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## The communicative language teaching and its pedagogy

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### Abstract

The communicative approach is based on the idea that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning. The main goal of communicative language teaching is to enable students communicate in real life situation, rather than just acquiring grammatical knowledge. No structures of language can be used as a means of communication unless it serves certain functions in the society.

**Keywords:** Cohesion, coherence, linguistic competence, situational context, communicative competence

### Introductions

The goal of most of the approaches and methods is to make the students able to communicate in the target language. In other words, all the approaches and methods to language teaching are communicative in some extent. They are varied only in the degree of communicative nature. Communicative language teaching (CLT) is an established approach to second or foreign language teaching that possesses a wide range of variation in application across the various contexts of the world. Communicative language teaching is the cry of the day. It is recently developed approach to language teaching. It gives emphasis on developing communicative competence in the students. Communicative competence enables a learner to communicate with the speakers of the target language in such a way that he\she is accepted as one of the members of that speech community. A major strand of CLT centers on the belief that if the students are involved in meaning focused communicative activities, then language learning will take care of itself (Harmer, 2007, p. 69) <sup>[4]</sup>. Instead of concentrating solely on grammar, pioneers such as David Wilkins, HENRY Widdowson and Christopher Candlin suggested to look at what communicative of CLT is thus with spoken functions as much as with written grammatical and textual functions. The notion of when and how it is appropriate to say certain things is of primary importance in CLT. It is believed that plentiful exposure to language in use and plenty of opportunities to use it are vitally important for the development of L2 knowledge and skill. Activities in CLT typically involve students in real or realistic communication, where the successful achievement of the communicative task is an important as the accuracy of the language use. Both fluency and accuracy are the goals of CLT, with a priority on fluency. Ellis (2003) <sup>[3]</sup> characterizes CLT as:

CLT aims to develop the ability to use language in real communication that may involve two general purposes: the interactional function, where language is used to established and maintain contact, and the transactional function, where language is used to exchange information, CLT, then, is directed at enabling learners to function interactionally and transactionally in the target language. Whereas the earlier methods were based on a view of language as a set of linguistic systems, CLT drew on functional model of language and a theory of communicative competence.

In this way, as an approach to language teaching, CLT views the nature of language as functional and communicative, and the nature of learning as directed by the theory of communicative competence. Widdowson (1978) <sup>[8]</sup> argues that whereas structural approaches to teaching focus on usage, i.e. the ability to use language correctly, CLT is directly at use, i.e. the ability to use language meaningfully and appropriately in the construction of discourse. Meaning and organization of discourse are central in the practice of CLT. Since

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the goal of language teaching is to develop communicative competence in learners, all these meaning aspects such as fluency, contextual use of language, organization of discourse, strategic ability, accuracy, etc. are virtually focused on in the communicative lesson, or classroom.

Howatt (1984) <sup>[9]</sup> distinguishes a weak and a strong views of CLT. The former one is based on the assumptions that the components of communicative competence can be identified and systematically taught. The latter one, i.e. the strong version of CLT claims that language is acquired through communication, not by breaking it into its different components and teaching them one by one. The learners discover and learn the system of language use and usage when they are involved in the process of communication. Ellis (2003) <sup>[3]</sup> defines as. an approach to teaching that is directed at developing communicative abilities in the learners either by teaching aspects of communicative competence (The weak version) or by creating conditions for learners to learn through communicating (the strong version) p. 340.

### **A brief historical overview**

Though in the history of language teaching the goal of L2 instruction was characterized as 'communication' or 'meaning' through the language teaching approaches such as OSS approach, situational approach, content-based approach, and so on, systematic procedures, materials, nature of language contents, teaching/learning activities were not clearly defined in these approaches, and thus, L2 communication as a goal of teaching had not been established until a group of theorists appeared in early 1970s or late 60s with an apparent framework of language teaching approach called communicative language teaching (CLT). The pioneers of this approach contributed to its development from different perspectives. For example, Hymes (1972) <sup>[10]</sup> elaborated the concept of communicative competence on which the key principle of CLT (i.e. language for communication) is grounded. Similarly, Wilkins (1972) <sup>[11]</sup> proposes Notional-functional syllabus that focused on meaning and functions as the contents for second language teaching and learning. The CLT approach is based on Wilkin's model of syllabus which is communicative in nature. Widdowson and Candlin elaborated the assumptions of CLT, keeping meaning, fluency and communication in the Centre of teaching and learning of a second language. They advocated for authenticity of materials, realistic nature of communicative activities, fluent speech of the learners, and so on. Halliday's functional theories, Hymes's sociolinguistic theories, Austin's linguistic philosophy are also very important contributions to the development of CLT. About the origins of CLT, Richards and Rodgers (2002) note that: The origins of CLT are to be found in the changes in the British language teaching tradition dating from the late 1960s. The work of the Council of Europe; the writings of Wilkins, Widdowson, Candlin, and other British applied linguists on the theoretical basis for communicative or functional approach to language teaching; the rapid application of these ideas by textbook writers; and equally rapid acceptance by British language teaching specialists, curriculum development centers, and even by governments gave prominence nationally and internationally to what came to be referred to as the Communicative Approach, or simply Communicative Language Teaching.

