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## Communicative Language Teaching; An Approach Rather than a Method

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### Abstract

English learning as a language of communication is aptly considered as an approach rather than a method. At designing and procedures, a very significant level of abstract uniformity could very easily be differentiated in the language and theory. The CLT, as an approach invites tremendous openness for individual analysis and disparities which other methods may possible not. Obviously CLT approach could be one edition among the various proposals for syllabus models, language drills, exercise types and classroom activities sure to gather wide appreciations in future. Thus licensing communicative teachings, similar to other allied teaching methods. Contrastingly analysis might give birth to homogenous subgroup.

**Key words:** *enhance communication skills, creativity, motivation, approach, language learning enthusiasm*

### Historical Background

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) acquires its origin from the British language teaching tradition during late 1960s commonly termed as situational language teaching, and the

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only main British approach for EFL language teaching. Here the language was instructed by practicing on fundamental structures besides based on constructive situation-oriented activities.

In fact, the linguistics enforced the basic dimensions of language teaching, supported and applied in UK and that wasn't very much addressed to the contemporary language teachings of that period – the functional and communicative potential of language teaching. They were too convinced on communicative competence of language teaching instead of mere memorization of structures.

The magnificent contribution of linguists like Wilkins, Brumfit and Keith Johnson, in addition to the work of the Council of Europe very much helped in applying linguistics to develop communicative approach of language teaching.

### **Development of CLT**

The comprehensive implementation of the concept via textbooks and the acceptance of the English language teaching experts, curriculum centers and the concerned governments helped develop further the communicative approach or precisely Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). This revolution started initially as a British innovation stressing on the alternative concepts of syllabi since mid-1970s. British and American scholars take it as an approach and not as a method, aiming at making communicative competence as a goal of language teaching and secondly to enhance procedures for teaching required skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking which acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication.

### **Communication Language Theories: An Approach**

In fact, the theory of language as communication was the foundational beginning of a communicative approach in language teaching. The ultimate goal of language teaching is to develop communicative competence (Hymes, 1972). Hymes created this concept against Chomsky's theory of competence. According to Chomsky, the linguistic theory is initially related to the ideal speaker and listener within a purely homogenous speech community, knowing their language very correctly and unaffected grammatically with reference to memorization, imitation, shifts of attention and interest, distraction and errors, thereby implementing their knowledge of the language in truer sense (Chomsky 1965).

### **Communicative Competence**

Chomsky focuses on a linguistic theory characterizing the abstract abilities which speakers possess which enable them to recreate grammatically correct sentences in a language. In comparison, Hymes viewed linguistic theory as part of a more general theory including communication and culture.

The definition according to Hymes's theory of communicative competence includes the needs of a speaker, thereby assuring that:

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1. Better degree of possibility is achieved.
2. Learning has been implemented by communication and comparative understanding.
3. Contents of the given context are appropriate to usage and evaluation.
4. Targets are achieved and performed pragmatically by interactions.

Hymes's theory obviously invites a better understanding of the communicative prospective in comparison to Chomsky's concept of competence, solely based on grammatical obligations.

### **Theory of Functions of Language**

Halliday's theory of functions of language is another co-related linguistic theory in CLT, stating "linguistics is concerned with the description of speech acts or texts, since only through the study of language in use are all the functions of language, and therefore all components of meaning, brought into focuses" (Halliday, 1975).

Halliday, through his outstanding publication of papers and quality books, has comprehensively elaborated his theory of language wherein Hymes's communicative competence is complimented, weighted and recommended for CLT.

According to Halliday, seven main functions of a language, performing functions at the first language learning level for children are:

1. The instrumental function: using language to get things,
2. The regulatory function: using language to control the behavior of others,
3. The interactional function: using language to create interaction with others,
4. The personal function: using language to express personal feelings and meanings,
5. The heuristic function: using language to learn and to discover,
6. The imaginative function: using language to create a world of the imagination,
7. The representational function: using language to communicate information.

The phenomenon of learning a second language has been acknowledged by the enthusiastic fans of Communicative Language Teaching as it acquires the linguistic means in carrying out the requisite roles.

### **Communicative Language Teaching**

In accordance with the guidelines and the practical understanding among various language theories, communicative language teaching has a sound theoretical foundation. The communicative language teaching concepts are based on following characteristics:

1. CLT is a complete system of expression in terms of meaning.
2. It is primarily based on learning interaction and communicative aspects of a language.
3. CLT's linguistic structure depicts its communicative and functional utilities.

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## CLT Theories in Language Learning

Pragmatic linguists have not focused their work on language teaching based on any specific learning theories. For example, Keith Johnson and Brumfit (1979) or Littlewood (1984) have recommended any discussions on language theory.

However, one of the principles assumed is the *Communicative Principle* which very much helps in the activities that involve real communication in the learning process. Another principle that helps carry out the meaningful tasks in learning is *Task Principle*. The third one is *Meaningfulness Principle*, focusing on language-based meaningful efforts which include the best activities chosen in accordance with the involvement of a learner in a constructive and real language usage. These principles certainly can be practiced as they concentrate on the atmosphere necessary for the promotion of a second language learning (ESL).

Contemporary communicative language teaching has tried to explain theories of language learning processing activities, well-matched with the communicative approach. According to Sauvignon (1983), second language learning research is an instrument of learning theories. Besides, he considers the role of socio-linguistic, cognitive and individual variables in acquiring a language as very important whereas the rest have got theoretical compatibility with the principles of CLT.

