



Tikrit University / College of Education for Women

English Department

Methods of Language Teaching / 3rd. class

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The-Communicative-Language-Teaching

Introduction

It has been noticed that the goal of 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 the right way or not. It had been observed that students were able to write and read the sentences in the target language correctly. But when it came to communicating 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 centred approach to communicative approach in the late 1970s and 80s. CLT is an approach to teach a foreign or second language which emphasizes on communicative competence. It also emphasizes interaction as a means to teach the 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 the 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-1970s, the scope of Communicative Language Teaching has extended. Both American and British proponents now see it as an approach that aims to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and develop a procedure for the teaching of four language skill that acknowledges the interdependence of language and communication (Richards & Rodgers 1986:66).

Objectives of the Communicative Language Teaching

It aims to make learners to attain communicative competence so the learners can use language accurately and appropriately.

Features of the Communicative Language Teaching

1. The major focus while using the CLT approach is on the learners. The teacher is just the facilitator. A teacher is a person who manages the environment and helps the learners to become autonomous.

2. The syllabus emphasizes the functional use of language. The syllabus is relying on authentic materials. The tasks which are assigned to the learners have purposes and meanings.

3. 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.

4. In the CLT approach, the 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.

5. In this approach, it is believed that communicative functions are more important rather than linguistic structures. Littlewoods states that one of the most characteristics 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. Each language has a 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.

6. While using the CLT approach in teaching language, the target language is used in the classroom. The target language is a vehicle for classroom 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 the native language should be used judiciously.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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).

10. 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. The teacher should not correct them during the activities in which they are using the target language. The teacher can note the errors of the learners and make it correct after the activities are over.

11. CLT approach provides opportunities to communicate in the target language to the learners. It encourages teacher-student and student-student interaction. It helps to encourage the cooperative relationship among students. The teacher should give work in a group or in pair which give opportunities to share the information among them. It also helps to promote 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).

12. CLT approach provides the opportunities to the learners not only about what to say and but also about how to say.

13. The teacher should create situations which help to promote communication. The teacher should teach them how language should be used in a social context. The teacher should give activities such as role play which help the learners to learn the language in social context.

13. Language teaching techniques should be designed in such a 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 classroom to promote real communication

14. 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).

15. 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.

16. While using the CLT approach in the classroom, the teachers do not interrupt during the learning process to correct the errors of the learners. They just note the errors and correct them 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.

17. The major focus in the 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-centred 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).

Advantages

1. The communicative approach is much more pupil-orientated because it is based on pupils' needs and interests.
2. The communicative approach seeks to personalise and localise language and adapt it to the interests of pupils. Meaningful language is always more easily retained by learners.
3. Seeks to use authentic resources. And that is more interesting and motivating for children.
4. Children acquire grammar rules as a necessity to speak so is more proficient and efficient.

Disadvantages

1. It pays insufficient attention to the context in which teaching and learning take place
2. The Communicative Approach often seems to be interpreted as: "if the teacher understands the student we have good communication" but native speakers of the target language can have great difficulty understanding students.
3. Another disadvantage is that the CLT approach focuses on fluency but not accuracy. The approach does not focus on error reduction but instead creates a situation where learners are left using their own devices to solve their communication problems. Thus they may produce incoherent, grammatically incorrect sentences.