An Analysis of Communicative Language Teaching Approach Based on the International Researches

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ABSTRACT

With the development of globalization, the role of English in the construction and development of society has gradually increased. In order to meet the needs of students' development, teachers need to adjust teaching methods. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) plays an important role in language teaching. The purpose of this study is to provide a historical overview of Communicative Language Teaching and demonstrate the basic theories and characteristics of communicative language teaching. Then, the benefits and flaws of Communicative Language Teaching would be pointed out. The main merit of Communicative Language Teaching is improving students' fluency in speaking, while it might ignore the accuracy of the target language. In the end, some reflections would be presented.

Keywords: *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Features, Strengthens and Limitations, Second language learning.*

1. INTRODUCTION

By the end of 1960s, Communicative Language Teaching was found during the challenge of Traditional language teaching. "It was at this point those traditional methodologies like Grammar-Translation and Audio-Lingual approach gave way to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)" [1]. Three multidimensional parts are contained in this article, and the study aims to analyze communicative language teaching approach. A brief background of CLT and how to develop the CLT in different stages will be discussed in the first section. After that, main characteristics of CLT are explained. The third part will focus on strengthens and limitations of CLT. To analyze the topic of the CLT for helping foreign language teacher to acquire a comprehensive understanding of Communicative Language Teaching and adopt their teaching methods in practical teaching. It enables teachers to improve their pedagogy and provides more possibilities for foreign languages teaching.

2. A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING METHOD

The historical context and characteristics of Communicative Language Teaching are discussed in this section. To begin, the history and origins of Communicative Language Teaching are discussed. After that, there is a definition of Communicative Language Teaching.

2.1. The Origin of Communicative Language Teaching

The origin of the Communicative Language Teaching dates back to the growing dissatisfaction with the structural and behaviorist approach to language.

Until then, Situational Language Teaching had been the most common British method of English as a foreign language[2]. At that time, Chomsky has proved that conventional structural theories of language were unable to account for the fundamental characteristic of language and identified the flaws of grammar-translation method and other structural as well as behavioral approaches[3]. He considered that the traditional methods only focus on memorizing of grammatical structures, mechanical practice of vocabulary, or grammar rules, thus neglecting the functional and communicative potential of language. As a result, Students may understand the rules of linguistic usage, but be unable to use the language[4].

Another factor that contributed to the emergence of the Communicative Language Teaching is the change in reality of Europe, especially after the establishment of the European Union. Thousands of people are now moving

freely across the European countries, feeling the need to communicate in different languages. More specifically in real-life situations that call for more face-to-face interaction skills based on fluency and mutual understanding.

2.2. The Background of Communicative Language Teaching

The Communicative Language Teaching is also known as the notional functional approach. It was created by the European Council in the 1970s, based on the work of Wilkins and others on profit and other issues. It's founded on the idea that language instruction should go beyond only teaching grammar and vocabulary to include the study of the meanings and functions of utterances in various authentic circumstances. A variety of language ideas have been combined to create Communicative Language Teaching. Sociolinguistics, functional linguistics, semantics, and pragmatics are all used to create it.

2.3. The Definition of Communicative Language Teaching

"Communicative language teaching is an approach that regards interaction as the means and goal of second language acquisition" [5]. Some linguistics noted that students could produce sentences accurately in a lesson, but could not use them appropriately when genuinely communicating with each other outside of the classroom[6].It means that being able to communicate required communicative competence—knowing when and how to say what to whom[7]. Communicative teaching approach develops students' "communicative competence". This is different from the linguistic or grammatical method. The goal of Communicative Language Teaching is to create an interactive and real-life environment that promotes to effective communication. In such learning environment, students are also able to improve their grammatical competence and expand vocabulary.

According to Howatt, there are two versions of Communicative Language Teaching—a strong version and a weak one. The weak version requires students to first learn language as a structural system before learning how to use it in communication. With the strong version of Communicative Language Teaching, 'language is acquired through communication' [8]. The language structural system can be formed through the whole process, second language learners may realize the grammar structures or rules when they try to communicate with others in second language. In other words, whereas the earlier CLT theory considered the form and function of the language of instruction to be the key and necessary means of helping learners to develop their ability to use the language for communication, the

later development of the theory considers that the learners' experience of language learning as a whole should be valued as the focus of language use or language learning. This is because the learning style or language habits that result from such experiences support the learner's use of the second language from start to finish.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

The goal of Communicative Language Teaching is to foster students' communicative competence. To do this, some characteristics could be found in the interaction between students and teachers in communicative language teaching classes. The most evident characteristic of Communicative Language Teaching is that almost everything that is done is done with a communicative intent. Students use and learn the target language through communicative activities. Many activities in class require students to interact with each other and exchange information, such as games, role-plays, and problem-solving tasks. These activities have the following some features. "Activities that are truly communicative according to Morrow have three features in common: information gap, choice and feedback"[6]. The information gap refers to a set-up in the activities where information is divided among students who then have to piece it back together[9]. For instance, a text is given to a same group. Learner A has a biography of a well-known person lacking all of the location names, while Learner B receives the identical material missing all of the dates. They can finish the text together by exchanging each other information. Choice means that learners should be able to communicate in whatever language they like. In a chain drill, for example, if a student must respond to her neighbor's question in the same way that her neighbor responded to someone else's question, she has no choice of form or topic, and meaningful communication does not occur[6]. Feedback means that leaners evaluate whether they achieve the communication goal depended on comments he receives from listeners. If learners cannot be evaluated in a timely manner, for example, then they cannot assess whether they are being understood in communications.

