

Does Communicative Language Teaching Really Work? A Critical Appraisal

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Abstract

When asked to identify the methodology they employ in their classrooms, most teachers claim to use “Communicative Language Teaching” (CLT). Even with the shift of attention from insistence on methods toward post method condition, CLT has not lost its dominance in ELT. However, most teachers neither stop such a claim nor think critically why they do so. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to go through a critical appraisal of Communicative Language Teaching. This is done first by going through a brief review on the basic claims, tenets, barriers and problems of implementing CLT especially in EFL contexts. Then, a framework is proposed touching upon the shortcomings of the available models and theories for criticizing language teaching methods. Finally, it looks at how the design is implemented in practice by focusing on CLT and examines the framework based on the claims and tenets of CLT, with particular reference to research findings and available literature. It is argued that CLT helps learners in building automaticity and self-confidence; empowering meaningful learning; developing intrinsic motivation; employing multiplicity of strategies; and fending for learners’ language ego. Culture, sociopolitical consciousness and interlanguage stages of development are important to CLT. It allows for the initiative of the learner and is most probable to be informed by a mediation rather than medium view. However, there are several problems with CLT. The most important one is in regard with the practicality, unilaterality, and non reflexivity of method. Moreover, it assumes teachers as helpless victims of ideological imposition and disregards their agency in the teaching / learning process.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, framework, critical appraisal

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Introduction

CLT is said to have developed because of the dissatisfaction of methodologists and applied linguists with the Grammar Translation Method and Audio-Lingual Method, and it was a reaction against the language teaching practices that saw language as a system of rules in which form was deemed important and accuracy in the production of those forms was thought essential (Maftoon, 2011, p.49). It is a cover term for a variety of approaches. The basic underlying tenet of CLT is developing communicative competence in the learners. The focus is the message (meaning) rather than form, and functional aspect of language is primary. Activities in this method involve authentic communication and resemble those that language learners will encounter in real life. Teacher is facilitator or counselor and fluency in the expression of meaning is essential.

Is it a method of teaching?

Savignon (2007, p. 217) states that “it would be inappropriate to speak of CLT as a teaching ‘method’ in any sense of that term as it was used in the 20th century. Rather, CLT is an approach that understands language to be inseparable from individual identity and social behavior”. Therefore, concept of CLT construed as a general approach rather than a specific teaching method might be useful in providing language practitioners with some important guidelines even at the time of the postmethod condition (Celce-Murcia, et al., 1997). Moreover, Kumaravandivelu (2003) suggested the term principled communicative approach. However, calling it an approach cannot disguise the fact that in one way or another its priorities relate ultimately to methodology.

What are the problems with CLT?

Celce-Murcia et al., (1997) mention the problems with CLT under two headings:

The linguistic content base of CLT

The principles of CLT were fully compatible with a functional perspective on linguistics (Halliday, 1973) and translated into classroom practice by means of the notional-functional syllabuses of Wilkins (1976) and van Ek (1977). Hence, the lack of firm linguistic guidelines led to a diversity of communicative approaches. In addition, no coherent and explicitly formulated pragmatic and sociolinguistic model was available to draw on (see Savignon, 1983); nor had discourse analysis reached sufficient development and recognition. The lack of clear-cut content specifications in CLT, also led to problem with the testing of learning outcomes.

The pedagogical treatment of linguistic forms in CLT:

Many CLT proponents neglected linguistic competence and accepted the premise that linguistic form emerges on its own as a result of learners' engaging in communicative activities. They believe linguistic form is learned incidentally rather than as a result of focusing directly on linguistic form. However, Widdowson (1990) argues that incidental; "natural" language acquisition is a "long and rather inefficient business". Making learners aware of structural regularities and formal properties of the target language will greatly increase the rate of language attainment while the lack of a repertoire of language chunks means that they tend to put sentences together from scratch, word by word, which takes up most of their cognitive capacity and does not allow them to achieve native-like fluency.

