

CHAPER TWO

Literature Review

In this chapter, literature review, the theoretical base of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) will be presented, followed by literature review.

2.1: Theoretical Framework:

At the level of language theory, Communicative Language Teaching has a rich, if somewhat eclectic, theoretical base. Some of the characteristics of this communicative view of language are as follow:

- 1- Language is a system for the expression of meaning .
- 2- The primary function of language is for interaction and communication .
- 3- The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
- 4- The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse .

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as "communicative competence." Hymes coined this term in order to contrast a communicative view of language and Chomsky's theory of competence. Chomsky held that linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitation, distractions,

shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. (Chomsky 1957)

For Chomsky, the focus of linguistic theory was to characterize the abstract abilities speakers possess that enable them to produce grammatically correct sentences in a language. Hymes held that such a view of linguistic theory was sterile, that linguistic theory needed to be seen as part of a more general theory incorporating communication and culture. Hymes's theory of communicative competence was a definition of what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community. In Hymes's view, a person who acquires communicative competence acquires both knowledge and ability for language use with respect to:-

1- whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available.

2- whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated.

3- whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what it's doing entails.

4- This theory of what knowing a language entails offers a much more comprehensive view than Chomsky's view of competence, which deals primarily with abstract grammatical knowledge.

Another linguistic theory of communication favored in CLT is Halliday's functional account of language use. "Linguistics ... is concerned... with the description of speech acts or texts, since only

through the study of language in use are all the functions of language, and therefore all components of meaning, brought into focus" (Halliday 1978: 145). In a number of influential books and papers, Halliday has elaborated a powerful theory of the functions of language, which complements Hymes's view of communicative competence for many writers on CLT (e.g., Johnson 1979; Savignon 1983). He describes (1975: 11-17) seven basic functions that language performs for children learning their first language:-

- 1- The instrumental function: using language to get things.
- 2- The regulatory function: using language to control the behaviour of others.
- 3- The interactional function: using language to create interaction with others.
- 4- The personal function: using language to express personal feelings and meanings.
- 5- The heuristic function: using language to learn and to discover.
- 6-The imaginative function: using language to create a world of the imagination.
- 7- The representational function: using language to communicate information.

Learning a second language was similarly viewed by proponents of Communicative Language Teaching as acquiring the linguistic means to perform different kinds of functions. Learning theories are conceptual frameworks that describe how information is absorbed, processed, and retained during learning. Cognitive, emotional, and environmental influences, as well as prior experience, all play a part

in how understanding, or a world view, is acquired or changed, and knowledge and skills retained.

In contrast to the amount that has been written in Communicative Language Teaching literature about communicative dimensions of language, little has been written about learning theory. Elements of an underlying learning theory can be discerned in some CLT practices, however. One such element might be described as the communication principle: Activities that involve real communication promote learning. A second element is the task principle: Activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning. A third element is the meaningfulness principle: Language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process. Learning activities are consequently selected according to how well they engage the learner in meaningful and authentic language use (rather than merely mechanical practice of language patterns). These principles, we suggest, can be inferred from CLT practices (e.g., Littlewood 1981). They address the conditions needed to promote second language learning, rather than the processes of language acquisition .

More recent accounts of Communicative Language Teaching, however, have attempted to describe theories of language learning processes that are compatible with the communicative approach. Savignon (1983) surveys second language acquisition research as a source for learning theories and considers the role of linguistic, social, cognitive, and individual variables in language acquisition. Other theorists (e.g., Stephen Krashen, who is not directly associated with Communicative Language Teaching) have developed theories cited as compatible with the principles of CLT. Krashen sees acquisition as the basic process involved in developing language proficiency and

distinguishes this process from learning. Acquisition refers to the unconscious development of the target language system as a result of using the language for real communication. Learning is the conscious representation of grammatical knowledge that has resulted from instruction, and it cannot lead to acquisition. It is the acquired system that linguists call upon to create utterances during spontaneous language use. The learned system can serve only as a monitor of the output of the acquired system. Krashen and other second language acquisition theorists typically stress that language learning comes about through using language communicatively, rather than through practicing language skills.

