence, and engage learners in communication» (Richards, 2006).

Communicative activities play a vital role in communicative language teaching.

These activities are helpful for the teachers to broaden their repertoire of techniques and activities so as to enable the learners to communicate more effectively in foreign languages. Communicative activities are purposeful and objective oriented. According to Littlewood, the communicative activities can be represented diagrammatically as follows. (Littlewood, 2003.86)

- Pre-Communicative activities
 - Structural activities
 - Quasi Communicative activities
- Communicative activities
 - Functional Communicative activities
 - Social interaction activities

Pre-communicative activities

They serve to prepare the learner for later communication. The two sub-categories of pre-communicative activities are:

Structural activities:

Focus is on the grammatical system and on ways in which linguistic items can be combined.

Quasi- Communicative activities:

Focus is on one or more typical conversation exchanges. Some resemble drills, but others are closer to dialogues. Drills and dialogues can be combined so as to provide a bridge from formal exercise to communicative use.

Communicative Activities – also have two sub-categories:

Functional Communicative activities include such tasks as comparing sets of pictures, noting similarities and differences, working out continuously following directions and so on. In these activities learners must work towards a definite solution for a problem.

Social interaction activities comprise exchange of words, converse with others, improvisations and debates. Here, teachers prepare learners about the varied social contexts in which they will need to perform outside the classroom using different social interaction activities.

The aims of the CLT are as follows

Information-Gap Activities

An important aspect of communication in CLT is the notion of information gap (E. E, G.H. Methods in teaching English). This refers to the fact that in real communication, people normally communicate in order to get information they do not possess. This is known as an information gap. More authentic communication is likely to occur in the classroom if students go beyond the practice of language forms for their own sake and use their linguistic and communicative resources in order to obtain information. In so doing, they will draw available vocabulary, grammar, and communication strategies to complete a task. The following exercises make use of the information-gap principle:

Students are divided into A-B pairs. The teacher has copied two sets of pictures. One set (for A students) contains a picture of a group of people. The other set (for B students) contains a similar picture but it contains a number of slight differences from the A-picture. Students must sit back to back and ask questions to try to find out how many differences there are between the two pictures.

Students practice role play in pairs. One student is given the information she/he needs to play the part of a clerk in the railway station information booth and has information on train departures, prices, etc. The other needs to obtain information

on departure times, prices, etc. They role-play the interaction without looking at each other's cue cards.

Jigsaw activities

These are also based on the information-gap principle. Typically, the class is divided into groups and each group has part of the information needed to complete an activity. The class must fit the pieces together to complete the whole. In doing so, they must use their language resources to communicate meaningfully and so take part in meaningful communication practice. The following are examples of jigsaw activities:

The teacher plays a recording in which three people with different points of view discuss their opinions on a topic of interest. The teacher prepares three different listening tasks, one focusing on each of the three speaker's points of view. Students are divided into three groups and each group listens and takes notes on one of the three speaker's opinions. Students are then rearranged into groups containing a student from groups A, B, and C. They now role-play the discussion using the information they obtained.

The teacher takes a narrative and divides it into twenty sections (or as many sections as there are students in the class). Each student gets one section of the story. Students must then move around the class, and by listening to each section read aloud, decide where in the story their section belongs. Eventually the students have to put the entire story together in the correct sequence.

Other Activity Types in CLT

Many other activity types have been used in CLT, including the following:

Task-completion activities: puzzles, games, map-reading, and other kinds of classroom tasks in which the focus is on using one's language resources to complete a task.

Information-gathering activities: student-conducted surveys, interviews, and searches in which students are required to use their linguistic resources to collect information.

Opinion-sharing activities: activities in which students compare values, opinions, or beliefs, such as a ranking task in which students list six qualities in order of importance that they might consider in choosing a date or spouse.

Information-transfer activities: These require learners to take information that is presented in one form, and represent it in a different form. For example, they may read instructions on how to get from A to B, and then draw a map showing the sequence, or they may read information about a subject and then represent it as a graph.

Reasoning-gap activities: These involve deriving some new information from given information through the process of inference, practical reasoning, etc. For example, working out a teacher's timetable on the basis of given class timetables.

Role plays: activities in which students are assigned roles and improvise a scene or exchange based on given information or clues.

At my lessons I usually use the methods which engage all the students in exploration of new information by motivating them to think critically. Below mentioned methods are some of them.

Anticipation Guides

An Anticipation Guide (E. E, G.H. Methods in teaching English) is a strategy that is used before reading to activate students' prior knowledge and build curiosity about a new topic. Before reading a selection, students respond to several statements that challenge or support their preconceived ideas about key concepts in the text. Using this strategy stimulates students' interest in a topic and sets a purpose for reading.

Anticipation guides can be revisited after reading to evaluate how well students understood the material and to correct any misconceptions.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming (E. E, G.H. Methods in teaching English) is a combination of a relaxed, informal approach to problem-solving and lateral thinking. People are asked to find ideas and thoughts that can at first seem to be a bit irrelevant. The idea is to use some of these ideas to form original, creative solutions to problems. Even some seemingly useless ideas can spark still more ideas. The goal of brainstorming is to direct people to new ways of thinking and break from the usual way of reasoning.

The most important thing about brainstorming is that there should be no criticism of ideas. students try to open up possibilities and discard wrong assumptions about the limits of the problem. Judgments and analysis of ideas are explored after the brainstorming process while focus should be at this stage on idea generation.

