Developing Communicative Language Teaching:
A Remedial Approach

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Abstract

This paper seeks the possibilities of applying the communicative Language teaching – a remedial approach for slow learners. Teaching is more than just imparting knowledge to students. Teaching isalso about effective communication and without the capacity to effectively communicate the students from different background cannot perform well at various fronts of social life. Call Centre's, Shopping malls, trade fairs etc… all need young personnel, at least fluent in English. Student need to speak well in their personal lives, future workplaces, socialinteractions, and political endeavors. They will have meeting to attend, presentations to make, discussions and arguments to participate in, andgroups to work with. Remedialapproach is all about identifying slow learners and gives them necessary guidance to help them overcome problems. The paper concludes with suggestive remarks about communicative Language Teaching- Remedial approach and also provides a solution for the teachers, which will help slow learners to have a better grasp in communicative Skills

A Remedial Approach

Communicative language teaching or the communicative approach is
an approach to language teaching that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study. Communicative Language Teaching is to be found in the changes in the British language teaching tradition dating from the late 1960s. Until then, Situational Language 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. British applied linguists emphasized another fundamental dimension of language that was inadequately addressed in current approaches to language teaching at that time the functional and communicative potential of language. They saw the need to focus in language teaching on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 19:3 March 2019**
K. Nesapriya, Editor. Select Papers from International Conference on *Contemporary Issues in Language and Literature*
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Another impetus for different approaches to foreign language teaching came from changing educational realities in Europe. In 1971 a group of experts began to investigate the possibility of developing language courses on a unit-credit system, a system in which learning tasks are broken down into portions or units, each of which corresponds to a component of a learner's needs and is systematically related to all the other portions.

The work of the Council of Europe; the writings of Wilkins, Widdowson, Candlin, Christopher Bruit, Keith Johnson, and other British applied linguists on the theoretical basis for a communicative or functional approach to language teaching; the rapid application of these ideas by textbook writers; and the equally rapid acceptance of these new principles by British language teaching specialists, curriculum development centers, and even governments gave prominence nationally and internationally to what came to be referred to as the Communicative Approach, or simply Communicative Language Teaching.

Howatt distinguishes between a "strong" and a "weak" version of Communicative Language Teaching: There is, in a sense, a 'strong' version of the communicative approach and a 'weak' version. The weak version which has become more or less standard practice in the last ten years, stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching, 'strong' version of communicative teaching, on the other hand, advances the claim that language is acquired through communication, so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of stimulating the development of the language system itself. If the former could be described as 'learning to use' English, the latter entails 'using English to learn it.'

The communicative approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as "communicative competence." Hymes coined this term in order to contrast a communicative view of language and Chomsky's theory of competence. Chomsky held that linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitation, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance.
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Learning a second language was similarly viewed by proponents of Communicative Language Teaching as acquiring the linguistic means to perform different kinds of functions. At the level of language theory, Communicative Language Teaching has a rich, if somewhat eclectic, theoretical base. Some of the characteristics of this communicative view of language follow. Language is a system for the expression of meaning. The primary function of language is for interaction and communication. The structure of language reflects its functional and

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communicative uses. The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse.

One such element might be described as the communication principle: Activities that involve real communication promote learning. A second element is the task principle: Activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning .A third element is the meaningfulness principle: Language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process. Learning activities are consequently selected according to how well they engage the learner in meaningful and authentic language use. These principles, we suggest, can be inferred from CLT practices.

The range of exercise types and activities compatible with a communicative approach is unlimited, provided that such exercises enable learners to attain the communicative objectives of the curriculum, engage learners in communication, and require the use of such communicative processes as information sharing, negotiation of meaning, and interaction. Classroom activities are often designed to focus on completing tasks that are mediated through language or involve negotiation of information and information sharing.

The emphasis in Communicative Language Teaching on the processes of communication, rather than mastery of language. Several roles are assumed for teachers in Communicative Language Teaching, the importance of particular roles being determined by the view of CLT adopted.

