

CLT and Task-Based Instruction for Effective Learning

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Abstract

The goal of Communicative Language Teaching is to develop fluency in language use. It emerged for better interaction like native speakers. Significantly, using the CLT approach increases communicative competence which is more reliable in language teaching. CLT is a broad approach to teaching that resulted from a focus on communication as the organizing principle for teaching. It helps language teachers achieve maximum learning among the learners rather than focus on mastery of the grammatical system of the languages. Task Based Instruction focuses on classroom activities involving two or more learners using communication strategies and interactional skills

Key Words: Task-based, Effective Teaching, CLT, Instruction

History

The CLT approach evolved during the 1960s and 1970s and has influenced approaches to language teaching today. CLT has contributed as a major source of influence on language teaching practice all over the world since the 1970s. This process of communicative language teaching methodology is still relevant today. It has taught many teachers who are relatively new to the profession may not be familiar

with them. So this paper, therefore, helps to review what we have learned from CLT and what its relevance is today.

English language teaching is becoming wider day to day due to drastic changes of knowledge in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) which supports sharing knowledge with others through different materials such as; textbooks, handouts, newspapers, magazines, email, internet, etc. Among them, ELT textbooks are more comfortable and available for learners from urban to remote areas all over the world which must be designed based on using the CLT approach in the present globalization period that is relevant and practical in real-life learning.

The CLT approach was influenced by the diver's theoretical and philosophical elements. These elements came into play in the dissemination of the main notions of the approach, and various manifestations of communicative frameworks were established. It is correlated with many scholars and

newly applied time and again. This interdisciplinary initiative, as documented by Brumfit and Johnson (1979), can be traced to (a) sociolinguists, particularly Hymes, Gumperz, and Goffman; (b) language philosophers such as Grice, Austin, and Searle; (c) linguist Ross, Fillmore, and Lakoff, who reacted against Chomsky; and (d) discourse analysis accounts by Halliday, McIntosh, and Stevens; and Crystal and Davy (see Byram & García, 2009; Widdowson, 2009).

The approach changed the object of what is taught and learned by helping students communicate, interact, and give conscious attention to meaning instead of language form. Hymes (1972, pp. 35-71 as cited in Rodrigues p. 24, 2015).

In short, the CLT approach teaches language to enhance students' communicative competence in authentic contexts, taking into consideration the various socio-cultural contexts, settings, participants, and conventions of speech.

Hymes introduced the term 'communicative competence' in 1972. It was used in the context of a reaction to Chomsky's distinction between the performance and competence of an ideal native speaker. Hymes criticized Chomsky's idea of competence apart from its use in the social context, proposing that knowledge of speakers must involve: what is possible to do with the language, what is feasible, what is appropriate, and what is done.

Hence, competence does not only involve speakers' knowledge of well-formed sentences in a language but the ability and knowledge of using language in social situations (Young, 2011, p. 67).

Richards (2006) pointed out, "Communicative Language Teaching is a broad approach to teaching that resulted from a focus on communication as the organizing principle for teaching rather than a focus on mastery of the grammatical system of the languages" (p. 36).

Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983 as cited in Rodrigues p.24, 2015), mentioned the major distinctions between Audiolingualism and communicative philosophical assumptions related to CLT's primary emphases on meaning. The language, therefore, is learned as means of communication and fluency, rather than native-speak proficiency and formal correctness. Communicative language teaching shifted the focus from grammatical form as the product of communication, to the process of communication and interaction in real and meaningful contexts for a critical view to real contexts of communication, Widdowson, (2005, p.7) indicated that meaning-focused instruction is not sufficient for helping students acquire accurate linguistic items The textbook writers must ensure meaningful communication moments, as well as attention to the linguistic code.

Widdowson (1979) proposed, "Once we accept the need to teach language as communication, we can no longer think of language in terms only of sentences" (pp. 49-50).

Students must understand how sentences combine in texts to perform communicative acts.

Even though this approach is widely promoted for establishing the aim of language teaching as the ability to communicate instead of learning specific grammatical forms, experts have questioned whether the approach, implemented initially by the West, can be applied overseas (Littlewood, 2011, p. 39). Indeed, different interpretations exist on how to implement the communicative approach, and solutions of how the approach may be applied in various cultural settings are still to be accomplished.

Lee and Van Patten (1995) underscored, "Although CLT may have caused a major revolution in the way that some people thought about language teaching, no major revolution occurred in the day-to-day practice of most language teachers" (p. 8).

Overall, few authentic materials for varying proficiency levels and successive sequences of communicative curriculum design have been developed. To alleviate instructional problems related to CLT, two frameworks were developed: Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Content-Based Instruction (CBI).

The primary concern of CLT is thus, with spoken functions as much as with written grammatical and textual functions. The notion of when and how it is appropriate to say certain things is of primary importance in CLT. It is believed that the development of L2 knowledge and skill.. Both fluency and accuracy are the goals of CLT, with a priority on fluency in language use.