Paired-Verbal-Fluency

Paired-Verbal-Fluency (E. E, G.H. Methods in teaching English) is a dialogue strategy used to engage students in an active verbal discussion. It can be used to review or summarize information or concepts previously learned or access prior knowledge or thinking about a concept or topic of study. The strategy allows students to construct their own learning and listen to the ideas of others. To access prior knowledge, the amount of time should increase from round to round. For example, the time would increase from 15 seconds in Round 1, to 30 seconds in Round 2, to 45 seconds in Round 3. As students' prior knowledge is accessed, they are able to remember more and make more connections, so the longer span of time as they move from round to round is needed. To summarize learning, the amount of time should decrease from round to round. For example, the time would decrease from 60 seconds in Round 1, to 30 seconds in Round 2, to 15 seconds in Round 3. As students' summarize their learning, they have less and less to say because the information has already been shared by them or their partner.

Think-Pair-Share

Think-Pair-Share (TPS) (E. E, G.H. Methods in teaching English) is a collaborative learning strategy in which students work together to solve a problem or answer a question about an assigned reading. This technique requires students to (1) think individually about a topic or answer to a question; and (2) share ideas with classmates. Discussing an answer with a partner serves to maximize participation, focus attention and engage students in comprehending the reading material.

The teacher decides upon the text to be read and develops the set of questions or prompts that target key content concepts. The teacher then describes the purpose of the strategy and provides guidelines for discussions. As with all strategy instruction, teachers should model the procedure to ensure that students understand how to use the strategy. Teachers should monitor and support students as they work.

T : (Think) Teachers begin by asking a specific question about the text. Students “think” about what they know or have learned about the topic.

P : (Pair) Each student should be paired with another student or a small group.

S : (Share) Students share their thinking with their partner. Teachers expand the “share” into a whole-class discussion.

Role-Play

Role-play (E. E, G.H. Methods in teaching English) is a technique that allows students to explore realistic situations by interacting with other people in a managed way in order to develop experience and trial different strategies in a supported environment. Depending on the intention of the activity, participants might be playing a role similar to their own (or their likely one in the future) or could play the opposite part of the conversation or interaction. Both options provide the possibility of significant learning, with the former allowing experience to be gained and the latter encouraging the student to develop an understanding of the situation from the ‘opposite’ point of view.

ERR(evocation-realization-reflection)

ERR framework (E. E, G.H. Methods in teaching English) system of teaching consists of three phases and it is a good model of the best way people learn. The model describes the process of thinking in which students are included before the process of learning, during the process and after the learning process. The first phase of the ERR framework system is evocation (E). At this stage students are encouraged to use their knowledge and experience on a particular subject and to anticipate and determine the purpose of teaching and learning. This phase connects the previously acquired knowledge with knowledge that is being acquired. This enables the transfer of knowledge. The second phase is the phase of realisation of meaning (Rz) which gets the students through a new text analysis, thematic presentations or other form of presentation and new contents. Students are expected to experience new content and integrate it into their own knowledge. At this stage information is acquired. In the phase of reflection (R) students think about what they have learned in the context of their existing knowledge, rearrange the existing knowledge, build and create a link between the existing and new knowledge and create a new quality. In order to develop a practical understanding of the framework system for teaching and learning, this system must be tested in the context of teaching as part of guided instruction and each teaching unit passes through the aforementioned phases of the framework of the system.

Estimated system for teaching and learning allows teachers to:

1. Organize instruction
2. Identify purpose and objectives of teaching
3. Plan additional activities
4. Involve students in purposeful learning
5. Establish a correlation between the subjects
6. Watch the needs and interests of students

4.Goals of CLT

Fluency in CLT

One of the goals of CLT is to develop fluency in language use. Let us look at these examples of fluency activities that you can use in teaching.

A group of students of mixed language ability carry out a role play in which they have to adopt specified roles and personalities provided for them on cue cards. These roles involve the drivers, witnesses, and the police at a collision between two cars. The language is entirely improvised by the students, though they are heavily constrained by the specified situation and characters.

The teacher and a student act out a dialog in which a customer returns a faulty object she has purchased to a department store. The clerk asks what the problem is and promises to get a refund for the customer or to replace the item. In groups, students now try to recreate the dialog using language items of their choice. They are asked to recreate what happened preserving the meaning but not necessarily the exact language. They later act out their dialogs in front of the class.

Accuracy in CLT

Another important aim of CLT is accuracy. Here is an example of an accuracy activity. Students are practicing dialogs. The dialogs contain examples of falling intonation in Wh-questions. The class is organized in groups of three, two students practicing the dialog, and the third playing the role of monitor. The monitor checks that the others are using the correct intonation pattern and corrects them where necessary. The students rotate their roles between those reading the dialog and those monitoring. The teacher moves around listening to the groups and correcting their language where necessary.

Students in groups of three or four complete an exercise on a grammatical item, such as choosing between the past tense and the present perfect, an item which the teacher has previously presented and practiced as a whole class activity. Together students decide which grammatical form is correct and they complete the exercise. Groups

take turns reading out their answers.

Teachers were recommended to use a balance of fluency activities and accuracy and to use accuracy activities to support fluency activities.

The success of CLT depends on its activities .Here are some of them.

Conclusion

1. CLT is one of the most important teaching methods at school as it emphasizes to engage the learners in real - life situations in the classroom. It is a method in which the language is used for a process of communication.
2. The principles of CLT should be paid great attention if the teacher wants the learners to have a good command of English.
3. Classroom activities help the teacher and give the learners an opportunity to become communicatively competent. While using activities errors shouldn't be paid great attention as correcting each and everything makes the learners less confident.
4. The aim of CLT is to develop fluency, accuracy , critical and creative thinking. includes four language skills including

Communicative approach can be applied at all levels in a language program, 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.

References

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