



Characteristics and Principles of Communicative Language Teaching

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Abstract:

The present paper throwing light on the Communicative Language teaching as an approach to teach English as a foreign language. It will give the historical background of CLT. The present paper also discusses the major characteristics and principles of CLT.

Keywords: CLT, Communication, English as foreign Language

1. Communicative Language Teaching

It has been noticed that the goal of the most of the methods is to make the students able to communicate in the target language. But in the 1970s, the educators tried to find out whether they were going to meet the goal of the students in a right way or not. It had been observed that students were able to write and read the sentences in target language correctly. But when it came to communicate in the target language, they failed to do so. It made clear to the observer that to make the students able to communicate in the target language, it required more than mastering only the linguistic structures. It had been accepted by the educators that to be able to communicate in the target language, communicative competence is required with linguistic competence. There had been a shift from the linguistic structure centered approach to communicative approach in the late 1970s and 80s.

CLT is an approach to teach foreign or second language which emphasizes on communicative competence. It also emphasizes on interaction as a means to teach language. Communicative Language Teaching replaced the Situation Language Teaching which had been used to teach English as a second or foreign language. It had been considered as the major British approach. The focus of SLT approach was on to teach the basic structures of language. But in the 1960s, the educators realized that language taught on the basis of situational learning would have been of no use. Because to teach the meaning, carried out from the utterances was more required as it expressed the intentions of the speaker or writer.

In the mid of 1970s, the scope of Communicative Language Teaching has extended. Both American and British proponents now see it as an approach that aim to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and develop procedure for the teaching of four language skill that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication (Richards & Rodgers 1986:66).

At the level of language theory, Communicative Language Teaching has a rich, if somewhat eclectic, theoretical base (Richards & Rodgers 1986:71).

2. Characteristics of CLT

- It aims to make learners to attain communicative competence so the learners can use language accurately and appropriately.
- The major focus while using CLT approach is on the learners. The teacher is just the facilitator. The teacher is a person who manages the environment and helps the learners to become autonomous.

- The syllabus emphasizes the functional use of language. The syllabus is relying on the authentic materials. The tasks which are assigned to the learners have purposes and meanings.
- Communicative activities enable the learners to attain communicative objectives of the curriculum, engage learners in communication, and require the use of such communicative processes as information sharing, negotiation of meaning, and interaction (Richards & Rodgers 1986:76).

3. Principles of CLT

- In CLT approach, meaning is given prime importance. The main focus of the approach is to make the learners able to understand the intention and expression of the writers and speakers.
- In this approach, it is believed that communicative functions are more important rather than linguistic structures. Littlewood states that "one of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language, combine these into a more fully communicative view" (1981:1). Each language has limited number of sentence patterns. Mastering only those sentence patterns does not help the learners to communicate in the target language. The learner needs to learn the communication functions of those structures.
- While using CLT approach in teaching language, the target language is used in the classroom. The target language is a vehicle for class room communication, not just the object of study (Larsen-Freeman, 2000:125). Because if the learners continue to use their native languages, they are not able to communicate in the target language. It is believed that native language should be used judiciously.
- Appropriate use of language is emphasized rather than accuracy. Accuracy comes at the later stage. It is believed that when the learners learn to use the language appropriately accuracy comes automatically.
- Language should be taught by integrating all language skills and not by only one skill. It means communication approach is not limited to only speaking skill; reading and writing skills should be developed.
- Language cannot be learnt through rote memorization. It cannot be learnt in isolation. It should be learnt through social interaction. To communicate in the target language, there is a need to struggle with language. Richards & Rodgers state that the target linguistic system will be learned best through the process of struggling to communicate (1986:67).
- While using this approach, the major focus is to make the learner able to communicate in the target language. Errors are tolerated by the teacher because what is more important is to make them able to speak in the target language. Teacher should not correct them during the activities in which they are using target language. The teacher can note the errors of the learners and make it correct after the activities are over.
- CLT approach provides the opportunities to communicate in the target language to the learners. It encourages teacher-student and student – student interaction. It helps to encourage the co-operative relationship among students. The teacher should give work in group or in pair which give opportunities to share the information among them. It also helps to promote the communication among them. Richards & Rodgers state that students are expected to interact with other people, either in the flesh, through pair and group work, or in their writings (1986:68).
- CLT approach provides the opportunities to the learners not only about what to say and but also about how to say.
- The teacher should create situations which help to promote communication. The teacher should teach them how language should be used in a social context. Teacher should give activities such as role play which help the learners to learn the language in social context.
- Language teaching techniques should be designed in such way that it encourages the learners to use the target language. Functional aspects of language should be given importance. Dramas, role plays, games should be used in the class room to promote the real communication.

- Students should be given opportunities to listen to language as it is used in authentic communication. They may be coached on strategies for how to improve their comprehension (Larsen- Freeman, 2000:128).

4. Role of the Teachers in the classroom

The teachers are just the facilitators who facilitate the learning process. It is the responsibility of teachers to create such situations in which communication can take place among the students. They monitor the learning process. While using CLT approach in the class room, the teachers do not interrupt during the learning process to correct the errors of the learners. They just note the errors and correct it at a later point. The teachers give such types of activities which help to accelerate the communication process. The teachers are also active participants of the communicative process. Richards & Rodgers state that there are some other roles assumed for teachers are need analyst, counsellor, and group process manager (1986:77).

5. Role of the Learners in the classroom

The major focus in CLT approach is on communication process rather than mastering linguistics structures. This leads to different roles for the learners. Communicative Language Teaching is a learner- centered approach in which the learners are given importance. The learners are expected to participate in the communication process actively. The cooperative approach (rather than individualistic) approach to leaning stressed in CLT may likewise be unfamiliar to learners. CLT methodologists consequently recommend that learners learn to see that failed communication is a joint responsibility and not the fault of speaker or listener. Similarly, successful communication is accomplishments jointly achieved and acknowledge (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:77).

6. Conclusion

Communicative Language Teaching is an approach which provides opportunity to the learners to communicate in the target language. The use of functional aspect of language makes them able to communicate in the target language in their day to day life. The activities which are used in CLT approach such as dramas, role plays and games make learning enjoyable.

References

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