

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT) IN A LEARNER CENTERED CLASSROOM

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English has been a second language in India for the last 150 years and is being taught in Indian classrooms with vigor and commitment. The Indian education system as well as the Indian class room is unquestionably teacher centered and teacher is like a savior to the students. Teacher plays a major role in imparting to students where students' participation is meager in the traditional classroom teaching system. Especially in the traditional language learning classroom, Teacher's Talk Time (TTT) is more than Student Talk Time (STT). So there needs a paradigm shift towards learner centered classroom approaches and methodologies. Latest and modern approaches and methods of teaching English language are under trial and consideration in India. A lot of research is being undertaken in the field of English Language Teaching as it has become a global language. English Language Teaching has emerged as a global tool of learner to emerge as a global, potential and competent citizen. It provides the learner with Communication Skills which is the need of the hour in the present global context. The basic skills of ELT viz., LSRW or Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing can equip the learner with tools to deal with the demands imposed by the globalization of work culture. Through the acquisition of the English Language Skills, the learner can manifest other skills like Soft Skills and Emotional Intelligence. English Language Teaching is also the key contributor of life skills which are needed for the personal and professional development.

Out of many approaches of English language Teaching, Communicative Language Teaching is a very popular and successful approach. The term "Communicative Language Teaching" is also famous as CLT. It is a learner centered approach. It focuses mainly on facilitating the learners to communicate purposefully and meaningfully in a Target Language.

In the English language classroom, English is the target language for the learners in India where English is not the mother tongue. English is to be learnt as a second language in India.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The communicative approach to English language teaching has its origin in the theory of language as communication. The main purpose of English Language Teaching is to enrich "communicative competence" in the learners. It was Hymes, a famous Linguist, who first introduced the concept of Communicative Competence. His prime focus was on the use of language in a social context within the sociolinguistic norms. Hymes coined this term in contrary to Chomsky's theory of competence. Chomsky tries to focus on an abstract linguistic theory that enables the speakers to produce grammatically accurate sentences. But in Hymes's view, the linguistic theory must focus on communication and culture. In the opinion of Hymes, one must acquire communicative competence along with knowledge of language and ability to use it.

Hymes has described different functions of language to be used in the class room. According to him, language can be used to communicate, to interact with others, to express personal feelings and emotions, to get things, to create a world of imagination, to get power over others, etc. Meaning is prominent in Communicative Language Teaching approach.

Features of the CLT

Communicative Language Teaching is mainly learner centered and activity based approach. So Contextual dialogues in the form of different activities like conversations, role play, group work, pair work, brain storming, mind mapping etc, with proper

drilling, are given much priority in this approach. Judicious use of mother tongue is accepted in this approach, but priority is the use of the target language. Teacher motivates the students to achieve communicative competence through trial and error methods and playful activities.

Communicative Syllabus

The syllabus in the CLT approach is designed based on the objectives of the approach. The syllabus focuses on semantic and grammatical patterns along with communicative functions to be learnt and expressed. These functions are namely describing something, requesting information, expressing agreement and disagreement etc. Vocabulary and grammar components are also given prominence. Jack C Richards in his text *Communicative Language Teaching Today* (2006) proposes two different types of syllabus called;

1. A skill-based syllabus
2. A functional syllabus

The skill-based syllabus focuses on all the four basic language skills and their micro-skills. In the functional syllabus, the learner is expected to learn to use necessary functions in English. The list of functions includes expressing likes and dislikes, offering and accepting apologies, introducing self and others, and giving explanations, explaining processes etc. A large variety of situations is introduced, and learners practice to master these functions. Keeping the functions in mind, necessary vocabulary and grammar are chosen and taught in the CLT class room.

Role of the Teachers

Teacher acts as a facilitator in the CLT class room in the communication process among the learners and the various activities and texts and also acts as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group. These roles lead to a set of secondary roles for the teacher; as an organizer, as a guide, researcher and mutual learner. In addition to the above roles, teachers are also expected to play the role of needs analyst, counselor and group manager. All the teachers are expected to pay

attention to the needs of the learners, which boosts up their motivational level. Along with this, the teacher is also supposed to play the role of a counselor offering useful feedbacks to the learners for better performance. The training of teachers in CLT methodologies and techniques is also useful and helpful to get better results.

Role of the Learners:

The fundamental role of the Communicative Language Teaching approach is to develop the communication skills of the learners. The language forms are the integrated part of the communication. The role of the learner as negotiator- between the self, the learning process, and the object of learning-emerges from and interacts with different roles in classroom activities. The learners participate and contribute in the form of collaborative learning. The implication for the learner is that he should contribute as much as he gains, and thereby learns in an interdependent way.

Role of Instructional Materials

In Communicative Language Teaching approach, the materials enrich the quality of classroom teaching and learning process. Language experts have identified two different types of materials used in this approach. They are:

1. Text-Based Materials: The text- based materials focus on the use of visual cues, taped- cues, pictures and fragmented sentences to teach how to initiate the talk, role play and all in either by pair works or group works.

2. Task-Based Materials: The task-based materials include a variety of games, role plays, simulations and other communicative and interactive activities. These tasks and activities are in the form of handouts, cue cards, interviewing each other and other forms of pair work in practice sheets.

Classroom Management

Communicative Language Teaching classroom is a learner centered one. Teacher helps the students to understand the theme and objectives of the task while teaching a topic, for example, brainstorming ideas with the class, using pictures, mime or personal experience may be used to teach a topic.

Students do a pre-task, for example, topic-based odd-word-out games etc. Teacher highlights some useful words and phrases and provokes students to take up activities in the given time. Teacher encourages students to do work in groups or in pairs in collaborative atmosphere and lets them to report their work and offers valuable feedback at the end. Teacher encourages the students to use target language during the discussions, searching, consolidating and reporting. Teacher analyses the students' performance and guides them accordingly.

Conclusion

Thus Communicative Language Teaching has been in vogue across the globe as the most popular and useful approach in learning English language especially in India where English is being taught as second language. Since the development and increasing popularity of Communicative Language Teaching is at pace, the language instructors and materials designers are working relentlessly to provide quality, user-friendly, self-guided materials to the learners of language through classroom and real life situations. It has a considerable influence on the other coexisting teaching methodologies and approaches. Training is to be provided to the teachers of English in the CLT methods and techniques by language experts. Continuous research is to be carried out to evolve better class room practices, teaching methods and techniques to make the classroom a more learner centered one to acquire desirable goals and benefits.

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