

THE COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING METHOD AND ITS INTERACTIVE STRATEGIES OF MOTIVATING

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Abstract: This article discusses the method of “Communicative Language Teaching” which focuses on improving the communicative skills of language learners. It presents the issues of implementing the most effective techniques of this method to the teaching process. The issue of increasing language learners’ speaking skills is connected with the interacted communication during the lessons. What’s more, it analyzes the effective ways of achieving above mentioned objectives. A number of suggestions have been included to apply the most advanced methods of interaction into the teaching process. All the presented suggestions help language learners to improve their communication skills on the discussing topics. These strategies are described clearly and how they can be implemented in the lessons.

Key words: Communicative language teaching (CLT), Communicative language teaching approach, communicative, communicate, method, English as a second language, English as a foreign language, language learners.

INTRODUCTION

Today, majority of English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers mention that, they employ “communicative” as the methodology of their teaching process. Thus, what does Communicative language teaching, or CLT mean? What history does it have? What is the basic goal of it? What does it set as its functions? Now, let us try to answer these questions.

According to Richards and Rogers, CLT is generally regarded as an approach to language teaching (2001). Hence, it is widely applied as “The Communicative Language Teaching Method or The Communicative Language Teaching Approach”. It is one of the modern and effective methods of teaching foreign languages. To this extent, it has become the accepted “Standard” in English language teaching. In the 1970s, when educators began to observe, they noticed that students could produce sentences accurately in a lesson, but could not use them appropriately when genuinely communicating outside of the classroom. Basically, students may know the rules of linguistic usage but be unable to use the target language. As Hymes says, being able to communicate required more than *linguistic (grammatical) competence*; it required communicative competence – knowing what, when and how to say. Such researches caused to change in the late 1970s and early 1980s from linguistic structure-centered approach to Communicative Approach. Consequently, CLT is very widely used all over the world. Moreover, it was developed in Britain (1970-1980). It has shifted the focus in language teaching from “learning about the language to learning to communicate in the language”.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

As Jack C. Richards states in the book of “Communicative language teaching (CLT) today”, Communicative language teaching sets as its goal the teaching of *communicative competence*. [5] In other words, presented approach is aimed at teaching how to communicate effectively in the target language. Furthermore, Taylor T.J explains CLT approach as following, “It emphasizes the ability to communicate the meaning of the message, instead of concentrating on grammatical perfection or phonetics”. [6] Theorists of Smith’s school of English mention that Communicative Approach is based on the work of sociolinguists who theorized that an effective knowledge of a language is more than merely knowing vocabulary and rules of grammar and pronunciation. Language learners should learn how to use the target language appropriately in any situations of society.

CLT is distinguished from other approaches of foreign language teaching with its emphasis on real-life situations and communication in context rather than grammar rules or verb conjugations. However, grammar is still important in CLT classroom, the focus is on communicating a message in the target language.

Learners in CLT classes practice real-life situations, in order to be more convenient when they are using the target language out of the classroom. In CLT, the most important factor that needs to be required by the learners is to express their thoughts or request their needs in everyday situations without worrying about having perfect grammar. The real life situations such as asking someone for the time, conversation between customer and waitress, buying a ticket at the airport, ordering a room at the hotel and etc., are important activities for learners to practice.



Picture is taken from: http://www.zoonar.com/photo/kellner-und-kundin-im-restaurant_1738374.html

Waitress: Good afternoon, can I help you?

Customer: Good afternoon. Can I have a menu, please?

Waitress: Here you are. Would you like something to drink?

Customer: Oh, I'd like a glass of water, please.

Waitress: Still or sparkling...?

As it was stated above, Communicative Approach emphasizes learning a foreign language through genuine communication. This method is the most student-centered, interactive, co-operative and content-based. According to educator Randall Gwin's point of view, asking a student how to spell *apple* is not communicative because teacher already knows the answer; there is no real aim. [5] Asking a learner to spell what is his favorite fruit is communicative. The point is that teacher may not be sure of the answer.

Including authentic materials to the characteristics of CLT method, it is concerned with the unique individual needs of each learner. Students should be given an opportunity to express their ideas and opinions. In addition, teaching foreign language through the functional and social interaction activities is the greatest demand of CLT. Moreover, use of only the target language in the classroom differentiates this approach

from other methods of language teaching. It is a fast and effective way to reach the goal of improving students' communication skills.