CLT in Iranian context

In Iranian context, educational system is centralized; the same textbooks are taught all over the country; oral communication is not taught; English is a very small portion of the curriculum; amount of language exposure is limited; students are tested using discrete point tests; learning grammatical structures and vocabulary items is necessary to be able to read English; there are a large number of students in classes; resources are not available; there is no practice time; and teaching equipment is insufficient. (Maftoon, 2011) In addition, Maftoon (2011) believes that CLT is not transferable and applicable in our educational system because learning system emphasizes repetition, memorization, and accumulation of knowledge; language is considered as knowledge; learning is the mastery of knowledge transmitted from teacher to the learners, the students are passive; errors are considered as the sign of inadequate repetition, memorization, and study; and teacher is the sole authority; thus must never be questioned or challenged. These result in over reliance on the teacher and consequently, teacher-centered classes. Moreover, English is neither medium of survival nor the medium of instruction but a component of school curriculum; students' motivation comes from the initiation of the teacher or from learners' desire to fulfill the requirements of the curricula. He thinks that our English classes suffer from Washback effect – the effect of University Entrance Exam – which has led the teachers to test-driven language teaching. Even the tests, he believes, measure the grammatical ability of the candidates and, so, they teach prescriptive grammar, vocabulary, and reading. On the other hand, learners are not normally integratively- or instrumentally motivated (Maftoon, 2011) since they learn English neither as a second nor really as a foreign language.

Maftoon (2011) states that CLT developed through research in ESL contexts, is being exported to some EFL environments without proper investigation of the compatibility of the two contexts. For an educational approach to be suitable for

one context or the other, it should be sensitive to the cultural and pedagogical principles, as well as to the needs and learning strategies of the learners who receive training under that very approach. So, he finds the root of the problem in: a) lack of recognition of CLT methodologies, b) challenges to the implementation of CLT in educational system. After all, it is Communicative Language Teaching, not Communicative Language Learning!

Therefore, the question to be posed here is why teachers use or claim to use CLT despite the fact that their students just need to pass an exam? Isn't it so that we have said goodbye to methods and believe that we are in Post Method Condition (Kumaravandivelu, 1994)? Why is it that despite all the claims made by different scholars believing the demise of the so-called methods, Communicative Language Teaching has survived for such a long time? These questions and many others can be answered if we try to make a framework within which teachers can appraise each method critically. Therefore, this paper begins by outlining different models for evaluation of methods and then it comes up with a framework of language teaching based on which CLT is critically appraised.

Models and criteria for appraisal of methods

Applying Brown's principled approach, Kumaravandivelu's operating principles, Seven I's of Larsen – Freeman, Danesi's Modal Flow Principle and Widdowson's criteria to a critical analysis of methods; we can come up with a framework for those intending to examine features of the approaches and methods of language teaching critically. Before introducing the framework, it may be more appropriate to review the aforementioned models.

Brown's Principled Approach

Brown (2001) takes "a broad, sweeping look at twelve overarching principles of second language learning from which sound practice springs and on which teaching can be based" (p. 54). He proposes twelve principles: automaticity; meaningful learning; the anticipation of reward; the intrinsic motivation; strategic investment; language ego; self-confidence; risk-taking; the language/culture connection; the native language effect principle; inter language; communicative competence.

However, Brown talks about these principles as the "major foundation stones for structuring a theory of teaching and teacher training process, on which techniques and lessons and curricula can be based. There can be many other principles which have been neglected by this approach.

Kumaravadivelu's Operating Principles

Kumaravadivelu (2006) proposes a three-dimensional system consisting of three pedagogic parameters: particularity, practicality, and possibility. According to the Parameter of Particularity, any postmethod pedagogy “*must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu*” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 171). The parameter of practicality relates broadly to the relationship between theory and practice, and narrowly to the teacher's skill in monitoring his or her own teaching effectiveness. Kumaravadivelu (1999) states that if context-sensitive pedagogic knowledge has to emerge from teachers and their practice of everyday teaching, then they ought to be enabled to theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize. The parameter of possibility is related to achieving a deepening awareness both of the sociocultural reality that shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality (Van Manen, 1977).