The teacher has two main roles: the first role is to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and texts. The second role is to act as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group. The latter role is closely related to the objectives of the first role and arises from it. These roles imply a set of secondary roles for the teacher; first, as an organizer of resources and as a resource himself, second as a guide within the classroom procedures and activities. A third role for the teacher is that of researcher and learner, with much to contribute in terms of appropriate knowledge and abilities, actual and observed experience of the nature of learning and organizational capacities.

The CLT teacher assumes a responsibility for determining and responding to learner language needs. This may be done informally and personally through one-to-one sessions with students, in which the teacher talks through such issues as the student's perception of his or her learning style, learning assets, and learning goals.

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Another role assumed by several CLT approaches is that of counselor, similar to the way this role is defined in Community Language Learning. In this role, the teacher-counselor is expected to exemplify an effective communicator seeking to maximize the meshing of speaker intention and hearer interpretation, through the use of paraphrase, confirmation, and feedback.

The focus on fluency and comprehensibility in Communicative Language Teaching may cause anxiety among teachers accustomed to seeing error suppression and correction as the major instructional responsibility, and who see their primary function as preparing learners to take standardized or other kinds of tests. A continuing teacher concern has been the possible deleterious effect in pair or group work of imperfect modeling and student error. Although this issue is far from resolved, it is interesting to note that recent research findings suggest that "data contradicts the notion that other learners are not good conversational partners because they can't provide accurate input when it is solicited" (Porter 1983).

A wide variety of materials have been used to support communicative approaches to language teaching. Unlike some contemporary methodologies, such as Community Language Learning, practitioners of Communicative Language Teaching view materials as a way of influencing the quality of classroom interaction and language use. Materials thus have the primary role of promoting communicative language use. We will consider three kinds of materials currently used in CLT and label these text-based, task-based, and realia.

Morrow and Johnson's *Communicate* (1979), for example, has none of the usual dialogues, drills, or sentence patterns and uses visual cues, taped cues, pictures, and sentence fragments to initiate conversation. A variety of games, role plays, simulations, and task-based communication activities have been prepared to support Communicative Language Teaching classes. These typically are in the form of one-of-a-kind items: exercise handbooks, cue cards, activity cards, pair-communication practice materials, and student-interaction practice booklets. In pair-communication materials, there are typically two sets of material for a pair of students, each set containing different kinds of information. Many proponents of Communicative Language Teaching have advocated the use of "authentic," "from-life" materials in the classroom. These might include language-based realia, such as signs, magazines, advertisements, and newspapers, or graphic and visual sources around which communicative activities can he built, such as maps, pictures, symbols, graphs, and charts. Different kinds of objects can be used to support communicative exercises, such as a plastic model to assemble from directions.

Communicative Language Teaching is best considered an approach rather than a method. Thus although a reasonable degree of theoretical consistency can be discerned at the levels of language and learning theory, at the levels of design and procedure there is much greater room for individual interpretation and variation than most methods permit. It could be

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that one version among the various proposals for syllabus models, exercise types, and classroom activities may gain wider approval in the future, giving Communicative Language Teaching a status similar to other teaching methods. On the other hand, divergent interpretations might lead to homogeneous subgroups.

Communicative Language Teaching appeared at a time when British language teaching was ready for a paradigm shift. Situational Language Teaching was no longer felt to reflect a methodology appropriate for the seventies and beyond. CLT appealed to those who sought a more humanistic approach to teaching, one in which the interactive processes of communication received priority. The rapid adoption and implementation of the communicative approach also resulted from the fact that it quickly assumed the status of orthodoxy in British language teaching circles, receiving the sanction and support of leading British applied linguists, language specialists, publishers, as well as institutions, such as the British Council.

The adoption of a communicative approach raises important issues for teacher training, materials development, and testing 'and evaluation. Questions that have been raised include whether a communicative approach can be applied at all levels in a language program, whether it is equally suited to ESL and EFL situations, whether it requires existing grammar-based syllabuses to be abandoned or merely revised, how such an approach can be evaluated, how suitable it is for non-native teachers, and how it can be adopted in situations where students must continue to take grammar-based tests. These kinds of questions will doubtless require attention if the communicative movement in language teaching continues to gain momentum in the future.
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