Littlewood (1984) considers an alternative learning theory that they also see as compatible with CLT-a skill-learning model of learning. According to this theory, the acquisition of communicative competence in a language is an example of skill development. This involves both a cognitive and a behavioral aspect.

The field of second or world language teaching has undergone many shifts and trends over the last few decades. Numerous methods have come and gone. We have seen the Audio-lingual Method, cognitive based approaches, the Total Physical Response (TPR), the Natural Approach, and many others (for a detailed description of these methods and approaches, see Richards and Rodgers 2001). In addition, the proficiency and standards-based movements have shaped the field with their attempts to define proficiency goals and thus have provided a general sense of direction. Some believe that foreign language instruction has finally come of age, others refer to it as the post-method area (Richards and Rodgers 2001). It is also generally believed that there is no one single best method that meets the goals and needs of all learners and

programs. What has emerged from this time is a variety of communicative language teaching (CLT) methodologies. Such methodologies encompass eclectic ways of teaching that are borrowed from myriad methods. Furthermore, they are rooted not only in one but a range of theories and are motivated by research findings in second language acquisition (SLA) as well as cognitive and educational psychology. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an introduction to CLT and furthermore describe general methodological principles that function as theoretical and practical guidelines when implementing CLT methodologies.

2.2: The Beginning of Communicative Language Teaching:

From its introduction into discussions of language and language learning in the early 1970s, the term *communicative competence* has prompted reflection. Fortunately for the survival of communicative competence as a useful concept, perhaps, the term has not lent itself to simple reduction, and with it the risk of becoming yet another slogan. Rather, it continues to represent a concept that attracts researchers and curriculum developers, offering a sturdy framework for integrating linguistic theory, research, and teaching practice.

Present understanding of CLT can be traced to concurrent developments on both sides of the Atlantic. In Europe, during the 1970s, the language needs of a rapidly increasing group of immigrants and guest workers, and a rich British linguistic tradition that included social as well as linguistic context in description of language behavior, led to the Council of Europe development of a syllabus for learners based on functional-notional concepts of language use. Derived from neo-Firthian systemic or functional linguistics that views language as meaning potential and maintains the centrality of context of situation in

understanding language systems and how they work, a threshold level of language ability was described for each of the languages of Europe in terms of what learners should be able to do with the language (van Ek, 1975). Functions were based on assessment of learner needs and specified the end result, the product of an instructional program. The term *communicative* was used to describe programs that used a functional notional syllabus based on needs assessment, and the language for specific purposes (LSP) movement was launched. Concurrent development in Europe focused on the process of *communicative* classroom language learning. In Germany, for example, against a backdrop of social democratic concerns for *communicative* language teaching individual empowerment, articulated in the writings of contemporary philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1970, 1971), language teaching methodologists Candlin, Edelhoff, and Piepho, took the lead in the development of classroom materials that encouraged learner choice and increasing autonomy (Candlin, 1978). Their systematic collection of exercise types for *communicatively* oriented English teaching were used in teacher in-service courses and workshops to guide curriculum change. Exercises were designed to exploit the variety of social meanings contained within particular grammatical structures. A system of "chains" encouraged teachers and learners to define their own learning path through principled selection of relevant exercises. Similar exploratory projects were also being initiated by Candlin (1978) at his academic home, the University of Lancaster, England, and by Holec (1979) and his colleagues at the University of Nancy (CRAPEL), France.

Meanwhile, in the United States, Hymes (1971) had reacted to Chomsky's characterization of the linguistic competence of the ideal native speaker and proposed the term *communicative competence* to represent the use of language in social context, the observance of

sociolinguistic norms of appropriacy. His concern with speech communities and the integration of language, communication, and culture was not unlike that of Firth and Halliday in the British linguistic tradition (see Halliday, 1978).

Hymes' communicative competence may be seen as the equivalent of Halliday's meaning potential. Similarly, his focus was not language learning but language as social behavior. In subsequent interpretations of the significance of Hymes' views for learners, U.S. methodologists tended to focus on native-speaker cultural norms and the difficulty, if not impossibility, of authentically representing them in a classroom of nonnative speakers. In light of this difficulty, the appropriateness of communicative competence as an instructional goal was questioned .