However, Kumaravadivelu uses these as the aspects of postmethod pedagogy while they can also be used as criteria for critical appraisal of the methods.

Seven I's of Larsen – Freeman

Larsen-Freeman (1999) discusses that teachers should not be blinded by the criticism of methods and fail from their invaluable contribution to teach, but rather “to Reconcile”. That is, to move in a way to avoid inappropriate uses of methods, while benefiting from them at the same time. For this purpose, she introduced the notion of seven “I's”—moving from Ideology to Inquiry while challenging notions of Inclusive generalizations, Imposition leading to Implementation, Intactness, and Immutability. We need to reconcile ideas about the influence of culture with recognition of individual differences (Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Learning to teach is a developmental process. Skilled teachers do not emerge from teaching preparation programs ready to implement a particular method. They must not only develop their thoughts about teaching, but also their actions or techniques. According to Larsen-Freeman (1999), “Methods are not immutable in practice. As teachers gain experience, they come to understand a particular method differently. Thus, methods are not something superimposed on teaching. They are instantiated differently, not only due to contextual differences, but also due to the teachers' stage of development. In order for this matter to be realized, the ideology underlying a method must be acknowledged, but so must the spurious views on methodology called the “i” myths: the myths of inclusive generalization, the myth that imposing a method will lead to its implementation, and the false assumptions that methods are fully intact and immutable packages. Decisions

about appropriate methodology should be made by local educators taking their students' needs into account." (pp. 28-29)

However, she just focuses on seven ways to make a method appropriate to a context or different learners and teaching contexts while these are not the only ways and beside they can be used as criteria to take a critical look at methods.

Danesi's Modal Flow Principle

Danesi (2003) discusses that the reason that so many methods and approaches in SLT have relatively tended to fail lies in the fact that all of them were in part unimodal, that is, focusing on only one of the two hemispheres of the brain. For example, on the one hand, the methods such as GTM or ALM focused only on the left hemisphere (L-Mode) while, on the other hand, the Communicative, Humanistic, and Neurolinguistic methods and approaches overemphasized the right hemisphere (R-Mode) to the detriment of the L-Mode. Danesi (2003) states that any instructional system that privileges only one of the two modes of brain is bound to fail sooner or later because such a system has been unimodally developed. He mentions some general procedures for each stage:

During an R-Mode Stage: Classroom activities should be student-centered and involve students and teacher in a complementary fashion. Novel input should be structured in ways that activate sensory, experiential, inductive forms of learning (dialogues, questioning strategies, simulations, etc.). And, the students' inductive and exploratory tendencies should be encouraged to operate freely when introducing new information.

During an L-Mode Stage: The focus here shifts to the teacher. The teacher should explain the structural and conceptual features of the new materials clearly using deductive and inductive techniques as warranted by the situation. And focusing on some problematic aspect of the subject being taught is to be encouraged if a student appears to have difficulty grasping it or using it with appropriate comparison to the Native Language and with suitable exercise materials.

During an Intermodal Stage: The learner should be allowed to employ the new materials to carry out real- life verbal tasks, but only after he/she shows the ability or willingness to do so. Teaching new things or discussing matters of form and structure during this stage should be avoided. Students should be allowed to find solutions to problems of communication on their own. Role-playing and work in pairs or groups is advisable for most students, although some may not wish to participate. The latter can be assigned other kinds of creative tasks (e.g. writing).

The only focus of Danesi, however, is on brain and its work while this can be one of the criteria to look at the methods critically.

Widdowson's pragmatics of language teaching

Widdowson (1990, pp. 29-53) questions the relevance of methods of teaching. He believes that there is no reason to suppose that what goes on in one domain is necessarily relevant to what goes on in another. However, it is teachers who have to concern the pedagogy, to determine the relevance, to be convinced that what research says is related and has influence on what they do. They have to act as mediators between theory and practice, between the domains of disciplinary research and pedagogy. Then, he sets up “a scheme for language teacher education, a pragmatics of pedagogy” which incorporates conditions for establishing relevance. (p.29) He believes that innovative approaches of the past to language teaching have not subjected to this kind of pragmatic treatment because they have a non-reflexive, unilateral character: they derive from theory and determine practice. The teacher acts as a medium. Pragmatism, as he uses the term, is a function of pedagogic *mediation* and can be realized through the immediate activity of teaching, that is, the connection between the ideal and the real needs to be established by mediation. On the other hand, we may have the medium perspective which tends to see the syllabus as primary while with a mediation view, the methodology becomes primary.

