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Communicative Language Teaching

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Abstract

It has been noticed that the goal of the most of the methods whether it is Audio- Visual, the Direct method, the Silent Way or De-suggestopedia so far is for students to learn to communicate in the target language. In the 1970s, though, educators began to question if they were going about meeting the goal in the right way. Some observed that students could produce sentences accurately in a lesson, but could not use them appropriately when genuinely communicating outside of the class-room. Others noted that being able to communicate required more than mastering linguistic structures. Students may know the rules of linguistic usage, but unable to use the language. It became clear that communication required that students perform certain functions as well as, promising, inviting and declining invitations within a social context. In short, being able to communicate required more than linguistic competence, it required communicative competence – knowing when and how to say what to whom. All these observations, done at various times contributed to a shift in the late 1970s and early 1980s from a linguistic structure –centered approach to Communicative Approach or Communicative Language Teaching Approach (Widdowson 1990).

Keywords: Communicative Language, Communicators, Informational gap

The approach of Communicative Language Teaching aims broadly to apply the theoretical perspective of Communicative Approach by making communicative competence the goal of language teaching and by accepting the idea that there exists the interdependence of language and Communication. It is clear that without the knowledge of language, nobody can utter his/her/their presumed languages. To this, further it can be said that students need know ledge of the linguistic forms, meanings, and functions. They also need to know that many different forms can be used to perform a function and also that a single form can often serve a variety of functions. The students must be able to choose the most suitable form for their use among the available forms. The students when exposed, must be able to initiate the communication process. Communication is a process, knowledge of the forms of language is insufficient.

This process involves the crucial role of teacher who facilitates communication in the class-room. As a facilitator the teacher's role is more of a responsible agent who has to



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establish situation likely to promote and encourage communication activity. He, in the whole practice, may have various roles - as an advisor, as a quiz master, questioning and answering and monitoring their performance. He might take note of their errors, to be worked on at a later time during more accuracy based activities. While at other time, he may be 'co-communicator' engaging in the communicative activity along with students (Littlewood 1981).

Students are, overall communicators. They actively try their best to negotiate the meaning - try to make themselves understood and understanding others--- even when their knowledge of the target language is incomplete. In this Approach as the role of the teacher is less dominant than in teacher-centered method, students are seen as more responsible managers of their own learning.

The salient feature of CLT is that almost everything that is done is done with a communicative intent. Students use the language a great deal through communicative activities such as games, role plays, and problem-solving tasks. According to Morrow, "activities that are truly communicative have three feature in common-Information gap, choice, and feedback.

An information gap exists when one person in exchange knows something the other person does not know. If we both know today is Tuesday and I ask –you, 'What is today?' and you answer, 'Tuesday,' our exchange is not really communicative. Rather, in communication, the speaker has a choice of what he/she will say and how he/she will say it. If the exercise is tightly controlled so that students can only say something in one way, the speaker has no choice and the exchange, therefore, is not communicative. True communication is always purposeful. A speaker can thus evaluate whether or not his purpose has been achieved based upon the information he/she received from his/her listeners. If the listener does not have an opportunity to provide the speaker with such feedback, then the exchange is not really communicative.

Another characteristic of CLT is the use of authentic materials. It is considered desirable to give students an opportunity to develop strategies for understanding language as it is actually used. It is also seen that the activities in CLT are often carried out by students in small groups. Small members of students interacting are favored in order to maximize the time allotted to each student for communicating.

The nature of student-teacher interaction holds great importance in CLT. The teacher may present some part of the lesson, such as when working with linguistic accuracy. At other times, he is the facilitator as has been already stated. But the teacher does not always himself interact with the students. Sometimes, he is a co-communicator, but more often he establishes situation that prompts communication between and among the students, the students interact a great deal with one another. They do this in various configurations, pairs, triads, small groups and whole group.



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A teacher evaluates not only the accuracy of the students but also their fluency. The student who has the most control of the structures and vocabulary is not always the best communicator. A teacher can informally evaluate his students' performance in his role as an adviser or co-communicator. For more formal evaluation, a teacher is likely to use an integrative test which has a real communicative function. In order to assess student's writing skill, for instance, a teacher might ask them to write a letter to a friend.

The techniques and materials -

However, it is pertinent to mention that without certain techniques and materials CLT cannot be found appealing. These are as follows-

- 1- Authentic materials.
- 2- Scrambled sentences
- 3- Language games
- 4- Picture- strip story
- 5- Role play.

To conclude it can be said that the greatest contribution of CLT is asking teachers to look closely at what is involved in communication. If teachers intend students to use the target language, then they must truly understand all that being communicatively competent entails. In achieving communicative competence, we should promote functional syllabuses, a variety of language forms should be presented at one time. We will have to follow all the cruxes of CLT like using language games, problem-solving tasks or role plays. We will have to include other innovative methods in it rather than the three features of communication.

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