At the same time, in a research project at the University of Illinois, Savignon (1972) used the term communicative competence to characterize the ability of language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning, as distinct from their ability to perform on discrete-point tests of grammatical knowledge. At a time when pattern practice and error avoidance were the rule in language teaching, this study of adult classroom acquisition of French looked at the effect of practice in the use of communication strategies as part of an instructional program. By encouraging students to ask for information, to seek clarification, to use circumlocution and whatever other linguistic and nonlinguistic resources they could muster to negotiate meaning, to stick to the communicative task at TESOL QYARTERLY hand, teachers were invariably encouraging learners to take risks, to speak in other than memorized patterns. When test results were compared at the end of the 18-week, 5-hour-per-week program, learners who had practiced communication in lieu of laboratory pattern drills for one hour a week performed with no less accuracy on discrete-point tests of structure. On

the other hand, their communicative competence as measured in terms of fluency, comprehensibility, effort, and amount of communication in a series of four unrehearsed communicative tasks significantly surpassed that of learners who had had no such practice. Learner reactions to the test formats lent further support to the view that even beginners respond well to activities that let them focus on meaning as opposed to formal features. (A related finding had to do with learner motivation. Motivation to learn French correlated, not with initial attitudes toward French speakers or the French language, but with success in the instructional program.)

The accompanying guide (Savignon, 1972) described their purpose as that of involving learners in the experience of communication. Teachers were encouraged to provide learners with the French equivalent of expressions like "What's the word for?" "Please repeat," "I don't understand," expressions that would help them to participate in the negotiation of meaning. Not unlike the efforts of Candlin and his colleagues working in a European EFL context, the focus was on classroom process and learner autonomy. The use of games, role plays, pair and other small-group activities has gained acceptance and is now widely recommended for inclusion in language teaching programs.

CLT thus can be seen to derive from a multidisciplinary perspective that includes, at least, linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and educational research. The focus has been the elaboration and implementation of programs and methodologies that promote the development of functional language ability through learner participation in communicative events. Central to CLT is the understanding of language learning as both an educational and a political issue. Language teaching is inextricably tied to language policy. Viewed from a multicultural international as well as international perspective, diverse

Sociopolitical contexts mandate not only a diverse set of language Learning goals, but a diverse set of teaching strategies. Program design and implementation depend on negotiation between policy communicative language teaching makers, linguists, researchers, and teachers. And evaluation of program success requires a similar collaborative effort. The selection of methods and materials appropriate to both the goals and context of teaching begins with an analysis of both learner needs and styles of learning.

2.3: The Shift Toward Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Instruction: A Historical Perspective:

For many decades the predominant method of language instruction was the grammar-translation method. This method is rooted in the teaching of the nineteenth century and was widely used for the first half (in some parts of the world even longer) of the last century to teach modern foreign languages (Richards and Rodgers 2001). Textbooks primarily consisted of lists of vocabulary and rule explanations. By and large, students engaged in translation activities. Little oral proficiency would result from the Grammar-translation Method, and students often were expected to go abroad and immerse themselves to become a fluent speaker. The Grammar-translation Method was not without its opponents, and the demand for oral proficiency led to several counter and parallel movements that laid the foundation for the development of new ways of teaching, as we still know them today (Richards and Rodgers 2001).

One such method is the Direct Method, sometimes also referred to as the Berlitz Method as it was widely used in Berlitz schools. Some reformers of the nineteenth century (e.g., Gouin and Sauveur) believed that languages should be taught in a natural way, that is, how children learn language.

As Richards and Rodgers (2001) point out, “Believers in the Natural Method argued that a foreign language could be taught without translation or the use of the learner’s native language if meaning was conveyed directly through demonstration and action”. For this reason, they also strongly promoted the spontaneous use of language. Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 12) describe principles of procedures underlying the Direct Method in the following way:

1. Classroom instruction was conducted exclusively in the target language.
2. Only everyday vocabulary and sentences were taught.
3. Oral communication skills were built up in carefully graded progression organized around question-answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes.
4. Grammar was taught inductively.
5. New teaching points were introduced orally.
6. Concrete vocabulary was taught through demonstrating, objects, and pictures; abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas.
7. Both speech and listening comprehension were taught.
8. Correct pronunciation and grammar were emphasized.