In sum, an approach informed by medium focuses on meaning as transmitted through the medium of language, on devising syllabuses of preplanned schemes. Language is the code for transmission of meaning and nonconformity is negatively evaluated as error. On the other hand, an approach informed by mediation focuses on methodology, on exposure to language by guiding the learner by means of task control, provides for the exploitation of previous experience and for the exercise of initiative on the part of the learner. Nonconformity is positively evaluated as the achievement of an interim interlanguage. He also focuses on initiative versus initiation and believes that a method should help learners plot their own course and learn to initiate learning rather than be initiated by the teacher. In one word, he focuses on medium and mediation as well as initiation versus initiative issues as the main points to examine methods. However, the purpose of the model, he mentions, is not to reveal the efficacy of any particular method but to use a set of principles as bearings for the development of different techniques.

Framework for critical appraisal of teaching methods

The major models outlined above provide the foundation on which a framework may be constructed. Such a framework could enable teachers to appraise different methods of language teaching critically. This can provide them with the autonomy necessary to devise for themselves a systematic, coherent, and relevant method of teaching that is the result of informed teaching and critical appraisal.

Keeping this in mind, the researchers present what is called a “*framework for critical appraisal of teaching methods.*” It is not conditioned by a single particular language teaching method nor is it constrained by the underlying assumptions of any one specific method or theory of language learning / teaching. It is a way to delve into the basic claims of each method to find its merits and demerits. Of course, the list is endless and according to the needs of the students, teachers and society, there may be many other criteria to be added to it.

The framework comprises the following components in which we question if the methods we want to appraise critically: 1) Build Automaticity; 2) Empower Meaningful Learning; 3) Enhance Motivation; 4) Employ Multiplicity of Strategies; 5) Fend for Language Ego; 6) Sustain Self-confidence and Encourage Risk-taking; 7) Enhance the Language/Culture Connection; 8) Progress through Inter language stages of development: Learner Differences; 9) Enhance Communicative Competence; 10) Emerge from the Practice of Particularity: Context Sensitive Teaching; 11) Raise Sociopolitical consciousness: possibility; 12) Enable and Improve Practicality: Teacher Autonomy; 13) Move beyond Ideology to Inquiry; 14) Encourage Interaction; 15) Provide Opportunities to Practice and Make Practical Application: Learner Autonomy; 16) Design and Develop Global Application; 17) Use Integrated Whole Method of Teaching 18) Take Bimodality into Account; 19) Allow for Initiative of the Learner; 20) Allow The Learners’ Engagement Of Relevant Procedures For Mediation; 21) Encourage Reflection.

In the following each of these criteria are explained considering CLT as an example to be appraised critically to see how the design is implemented in practice by focusing on CLT.

Build automaticity

CLT may be an efficient approach for L2 learning regarding automaticity for its focus on fluency. Overanalyzing language, thinking too much about its forms, and consciously lingering on rules of language (Brown, 2001), are all avoided in CLT and so, leading the learners to graduation to automaticity.

Empower meaningful learning

In CLT, pitfalls of rote learning are to be avoided:

- ✓ Activities are purposeful
- ✓ No or little grammatical explanation
- ✓ No drills or memorization
- ✓ No abstract principles or theories
- ✓ Activities contribute to accomplishing a goal

Meaningful communication in CLT results from students’ processing content that is relevant, purposeful, interesting, and engaging (Richards, 2006, p.22).