Richards (2006, p. 22) mentions that the communicative approach has been widely implemented communicatively.it is a set of very general principles grounded in the notion of communicative competence as the goal of second and foreign language teaching, and a communicative syllabus and methodology as the way of achieving this goal, communicative language teaching has continued to evolve as our understanding of second language learning. Current communicative language teaching theory and practice thus draw on many different educational paradigms and traditions.

And since it draws on several diverse sources, there is no agreed-upon set of practices that characterize current communicative language teaching.Communicative language teaching today refers to a set of generally agreed-upon principles that can be applied in different ways, depending on the teaching context, the age of the learners, their level, their learning goals, and so on. The following core assumptions or variants of them underlie current practices in communicative language teaching.

Ellis (2003 as cited in Sharma 2012, p.78) characterizes that CLT aims to develop the ability to use language in real communication that may involve two general purposes: the interactional function, where language is used to establish and maintain contact, and the transactional function, where language is used to exchange information. CLT is directed toward enabling learners to function interactionally and transactionally. Whereas the earlier methods were based on a view of language as a set of linguistic systems, CLT drew on a functional model of language and a theory of communicative competence. It is clear that communicative language teaching focuses on language teaching on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures so, all English textbooks have to design on the basis of communicative nature for applying knowledge of the language in actual performance.

As is introduced above, CLT is usually characterized as a broad approach to teaching, rather than as a teaching method with a clearly defined set of classroom practices. As such it is most often defined as a list of general principles or features for second and foreign language teaching. One of the most recognized of these lists is Nunan's (1991) five features:

1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the learning process itself.
4. An enhancement of the learner's own experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
5. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

The aforementioned five features focus on learners' needs and desires through interaction, concerning functional competence. developing in an authentic context through negotiation and cooperation. Thus a CLT class often takes fluency-based activities that encourage learners to develop their confidence, role-plays in which students practice and develop language functions, as well as judicious use of grammar and pronunciation-focused activities. The achievement of learners can be loosely defined as their ability to apply knowledge of both formal and sociolinguistic aspects of a language with adequate proficiency to communicate based on content-based instruction and task-based instruction in a modern term in language development.

Task-Based Instruction

Task-based instruction, or TBI (also known as task-based teaching), is a methodology that can be regarded as developing from a focus on classroom processes. In the case of TBI, it is specially designed for instructional tasks.. Task-based instruction, however, makes strong claims for the use of tasks and sees them as the primary unit to be used, both in planning to teach (i.e., in developing a syllabus) and also in classroom teaching. But what exactly is a task? And what is not a task?

The notion of task is a somewhat fuzzy one, though various attempts have been made to define it. Some of the key characteristics of a task are the following:

- a. It is something that learners do or carry out using their existing language resources.
- b. It has an outcome that is not simply linked to learning a language, though language acquisition may occur as the learner carries out the task.
- c. It involves a focus on meaning.
- d. It calls upon the learners' use of communication strategies and interactional skills.

Many of the activities proposed in the early days of CLT can be described as tasks according to the definition above, i.e., information-gap and information-sharing activities that we find in many course books and ELT materials. TBI, two kinds of tasks can usefully be distinguished:

Pedagogical tasks are specially designed classroom tasks that are intended to require the use of specific interactional strategies and may also require the use of specific types of language (skills, grammar, and vocabulary). A task in which two learners have to try to find the number of differences between two similar pictures is an example of a pedagogical task. The task itself is not something one would normally encounter in the real world. However, the interactional processes it requires to provide useful input to language development.

Real-world tasks are tasks that reflect real-world uses of language and might be considered a rehearsal for real-world tasks. A role play in which the students practice a job interview would be a task of this kind.

Willis (1996) proposes six types of tasks as the basis for TBI:

1. Listing tasks: For example, students might have to make up a list of things they would pack if they were going on a beach vacation.
2. Sorting and ordering: Students work in pairs and make up a list of the most important characteristics of an ideal vacation.
3. Comparing: Students compare ads for two different supermarkets.
4. Problem-solving: Students read a letter to an advice columnist and suggest a solution to the

writer's problems.

5. Sharing personal experience: Students discuss their reactions to an ethical or moral dilemma.
6. Creative tasks: Students prepare plans for redecorating a house

There are many other taxonomies of tasks based on particular features of tasks; such as whether they are one-way, two-way, simple, or complex. Many classroom activities do not share the characteristics of tasks as illustrated above and are therefore not tasks and are not recommended teaching activities in TBI. These include drills, cloze activities, controlled writing activities, etc., and many of the traditional techniques that are familiar to many teachers. Despite the extensive recent literature on tasks, however, there are virtually no published teacher resources containing tasks that meet the criteria proposed in TBI.

How does TBI in practice differ from more traditional teaching approaches?

Recall our earlier discussion above of the principles of a P-P-P lesson or teaching format:

Presentation: The new grammar structure is presented, often using a conversation or short text. The teacher explains the new structure and checks students' comprehension of it.

Practice: Students practice using the new structure in a controlled context, through drills or substitution exercises.

Production: Students practice using the new structure in different contexts often using their content or information, to develop fluency with the new pattern.

