THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING METHOD AND ITS INTERACTIVE STRATEGIES

Azamat Azimov Khayrulloyevich
Senior Teacher of English Philology Department,
Uzbek State World Languages University

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.

Keywords: Communicative language teaching (CLT), Communicative language teaching approach, communicative method, (ESP)English for specific purposes, (ESL)English as a second language, (EFL) English as a foreign language learners

INTRODUCTION

As opposed to the grammar based approaches, in planning language courses within a communicative paradigm, grammar is no longer the starting point of language teaching program. It shifts to communication ability covering all possibilities of situation and purposes that we can encounter in real world; from daily life to work places, from monolog to dialog, from interpersonal to transactional communication and so on. Aspects of materials should include factors which gives meaning to language at the time happening (contexts), besides provisioned with abilities required to express and to understand language being used (the communicative competence). Therefore, the goal of language teaching shifts from mastery of grammar to the development of communicative competence in part of students. In general term, the goal of CLT is argued to develop students' communicative competence.

LEARNING THEORY

One of the best known learning theory of CLT is 'people learn language best when using it to do things rather than through studying how language works and practicing rules. It signs the reaction to the previous learning practices which focused on learning grammatical rules but the students failed in oral communication. An interesting statement relating to this principle is from Brown[13], who reminds that teacher should not expose students to learn grammar too much, because students are to be English communicator, not grammarians.

A rather comprehensive package of learning theory in CLT is summarized by Richards and Rodgers[14], as follows:

a. Activities that involve real communication promote learning.

b. Activities in which language used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning, and

c. Language that is meaningful to the learners supports the learning process.

Consequently, Richards and Rodgers[15] add that learning activities should be selected according to how well they engage learner in meaningful and authentic language use (rather than merely mechanical practice of language patterns). They must involve real communication, have students carry out meaningful tasks and use meaningful language.

3. Principles

The basic features of CLT was described by Nunan[16] (2000: 279), in which he list five features that are generally accepted by most linguists and practitioners in their explanation about CLT today. These features are:

a. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.

b. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.

c. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on the language but also on the learning process itself.

d. An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.

e. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom.

Richards[17] underlines the core assumptions or variants in practices of CLT as follows:

a. Second language learning is facilitated when learners are engaged in interaction and meaningful communication.

b. Effective classroom learning tasks and exercises provide opportunities for students to negotiate meaning, expand their language resources, notice how language is used, and take part in meaningful intrapersonal exchange.

c. Meaningful communication results from students processing content that is relevant, purposeful, interesting and engaging

d. Communication is a holistic process that often calls upon the use of several language skills or modalities

e. Language learning is facilitated both by activities that involve inductive or discovery learning of underlying rules of language use and organization, as well as by those involving language analysis and reflection Jack C. Richards, *Op. Cit.,* p. 23.

f. Language learning is a gradual process that involves creative use of language and trial and error. Although errors are a normal product of learning the ultimate goal of learning is to be able to use the new language both accurately and fluently

g. Learners develop their own routes to language learning, progress at different rates, and have different needs and motivations for language learning

h. Successful language learning involves the use of effective learning and communication strategies

i. The role of the teacher in the language classroom is that of a facilitator, who creates a classroom climate conducive to language learning and provides opportunities for students to use and practice the language and to reflect on language use and language learning

j. The classroom is a community where learners learn through collaboration and sharing

4. Goal

As having been described above, the goal of CLT is to develop communicative competence in part of students. There have been a number of theories about it, but the best known elements of the competence in communication are as follows:

a. Linguistic competence. It is also commonly acknowledged as grammatical competence, which concerns with mastery of language elements: grammar, vocabulary and morphology.

b. Sociocultural competence. It also known as sociolinguistic competence, which demands the appropriate use of language toward social values and system.

c. Strategic competence. It concerns with strategies which can be used to maintain communication and or to communicate effectively.

d. Actional competence. It concerns with physical performance of communication when one does speaking, for example: pronunciation.

e. Discourse competence. It is also known as pragmatic competence, which refers to shaping language and communicating purposively in different genres, using cohesion (structural linking) and coherence (meaningful relationship in language) elements appropriately.

Therefore, every language teaching material is considered to be as means to develop the five components of communicative competence above. Materials designed to involve all the elements above in activities that are to be conducted in the classroom.

TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURE

Technique for teaching language in CLT is actually open to varieties as far as they fulfill the CLT principles. However a number of them which are very common in the classroom summarized from Richards 5 as follows:

As well as offering clear advantages to the student, the CLT approach can also offer significant benefits to educators by fundamentally changing their role in the classroom. The educator is both a "facilitator, a guide and a helper" as well as being a "coordinator, an idea-person and a co-communicator" (Oxford, 1990). Teachers talk less and listen more as well as being more focused on students' individual learning journeys and working closely with them to achieve their goals.

