COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE SKILLS AND THEIR USAGE IN LINGUISTIC LESSONS

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ABSTRACT: - This article deals with communicative language skills. Communicative language teaching (CLT), or the communicative approach, is an approach to language teaching that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study.

KEYWORDS: Language, skill, approach, practice, emphasize.

INTRODUCTION

Learners in environments using CLT techniques learn and practice the target language by interactions with one another and the instructor, the study of "authentic texts" (those written in the target language for purposes other than language learning), and the use of the language both in class and outside of class.

Learners converse about personal experiences with partners, and instructors teach topics outside of the realm of traditional grammar to promote language skills in all types of situations. That method also claims to encourage learners to incorporate their personal experiences into their language learning environment and to focus on the learning experience, in addition to the learning of the target language.[1]

According to CLT, the goal of language education is the ability to communicate in the target language.[2] This is in contrast to previous views in which grammatical competence was commonly given top priority.

CLT also focuses on the teacher being a facilitator, rather than an instructor. Furthermore, the approach is a non-methodical system that does not use a textbook series to teach the target language but works on developing sound oral and verbal skills prior to reading and writing.

The communicative approach is based on the idea that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning.

When learners are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used, and this will allow them to learn to use the language.

Example

Practising question forms by asking learners to find out personal information about their colleagues is an example of the communicative approach, as it involves meaningful communication.

In the classroom Classroom activities guided by the communicative approach are characterised by trying to produce meaningful and real communication, at all levels. As a result there may be more emphasis on skills than systems, lessons are more learner-centred, and there may be use of authentic materials. Language teaching was originally considered a cognitive matter that mainly involved memorization. It was later thought instead to be socio-cognitive: language can be learned through the process of social interaction. Today, however, the dominant technique in teaching any language is communicative language teaching (CLT).[4]

It was Noam Chomsky's theories in the 1960s, focusing on competence and performance in language learning, that gave rise to communicative language teaching, but the conceptual basis for CLT was laid in the 1970s by the linguists Michael Halliday, who studied how language functions are expressed through grammar, and Dell Hymes, who introduced the idea of a wider communicative competence instead of Chomsky's narrower linguistic competence.[4] The rise of CLT in the 1970s and the early 1980s was partly in response to the lack of success with traditional language teaching methods and partly by the increase in demand for language learning. In Europe, the advent of the European Common Market, an economic predecessor to the European Union, led to migration in Europe and an increased number of people who needed to learn a foreign language for work or personal reasons. Meanwhile, more children were given the opportunity to learn foreign languages in school, as the number of secondary schools offering languages rose worldwide as part of a general trend of curriculum-broadening and modernization, with foreign-language study no longer confined to the elite academies. In Britain, the introduction of comprehensive schools, which offered foreign-language study to all children, rather than to the select few of the elite grammar schools, greatly increased the demand for language learning.[5]

The increased demand included many learners who struggled with traditional methods such as grammar translation, which involves the direct translation of sentence after sentence as a way to learn language. Those methods assumed that students aimed to master the target language and were willing to study for years before expecting to use the language in real life. However, those assumptions were challenged by adult learners, who were busy with work, and by schoolchildren who were less academically gifted and so could not devote years to learning before they could use the language. Educators realized that to motivate those students an approach with a more immediate reward was necessary,[5] and they began to use CLT, an approach that emphasizes communicative ability and yielded better results.

Additionally, the trend of progressivism in education provided further pressure for educators to change their methods. Progressivism holds that active learning is more effective than passive learning.[5] As that idea gained traction, in schools there was a general shift towards using techniques where students were more actively involved, such as group work. Foreign-language education was no exception to thar trend, and

teachers sought to find new methods, such as CLT, that could better embody the shift in thinking. The development of communicative language teaching was bolstered by new academic ideas. Before the growth of communicative language teaching, the primary method of language teaching was situational language teaching, a method that was much more clinical in nature and relied less on direct communication. In Britain, applied linguists began to doubt the efficacy of situational language teaching, partly in response to Chomsky's insights into the nature of language. Chomsky had shown that the structural theories of language then prevalent could not explain the variety that is found in real communication.[7] In addition, applied linguists like Christopher Candlin and Henry Widdowson observed that the current model of language learning was ineffective in classrooms. They saw a need for students to develop communicative skill and functional competence in addition to mastering language structures.[7]

In 1966, the linguist and anthropologist Dell Hymes developed the concept of communicative competence, which redefined what it meant to "know" a language. In addition to speakers having mastery over the structural elements of language, they must also be able to use those structural elements appropriately in a variety of speech domains. That can be neatly summed up by Hymes's statement: "There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless."[5] The idea of communicative competence stemmed from Chomsky's concept of the linguistic competence of an ideal native speaker. Hymes did not make a concrete formulation of communicative competence, but subsequent authors, notably Michael Canale, have tied the concept to language teaching. Canale and Swain (1980) defined communicative competence in terms of three components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Canale (1983) refined the model by adding discourse competence, which contains the concepts of cohesion and coherence.

An influential development in the history of communicative language teaching was the work of the Council of Europe in creating new language syllabi. When communicative language teaching had effectively replaced situational language teaching as the standard by leading linguists, the Council of Europe made an effort to once again bolster the growth of the new method, which led to the Council of Europe creating a new language syllabus. Education was a high priority for the Council of Europe, which set out to provide a syllabus that would meet the needs of European immigrants. Among the studies that it used in designing the course was one by a British linguist, D. A. Wilkins, that defined language using "notions" and "functions," rather than more traditional categories of grammar and vocabulary. The new syllabus reinforced the idea that language could not be adequately explained by grammar and syntax but instead relied on real interaction.

In the mid-1990s, the Dogme 95 manifesto influenced language teaching through the Dogme language teaching movement. It proposed that published materials stifle the communicative approach. As such, the aim of the Dogme approach to language teaching is to focus on real conversations about practical subjects in which communication is the engine of learning. The idea behind the Dogme approach is that communication can lead to explanation, which leads to further learning. That approach is the antithesis of situational language teaching, which emphasizes learning by text and prioritizes grammar over communication.

A survey of communicative competence by Bachman (1990) divides competency into the broad headings of "organizational competence," which includes both grammatical and discourse (or textual) competence, and "pragmatic competence," which includes both sociolinguistic and "illocutionary" competence. Strategic competence is associated with the interlocutors' ability in using communication strategies.

CLT teachers choose classroom activities based on what they believe is going to be most effective for students developing communicative abilities in the target language (TL). Oral activities are popular among CLT teachers, as opposed to grammar drills or reading and writing activities, because they include active conversation and creative, unpredicted responses from students. Activities vary based on the level of language class they are being used in. They promote collaboration, fluency, and comfort in the TL. The six activities listed and explained below are commonly used in CLT classrooms.

Role-play

Role-play is an oral activity usually done in pairs, whose main goal is to develop students' communicative abilities in a certain setting.

Example:

1.   The instructor sets the scene: where is the conversation taking place? (E.g., in a café, in a park, etc.)

2.   The instructor defines the goal of the students' conversation. (E.g., the speaker is asking for directions, the speaker is ordering coffee, the speaker is talking about a movie they recently saw, etc.)

3.   The students converse in pairs for a designated amount of time.

This activity gives students the chance to improve their communication skills in the TL in a low-pressure situation. Most students are more comfortable speaking in pairs rather than in front of the entire class.[5]

Instructors need to be aware of the differences between a conversation and an utterance. Students may use the same utterances repeatedly when doing this activity and not actually have a creative conversation. If instructors do not regulate what kinds of conversations students are having, then the students might not be truly improving their communication skills.

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