

THE THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Bozorova Maftuna O'lmas qizi

O'zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti

Ingliz tili 1-fakulteti, 1-bosqich talabasi

Abstract

This article presents information about Communicative Teaching (CLT) method, examples, merits and dimerits of this approach. Furthermore, the way to how CLT can be applied in the classroom is explained with further details.

Keywords

Communicative Language Teaching, role-playing, rote-learning, student-centered, vocabulary, Howatt, grammar correction, communication, large-class sizes.

INTRODUCTION

Although grammar-translation method (a method that focuses more on grammar rules and its use in the language based on theoretical information) was used until 1970s, a new approach called CLT to teach foreign languages has emerged. CLT focuses more on language development through interaction and communication as the main objective to learn foreign language. After the main drawbacks of grammar-translation method became noticeable, Communicative Language Teaching became more prevalent. D.A.Wilkins suggested the definition to the practical use of language that helped to create a foundation for CLT appeared due to the work of experts from Europe. Communicative language teaching is an approach that aims to teach students through increasing their interaction with the classroom, making the atmosphere much more lively. CLT emphasizes the importance of practical application of the material, thereby developing language competence in students. In order to acquire a new language, it is not enough to learn all grammar rules, to have tones of vocabulary, to master new theories of language without putting them into application.

Features of CLT

The first and foremost regularly mentioned aspect of CLT is its student-centered and practice-based notion of foreign language teaching. For some academics, CLT entails more than a combination of practical and grammatical teaching. Littlewood (1981:1) mentioned that, "one of the key elements of

communicative language teaching is that this approach concentrates applicable and configurational features of language". However, for some, it intended the utilization of methodologies in which learners are engaged in group discussions or groups leveraging accessible sources in problem-solving activities. One example that can describe the "weak" and "strong" versions of communicative language teaching. It is Howatt's explanation: Hypothetically, a "strong" and "weak" forms of interpersonal technique (CLT). The "weak" version has become almost typical and fundamental implementation in teaching, emphasizes the significance of supporting students with possibilities to use their second language for conversation and, strives the implementation of such practices to an extensive and broader language teaching plan. Alternatively, the "strong" version leans towards the assertion that language can be obtained through conversation, in such a way that it is a matter of encouraging the progress of language methodology itself. In short, previous- mentioned term is basically can be clarified as "acquiring to use", the latter stands for "utilizing language to acquire it".

Examples of CLT.

One of the most principal illustrations of CLT is role-playing activities. By starting the lesson with role-playing activities that involve the performance of situations that can be experienced in real life, students can develop both communication and collaboration skills simultaneously. Students can create role-playing activities by taking specific roles of their favorite actresses or actors. This activity can include job interviews, discussions, film roles, going shopping, visiting a hospital, and so on. This procedure not only helps them to learn new vocabulary in the target language, but also develops interpersonal skills and their ability to make improvisation in unexpected situations, thereby improving problem-solving skills. Making interviews during the class is also crucial to enhance students' communication skills. At the beginning of the lesson, a teacher asks the same set of questions from all students, and they should answer these questions by working in pairs. Admittedly, this can be used for intermediate or upper-intermediate learners. Students with an advanced level of target language should be ready to have unforeseeable discussions. It would be beneficial for them, if they were asked to give answers, explanations, and examples to instant questions by using advanced vocabulary. This technique allows students to share personal thoughts, interests and exchange ideas with partners, building a strong relationship in the class. After listening to interviews, educators can give overall feedback, helping to reflect on mistakes, and grammatical errors. Rather than relying only on grammar or theories, it is much better to have lively and active communication during the class.

Group work is an activity that involves teamwork and helps learners improve communication in a larger collective. For instance:

1. Students are required to work in a group of no more than 6 people.
2. Students should take different roles (student A, student B, etc)
3. The teacher gives a sheet of paper relevant to the lesson's theme and students have to take an allocated time to fill gaps by using given vocabulary.
4. Finally, each group should check the grammatical mistakes of another group, and at the end, they will give feedback and suggestions to each other.