Enhance motivation

Motivation in CLT may stem from several sources. Activities and tasks stem from learners' needs, wants, and desires within them. So, the *behavior* itself is self-regarding and no externally administered reward is necessary. The learners perform the *task* because it is fun, interesting, useful or challenging and not because they anticipate some cognitive or affective rewards from the teacher (Brown, 2001). With encouragement and help from their *teacher* in developing the strategic competence the learners' need to interpret, express, and negotiate meaning, this may lead to learners' satisfaction and even surprise (Brown, 2001). The role of the teacher is that of a coach: to provide support, strategies, and encouragement for learners as they explore new ways of being. Language teaching methodologists develop classroom *materials* that encourage learner choice (Brown, 2001). For a teacher in training or novice teachers as well as students who may indeed be feeling insecure and perhaps inadequate to the task ahead, CLT has an empathetic tone of encouragement.

Employ multiplicity of strategies

Learners use individualized battery of strategies for comprehending and producing the language. It is important to recognize a wide variety of styles and strategies that learners bring to the learning process. Therefore, since learners learn in different ways and have different strengths, teaching needs to take these differences into account rather than try to force students into a single mold. In language teaching, this has led to an emphasis on developing students' use and awareness of learning strategies (Richards, 2006, p.25). Better understanding of the strategies used in the negotiation of meaning offers the potential for improving classroom practice of the needed skills (Savignon, 1991).

Fend for language ego

Learners are given the opportunity to say what they want to say in the second language, so they are encouraged to develop a personality in the second language with which they are comfortable. On the other hand, teacher displays a supportive attitude to students. Warm patience and empathy is openly communicated for fragile language egos.

Sustain self-confidence and encourage risk-taking

CLT promotes learners' autonomy and self-confidence in which they believe that they are indeed fully capable of accomplishing a task at least partially. Students are encouraged to try out language, to venture a response, and not to wait for someone else to volunteer language. On the other hand,

teacher provides neither too easy nor too hard challenges and responds to students' risky attempts with positive affirmation.

Enhance the language / culture connection

CLT is sensitive to the cultural and pedagogical principles, cultural customs, values and ways of thinking, feeling and acting. Culture is seen to play an instrumental role in shaping speakers' communicative competence, both in their first and subsequent languages (Berns, 1990, p.104).

Progress through interlanguage stages of development: Learner differences

Learners go through a systematic or quasi-systematic developmental process as they progress to full competence in the target language. Successful interlanguage development is partially a result of utilizing feedback from others. Furthermore, "language learning is a gradual process that involves creative use of language, and trial and error. Errors are a normal product of learning. Learners develop their own routes to language learning, progress at different rates, and have different needs and motivations for language learning" (Richards, 2006, p.22). One of the major tenets of CLT is "focusing greater attention on diversity among learners and viewing these differences not as impediments to learning but as resources to be recognized, catered to, and appreciated which is known as the study of individual differences" (Richards, 2006, p. 24).

Enhance communicative competence

Widdowson (1990) argues that no syllabus can produce communicative competence, and only when it is actualized through classroom activity can it have an effect on learning and it is mediated by methodology. He states that whether or not a syllabus will help to *promote* a communicative competence will depend on just how it is used, how grammatical and situational factors are taken into account in the manner of its implementation. However, communicative competence is claimed to be the goal of classroom in CLT, and instruction needs to point toward all its components: organizational, pragmatic, and strategic. CLT claims to pay attention to language use and not just usage, to fluency and not accuracy, and to students' eventual need to apply classroom learning to previously unrehearsed contexts in the real world.

Emerge from the practice of particularity: Context sensitive teaching

When communicative language teaching (CLT) was first developed in the 1970s, it was exported enthusiastically over the world as a ready-to-use

package of ideas and techniques (Littlewood, 2013). The dominance of CLT led to the neglect of one crucial aspect of language pedagogy, namely the context in which that pedagogy takes place. Bax (2003) argues that it is time to replace CLT as the central paradigm in language teaching with a Context Approach which places context at the heart of the profession. From Singapore, Pakir (1999) suggested that communicative language teaching with its professional practices based on “Anglo-Saxon assumptions” (p. 112) has to be modified taking into account what she calls “glocal” linguistic and cultural considerations. Bax (2003) argues, however, that although it has served a useful function in the profession, particularly as a corrective to shortcomings in previous methodologies, CLT is now having a negative effect, and needs to be replaced as our main focus.