There are the following principles of Communicative Language Teaching:

1. The goal is to learn to communicate in the target language.
2. The emphasis is on meaning, comprehension, elaboration rather than on the structure and form of the language.
3. The use of authentic materials.
4. The teacher is a guide, counselor, organizer, facilitator who helps learners to communicate in English and motivates them to work with the language.
5. The personal experiences of language learners are considered as common factor of the classroom learning.
6. Learners interact with each other through pair or group work and through writing.
7. Sequencing of content and structures is determined by learners' interests.
8. The use of interactive activities such as information gap fillings, role-plays, games, dialogues, problem-solving, discussions and etc., in the language teaching.

In the classroom activities based on the principles of CLT are very essential to define the role of teacher and learners in the classroom. The activities adopted in CLT entailed new roles for language teachers and learners to assume during the lesson. The role of the teacher in CLT is quite different from traditional teaching methods. As for teacher, he/she takes part in learning-teaching group as an independent participant rather than being a model for correct speech. The main role assumed for teacher is to facilitate and monitor communication process between all participants in the classroom. The CLT teacher is in charge for determining, responding to learner language needs, and developing a different view of learners' errors.

As for learners, they assume a greater degree of responsibility for their own language learning. Students now participate in classroom activities which are based on a

cooperative rather than individualistic approach to learning. Learners are expected to be more convenient to listening to their partners in pair work or group work tasks. This responsibility to participate can often lead to an increased sense of confidence in using target language.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The following activities help to promote language learners' speaking and communication skills:

Brainstorming encourages learners to produce the idea of solving practical and scientific problems individually or in groups. The attendants try to find out solutions for more complicated problems without being criticized for their ideas.

Learners discuss the answers and select more intensive and effective ideas. Brainstorming performs all the tasks. However, its basic task is to improve students' learning process, to motivate them to realize and solve the problem individually and to enhance their speech manner and expressing the ideas among others.

Discussion is one of the effective ways of teaching language. It is an active method of sharing opinions on a specific problem individually and freely.

There are several objectives of using it:

- To provide learners with new information;
- To encourage students to differentiate evidence and conclusions based on evidence;
- To motivate learners to exchange opinions with others;
- To help learners to confide and defend their personal opinions;
- To involve students to obtain the meaning of the questions and think them over;
- To foster students' critical thinking and quick decision-making.

The teacher sets the purpose and organization of the discussion. For instance, students can be involved in advantages or disadvantages discussions. For this type of discussions, teacher forms groups that contain 5 or 6 students and provide controversial sentences such as, "Technology makes our life easier vs. Technology is the cause of

pollutions”. Then, groups start working on their topic in given time and present their opinions to the whole class. It is important to divide speaking equally among members of the group.

Story narrating through the pictures is a quite enjoyable and free-speaking activity. For this activity, students are asked to read a story, a tale or they may create their own story and to draw several sequential pictures that describe the story, which they have read. When students come to the class, they tell the story relating with pictures to the class. This activity can be used as an individual or small group work. At the end, the rest of the students can ask questions about the pictures or story.

This activity helps language learners:

- To improve public speaking skills;
- To foster creativeness and imagination;
- To advance critical thinking.

Story forming is an interesting and teamwork activity. It provides opportunities for learners to improve imagination, speaking and as well as communication skills. Before starting the activity, class is divided into small equal groups. Teacher narrates the most essential part of the story and gives some pictures of the same story from a book. All the pieces of pictures are scattered in front of a small group. Teacher asks members of the groups to arrange it in a sequence of the story that they have heard by communicating with each other. When they finish doing this, each one is asked to narrate their part of story through the picture.

Network is a strategy to develop strong language and communication skills. In this activity, students are supposed to be working in groups with no more than 8 students each. Each group receives a ball of string. Whoever is speaking on the topic chosen holds the ball of string. When the speaker has finished he/she gives the ball of string to the next speaker, but holds on the string. In this way, a web of string develops showing who talked the most and who talked the least.