Generally, a teacher should be a good instructor to ensure that each member of a group is participating. This activity not only fosters collaboration, but also helps to develop communication in target language.

METHODOLOGY

The literature search is carried out by utilizing discussions like Wikipedia, Google Scholar, and Scopus. This systematic search singled out articles and working papers published within the last 4 and 5 decades to differentiate and analyze current advancements in Communicative Language Teaching (1981, Littlewood). Firstly, the introduction part mostly focused on general information about CLT and the term "CLT". Then, it reviewed common features of this approach, providing academic research to help readers understand the topic better. Articles that did not emphatically investigate CLT, concentrate on traditional teaching methods, or have insufficient empirical evidence were eliminated from the review. The data collection procedure examined the key points by carefully selecting the most reliable websites, journals and empirical research. The largest part of selected data is mostly designated to the effectiveness of using the Communicative Language Teaching approach in the classroom. Information regarding the implementation of CLT to enhance communicative skills in the target language is backed up with evident examples and supporting sentences. Moreover, this article's main objective is to explore key advantages and drawbacks of the implementation of CLT in the classroom.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Since the communicative language teaching approach focuses on developing effective communication, it has attained noticeable attention in language teaching. The outcomes below present a properly-balanced review of advantages and drawbacks of CLT, gathering information from previous studies indicated in the introduction part.

Advantages of CLT

According to Richard and Rodgers (2001), CLT approach has concentrated on effective interaction as a vehicle for increasing practical ability to use second language in authoritative and accurate circumstances. The evidences also demonstrated that if students are exposed to situations where they engage in communication activities and exercises, they can cultivate their interpersonal skills to deliver information skillfully, thus developing their language and communicative proficiency (Krashen 1981). CLT not only increases students's language competence, but also helps to develop teamwork and collaboration by involving them into group discussions during the class. The study carried out by Hasibuan and Batubara (2012) shows that the CLT approach can develop students' critical reasoning and analytical thinking skills as this approach includes various activities that call for students to compromise terms in different contexts. While communicating with partners about various topics in the target language, learners are inspired to think critically, thereby bringing about the enhancement of cognitive functions. Furthermore, CLT provides a way to learn a foreign language with enjoyable ways, such as having active participation in role-playing, games, the discussion groups. Communication helps students to feel a sense of community, motivating them to improve their second language. Admittedly, the teacher's role should be a facilitator in the CLT approach, giving them an opportunity to listen to students' interests and identify how to approach to help them to increase their interpersonal skills.

Disadvantages of CLT

It is evident that this approach can not be implemented in every level of learners. Because, beginner language learners should acquire grammar rules, vocabulary and know its use in different situations. Another dimerit of this instructional approach is that students should concentrate merely on communication, thereby forgetting about grammar and error correction. Although this helps students to be fluent in the target language, it does not deal with precision. The study conducted by Ahmad annd Rao (2013) suggests that CLT students often seem to find it difficult to follow lexical precision, a primary element of language acquisition. Evidently, by incorporating this approach into classroom, teachers can not create a solid foundation for preparing students to academic writing. It requires tremendous effort and dedication to manage large-class sizes by using CLT, as there are varying level of learners in one classroom. Generally, it is a challenging task for educators to keep the track of progress of all students.

Different studies have their own counterarguments. This raises numereous questions and leads to uncertanties whether this approach should be incorporated into education and school curriculum or not. Despite garnering considerable

attention in language teaching, CLT is not acknowledged universally. However, the principal objective of CLT is to help language learners to be fluent, self-assured and skilled communicators in diverse life situations.

CONCLUSION

Communicative language teaching creates a cornerstone for communicative requirements by utilizing methods that involves learners to speak fluently. Probably, for some, it may seem that there is a little focus on grammar and lexical resource to satisfy the demands of language learners. However, CLT has already modified the way of teaching foreign language, changing the role from traditional rote-learning to active interaction.

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