In the new trend to CLT, on the other hand, the aim is to develop principles which help each teacher develop a form of communication-oriented language teaching suited to his or her own specific context (Littlewood, 2013). CLT today refers to a set of generally agreed upon principles that can be applied in different ways, depending on the teaching context, the age of the learners, their level, their learning goals, and so on (Richards, 2006). Hall (2011, p. 93) notes that ‘everyday classroom practices can appear to be quite different when CLT principles are applied in differing social and educational contexts’.

Therefore, CLT used to neglect one key aspect of language teaching—namely the context in which it took place. As scholars like Bax and some others believe such a change is taking place, language teaching programs are becoming more sensitive to particular groups of teachers teaching particular groups of learners pursuing particular sets of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular socio-cultural milieu. Hence, although there was no particularity at the early form of the approach it is gaining more and more particularity.

Raise sociopolitical consciousness: Possibility

Sociolinguistic perspectives have been important in understanding the implications of norm, appropriateness, and variability for CLT. Variation in the speech community and its relationship to language change are central to sociolinguistic inquiry. More than one variety of a language is recognized as a model for learning and teaching. (Berns, 1990, p.104) A range of both oral and written texts in context provides learners with a variety of language experiences, experiences they need to construct their own “variation space” to make determinations of appropriateness in their own expression of meaning. Negotiation in CLT highlights the need for interlinguistic—that is, intercultural—awareness on the part of all involved (Byram, 1997). Increasingly, researchers’ attention is now being directed to the social dynamics and discourse of the classroom (Savignon, 1991). CLT is derived from critical pedagogy and it is not merely transmission of a dead body of

current knowledge from teacher to learners. Language learning experience is an instrument for developing sociocultural consciousness: hence, possibility criteria mentioned by Kumaravandivelu (2012) may be met by this method.

Enable and improve practicality: Teacher Autonomy

In CLT, pedagogic knowledge is not self-constructed and does not emerge from the practice of every day teaching. Although strict adherence to a given text is not likely to be true to the processes and goals of CLT (Savignon, 1991) teachers do not construct their own context-sensitive theory of practice. Single methodology or fixed set of techniques is prescribed. Teachers try to make changes in their teaching in accordance with various types of advice, whether directives from Ministries of Education, advice from so-called experts in teacher education and research, or other sources, hence, no practicality.

Move beyond ideology to inquiry

It must be explicitly acknowledged that language teaching methods do reflect ideological positions (Freeman, 1999). CLT contributes to the de-skilling of teachers by deciding a priori that this method is appropriate to a given context. Indeed, it assumes that teachers are helpless victims of ideological imposition and disregards their agency in the teaching / learning process. Teachers' teaching is not shaped by teaching based on their own understanding, beliefs, style, and level of experience while being implemented in the relevant teaching contexts (Freeman, 1999). Hence, CLT reflects ideological positions.

Encourage interaction

“Second language learning is facilitated when learners are engaged in interaction and meaningful communication” (Richards, 2006, p. 22). CLT encourages students to interact both with the teacher, with classmates, and with their own beliefs, convictions, and ideas, compare their responses with a partner, to share their ideas in a small group, to write out definitions of their own, and to think back -- with certain criteria and characteristics in mind. It attempts, in other words, to make students to bring as much discussions and interaction as they can.

Provide opportunities to practice and to make practical application: Learner Autonomy

“Language learning is facilitated both by activities that involve inductive or discovery learning of underlying rules of language use and organization, as

well as by those involving language analysis and reflection.” “Effective classroom learning tasks and exercises provide opportunities for students to negotiate meaning, expand their language resources, notice how language is used, and take part in meaningful interpersonal exchange” (Richards, 2006, p.22). The basic principle is that learners should engage with texts and meaning through the process of use and discovery.

“The role of the teacher in the language classroom is that of a facilitator, who creates a classroom climate conducive to language learning and provides opportunities for students to use and practice the language and to reflect on language use and language learning, giving learners greater choice over their own learning, both in terms of the content of learning and processes they might employ (Richards, 2006, p. 25).

