

=====
Communicative Approach in Teaching English as L2: An Overview

D. Renukadevi

=====
Abstract

In the long history of language learning, especially in the case of learning English as L2, educationalists have been tirelessly trying to explore more and more practical approaches that range from conventional methods like Grammar translation method, Direct method, Situational Language Teaching and so on, to the latest mode of communicative approach. The conventional teaching methods - the unsuccessful results of the earlier language theories, were proved to be ineffective, because it was felt that the learners were passive and the teaching-learning process was mechanical, in all those methods. Hence during the 1960s, a new trend of language teaching called Communicative Language Teaching pushed its way into classrooms and has been widely acclaimed by educationists so far. The present paper glimpses briefly the emergence of the learner-friendly, Communicative Approach in teaching English as L2 and its scope and focus in making teaching-learning a great success in modern Indian classrooms.

Keywords: Communicative Approach, its principles, focus, the roles of teacher in CLT, Communicative Language Teaching

Introduction

The communicative language teaching (CLT) approach is currently one of the most popular methods in the teaching field. It is an approach in which the focus is mainly on communication and developing students' ability to express their thoughts and ideas in an effective way. In order to achieve this goal, CLT helps the students use the target language (L2) in a variety of contexts and situations. Its primary focus is on helping learners create meaningful communication rather than forcing them to imbibe the syntax of the foreign language. Undoubtedly, the ability to learn a non-native language is determined by the pace with which the

learners have developed communicative competence. This term CLT refers to the teaching approach to extract the learner's ability in applying his/ her knowledge of the language to communicate effectively. The acquisition of communicative competence lies in knowing how to use/handle the language, in different contexts in a very practical way, both in formal and informal settings. This can be achieved through the use of communication strategies specially followed in CLT and also by means of the various classroom activities that naturally induce real communication.

Communicative Approach: A Brief Look at Its Emergence

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which focuses on the semantic aspects of the language and fluency in the target language acquisition is defined by many writers (Cannale, 1983; Cook, 1991; Littlewood, 1981; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Richards and Rodgers 2001; Rivers, 1987). Communicative Language Teaching is a “hybrid approach to language teaching, essentially “progressive” rather than “traditional”... (Wright, 2000). It is based on the theory that the principal function of language learning is communication. Hence the most fundamental principles of communicative approach is to make the learners engage in real-life situations that necessitate communication to attain ease in oral expression as well as accuracy in linguistic aspects. So its primary goal is for learners to develop “communicative competence” (Hymes, 1971).

The following are levels of objectives in a communicative approach (Piepho, 1981):

- an integrative and content level, when language is considered as a means of expression;
- a linguistic and instrumental level, when language is considered as a semiotic system and an object of learning;
- an affective level of interpersonal relationships and conduct, when language is considered as a means of expressing values and judgments about oneself and others;
- a level of individual learning needs (remedial learning based on error analysis);
- a general educational level of extra-linguistic goals (when language learning is within the school curriculum).

The Focus of Communicative Approach in L2 Teaching

It has become widely accepted that communicative competence can be exclusively acquired through the influence of communicative language teaching. Communicative competence, the targeted outcome of communicative approach, includes the following aspects of language knowledge:

- Using language for a range of different purposes and functions
- Varying the use of language according to the setting and the participants

- Producing and understanding different types of texts
- Maintaining /managing with the communication even with limited language knowledge

The principle of Communicative Language Teaching is quite different from other approaches. It focuses on:

- real communication to promote learning
- providing meaningful tasks to promote complete learning

Hence CLT is viewed as the best approach for teaching, with a clearly defined set of classroom practices. The main five features of CLT (David Nunan's (1991) are:

- An emphasis on oral communication through interaction in the target language.
- The conversion of language texts into the learning ideologies.
- Providing more space for learners to focus on the learning process.
- An enhancement of the learners' own personal experiences as essential contributing elements to classroom learning.

- An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

Thus in CLT, any teaching ideology that helps students develop their communicative competence in a realistic framework is an acceptable and beneficial form of instruction. Hence,

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 16:4 April 2016

D. Renukadevi

Communicative Approach in Teaching English as L2: An Overview

activities like pair and group work requiring negotiation and cooperation between learners, fluency-based activities that encourage learners to develop their confidence, role-plays in which students practice and develop language functions, as well as careful use of grammar and pronunciation-focused activities are practiced in a classroom of CLT.

The Transformation Needed in a CLT Teacher

In CLT, the teacher keeps the students engaged in nonstop communication when they perform various single/group activities, which are carefully prepared by him/her. By this method, unintentional learning of the language, its vocabulary and simultaneous use of it in varied situations is highly possible. Here, the teacher has to provide the students with examples of how each activity can be performed and during the activity, he/she needs to direct them in the right way to hit the objective in learning and facilitating them whenever required. Also, as a partaker, the teacher takes the role of an active participant in each learning group and thus leads the learners' group with proper guidance. When the teacher becomes part of the group, the dominance of the teacher is avoided and the learners feel much ease in learning. Also, in CLT approach the teacher determines and responds to learners' language needs and thus making learners aware of meticulous use of language structures throughout the ongoing language activity.

Conclusion

The modern communicative approach makes the students speak the L2 with much more interest and enthusiasm than the previous conventional methods do. Rather than memorizing mechanically the grammar rules, the learner finds the communicative approach more comfortable to use the target language in semi-authentic contexts. In this approach, the activities followed pave the way to facilitate their language learning outside the classroom. It is quite obvious through experiences and evidences, that increase in fluency is the ultimate outcome of communicative language teaching. The approach also leads to the acquisition of grammatical, sociolinguistic, and communicative competence through the interactive activities. This enables the learners to be more confident when communicating with other people both in formal and informal settings in real life situations and thus this CLT approach draws the most expected outcome of any language learning which is the fluency, from the L2 learner.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 16:4 April 2016

D. Renukadevi

Communicative Approach in Teaching English as L2: An Overview

References

1. Littlewood, W. (1981). Communicative Language Teaching. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Nunan, D. (1991). Language Teaching Methodology: A Textbook for Teachers. New York: Prentice-Hall.
3. Daisy, Communicative Language Teaching - a comprehensive approach to English Language, Language in India Feb 2012, vol. 12 issue 2, p. 249.
4. Simhachalam Thamarana ,A Critical Overview of Communicative Language Teaching,International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities 07/2015; 5):90-100
5. Samuel Oviedo, Copy of Teaching Methods,12 Teaching Methods, 17 May 2014
6. Jack C. Richards, Communicative Language Teaching Today, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006.
7. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communicative_language_teaching
8. <https://prezi.com/k59l8nyf4xx3/copy-of-teaching-methods/>
9. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/which-best-describes-you-ii-teaching-method-h%C3%A8ctor-alsinet-rodr%C3%ADguez?articleId=6044090579921436672>

D. Renukadevi
Assistant Professor
Department of English,
Erode Sengunthar Engineering College
Thudupathi
Erode 638 057
Tamilnadu
India
renukarkm@gmail.com