Despite its success in private schools, the Direct Method was met with a great deal of criticism. Strict requirements to adhere to its principles and the need for native speakers or someone with native-like fluency prevented this method from becoming widely adopted by academic institutions (see Richards and Rodgers 2001).

Hailed in its day as revolutionary in foreign language teaching, the grammar-translation method was replaced by the Audiolingual Method in the 1950s and 60s. The belief in the effectiveness of this method was so strong that traces of audiolingual-based teaching theories

can still be found in teaching materials. The audiolingual method was based on the school of behaviorism in psychology and structuralism in linguistics, for this reason, it also became known as the “structural” or “behaviorist” method.

Because of its primary emphasis on spoken language, it is also referred to as the “Aural-oral” Method. The underlying assumption of this philosophy was that, as Rivers (1964) put it, foreign language learning is basically a mechanical process of habit formation and automatization. In practice, this means students were presented with language patterns and dialogues, which they had to mimic and memorize. Language practice by and large consisted of repetition of language patterns and drill exercises. Drill types include substitution drills, variation drills, translation drills, and response drills.

A tenet of this method was that errors of any kind were to be avoided, so the learners were not to establish bad habits. For this reason, the native speaker teacher was considered the perfect model.

There were, however, many problems with audiolingual approaches. The teacher, who was often seen like the drillmaster, carried the responsibility of teaching and student learning like an atlas on his shoulder (Lee and VanPatten 2003). One of the most widely brought forward points of criticism toward this method is that the learners lacked engagement in meaningful language use and had only limited opportunities to use language creatively while interacting with their peers. As Willis (2004) points out, “This was because the emphasis was on eradication of errors and accurate production of the target forms, not on communication of meanings” Due to overcorrection of students’ errors by the teacher, anxiety levels were often quite high among students. The Audiolingual Method failed to have the desired effect of helping learners become competent speakers in the TL.

Several factors and influences led to the demise of the Audiolingual Method and caused a shift in language teaching methodology. This brought forth communicative language approaches and a range of alternative methods.

1. The Audiolingual Method did not live up to its promise creating speakers who were able to communicate in the target language.

2. Theories of learning moved away from behaviorist views of learning. The most influential work was the one by Chomsky, which was published in his book *Syntactic Structures* (1957). He argued that language learning involves creative processes and perceived language as rule-governed creativity. As Willis (2004) describes it, “He believed that a basic rule system that underpins all languages is innate and that, given exposure to a specific language, children will naturally create the specific rules of that language for themselves. Learning is thus seen as a process of discovery determined by internal processes rather than external influences” .

3. Works by scholars and sociolinguists such as J. Firth, M. Halliday, D. Hymes, and J. Austin led to a change in the way language was viewed. As emphasized by many practitioners, the primary purpose of language is to communicate.

4. The development of a functional-notional syllabus in the 1970s in Europe by Van Ek (1973) and Wilkins (1976) initiated a new way of how teaching materials were organized. Traditionally, syllabuses had been organized around grammatical structures and vocabulary units.

The functional-notional syllabus attempted to show what learners need to do with language and what meanings they need to communicate, and organized the syllabus around functions and notions. Functions are communicative speech acts such as “asking,” “requesting,” “denying,” “arguing,” “describing,” or “requesting.” Notional categories include concepts such as “time” or “location.” Notions and functions are different

from topics and situations as they express more precise categories. For example, a topic may be “family,” the situation “coming for a visit and having dinner.” The function and the notion that is addressed in this unit may involve “inviting” and “time past” (e.g., past tenses, expressions like “last week,” “a few days ago”). The functional-notional syllabus laid the ground work that ultimately led textbook writers to organize their materials in terms of communicative situations, and some also in very concrete communicative tasks.