In the context of S. Krashen (1993), language learning acquisition is the primary process involving the overall development of language proficiency besides differentiating it from learning. By acquisition, I mean the unconscious development of the target language by the implementation of a language for real communication. Learning refers to the conscious representation of a grammatical knowledge evolving out of instruction process. Obviously linguists like Krashen and other ESL theorists stress upon the fact that the language learning acquisition is using language communicatively, instead of practicing the language learning skills. Linguists like Littlewood and Johnson, have considered another relevant theory which they visualize as compatible with CLT - a skill-learning model of learning. This new theory speaks of acquisition of a language as communicative competence in skill development, involving both behavioral and cognitive perspectives.

### Objectives

The communicative language approach is based on the following level of objectives (Piepho 1981):

1. An integrative and context level, depicting language as a way of expression.
2. A linguistic and instrumental level, depicting language as a semiotic system and objective learning.
3. An interpersonal relationship and conduct, focusing on a language as an expression of values and judgment.

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4. An individual learning needs, based on remedial learning on error analysis.
5. An extra-linguistic educational goal, based on school curriculum language-learning.

For better teaching conditions and situations, the aforesaid objectives are better proposed as general objectives. There can't be any other objective better than this level as this kind of approach helps in fulfilling the requirements of the target learners.

### **Designing Syllabus Models for Communicative Language Teaching**

Modeling syllabus in communicative language teaching level has attracted the attention of linguists. It was Wilkins (1976) who, for the first time, proposed a syllabus model as notional syllabus specifying the semantic-grammatical categories with reference to frequency, motion, and location besides the categories of communicative functions necessary for the learner's expression. Accordingly it was developed as a syllabus by the Council of Europe including the description of its objectives for the foreign language courses of European adults, the situation wherein they would need to use it for business, trade and travel, etc. The results were presented as 'Threshold level English' to get a reasonable degree of skill in communication in the target foreign language.

### **Role of Learner/Student**

A learner in a communication process of language learning is supposed to give more and more emphasis on increasing his better communication abilities rather than focusing on a mastery of the language. Thus an active involvement on the learner's part is obligatory.

### **Role of Teacher/Trainer**

A teacher's role is determined under the curriculum framework of communicative language teaching. The teacher has two important roles; primarily he acts as a facilitator in the process of communication, thereby involving the participant learners directly in a classroom. The facilitation comprises inter-activities and the use of texts as a supporting material; secondly a teacher acts as an independent participant within a learning-teaching discussion (Candlin, 1980). The duties imply a series of secondary rules for the teacher initially as an organizer of resources and a resource himself, thereafter as a guide within the classroom procedures and activities, and finally a teacher acts as a researcher and a learner. All these requirements describe the knowledge and skills teachers should have.

### **Text-Based Materials**

There are numerous textbooks that follow communicative language teaching principles to instruct and support teachers and students. Contents reveal grading and sequencing of language practice different from structurally organized texts. Occasionally some of them are written around a large structural syllabus with slight reformation in order to justify their claim that they

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follow communicative approach. Nevertheless others are very different from previous language teaching textbooks.

Morrow and Johnson's *Communicate* (1979), for example, has stressed the implementation of the usual dialogues, drills, or sentence patterns, visual cues, taped cues, pictures, and sentence fragments to initiate conversation. Watcyn Jones's *Pair Work* (1981) consists of two different texts for pair work, containing different information needed to perform role plays and carry out other pair activities. Texts written to support the Malaysian *English Language Syllabus* in 1975 similarly represent a departure from conventional textbook modes. A characteristic lesson consists of a theme (relaying information), and a task analysis for thematic development (understanding the message, asking questions to get elucidation, asking for more information, taking notes, ordering and presenting information).

### **Task-Based Materials**

Different varieties of games, simulations, role plays, task-based activities at the communication level have been organized to support communicative language teaching classes. Typically these are presented in exercise handbooks, cue cards, activity cards, pair-communication practice materials and student-interaction practice booklets. There are normally two sets of materials in a pair-communication: materials for a pair of students with different kinds of information in each set. Occasionally the information is complementary wherein partners fit their respective parts of the 'jigsaw' into a composite whole. The rest suppose different roles of relationship for the partners.

Communicative language teaching is advocated for the use of authentic or real-life material teaching in a classroom including language-based areas such as signs, advertisements, magazines, and newspapers besides graphics and audio-visuals sources on which language communication is presented. These comprise pictures, symbols, maps, charts, and graphs. Objects like plastic models can best be utilized to support exercises on enhancing communication skills.

### **Conclusion**

Contemporary English as a language for learning is better presented in the form of communication, unconscious of the systematically standard theories and grammar rules. This system of new learning has many enthusiastic followers who were and are desirous for a better humanistic approach to teaching with an interactive process of communication. The acceptance of communicative approach has given birth to vital issues like reformation in teacher training, testing, evaluation and materials development.

Queries have been put forth as to:

1. Whether communication approach can be applied at all levels of a language learning including ESL and EFL levels.

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2. Whether the existing grammar-based curriculum needs to be abandoned or simply revised and redrafted.
3. How much needs to be evaluated for a better communication approach and how would that be suitable for non-native trainers.

All such queries have to be effectively answered in order to implement an innovative language teaching approach in the form of CLT.

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