

# Communicative Language Teaching as a Second and Foreign Language Teaching

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Communicative language teaching (CLT) is a second and foreign language teaching approach that emphasizes on interactions as the ultimate objective and means of learning a target language. This approach is based on the theory that communication the main function of language use. Its main aim is to ensure that language learners develop and improve their communicative competence or ability. This approach involves creating real - life situations that facilitate and necessitate communication. Since its introduction in 1960s and 1970s, it has changed and evolved to meet the requirements of the modern generations. This paper discusses the current thinking and practices in second language learning.

Today, CLT refers to generally accepted principles which are applied in various ways depending on the context of teaching, learners' age, and learning goals and levels among other factors (Richards, 2012). CLT practices facilitate interaction and meaningful communication using target language in different class situations. Class settings involve exercises and tasks which create opportunities for learners to discuss meaning, know how language is used, expand their second language resources, and undertake meaningful interpersonal exchanges (Richards, 2012). This has brought a shift in teaching from grammar - translation method into proficiency - based methods. CLT advocates for oral proficiency which allows learners to communicate fluently using the target language. Proficiency guidelines have been put in place to assess learner's progress in and after each level of language teaching (Richards, 2012). The activities created and real - life related interactions in classroom settings allow learners to develop their proficiency when sharing ideas using second language. Errors which learners' make during these interactions are corrected and they gradually become more proficient.

CLT integrates all teaching goals into one. Different language features such as grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary among others are learnt at once. CLT approach creates situations that make learners derive real - life meaning from different language features (Richards, 2012). Learners' grammatical development is linked with communication ability as a way of improving their communication competence. Grammar is therefore not taught in isolation but made to develop as a result of communicative tasks undertaken by learners. This enables them to appreciate grammatical elements in real life situation and consequently leave a long - lasting impression in their minds (Richards, 2012). Information sharing, problem solving, and role play in different activities create need for different grammatical elements making students to be more alert. Both inductive and deductive learning are therefore used in ensuring students improve their grammar. Real - life situations connect learners' interests and lives

making them to comprehend target language elements with ease.

Languages are tied with cultures of the original speakers. Culture is therefore very instrumental in shaping communicative competence of the speaker either in their first or subsequent languages. CLT encourages cross - cultural activities which involve comparing differences in using different texts in different cultures (Richards, 2012). Situations are created for CLT leader learners into learning openness and general empathy towards other cultures. Learners' ability to recognize different viewpoints based on different languages and their culture is of big importance (Richards, 2012). Appreciation of new culture makes it easy for learners to learn new language.

Communication competence is the main objective in CLT. It is all based on knowledge of grammar, phonology, semantics, and vocabulary of the target language. The relationship between language and social context plays a big role in ensuring main objective is achieved (Richards, 2012). Learners are expected to know how to start and end conversations in different contexts. Teaching, learning, speaking, and listening are taken as different elements in language learning but should take place simultaneously in order to bring the desired meaning among learners (Richards, 2012). For any learner to read, listen, speak or write, he/she should be able to comprehend the language being used. Comprehension is therefore key factor that defines traditional skills in learning of language.

There are different standards in place to check progress in CLT. Every element of language learning such as grammar, proficiency, and culture among others has standards (Richards, 2012). These standards are the reference points during assessment of the CLT progress among learners in every level. Culture based standards ensure students understand and demonstrate the relationship between perspectives and practices of the studied culture. They also ensure that students further and reinforce their knowledge in other study disciplines through foreign language perspectives. Proficiency standards help in the assessment of oral competency among students in various levels of language teaching (Richards, 2012). Assessment helps to improve learners' understanding, use and application of languages in different real - life concepts, as well as meeting academic requirements. Mechanisms are set for self - assessment and peer - assessments in interactive activities (Richards, 2012). Teachers test learners to establish whether they have attained desired language mastery level or not. Assessments are also aimed at establishing whether CLT is achieving desired grammatical, proficiency, and language competency levels for further recommendations.

In conclusion, CLT equips students with structures, functions and grammar of any language as well as strategies of that will enable them to successfully interact in real - life situations. There are different standards put in place to help in the assessment of learners' progress. Appreciation of other culture increases one's ability to comprehend other language and thereby apply it accordingly in different situations. CLT teaches people through creation of real - life contexts which are instrumental in language learning.

## **References**

- [1] Richards, J. C. (2012). *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.