5. A growing number of research studies in applied linguistics have provided many new insights and a deeper understanding of second language learning and SLA processes. Some of these include

- Learners move through different stages of development (Selinker 1972).
- Learners develop an underlying language system that develops in a sequence that does not always reflect the sequence of what was taught in a curriculum (Dulay and Burt 1973). Work by Pienemann (1989) showed that learners develop language skills according to their own internal syllabus.

Alternative approaches and methods to language teaching

While communicative language teaching methodologies kept evolving and being more clearly defined, in the 1970s and 80s a set of alternative approaches and methods emerged. Some of these include comprehension based methods such as the Total Physical Response (TPR), the Natural Approach, the Silent Way, or Suggestopedia (for a detailed description of these methods, see Richards and Rodgers 2001). Many of these methods never became widely adapted and had only a short shelf life. This is not to say that these methods did not contribute to the field of language teaching.

On the contrary, some of these methods have helped shape and continue to have an influence on the field in many ways. For example, TPR, which James Asher (1969) originally developed as a method to teach language by combining action and speech, is still widely used. Many practitioners, however, promote and use TPR as a technique to introduce some vocabulary or grammatical structures. Some principles of learning that have been promoted through these methods are integrated in the discussion below.

2.3.1: What Is Communicative Language Teaching?

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is generally regarded as an approach to language teaching (Richards and Rodgers 2001). As such, CLT reflects a certain model or research paradigm, or a theory (Celce-Murcia 2001). It is based on the theory that the primary function of language use is communication. Its primary goal is for learners to develop communicative competence (Hymes 1971), or simply put, communicative ability. In other words, its goal is to make use of real-life situations that necessitate communication.

2.3.2: Defining communicative competence:

Communicative competence is defined as the ability to interpret and enact appropriate social behaviors, and it requires the active involvement of the learner in the production of the target language (Hymes 1972). Such a notion encompasses a wide range of abilities: the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary (linguistic competence); the ability to say the appropriate thing in a certain social situation (sociolinguistic competence); the ability to start, enter, contribute to, and end a conversation, and the ability to do this in a consistent and coherent manner (discourse competence); the ability to communicate effectively

and repair problems caused by communication breakdowns (strategic competence).

As frequently misunderstood, CLT is not a method. That is to say, it is not a method in the sense by which content, a syllabus, and teaching routines are clearly identified (see Richards and Rodgers 2001). CLT has left its doors wide open for a great variety of methods and techniques. There is no single text or authority on it, nor any single model that is universally accepted as authoritative (Richards and Rodgers 2001). By and large, it uses materials and utilizes methods that are appropriate to a given context of learning. CLT has spawned various movements such as proficiency-based or standard-based instruction. While the early days of CLT were concerned with finding best designs and practices, the proficiency-based movement contributed to the field of language teaching by putting forward a set of proficiency guidelines (see American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages [ACTFL] guidelines in Chapter 8, Developing Oral Communication Skills). These guidelines describe language ability and are meant to be used to measure competence in a language. In this sense, the proficiency-based movement focused on measuring what learners can do in functional terms. By providing evaluative descriptions, that is, by specifying what students should know and how they should be able to use language within a variety of contexts and to various degrees of accuracy at different stages, it provided a set of broadly stated goals and thus a sense of direction for curriculum designers. The standard-based movement attempted to further streamline descriptions of what students should know and be able to do after completing a particular grade level or curriculum to meet national standards in foreign language education from kindergarten to university. In this way, both movements positively influenced and strengthened the

development and implementation of communicative oriented teaching practices.

As far as theories of learning and effective strategies in teaching are concerned, CLT does not adhere to one particular theory or method. It draws its theories about learning and teaching from a wide range of areas such as cognitive science, educational psychology, and second language acquisition (SLA).

2.4: The Purpose of Communicative Language Teaching Activities:

The communicative approach must be based on and respond to the students' communicative needs and interests. The approach should also be based on the language which the students will be in touch with in realistic situations.

There is no single perfect method for teaching ESL: rather, an eclectic approach is recommended. By using a range of communicative teaching procedures, which can be organized into various activities, instructors can accommodate the students' various learning styles.