Advocates of TBI reject this model on the basis that (a) it doesn't work; and (b) it doesn't reflect the current understanding of second language acquisition. They claim that students do not develop fluency or progress in their grammatical development through a P-P-P methodology. They also argue that second language learning research has shown that language learning results from meaningful interaction using the language and not from controlled practice. With TBI the focus shifts to using tasks to create interaction and then building language awareness and language development around task performance. How does this work in practice?

Willis proposes the following sequence of activities:

Pre-task Activities

Introduction to Topic and Task

T helps Ss to understand the theme and objectives of the task, for example, brainstorming ideas with the class, and using pictures, mime, or personal experience to introduce the topic.

Ss may do a pre-task, for example, topic-based, odd-word-out games.

T may highlight useful words and phrases, but would not pre-teach new structures.

Ss can be given preparation time to think about how to do the task.

Ss can hear a recording of a parallel task being done (so long as this does not give away the solution to the problem).

If the task is based on a text, Ss read a part of it.

Task Cycle

Task

The task is done by Ss (in pairs or groups) and gives Ss a chance to use whatever language they already have to express themselves and say whatever they want to say. This may be in response to

reading a text or hearing a recording.

T walks around and monitors, encouraging in a supportive way everyone's attempt at communication in the target language.

T helps Ss to formulate what they want to say, but will not intervene to correct errors of form.

The emphasis is on spontaneous, exploratory talk and confidence building, within the privacy of the small group.

Success in achieving the goals of the tasks helps Ss' motivation.

Planning

Planning prepares for the next stage where Ss are asked to report briefly to the whole class how they did the task and what the outcome was.

Ss draft and rehearse what they want to say or write.

T goes around to advise students on language, suggesting phrases and helping Ss to polish and correct their language.

If the reports are in writing, T can encourage peer editing and use of dictionaries.

The emphasis is on clarity, organization, and accuracy, as appropriate for a public presentation. Individual students often take this chance to ask questions about specific language items.

Report

T asks some pairs to report briefly to the whole class so everyone can compare findings, or begin a survey. (N.B: There must be a purpose for others to listen). Sometimes only one or two groups report in full; others comment and add extra points. The class may take notes.

T chairs, comments on the content of their reports, rephrases perhaps but gives no overt public correction.

Language Focus

Analysis

T sets some language-focused tasks, based on the texts students read or on the transcripts of the recordings they hear. Examples include the following:

- Find words and phrases related to the topic or text.
- Read the transcript, find words ending in "s" and say what the "s" means.
- Find all the words in the simple past form. Say which refers to past time and which does not.
- Underline and classify the questions in the transcript.
- T starts Ss off, then students continue, often in pairs.
- T goes around to help, Ss can ask individual questions.

In plenary, T then reviews the analysis, possibly writing relevant language up on the board in list form; Ss may make notes.

Practice

T conducts practice activities as needed, based on the language analysis already on the board, or using examples from the text or transcript.

Practice activities can include:

- Choral repetition of the phrases identified and classified
- Memory challenge games based on partially erased examples or using lists already on the blackboard for progressive deletion
- Sentence completion (set by one team for another)
- Matching the past-tense verbs (jumbled) with the subject or objects they had in the text
- Dictionary reference with words from text or transcript.
- Task-based instruction can, in theory, be applied in several different ways in language teaching:

As the sole framework for course planning and delivery: This appears to be the strategy proposed by Willis. Such an approach was used in a program described by Prabhu (1987) in which a grammar-based curriculum was replaced by a task-based one in a state school system, albeit only for a short period.

As one component of a course: A task strand can also serve as one component of a course, where it would seek to develop general communication skills. This is the approach described by Beglar and Hunt (2002) in their study of a 12-week course for second-year Japanese university students. The task strand was based on a survey. Students designed a survey form, then collected data, analyzed it, and presented the results. In this case, "task" is being used in ways others would use the term "project." At the same time, students were also involved in classroom work related to a direct approach to teaching speaking skills, receiving explicit instruction in some of the specific strategies and micro skills required for conversation.

As a technique: Teachers who find the procedures outlined by Willis unrealistic and unmanageable over a long period could still use task work from time to time as one technique from their teaching repertoire.

Issues in Implementing a Task-Based Approach

Many issues arise in implementing a task-based approach. To begin with, there is little evidence that it works any more effectively than the P-P-P approach it seeks to replace. Criteria for selecting and sequencing tasks are also problematic, as is the problem of language accuracy. Task work may well serve to develop fluency at the expense of accuracy, as with some of the other activities suggested within a CLT framework. Content issues are also of secondary importance in TBI, making it of little relevance to those concerned with CBI or mainstreaming. The fact that TBI addresses classroom processes rather than learning outcomes is also an issue. In courses that have specific instructional outcomes to attain (e.examination targets) and where specific language needs have to be addressed rather than the general communication skills targeted in task work, TBI may seem too vague as a methodology to be widely adopted.

Conclusion

In conclusion, communicative language teaching is the nature of communication while teaching to use language communicatively. Fluency is natural language use occurring when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible and ongoing communication despite limitations in his or her communicative competence. Fluency is developed by creating classroom activities in which

students must negotiate meaning, use communication strategies, correct misunderstandings, and work to avoid communication breakdowns for effective learning and teaching.

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