Until then, Situational Language Teaching represented the major British approach to teaching English as a foreign language. In Situational Language Teaching, language was taught by practicing basic structures in meaningful situation-based activities.

Thus, the origins of CLT are linked with the failure or inadequacies seen in the traditional approaches such as Situational Language Teaching and Audiolingualism. Chomsky's influential linguistic theory-though attracted many theorists and practitioners with the new explanation of how language is acquired-could not capture properly in time the notion of meaning and functions of language. Thus, despite many strengths of Chomsky's Generative Theory, it could not prevent the birth of CLT that defined the interpersonal and communicative functions of the language being learned. The use of language varies the person with whom we are talking to, the situation, which we are taking to and the topic on which we are talking to. The speakers, therefore, need to know how to produce not only grammatically correct sentences but also socially acceptable sentences in appropriate situations. The pedagogical activities under this approach are given below:

### **Teacher's role**

In CLT several roles are assumed for teachers. The teacher facilitates communication in the classroom. As a facilitator his/her role is to facilitate the communication between all participants in the classroom, and between those participants and the various activities and texts. One of his/her main responsibilities in this role is to establish situations likely to promote communication. During the activities he/she acts as an adviser answering students' questions and monitoring their performance. A teacher may play a role of a 'co-communicator' engaging students in the communicative activity along with students. Other roles assumed for teachers are 'need analyst', 'counselor' and 'group process manager'.

### **Students' role**

Since CLT is learner-centered approach, student's role is very important. The roles of students are communicators and managers in learning. Students are actively engaged in negotiating meaning trying to make themselves understood and understanding others-even when their knowledge of the target language is incomplete.

### **Process**

Since the goal of CLT is to develop communicative competence to the students, almost everything that is done with communicative intent. CLT focused on the kinds of classroom activities that could be used as the basis of communicative methodology such as language games, role-plays and problem-solving tasks.

### **Techniques and materials**

The techniques and materials associates with communicative language teaching are as follows:

### **Authentic materials**

What is authentic and natural to native speakers of the target language is not so to learners in the classroom. What is important these materials are used in a way that is genuine for learners? In CLT we see that the teachers use a genuine newspaper article. He also assigns the students homework,

requiring that they listen to a live radio or television broadcast. Most accessible materials (for example, the use of a weather forecast when working or predictions) or at least ones that are realistic are most desirable. For elementary classes realia is used that do not contain a lot of language but a lot of discussion could be generated.

### Scrambled sentences

Students should work with language at the suprasentential (Above the sentence e.g. paragraph, text etc.) level. In this, first of all, the teacher provides a passage (a text) to the students in which the sentences are in scrambled order. The passage may be seen or unseen. The teacher tells the students to unscramble the sentences. When they finish, the students compare what they have done with the original text. By this type of exercise, they learn those properties of language which bind the sentences together i.e. cohesion and coherence. They learn how sentences are bound together at suprasentential level.

### Picture strip story

In CLT, picture strip story is one of the learning procedures, which helps the students to develop their communicative competence. Different types of activities can be done by picture strip story. Here, I am going to suggest one based on scrambled sentences. The teacher should divide the class into groups. One student in each group is given a picture strip story. He/she shows the first picture of the story to the other group members and asks them to predict what the second picture would look like. An information gap exists—the students in the groups don't know what the picture contains. They have a choice as to what their prediction will be and how they will word it. They receive feedback not on the form but on the content of the prediction by being able to view the picture and compare it with their prediction.

### Conclusion

CLT is best understood as an approach rather than a method. It is therefore a unified but broadly based theoretical position about the nature of language and language learning and teaching. The goal is to enable students to communicate in the target language by using it as much as possible. Communicative language teaching came to fulfill the gaps in traditional approaches, which had neglected the practical aspects of communication. The greatest contribution of CLT is asking teachers to look closely at what is involved in communication. If teachers intend to help students learn to use target language, then they must truly understand all that being communicatively competent entails. Today CLT has become the favorite approach of language teaching, for both teachers and learners, by its interesting and funny way. No doubt, it is an interesting approach of language teaching for both teachers and learners.

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