Role-play is a teaching strategy that offers several advantages for both student and teacher. It is used in a variety of settings. In this activity, students are encouraged to act

out roles of people in different spheres of society. The principle behind role-playing is that the student assumes a particular personality of a different person, such as a historical character, famous person. This helps learners in developing confidence and refining the skills. According to Jones (1982), students “must accept the duties and responsibilities of their roles and functions, and do the best they can in the situation in which they find themselves”.

Information gap is one more effective strategy to improve communication skills. The point is that, everybody has the opportunity to talk extensively in the target language. For this activity, students are involved to work in pairs. One student will have the information that other partner does not have. The partners will share what they have gained from the information, which they learned in a limited time. Each partner plays an important role, because the task cannot be completed if the partners do not provide the information the others need.

Two stars and a wish is peer assessment of language learners. This is particularly useful for the writing process, verbal and written communication skills. Students are paired and asked to read each other’s written work. The reader must identify two things the author did well (stars) and one specific suggestion for improvement (wish). Before implementing this strategy, students must be trained on the process of providing appropriate feedback to their peers. The teacher can use this strategy as a formative assessment by circulating around the classroom and listening to the conversations between partners.

Jigsaw activities 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 so doing, they must use their language resources to communicate meaningfully and so take part in meaningful communication practice.

The followings 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.

Reporting is widely used activity in foreign language teaching. It serves many purposes such as collecting information or presenting attitude to a problem. Students are asked to read a newspaper, magazine or watch news on TV before coming to the class. In class, each student reports to the rest of the class what they find as the most interesting news. Moreover, they can present a report about whatever they have experienced anything worth in their daily life. This is the most productive way of motivating students to speak and communicate in the target language. Additionally, they will enrich their vocabulary e.g. the words, phrases, reporting verbs, expression used in reporting.

Fish bowl is one of the modern and productive ways of involving language learners to communicate. Educator needs to set double – inner and outer circles in the middle of the class. In the inner circle, there are five chairs. They are occupied by students whose views, preferably controversial, on the topic are known beforehand. Three of the students in the inner circle start the discussion. They may be joined by one or two students presenting yet another view. Students form outer circle may also replace speakers in the inner circle by tapping them on the shoulders if they feel they can present the case better. This activity provides an opportunity to improve learners' communication, problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

Onion focuses on encouraging students to communicate in the target language. It is suggested by the ESL educators as a way of conducting discussions. It provides each student with the opportunity to share their opinions and to express feelings about the problem they are discussing. For this activity, the whole group is divided into two equal groups. As many chairs as there are students are arranged in a double circle, with the chairs in the outer circle facing inwards and those in the inner circle facing outwards. Thus, each member of the circle sits facing a student in the outer circle. After a few minutes of discussion, all the students in the outer circle move one chair and have a new partner to continue with.

Interviews. Students can conduct interviews on selected topics with various people. It is a good idea that the teacher provides criteria to students so that they know what type of questions they can ask or what path to follow, but language learners should prepare their interview questions. Conducting interviews with people gives students a chance to practice their speaking ability not only in class but also outside and helps them becoming socialized. After interviews, each student can present their study to the rest of the class. Moreover, students can play the roles of any characters from the real life and interview each other. After interviewing they introduce their partner (hero) to the class.

Talk shows are conducted based on the different topics announced by the teacher. The role of language teacher is a facilitator who guides learners to organize talk shows. Class can be involved to work in small groups and with the whole class. Students, themselves choose their roles e.g. moderator, guests, scientists, psychologists and etc. Teacher gives a limited time for preparation and provides criteria to evaluate learners. Students prepare talk shows familiar real ones on TV. Preparation procedure and ready talk show take a place using the only target language.

CONCLUSION.

To sum up, the goal of any kind of teaching second language (L2) is to motivate learners to communicate in the target language. There is variety of ways to help learners to improve their communication skills. This method is the most student-centered,

interactive, co-operative and content-based. The presented activities set the main objective as teaching how to communicate, integrating other language skills as well. However, the only person who can define which of the strategies is the most appropriate for language learner is teacher. In other words, the teacher is only person who knows what to employ and how to employ. Concluding all the presented opinions, in order to have effective result, educator needs to choose perfect strategies considering all the factors of the learning and teaching process.

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