The Role of Communicative Language Teaching and its Current Trends in Learning Foreign Languages

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Abstract: This article discusses the communicative language teaching method from its background till the present day of evaluation. It gives information about types of activities that can be very helpful in promoting communicative competence and types of principles and practices for implementing communicative language teaching.

Currently, the development of the science of method has allowed us to know essential data about a good number of methods, approaches, and techniques for teaching foreign languages to learners. In addition, we learned that these methods can vary based on learners' age and levels. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the fact that teaching any foreign language by promoting learners' communicative competence might give outstanding results compare to theory-based teaching. Naturally, most teachers and learners have an affinity for communicative-based learning and teaching. The science methodology introduced many methods which prioritize enhancing language learners' speaking skills. However, the methods have so many drawbacks as these methods were invented for specific purposes. Hence, language teachers are not able to utilize them widely.

So, flexibility and simplicity served as stimulators to the creation of communicative language teaching. Jack C. Richards divided the period of formulation of communicative language teaching into three phases.

1. Phase is the grammar-based approach (1960). The grammar-based approach, in other words, traditional approaches see language proficiency in grammar, to be more precise at that time, people are inclined to think that, the capability of speaking in a foreign language can be achieved only when learners create their grammatical competence. So, when it came to teaching grammar, they used a deductive (overt) approach. Furthermore, it was assumed that learning grammar and producing sentences accurately are crucial for the four skills.

2. Phase 2: Classic Communicative Language Teaching (1970-1990). Unlike traditional language teaching in this period of time, people started to doubt the effectiveness of focusing on grammar when it comes to teaching a foreign language while only focusing on grammar. The main reason of occurring this change was in order to advance learners' communicative competence they need not learn grammatical rules. In addition, so many researchers showed that possessing amazing grammar does not mean that students can reach fluency in a foreign language that they intended to learn. Communicative language teaching caused a great deal of enthusiasm with remarkable results. When this approach appeared in language teaching in the 1970s and 1980s, language teachers tried to modify their way of teaching syllabuses, and classroom materials. In the planning teaching process within a communicative approach, grammar was no longer the starting point.

3. Phase 3. Current communicative language. From this notion, it is easy to guess that this period of time also promotes communicative language teaching though in that phase people created new approaches. These approaches decreased the impact of grammar remarkably. Naturally, pupils started learning grammar inductively (covert). In that phase, they started learning new foreign languages based on their purposes of learning. It means that the learning process becomes specific, not general.

At present time developing communicative competence is especially important. It was assumed that communicative competence includes the following aspects:

➢ ability to use language for a range of different goals and functions

➢ ability to differentiate when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written or spoken communication)

➢ ability to produce and understand different types of texts such as narratives, reports, interviews, conversations

➢ ability to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge.

It is widely known that without any practice students cannot develop their speaking skills. That aside, teachers tend to use a diversity of activities that can be helpful for learners' speaking skills. These activities can break up into two: fluency and accuracy activities.

Activities focusing on fluency aimed at increasing the capability of natural use of language during communication. In addition, it requires meaningful use of language and communication strategies that lead to producing language that may not be predictable.

Activities focusing on accuracy mostly focus on the formation of correct examples of language. It aimed to practice language out of context, and a small sample of language. Even though, it doesn't require meaningful communication speaker should control the choice of language.

In communicative language teaching has other various activities.

Task-completion activities: puzzles, games, map-reading, and other kinds of classroom tasks in which aimed at using one's language resources to complete a task.

Information-gathering activities: student-conducted surveys, interviews, and searches so students are able to learn how to use their linguistic resources to collect information.

Opinion-sharing activities: activities in which students are required to compare values, opinions, or beliefs, such as a ranking task in which students list six qualities based on their importance.

Information-transfer activities: These activities make learners take information that is presented in one form, and represent it in a different form. For example, they may read instructions on how to cook something, and then draw a map showing the sequence, or they may read information about a subject and then represent it as a graph.