Communicative activities give the students the opportunity to interact as equal partners. They don't just sit and react to stimuli. Interacting is far more stimulating than merely reacting. The learners get the chance to be engaged in activities where the main purpose is to communicate meaning effectively to one or more individuals. Communicative activities create a context which supports learning. They provide the students with a great number of opportunities to develop positive relationships with other students and with the teacher.

Communicative activities give the students a higher level of motivation to learn the language. The ultimate goal in this method is to communicate with others. The principal reason for any one to learn a language is to be able to communicate with others.

Below are 6 criteria that one can use to decide how communicative different classroom activities are.

1. *Communicative purpose*: The activity should have a real communicative purpose. It should not just practise language for its own sake. In communicative activities, students are trying to get or give information or opinions in a situation that is similar to what can happen in real life.
2. *Communicative desire*: The activity should create in the student a desire to communicate. He should feel a real need to communicate.
3. *Content not form*: When the students are doing the activity, they must be concentrating on what they are saying not how they say it. They must have some message that they want to communicate.
4. *Variety of language*: The activity should involve the students in using a variety of language, not just one specific language form. The students should feel free to improvise, using whatever resources they choose.
5. *No teacher intervention*: The activity should be designed to be done by the students working by themselves rather than with the teacher. The teacher should develop activities that will exercise the creative abilities of the students. The activity should not involve the teacher correcting or evaluating how the students do the activity, although it could involve some evaluation of the final product of the activity when the activity is over. This assessment should be based on whether the students have

achieved their communicative purpose, not whether the language they used was correct.

6. *No materials control:* Students must be motivated by a communicative purpose. The activity should not be designed to control what language the students use. The choice about what language to use should rest with the students.

Sequencing of activities is important. We can differentiate:

-Pre-communicative activity to communicative activity -

Students move from shorter activities where a very narrow range of items are practised to a comprehensive activity in which they have to consolidate the new information taught with all that they have learned previously. Students move from controlled to creative activities, from small parts to the whole. The aim of a pre-communicative activity is to gain control of linguistic forms.

-Communicative activity to pre-communicative activity –

Students perform, for example, a role-play of a situation they might encounter without any lead-up activities. From this role-play, the teacher can diagnose areas which need further practice. Also, the students can see what their needs are. On the basis of the teacher's diagnosis and perhaps after a discussion with the students about their needs, the teacher can organise controlled practice of the items which would help the students communicate more effectively or appropriately. This would be followed by other communicative activities which give the students a chance to practise the new items taught. This method is more effective with intermediate and advanced students and it is very effective for

convincing students of the necessity of practising particular language items.

While practising different kinds of activities we must always remember: initially, the aim of a communicative activity is to focus more on meaning than on form. The message can be understood even if there are some errors in the form. Obtaining correct meaning and correct form is the ultimate goal.

2.4.1: Some examples of Classroom Activities in Communicative Language Teaching:

Since the advent of CLT, teachers and materials writers have sought to find ways of developing classroom activities that reflect the principles of a communicative methodology. This quest has continued to the present, as we shall see later in the coming examples. The principles on which the first generation of CLT materials are still relevant to language teaching today, so in this chapter we will briefly review the main activity types that were one of the outcomes of CLT.

2.4.2: Accuracy Versus Fluency Activities.

One of the goals of CLT is to develop fluency in language use. Fluency is natural language use occurring when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible and ongoing communication despite limitations in his or her communicative competence. Fluency is developed by creating classroom activities in which students must negotiate meaning, use communication strategies, correct misunderstandings, and work to avoid communication breakdowns.

Fluency practice can be contrasted with accuracy practice, which

focuses on creating correct examples of language use. Differences between activities that focus on fluency and those that focus on accuracy can be summarized as follows:

Activities focusing on fluency

- * Reflect natural use of language
- * Focus on achieving communication
- * Require meaningful use of language
- * Require the use of communication strategies
- * Produce language that may not be predictable
- * Seek to link language use to context

Activities focusing on accuracy

- * Reflect classroom use of language
- * Focus on the formation of correct examples of language
- * Practice language out of context
- * Practice small samples of language
- * Do not require meaningful communication
- * Control choice of language

The following are examples of fluency activities and accuracy activities.

