

On Two Principles and the Activities of CLT

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Abstract. CLT is an important language teaching approach in English speaking countries since the 1980s. Our Chinese Education Ministry has in recent years advocated changing teaching method to help students achieve communicative competence through revising textbooks, emphasizing teacher training, introducing original English textbooks. CLT has already drawn a wide-ranging attention at home and abroad. Based on abundant information and materials, this paper is going to explore the two principles— create more realistic situation and student centeredness— in CLT from a relative new point of view through a discussion and concrete activities about the two principles. Therefore, the reader can form a clearer and deeper understand about CLT.

1. Introduction

With the development of modernization and globalization, communication becomes an important part in people's life. People need to communicate with each other in the same country or those from other countries. In order to achieve successful communication, people from different countries need to find mutual language in order to communicate. Therefore, second language teaching and learning is widely implemented in many countries in the world.

In this paper, the author is going to start with the definition of communicative language teaching and view the development of language teaching. For the main part, the author is going to talk about the use of CLT in China and concrete activities about the application of CLT are given Finally, the author is going to conclude and make some proposals for English language teaching in China.

2. Definition of CLT and CLT in China

2.1 Definition

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), the origin of communicative language teaching in the British language teaching tradition can be traced back to the late 1960s. Before introducing Communicative Language Approach, several language-teaching methods had been widely used in second language teaching and learning for a long period of time, such as the Grammar-translation Method, the Direct Method, the Audiolingual Method and the Notional-functional Method. Gradually, people realized the importance of communication and started to learn a foreign language in a practical way.

Communicative language teaching approach helps people to achieve communicative competence. Students learn language not only in classrooms, but also in the society. It becomes more practical and pragmatic. It is also been designed for social use. Brown (2000:250) says, "Communication may be regarded as a combination of acts, a series of elements with purpose and intent. Communication is not merely an event, something that happens; it is functional, purposeful, and designed to bring about some effect-some change, however subtle or unobservable-on the environment of hearers and speakers."

2.2 An Overview About CLT in China

In recent years, English language teaching has improved in China. Tape recorders and videos are introduced to the classroom. Besides, we can find rich materials in learning English, such as magazines, books, tapes and the Internet. Listening and speaking are taken into consideration. Teachers start to correct pupils' pronunciation and intonation in learning English, emphasizing

linguistic competence. Gradually, teachers try to teach English in a communicative way. The method of language teaching in China is changing.

3. Two Principles of CLT

3.1 Create More Realistic Situation

The current teaching methods don't emphasize the real world situations and fail to cultivate students' spontaneity. Artificial conventions and mechanical question-and-answer sequences fall short of the flexible, spontaneous kind of communicative interaction required for performing a task with the context of situation relevant to the real world. Such classroom teaching forces learners to talk about things that are not of their own choosing and not based on their actual needs. Instead, they are provided with a rigid set of guided structures in isolation. Taught in this way, the learners frequently fail when they are faced with the need to produce the language related to a specific situation.

Simulation techniques seem to be a better alternative, as they seek to place learners in a situation where they are asked to take on different roles and to accomplish their specific tasks, including problem solving. They offer an opportunity for the learners to practice using the language in the right place at the right time and as appropriately as possible.

The most obvious advantage of these kind techniques is that it puts the learners in realistic situations. By simulating the physical circumstances of certain situations, the students can have the opportunity to use and to practice the sort of language, particularly the vocabulary related to that situation, so that learners are rehearsed for real life. In addition, they can express what they want to say whenever the situation calls for it. The teacher provides the best conditions for learning through creating the realistic situation.

3.2 Be Students-centered

The focus of classroom should be shifted from the teacher to students. The present teaching in China, however, is just the opposite; the class is just mainly teacher-centered.

The class should be learners-centered. Communicative approach makes learners to be themselves and requires the classroom instructor to play a secondary role, trying to keep focus on the students not on himself and encouraging students to communicate among themselves. The teacher is expected to "lead from behind", i.e. to act more as adviser and to participate in the interactions if possible. The teacher should allow full scope for his students' spontaneous learning process and give more opportunities for the students to talk, perform and express their own ideas. In this way, the students will no longer feel inferior. Gradually, they will form a positive attitude toward English studying. The proposed teachers' role in the classroom is significant not only for classroom methodological reasons, but also, as we shall see, for its effect on human relationships in classroom. This relationship will contribute favorably to effective learning.

The role and relationship between the teacher and students are fixed by the students-centered principle. It is to say that the students are the main part in communication, while the teacher helps the students to communicate. The teacher can play several roles in the class: he directs the class activities, designs the scene of communication, and also he is a consultant—guiding the communication and solving the problems in communication. At the same time, the teacher should be a partner of communication—he takes part in the students' communication. Of course, the students should throw themselves into communication actively. They can learn the target language through communication, and improve their listening and speaking ability through communication.

These two pieces of principle, of course, will not solve all the problems, for communication teaching does not only involve methods and techniques but also material development, testing, class organization and possibly the retraining of the staff. These big issues have to be dealt with if a genuine communicative approach is to be followed.

The communicative approach is an effective teaching method, which helps the students to

develop the ability to use a new language practically. In specific language environment, it requires the students to communicate each other in the language they are learning. The students and teachers should put themselves into the “real” scene. The aim of teaching English is to develop the student’s ability of using language communicative ability. We say the process of teaching is the process of communication, so English teaching should use the communicative approach.

4. Activities According to the Two Principles

Language learning takes place among the students and teachers who know their frequent frustration, many aspects of it are beyond their pedagogic control, it is likely, in fact, that many aspects of language learning can take place only through natural processes, which operate when a person is involved in using the language for communication. If this is so, communicative activity (inside or outside the classroom) is an important part of the total learning process.

CLT activity provides opportunities for positive personal relationships to develop among learners and teachers. These relationships can help to humanize the class and to create an environment that supports the individual in his efforts to learn.

Because of the limitation of the classroom, this requires the teacher to create more various social situations and relationships in the class. Simulation, role-playing, discussion and other teaching aids are important techniques for creating a wider variety of social situations and relationships.

In looking for ways of creating more varied forms of interaction in the classroom, teachers of foreign language have turned increasingly to the field of simulation. Learners are asked to imagine themselves in a situation which would occur outside the classroom, and they are asked to behave as if the situation really existed.

5. Conclusion

In summary, communicative language teaching needs to be integrated with textbooks and specific materials, so that students are able to pass exams and remain successfully in the academic system. Communicative approach cannot be separated from other methods (the grammar-translation, the audio-lingual method, the direct method and drills) which have been used for many years. Teachers may choose different methods in specific language classrooms.

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