Reasoning-gap activities: These activities require deriving some new information from given information through the process of inference, practical reasoning, etc. For example, working out a teacher's timetable on the basis of given class timetables.

Role plays activities in which students choose roles and improvise a scene or exchange through given information or clues.

In communicative language teaching, practice is divided into three groups: mechanical, meaningful, and communicative [1].

Mechanical practice is a type of activity that students can successfully carry out without necessarily understanding the language they are using. Repetition drills and substitution drills can be good illustrations because these activities are designed to practice the use of particular grammatical or language items.

Meaningful practice can be guessed from its notion as it is a type of activity where language control

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is provided however, students are needed to make meaningful choices when carrying out a practice. For instance, in order to practice the use of prepositions to describe locations of places, students might be given a street map with various buildings identified in different locations. They are also given a list of prepositions such as across from, on the corner of, near, on, and next to. After that, they have to answer questions such as "Where is the restaurant? Where is the library?" etc. The practice is meaningful because students have to respond according to the location of places on the map.

Communicative practice is a type of activity in which practice is carried out by using language within a real communicative context, so students have to exchange real information, and as a consequence, the language used is not predictable. For example, students might have to draw a map of their hometown and answer questions about the location of different places, such as the nearest bus stop, the nearest shops, etc.

Doughty and Long introduced several principles for implementing communicative language teaching practices.

Principle 1: Use Tasks as an Organizational Principle. As it was mentioned, the traditional style of teaching a foreign language relied on teaching grammar by doing different exercises such as texts, short stories, and dialogues, nevertheless after appearing communicative language teaching method the way of teaching and organizing the curriculum also required a new syllabus. So, people start to contemplate how to organize the teaching process while only relying on new methods. This dilemma found its solution, in which the focus of attention was on tasks that require interaction from learners and provide learners a purpose to use the grammar in a meaningful context. This approach is called task-based learning or task-based instruction.

Principle 2: Promote Learning by Doing. In other words, instead of understanding, some theories students are required to realize these on their own. This principle of "learning by doing" is strongly supported by an active approach to using language early on. For instance, Swain suggests that learners need to actively produce language. Only, in that case, they are able to discover new corners of a language. Realizing is more beneficial compared to absorbing information because when learners discover something it remains in their long-term memory aside from that, they are able to enhance their analyzing and critical thinking.

Principle 3: Input Needs to Be Rich. Putting rich input is not an easy task however it can be really effective for learners. As Doughty and Long claimed put it, rich input entails realistic samples of discourse use surrounding native speakers' and non-native speakers' accomplishments of targeted tasks. This makes one of the most obvious points that learners need to hear the language, whether from the teacher or from multimedia resources (TV, video and podcast, websites), furthermore, this material should reflect real-life stations in other words it should be authentic. A teacher should take into consideration that input should be meaningful, comprehensible, and match learners' level.

Principle 4: Promote Cooperative and Collaborative Learning. In learning, process cooperativeness plays a significant role. Because while promoting only collaboration teachers are not only able to make learners take part in a lesson actively but also, he can motivate students. In addition, while cooperating with each other students learn how to express their thoughts and defend their ideas.

Principle 5: Provide Error Corrective Feedback. It's widely known that feedback quintessential part of the teaching process as it leads to learners' progress. Feedback can be categorized in two different ways: positive feedback confirms the correctness of a student's response. Teachers demonstrate this behavior by agreeing, praising, or showing understanding. Or, negative feedback, generally known as error correction has a corrective function on a student's faulty language behavior [2].

In conclusion, the communicative language teaching method is one of the effective ways of teaching, despite of lack attention towards grammar in this method students are guided to discover knowledge about language by themselves, which makes learners analyze materials deeply.

List of used literature

1. Jack C. Richards – Communicative Language Teaching Today - Cambridge University Press 2006 p 19.

2. Principles of Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Instruction M01_BRAN9064_01_SE_C01.QXD p 15.