

Pedagogy and Curriculum Innovations

Third Year 2020-2021

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First Semester
Lecture 12:
Communicative Language Teaching





Communicative Language Teaching: Introduction



The goal of most of the methods you have been introduced to so far is for students to learn to communicate in the target language. In the 1970s, though, educators began to question if they were going about meeting the goal in the right way. Some observed that students could produce sentences accurately in a lesson, but could not use them appropriately when genuinely communicating outside of the classroom. Others noted that being able to communicate required more than mastering linguistic structure, due to the fact that language was fundamentally social. Within a social context, language users needed to perform certain functions, such as promising, inviting, and declining invitations (Wilkins 1976). Students may know the rules of linguistic usage, but be unable to use the language (Widdowson 1978). In short, being able to communicate required more than linguistic competence; it required communicative competence (Hymes 1971)—knowing when and how to say what to whom. Such observations contributed to a shift in the field in the late 1970s and early 1980s from a linguistic structure-centered approach to a Communicative Approach (Widdowson 1990; Savignon 1997).



Communicative Language Teaching: Introduction



Applying the theoretical perspective of the Communicative Approach, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) aims broadly to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching. What this looks like in the classroom may depend on how the principles are interpreted and applied. Indeed, Klapper (2003) makes the point that because CLT lacks closely prescribed classroom techniques, as compared with some of the other methods we have just looked at, CLT is 'fuzzy' in teachers' understanding. This fuzziness has given CLT a flexibility which has allowed it to endure for thirty years. However, its flexibility also means that classroom practices differ widely even when teachers report that they are practicing CLT. It is probably fair to say that there is no one single agreed upon version of CLT.



Principles



1. Whenever possible, authentic language —language as it is used in a real context —should be introduced.
2. Being able to figure out the speaker's or writer's intentions is part of being communicatively competent.
3. The target language is a vehicle for classroom communication, not just the object of study.
4. One function can have many different linguistic forms. Since the focus of the course is on real language use, a variety of linguistic forms are presented together. The emphasis is on the process of communication rather than just mastery of language forms.
5. Students should work with language at the discourse or suprasentential (above the sentence) level. They must learn about cohesion and coherence, those properties of language which bind the sentences together.



Principles



6. Games are important because they have certain features in common with real communicative events—there is a purpose to the exchange. Also, the speaker receives immediate feedback from the listener on whether or not she has successfully communicated. Having students work in small groups maximizes the amount of communicative practice they receive.
7. Students should be given an opportunity to express their ideas and opinions.
8. Errors are tolerated and seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills.
9. One of the teacher's major responsibilities is to establish situations likely to promote communication.
10. Communicative interaction encourages cooperative relationships among students. It gives students an opportunity to work on negotiating meaning.
11. The social context of the communicative event is essential in giving meaning to the utterances.



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Principles



12. Learning to use language forms appropriately is an important part of communicative competence.
13. The teacher acts as a facilitator in setting up communicative activities and as an advisor during the activities.
14. In communicating, a speaker has a choice not only about what to say, but also how to say it.
15. The grammar and vocabulary that the students learn follow from the function, situational context, and the roles of the interlocutors.
16. Students should be given opportunities to work on language as it is used in authentic communication. They may be coached on strategies for how to improve their comprehension.