Both make use of group work, reminding us that group work is not necessarily a fluency task (Brumfit 1984).

2.4.3: Fluency Tasks.

A group of students of mixed language ability carry out a role play in which they have to adopt specified roles and personalities provided for them on cue cards. These roles involve the drivers, witnesses, and the police at a collision between two cars. The language is entirely improvised by the students, though they are heavily constrained by the

specified situation and characters. The teacher and a student act out a dialogue in which a customer returns a faulty object she has purchased to a department store. The clerk asks what the problem is and promises to get a refund for the customer or to replace the item. In groups, students now try to recreate the dialog using language items of their choice. They are asked to recreate what happened preserving the meaning but not necessarily the exact language. They later act out their dialogs in front of the class.

2.4.4: Accuracy Tasks.

Students are practicing dialogs. The dialogs contain examples of falling intonation in Wh-questions. The class is organized in groups of three, two students practicing the dialog, and the third playing the role of monitor. The monitor checks that the others are using the correct intonation pattern and corrects them where necessary. The students rotate their roles between those reading the dialog and those monitoring. The teacher moves around listening to the groups and correcting their language where necessary. Students in groups of three or four complete an exercise on a grammatical item, such as choosing between the past tense and the present perfect, an item which the teacher has previously presented and practiced as a whole class activity. Together students decide which grammatical form is correct and they complete the exercise. Groups take turns reading out their answers.

Teachers were recommended to use a balance of fluency activities and accuracy and to use accuracy activities to support fluency activities. Accuracy work could either come before or after fluency work. For example, based on students' performance on a fluency task, the teacher could assign accuracy work to deal with grammatical or pronunciation problems the teacher observed while students were carrying out the task. An issue that arises with fluency work, however, is whether it develops

fluency at the expense of accuracy. In doing fluency tasks, the focus is on getting meanings across using any available communicative resources. This often involves a heavy dependence on vocabulary and communication strategies, and there is little motivation to use accurate grammar or pronunciation. Fluency work thus requires extra attention on the part of the teacher in terms of preparing students for a fluency task, or follow-up activities that provide feedback on language use. While dialogs, grammar, and pronunciation drills did not usually disappear from textbooks and classroom materials at this time, they now appeared as part of a sequence of activities that moved back and forth between accuracy activities and fluency activities. And the dynamics of classrooms also changed. Instead of a predominance of teacher-fronted teaching, teachers were encouraged to make greater use of small-group work. Pair and group activities gave learners greater opportunities to use the language and to develop fluency.

2.4.5: Mechanical, Meaningful, and Communicative Practice

Another useful distinction that some advocates of CLT proposed was the distinction between three different kinds of practice – mechanical, meaningful, and communicative.

2.4.6: Mechanical practice refers to a controlled practice activity which students can successfully carry out without necessarily understanding the language they are using. Examples of this kind of activity would be repetition drills and substitution drills designed to practice use of particular grammatical or other items.

2.4.7: Meaningful practice refers to an activity where language control is still provided but where students are required to make meaningful choices when carrying out practice. For example, in order to practice the use of prepositions to describe locations of places, students

might be given a street map with various buildings identified in different locations. They are also given a list of prepositions such as across from, on the corner of, near, on, next to. They then have to answer questions such as “Where is the book shop? Where is the café?” etc.

The practice is now meaningful because they have to respond according to the location of places on the map.

2.4.8: Communicative practice refers to activities where practice in using language within a real communicative context is the focus, where real information is exchanged, and where the language used is not totally predictable. For example, students might have to draw a map of their neighborhood and answer questions about the location of different places, such as the nearest bus stop, the nearest café, etc.

2.4.9: Information-Gap Activities

An important aspect of communication in CLT is the notion of information gap. This refers to the fact that in real communication, people normally communicate in order to get information they do not possess. This is known as an information gap. More authentic communication is likely to occur in the classroom if students go beyond practice of language forms for their own sake and use their linguistic and communicative resources in order to obtain information.