Secondly, another characteristic of Communicative Language Teaching is using authentic materials. In communicative language teaching classes, students would be given a certain social context which is related to their daily lives. In the Role-play Activity, students are given a real-life situation in which they can relate to their own personal experiences, relieving the embarrassment of having nothing to say in the English classroom and effectively enhancing their interest and ability to express themselves, allowing them to acquire a broader range of communicative skills. Finally, Communicative Language Teaching is a student-oriented teaching approach and

carried out in a small group or class. Students play the lead role in class. Even when their knowledge of the target language is limited, they are actively engaged in meaning negotiating, attempting to make themselves understood [6]. Teacher's role is to establish communication situations and promote interactions, which is likely an advisor. In class, teachers need to answer students' questions and correct their mistakes through observing.

4. STRENGTHENS AND LIMITATIONS OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

The most obvious advantage of Communicative Language Teaching lies in the fact that this teaching method helps students improve their fluency when speaking the target language. In Communicative Language Teaching's typical Speed Dating Activity, for instance, students talk to different people in a short period of time and use English spontaneously after hearing each other's words. According to Larsen-Freeman, students' communicative competence can be gradually developed by participation in communicative tasks, with examples including the ability to produce fluent, consistent phrases[10]. Secondly, since the communicative language teaching class is students-oriented and students are communicators, it means that students have more opportunities and freedom to interact with each other in class. Teachers give students a chance to express or share their ideas and opinions. In addition, to overcome the typical problem which students could not use target language appropriately outside of classroom, Communicative Language Teaching advocate using authentic resources in learning process, which are relatively motivating and appealing for students[6]. The last benefit is that students will be motivated to study another language. Because of in a real communicative class, students learn the target language by communicating with each other. The given contexts are closely connected to their daily life.

However, critics against Communicative Language Teaching, such as Norland and Pruett[11], express the concern that the skills of reading and writing might be ignored in Communicative Language Teaching. Beside, Communicative Language Teaching emphasizes on the speaking fluency, which results in Brown pointing out Communicative Language Teaching lacks accuracy. He explains that if teachers neglect to teach grammar rules or vocabulary, students may eventually not sure what and how to say accurately in interactions. Lastly, there is still one weakness that Communicative Language Teaching is only available for a small class. Teachers may consume much time to check the language use of each student and correct their mistakes if this is a big class[12].

5. REFLECTIONS OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING APPROACH

Communicative Language Teaching method plays a crucial role in foreign language teaching. It has influenced English language teaching worldwide. Language is a tool of communication. The aim of learning language is to require communicative competence. Within a social context, language users needed to perform certain functions, such as promising, inviting, and declining invitations[12].

However, there are various practical challenges rising when teachers implement Communicative Language Teaching in schools from all over the world, especially where classes are often large and resources are limited[13]. In communicative class, teachers tend to apply some activities, such as role-play and information gap, to motivate students to interact with each other, thus small groups or pairs are essential. It would help teachers to observe students' errors in interactions and give feedback as soon as possible. But the majority schools' classes in Asia are very large. On the other hand, many teachers may feel confused when they apply Communicative Language Teaching approach to practical teaching. Because teaching methods upgrade cycle is quick. Sometimes teachers have learned mountains of theories but lack practical abilities.

In order to deal with this problem, the author suggests that teachers should find a midway between the traditional methods and the Communicative Language Teaching. We also should be in accordance with national conditions and adjust teaching approaches. The best methods are the ones that work well for students. The traditional methods, such as the grammar translation and audio-lingual method, are committed to fostering students' linguistic competence—knowing pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and so on. Communicative Language Teaching aims broadly to improve students' communicative competence. It emphasizes the meaning and usage of language rather than the form of language. Equal emphasis should be placed on linguistic competence and communicative competence. In many ways, traditional methods and Communicative Language Teaching method should learn from each other's strengths to offset their own weaknesses in many ways. In this case, teachers in class not only can provide students with an authentic context to practice their communicative skills, but give students an opportunity to learn new vocabulary and grammar structures. Just as Li says, the Communicative Language Teaching approach is a new development of language teaching methods, while the traditional methods are not so "backward and old-fashioned", and its advantages should be inherited and carried forward[14].

6. CONCLUSION

Focusing on Communicative Language Teaching theory, this study has analyzed its background, characteristics, advantages and disadvantages. Communicative Language Teaching is a teaching method that emphasized learners' responsibility in the learning process as well as teacher -student interaction. Though Communicative Language Teaching allows learners to use the target language appropriately outside the classroom and improve their fluency, it also overs the language accuracy sometimes. Therefore, the understanding of the Communicative Language Teaching method should not only focus on the simple interaction activities, but also should be combined with facts of classes. Although Communicative Language Teaching approach has many merits, it does not mean that traditional methods offer no advantages. It is necessary to find a midway between two of them. The study was limited by the absence of inspections in Communicative Language Teaching class, which makes these findings less connection with practice. Taken together, these results suggest that Communicative Language Teaching method enables teachers to construct an engaging and efficient language learning classroom and improve students' ability of using language, helping students understand and put what they have learned into practice.

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