Tikrit University

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Techniques & principles in language teaching

Third Year

Communicative Language Teaching

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2024-2025

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), as described in **Diane Freeman's works**, is an approach to language teaching that emphasizes **communication** and the **use of language in real-life situations**. The primary goal of CLT is to develop students' ability to **communicate effectively** in the target language.

Here is an explanation of **Communicative Language Teaching** based on Freeman's perspective:

Key Features of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

1. **Focus on Communication**:

   o CLT is primarily concerned with the **ability to communicate** rather than with mastering grammatical structures or vocabulary in isolation. The goal is for students to use the language in real-world, meaningful contexts, engaging in conversations, making requests, offering opinions, and solving problems.

   o The emphasis is on **fluency** (being able to speak easily and naturally) rather than just **accuracy** (being grammatically perfect).

2. **Real-Life Contexts and Situations**:

   o CLT encourages learners to practice language in **authentic situations** that resemble the types of communication they would experience outside the classroom.

   o Activities such as **role-plays**, **group discussions**, **interviews**, and **problem-solving tasks** are commonly used to simulate real-life communication.

3. **Learner-Centered Approach**:

   o CLT is **learner-centered**, meaning that it prioritizes the **needs, interests, and experiences** of the students. The teacher acts as a **facilitator**, guiding students through communication activities and encouraging their participation.

   o The role of the teacher in CLT is to **provide opportunities for interaction**, give feedback, and correct mistakes when necessary, but not to dominate the classroom.

4. **Use of Authentic Materials**:

   o In CLT, **authentic materials**—such as newspapers, advertisements, TV shows, and real-world texts—are used to expose learners to the language as it is actually used in daily life, rather than relying solely on textbooks with artificial or simplified language.

   o This helps students become familiar with natural language patterns, slang, and cultural aspects of communication.

5. **Task-Based Learning**:

   o CLT often uses **task-based learning** where learners engage in specific tasks that require communication. For example, students might be asked to plan a trip, solve a problem, or carry out a survey in the target language.

   o The focus is on completing the task successfully while using the language for communication, rather than focusing on form (grammar).

6. **Focus on Interaction**:

   o CLT promotes **interaction** as the core of learning. Interaction between students and between students and teachers is central to language learning.

   o Activities like **pair work** and **group work** are commonly used to allow students to practice speaking and listening in a social context.

7. **Integration of Skills**:

   o CLT integrates all four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) rather than focusing on one in isolation. These skills are taught together and practiced in integrated ways to mimic real-life communication.

   o For instance, a class might involve reading a text, discussing it in groups, and then writing a response or summary—all using the target language.

Teaching Methods and Techniques in CLT

1. **Role Plays**:

   o Students take on different roles (e.g., a customer and a waiter) and act out situations in which they would use language. This helps to practice spontaneous speech and fluency.

2. **Information Gap Activities**:

   o Students are given different pieces of information and are required to communicate with each other to fill in the gaps. This encourages interaction and the use of language to exchange information.

3. **Problem-Solving Tasks**:

   o Learners are asked to solve a problem or make a decision together, which requires communication and negotiation in the target language. This helps to develop functional language skills.

4. **Discussions and Debates**:

   o Students discuss or debate topics of interest in pairs or groups, allowing them to practice **expressing opinions**, **justifying points of view**, and **listening actively** to others.

5. **Project Work**:

   o Longer-term tasks where students work together to produce something, such as a presentation, report, or video. This involves collaboration and communication in the language.

6. **Games**:

   o Language games such as **word searches**, **crosswords**, and **quizzes** can also be used to make language learning more interactive and fun.

Goals of Communicative Language Teaching

- **Develop communicative competence**, which includes not only knowing grammatical rules but also knowing when, why, and how to use language appropriately in different social contexts.

- Enable students to use the language for **real-life communication** by engaging in functional tasks.

- Create an **interactive classroom environment** where students feel comfortable speaking and practicing the language.

- Move away from **traditional grammar-translation** methods and focus on **meaningful communication** rather than rote memorization of rules and vocabulary.

Strengths of Communicative Language Teaching

1. **Engagement**:

   o CLT tends to be more engaging for students because it involves them actively in their learning process and encourages meaningful communication.

2. **Practical Use of Language**:

   o Since CLT focuses on real-world language use, students can directly apply what they learn to everyday situations.

3. **Development of Fluency**:

   o By emphasizing fluency over accuracy, students are encouraged to practice speaking freely, which can increase their confidence and fluency in the language.

4. **Learner Autonomy**:

   o CLT encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning by participating actively in tasks and discussions, fostering greater **learner autonomy**.

Challenges of Communicative Language Teaching

1. **Focus on Fluency over Accuracy**:

   o In some cases, the focus on fluency may lead to students making errors that go uncorrected. For learners who need a stronger foundation in grammar, this can be problematic.

2. **Difficulty in Assessing Progress**:

   o Since CLT emphasizes communication rather than grammar drills, assessing students' progress in a **clear, measurable way** can sometimes be difficult. Traditional assessments, like tests, might not fully capture the communicative competence students have gained.

3. **Teacher's Role**:

   o CLT requires teachers to be more of a **facilitator** than a direct instructor, which might be challenging for teachers who are more accustomed to traditional teaching styles where they deliver information.

4. **Time and Resources**:

   o For some teachers, creating interactive and communicative activities may require more time for preparation and may not always be feasible in crowded classrooms or under time constraints.

5. **Not Always Effective for Beginners**:

   o For beginner students, CLT may not always provide the foundation in grammar and vocabulary that they need before they can engage in meaningful communication.

Conclusion

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach that prioritizes **real-world communication** and **learner-centered activities**. Its focus on **fluency**, **interaction**, and the **use of authentic materials** makes it an engaging method for language learners. However, it requires skilled teachers who can balance fluency and accuracy, and it may not always be suitable for beginner-level learners who need more structured instruction.