As adopting the CLT approach usually means that traditional, repetitive Instructional tasks become less important, teachers have more scope to be creative in the classroom. Although this means that additional time is needed to prepare appropriate teaching resources, there's significant benefit in increased student engagement and motivation.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, CLT is a powerful teaching approach to encourage the development of the four macro skills in language learning— speaking, listening, reading and writing. These are a core part of CLT from the very start, since active communication serves to integrate the different skills.

a. Fluency versus accuracy activities

Fluency activities are those which expose students to use language naturally by engaging them in meaningful interaction and maintain comprehensible and ongoing communication despite the limitation in their communicative competence. To acquire fluency the students are required

to use communication strategies, correct misunderstanding and work to avoid communication breakdown. While fluency focus on natural production of language, accuracy activities engage students to use language accurately in term of grammar and pronunciation.

b. Mechanical, Meaningful and Communicative Practice
1) Mechanical practices are those which expose students to use language successfully although without understanding of it. This is the common practice used in ALM or Army Method.
2) Meaningful practices engage students to communicate by involving meaningful choices to a contextual set of communication. At this activity, a teacher is required to create the context and task of communication, from which students explore language to express ideas.
3) Communicative practices are those which engage students to use language freely from their own source and their own real life situation and experience. At this activity the teacher is expected to use students' knowledge and experience as integral part of learning activities. At the time of learning in the classroom, experts recommend that those three kinds of activities conducted after a brief grammatical explanation, in the order of mechanical-meaningful-communicative practice.

c. Information Gap Activities
This activity is derived from reality fact in which people often ask for information from other people, which they do not have. This condition is imitated into classroom practice by giving students two or more package of related information, which one students possess different package from the other. Communication occurs as they are requesting information from the other. This activity usually is facilitated by the use of media, such as list, picture or series of pictures.

d. Jigsaw activities
This activities demand students to be divided into groups. Every group has certain piece of information. Every group is given task to share information they have to the other groups. The process of interaction becomes like jigsaw, at the time they transact information.

e. Task completion activities
This activity make student complete a task, such as puzzles, games, map-reading, by using their own language resource.

f. Information gathering activities
At this activity, students are required to conduct surveys, interviews to collect information.

b. Opinion sharing
This is the activity in which students are engage to compare values, opinions, beliefs. Example, the students are given task to make order of important qualities to choose someone to be wife or husband.

c. Information transfer activities

This activity engage students to take information that is presented in one form, and represent in a different form. For example, students are given task to read a travel experience. After that, they are asked to draw a map of it.

d. Reasoning gap-activities

This activity demands students to derive some new information from source information through process of inference, practical reasoning, and conclusion and so on. For example, working out a teacher's timetable on the basis of a given class timetable.

e. Role plays

This is the activity in which students are assigned roles and improvise a scene or exchange based on given information or clues. For example, one student is given a task to be a doctor with knowledge about certain disease and the symptoms. The other student is given a task to be a patient with certain symptoms to be talked to the doctor.

Procedure of teaching in CLT is not package as we can find in the previous methods. Many procedures may work. How they are designed, merely depend on the nature of communication activities taken from the real life into practices in the classroom. Different communication activity may need different technique and procedure to make it happen. Last but not least, to apply the recommended practices or teacher-created practices in the classroom, Richards19 identifies a number or characteristics that they should posses, as follows:

a. They seek to develop students' communicative competence through linking grammatical development to the ability to communicate. Hence grammar is not taught in isolation but often arises out of a communicative task, thus creating a need for specific items of grammar. Students might carry out a task and then reflect on some of the linguistic characteristics of their performance.

b. They create the need for communication, interaction, and negotiation of meaning through the use of activities such as problem solving, information sharing, and role play.

c. They provide opportunities for both inductive as well as deductive learning of grammar.

d. They make use of content that connects to students' lives and interests

e. They allow students to personalize learning by applying what they have learned to their own lives.

f. Classroom materials typically make use of authentic texts to create interest and to provide valid models of language.

6. Material development

Development of material in CLT is very widely open as far as they fulfill the principles. However, the shape and or media used to make the communication activities happen in the classroom will be very closely bound with the topic and teaching techniques to be applied in the classroom. At this point of view, a teacher must understand the nature of every communication activity, techniques of teaching and to make relevant material and media to perform in the classroom. A simple description of the elements is as follows:

Techniques Media Topics

- Role Play Task sheets for different roles Any topic
- Interview guide for interviewer Any topic
- Information gap Task sheets with missing information Any topic
- Information transfer Reading, listening, video materials Any topic
- Games Depends on game type Any topic

7. Evaluation

Evaluation in CLT focus on covers students' mastery of language and their ability in communication. Since the purpose of teaching is different according to the lessons and proficiency levels, the emphasis and elements of evaluation can be vary broadly. For example: for beginner level, the focus of development is on the fluency rather than accuracy; it should demand the teacher not to take too much attention to grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary choices while they do communication orally or written while the teacher scores the performance. In contrast, the focus will be different if the teacher is to evaluate students in intermediate levels.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the goal of any kind of language teaching ESP or EOP 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, 28 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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