In so doing, they will draw available vocabulary, grammar, and communication strategies to complete a task. The following exercises make use of the information- gap principle:

Students are divided into A-B pairs. The teacher has copied two sets of pictures. One set (for A students) contains a picture of a group of people. The other set (for B students) contains a similar picture but it contains a number of slight differences from the A-picture. Students must sit back to back and ask questions to try to find out how many

differences there are between the two pictures.

Students practice a role play in pairs. One student is given the information she/he needs to play the part of a clerk in the railway station information booth and has information on train departures, prices, etc. The other needs to obtain information on departure times, prices, etc. They role-play the interaction without looking at each other's cue cards.

2.4.10: Jigsaw activities

These are also based on the information-gap principle. Typically, the class is divided into groups and each group has part of the information needed to complete an activity. The class must fit the pieces together to complete the whole. In so doing, they must use their language resources to communicate meaningfully and so take part in meaningful communication practice. The following are examples of jigsaw activities:

The teacher plays a recording in which three people with different points of view discuss their opinions on a topic of interest. The teacher prepares three different listening tasks, one focusing on each of the three speaker's points of view. Students are divided into three groups and each group listens and takes notes on one of the three speaker's opinions. Students are then rearranged into groups containing a student from groups A, B, and C. They now role-play the discussion using the information they obtained.

The teacher takes a narrative and divides it into twenty sections (or as many sections as there are students in the class). Each student gets one section of the story. Students must then move around the class, and by listening to each section read aloud, decide where in the story their section belongs. Eventually the students have to put the entire story together in the correct sequence.

2.5: Other Activity Types in CLT

Many other activity types have been used in CLT, including the following:

2.5.1: Task-completion activities: puzzles, games, map-reading, and other kinds of classroom tasks in which the focus is on using one's language resources to complete a task.

2.5.2: Information-gathering activities: student-conducted surveys, interviews, and searches in which students are required to use their linguistic resources to collect information.

2.5.3: Opinion-sharing activities: activities in which students compare values, opinions, or beliefs, such as a ranking task in which students list six qualities in order of importance that they might consider in choosing a date or spouse.

2.5.4: Information-transfer activities: These require learners to take information that is presented in one form, and represent it in a different form. For example, they may read instructions on how to get from A to B, and then draw a map showing the sequence, or they may read information about a subject and then represent it as a graph.

2.5.5: Reasoning-gap activities: These involve deriving some new information from given information through the process of inference, practical reasoning, etc.

For example, working out a teacher's timetable on the basis of given class timetables.

2.5.6: Role plays: activities in which students are assigned roles and improvise a scene or exchange based on given information or clues.

2.5.7: Emphasis on Pair and Group Work

Most of the activities discussed above reflect an important aspect of classroom tasks in CLT, namely that they are designed to be carried out

in pairs or small groups. Through completing activities in this way, it is argued, learners will obtain several benefits:

- * They can learn from hearing the language used by other members of the group.
- * They will produce a greater amount of language than they would use in teacher-fronted activities.
- * Their motivational level is likely to increase.
- * They will have the chance to develop fluency.

Teaching and classroom materials today consequently make use of a wide variety of small-group activities.

Pedagogical tasks are specially designed classroom tasks that are intended to require the use of specific interactional strategies and may also require the use of specific types of language (skills, grammar, vocabulary). A task in which two learners have to try to find the number of differences between two similar pictures is an example of a pedagogical task. The task itself is not something one would normally encounter in the real world. However the interactional processes it requires provides useful input to language development. Real-world tasks are tasks that reflect real-world uses of language and which might be considered a rehearsal for real-world tasks. A role play in which students practice a job interview would be a task of this kind.

Willis (1996) proposes six types of tasks as the basis for TBI:

1. Listing tasks: For example, students might have to make up a list of things they would pack if they were going on a beach vacation.
2. Sorting and ordering: Students work in pairs and make up a list of the most important characteristics of an ideal vacation.
3. Comparing: Students compare ads for two different supermarkets.
4. Problem-solving: Students read a letter to an advice columnist and suggest a solution to the writer's problems.

5. Sharing personal experience: Students discuss their reactions to an ethical or moral dilemma.
6. Creative tasks: Students prepare plans for redecorating a house.