Design and develop global application

Globalization is the process of making applications work seamlessly utilizing the user’s preferred language and culture. While no method is equally applicable to every situation, some seem more broadly applicable than others. Recognizing and respecting the wide situations, conditions, needs, and abilities that operate for students and teachers around the world and suggesting a method that fits them all seems impossible, however, CLT claims that it recognizes and respects the role of internationalized varieties of English. Research reports provide a global perspective on language teaching for communicative competence in the twenty-first century (Savignon, 1991).

Use integrated whole method of teaching

An integrated approach allows learners to explore, gather, process, refine and present information about topics they want to investigate without the constraints imposed by traditional subject barriers (Pigdon and Woolley, 1992). It is an integrated approach which allows students to engage in purposeful, relevant learning.

Integrated learning encourages students to see the interconnectedness and interrelationships between the curriculum areas. Rather than focusing on learning in isolated curriculum areas, an integrated program is based on skill development around a particular theme that is relevant to the children in the class. Language in CLT is a complete system of making meaning, and learners should focus on meaning and strategy instruction.

Larsen-Freeman (1999) discusses that a method is a coherent set of links between thoughts (or beliefs) and actions in language teaching. Methods are coherent in the sense that there should be some theoretical or philosophical compatibility among the various thought-action links.

“CLT as a method is coherent and integrated following a certain philosophy and theory of language learning. Moreover, the connection between different

strands of the curriculum is emphasized, so that English is not seen as a stand-alone subject but is linked to other subjects in the curriculum” (Richards, 2006, p. 25). Furthermore, communication is a holistic process that often calls upon the use of several language skills or modalities (Richards, 2006).

Take bimodality into account

The general procedures during R-Mode:

CLT focuses on R-mode learning because classroom activities in CLT are student-centered and involve students and teacher in a complementary fashion. CLT puts the focus on the learner. Novel input is structured in ways that activate sensory, experiential, inductive forms of learning (dialogues, questioning strategies, simulations, etc.). The students’ inductive and exploratory tendencies are encouraged to operate freely when introducing new information.

The general procedures during L-Mode:

CLT neglects the L-mode aspect of learning since the focus does not shift to the teacher. The teacher does not explain the structural and conceptual features of the new materials clearly using deductive and inductive techniques as warranted by the situation. Explanations, drills, etc. may follow the experiential learning phases. However, explanation and drills are rare in this method. Focusing on some problematic aspect of the subject being taught may be encouraged if a student appears to have difficulty grasping it or using it with appropriate comparison to the native language and with suitable exercise materials!

CLT in intermodal stage:

The learner is allowed to employ the new materials to carry out real-life verbal tasks, not after he/she shows the ability or willingness to do so, but at the very beginning of the class. Teaching new things or discussing matters of form and structure during this stage is not avoided. But it is of secondary importance. Students are allowed to find solutions to problems of communication on their own. Role-playing and work in pairs or groups should be advisable for most students. However, CLT does not require work in small groups or pairs; group tasks have been found helpful in many contexts as a way of increasing the opportunity and motivation for communication. Classroom work in groups or pairs should not, however, be considered an essential feature and may well be inappropriate in some contexts.

[CLT] overemphasized and utilized R-Mode functions to the detriment of L-Mode functions. This is why it generated much interest at first, but seldom produced high level of proficiency at the end of a course of study (Talebinezhad and Mahmoodzadeh, 2011).

Allow for initiative of the learner

CLT allows for the initiative of the learner in the following ways:

1. To plot his own course by following his natural flair and abandon altogether the traditional notion of syllabus.
2. To redefine content not in terms of the forms or functions of language as such but in terms of problems of a conceptual or communicative character which require the use of language for their solution. (Widdowson, 1990, p.147)

The point is that CLT creates conditions for purposeful activity. Since learners have learned the language purposefully, then they will have the ability to use language for purposes beyond those which originally served to develop it. This in turn leads to *education rather than training* and *initiative rather than initiation*.

