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RESEARCH INNOVATOR

Communicative Language Teaching: Aims and Methods

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Abstract

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged on the basis of language teaching as a process rather than a product in 1970s. CLT aims at enhancing the learner's ability to communicate in a language in a fruitful manner. The primary function of language is given importance in this method. The learner is given interaction sessions and self motivation in this approach. The functional and communicative aspects of language are given importance in communicative approach. Grammatical and structural aspects of the language are taught following the communicative level of understanding of the language. The chief advantage of this approach is that the learner can attain communication level as soon as possible without bothering about the structural and grammatical features.

Key Words: CLT, Interaction, Motivation

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The CLT gives primary importance to learning to communicate. CLT is based on the idea that a language is learnt successfully when the learner asks some real meaning to communicate. CLT makes use of real life situations that necessitates communication. The motivation to learn language comes from the desire to communicate in meaningful ways on meaningful topics. Aslam says, "It is the learner and his learning that are more

important. Language is acquired rather than learnt consciously. The result is a classroom where the teacher facilitates language acquisition through problem solving activities and tasks which ensure learner's participation and interaction" (56).

In CLT, the mother tongue has no role to play. The students are compelled to use the target language but CLT believes that one can learn target language through the direct use of it. This means that the students should be given the atmosphere of the target language. The teacher should take care for giving the examples and methods of learning the language. On such an occasion fluency of expression should be there in the speech of learners. Contextual presentation is necessary to develop fluency of the target language. This means that the learner is to be given certain words and phrases that occur in the day to day conversation. Creating such context will help them to master certain words and phrases.

Classroom activities are to be switched over to English. The teacher should contextualize his presentation. He has to develop intelligible pronunciation also. Pronunciation is very necessary because good English is incomplete without learning good pronunciation. Pair works and group works are necessary for developing communication in English. As it is a communication between two persons there should be more than one member to guide the other in a healthy manner. The group of students again grouped in them to make them pair and let them speak between them. This will help each of the group members to hear the other and catch the pronunciation and the words.

When oral practice is done, there may be mistakes to happen but it can be disregarded for the sake of non breakable communication. Suppose it is broken to correct the mistake, the student's flow of speaking is interrupted and at that point the fluency is broken due to the discouragement he feels at that point. It is equal to the elementary stage where a child is not able to distinguish between right and wrong.

Reading and writing abilities are to be developed along with the communication in the classroom. Grammar is necessary for written English but classroom teaching of grammar should be functional. It should not go down in the mode of Grammar Translation method. Over use of grammar in the classroom should be avoided. Grammar, when it is taught in classroom should be practical.

Target language should be presented in a quality manner so that the language learned should be standard. Quality means the presentation of the ideas is conform to the standard usage of the language. This needs vocabulary choice and standard words and phrases. CLT is an interesting method of teaching English and consequently the learner should be given interest in situations to learn the language and such interest developed should be sustained all along the teaching practice. Any language when it is learned inductively should be able to derive enjoyment for the learner otherwise the teaching will be futile and the interest of the students cannot be sustained all along the teaching mode.

Materials selected for the purpose should be the familiar to the learners. In such case learners can very easily interpret the crux

of the material and consequently learning language will be easy for them. This can be made part of the classroom activities. Fresh and real materials are to be used for this purpose, otherwise the notion of the learners may change and their aptitude towards learning. The materials should be clear and arresting so as to attract the attention of the learners.

About the practice given to the students, it is advisable that spontaneous practice can be made so as to give insight to the learners with some natural abilities, quick reaction and incidental response. Authentic materials are to be supplied to the students in communicative approach. Authentic responses will help them to come to the correct idea of presentation and they can understand language without delay or issues relating to it. Visual stimuli are one of the important tools in teaching English. Building up confidence in the learner is important in learning. This will make the teaching process learner-centred.

There are no special syllabi in Communicative Language Teaching. Task specification and task organisations are seen prominent criteria for designing a syllabus in CLT. The syllabus of CLT is learner-centred. Grammar and structures which a student must know are included in the syllabus. Teacher plays a no less important role in CLT. The teacher in any classroom is the audio visual representative. So he must monitor the speech of the students as they are in the beginning stage of language development. The teachers influence the learners in many ways and this influence lingers long for an indefinite period. So the teacher has to be a role model to the students in their learning process. A teacher is a monitor of classroom activities. He can influence in the learning process of the students by correcting and giving directions to improve the standard of English language. The teacher facilitates communication process by giving situations and helping them to master the spoken language.

A teacher is the head of the learning group. He can also act as the participant in the learning process. The double role the teacher plays is helpful for students in that way students can depend on the teacher for correcting mistakes and involving in the teaching process. Normally the teacher organizes the classroom activities by depending on the syllabus prepared for the purpose. In this way the teacher is a resource person in the group. Often the resources are with the teacher and he shares the resources with other members of the group. The teacher is a guide, researcher, co learner to students in learning English. He can counsel the students in many ways. He is an analyser of the learners' language for giving meaningful suggestion in communication. The teacher motivates the pupils to analyse their performance and encourages them to proceed with confidence.

The learner is a negotiator among the self, the object of learning and learning process. In many cases students themselves manage their learning process. Classroom activities are characterised by attempts to produce meaningful and real communications at all levels. As a result there may be more emphasis on skill than systems. Lessons are more learners centred with authentic materials for presentation and training.

In communicative approach students' performance of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills are all taken in to consideration. Their ability to convey

ideas and present their thoughts and feelings are considered for evaluation. Several merits can be noted in the CLT. Development of communicative competence is the first and foremost merit of this method. Through communication the learners achieve this target. More exposure to the language can be achieved through communicative approach. A healthy relationship between students and teacher can be developed as each skill of the language progresses. Gradually the learner can develop other skills related to language learning as the speaking skill develops. In CLT the individual attention is possible and the learners can create their own way of presentation and skill developing.

CLT is learner-centred and this way the overall development of the student is realized. Contextual presentations of ideas are possible in this approach. This will help to master several other skills simultaneously. Finally learners can develop confidence and interest in their studies. This building up of confidence results in the better performance of the students.

There are certain limitations noted in this method. One of them is that the over emphasis on speaking skill consumes time and consequently becomes less attractive. There is no systematic grammar teaching in this method and this causes the loss of the grammatically accurate sentences in writing. The learner often misses the correct use of adverbs and adjectives contextually as grammar is disregarded in teaching. In case of teaching which is directed to a group who are weak and culturally backward, it is difficult to make them understand the ideas through communication in the target language. Time bound teaching under the prepared lesson plans is not possible in this method. Instant correction of mistake is not resorted though the communication is going on in fast manner. So the student misses the chance to correct the mistakes instantly. Another defect of this method is that the lack of proper syllabus for teaching. The syllabus is often prepared by the teacher himself. There is no direction for teaching English in a systematic manner. This often causes varied result of the communication of the language. There are differences in accuracy and fluency. This method is indented to develop fluency and as a result accuracy is often ignored as the foremost idea of language learning. For the successful execution of this approach, highly competent teachers with good communication skills are necessary. In the absence of competent teachers the system cannot be brought to success.

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