Allow the learners' engagement of relevant procedures for mediation

“An approach to pedagogy informed by *medium* will focus attention on the syntactic and semantic properties of the language itself and look for ways of manipulating them for the purposes of transmission. Learner activity will be directed at increasing receptivity. They will be involved in activities which are designed to facilitate the internalization of units of meaning so that they are put in store ready for use when required. Such practices will typically be exercises for the provision of practice” (Widdowson, 1990, p. 119).

CLT focuses on creating conditions for negotiation, the learners are engaged with activities designed to achieve purposeful outcomes by means of language. The activities are typically tasks for problem solving. Thus, CLT may be informed by a *mediation rather than medium view*.

Encourage reflection

Basta (2011) believes that “CLT encourages the development of critical thinking skills and communicative competences, by means of carefully structured activities of social interaction.” However, Tarvin and Al-Arishi (1991) questioned whether many “conspicuous action (those classroom actions which use the seen color, the heard sound, the felt warmth, and the smelled odor) and spontaneous response” activities discourage reflection or contemplation in the communicative language classroom. They stated that by promoting an intuitive grasp of the target language, a principal achievement of CLT, the use of automatic response is encouraged in a communicative situation contemplation is neglected while for reflection learners needed time. Such spontaneous activities tend to reward the “impulsive” student and to penalize the “reflective” student. Drawing on the work of educational theorists,

philosophers, and psychologists, they argued three types of CLT activities which could encourage reflection: task-oriented, process-oriented, and synthesis-oriented and that those activities be incorporated into today's communicative classrooms.

Conclusion

In this paper, the researchers attempted to shed light on factors related to critical appraisal of methods by proposing a framework touching upon the shortcomings of the available models and theories for criticizing language teaching methods. The researchers, then, implemented their proposed framework on CLT with particular reference to research findings and available literature.

CLT highlights the primary goal of language instruction, namely, to go beyond the teaching of the discrete elements, rules, and patterns of the target language and to develop the learner's ability to take part in spontaneous and meaningful communication in different contexts, with different people, on different topics, for different purposes; that is, to develop the learner's communicative competence. This is accompanied by building automaticity and self-confidence; empowering meaningful learning; developing intrinsic motivation; employing multiplicity of strategies; and fending for learners' language ego. Culture, sociopolitical consciousness and inter language stages of development are important to CLT. It encourages students to interact both with the teacher, with classmates, and with their own beliefs, convictions, and ideas, compare their responses with a partner, to share their ideas in a small group, to write out definitions of their own, and to think back. It allows for the initiative of the learner and is most probable to be informed by a mediation rather than medium view.

However, one of the most outstanding problems with CLT is that it does not emerge from the theorizing of the teacher as a practitioner and the practice of those theories followed by reflection on teachers' own teaching practice. It is imposed on the teacher from outside and reflects ideological perspectives. It is unimodal, focusing mostly on the R-Mode procedures of learning. Moreover, it can encourage reflection in the learners if appropriate tasks are designed which are in accordance with their needs.

In sum, CLT has lived for a long time because it fulfills most of the purposes and criteria for a teaching class. It just needs some modifications and adjustments most of them relate to the concept of method. This paper agrees with Larsen-Freeman (1999) who underscores the intrinsic value of the method and disapproves of the emergence of Kumaravadivelu's (1994) post-method pedagogy in the area of second language teaching. "For after all, much good can come from working with language teaching methods" (Freeman, 1999). She believes that "teachers and teacher educators should not be blinded by the criticisms of methods and thus fail to see their invaluable contribution to

teacher education and continuing development” (p. 26). It is just a matter of how we use them. It depends on whether we impose the method on the teacher from outside, or just give them a basis to make decisions about their students and their own beliefs, style, and level of experience; whether we let the teachers implement the methods in the relevant teaching contexts or use them as fully intact formulaic packages for practice in the classroom; whether we use them to lead students to intermodal stage or try one mode at the expense of another; and at last whether we give the students tasks that encourage reflection or not. Achieving these goals is a real challenge but it helps “keep teachers’ teaching alive and prevent it from becoming stale and overly routinized” (Prabhu, 1990).

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