EFFECTIVE APPROACHES OF APPLYING COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE IN CLASSROOM TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

Communicative language teaching has become one of the scattered and effective methods in teaching foreign language. The purpose of Communicative Language Teaching is to help students produce authentic language and communicate with others as speaking ability develops slowly in majority of learners. However, to produce authentic language does not mean developing speaking skills only but also CLT integrates multiple skills, such as listening and writing.

Key words

communicative approach, authentic language, grammar, target audience, solo activity.

To help students communicate, the teacher needs to provide rich and authentic input. There can be many approaches to achieve Communicative Language Teaching. Task-based teaching is the most common teaching approach. Teachers set up a goal, give students real-life language tasks, and students respond in a meaning way. In this process, students are motivated to use the language to serve the purpose of communication.

In CLT, meaning exceeds forms, but it does not mean that grammar is not important. Teachers should teach grammar within contexts and through communicative tasks. In this way, grammar is not presented as a list of rigid rules, but natural patterns that students acquire in the learning contexts.

Writing, like all other aspects of language, is communicative. Think about what we write in real life. We write e-mails, lists, notes, covering letters, reports, curriculums, assignments, essays perhaps if we study.

Some of us write articles or work on blogs, forums and websites. A few write stories and poems - but very few. All of these writing tasks have a communicative purpose and a target audience. In the English language classroom, however, writing often lacks this. Why? There are lots of reasons, as there are lots of ways to make the writing, we do with learners more communicative.

Challenges in teaching and learning writing

By its nature, writing is often a solo activity, done silently, involving physical effort and taking a lot of time. This may not make it attractive to learners or teachers as a classroom activity. In addition to this, writing is difficult, even in native language. There are linguistic, psychological and cognitive problems involved, making teaching it and learning it a considerable challenge. It is also important to remember that many people never write anything of any length in their daily lives, or anything using paper and a pen, or without using a spellchecker. But this is often what we ask them to do in English.

Responding appropriately to writing that learners give us is time-consuming and taxing, whether we are addressing errors or the content. We often have to work as hard as our learners have done. Our response is also often dictated by our concern with sub-skills and so correction is often at this level rather than at that of communicative competence. This is aggravated by the fact that it is not easy to evaluate this competence, especially formally - as can be seen in the complexity of the speaking criteria for exams such as IELTS and CEFR. In addition, it is important to recognize that learners are equally concerned about correctness in writing at a sub-level, in areas such as spelling and punctuation. This is especially true when compared to speaking. This inhibits communication.

The kinds of tasks we set learners may not be motivating, relevant or indeed very communicative. Writing is rarely incorporated into a lesson, ending up relegated to homework - which reduces the possibilities to be communicative. We need to give learners tasks that are intellectually satisfying, especially when writing. Adult learners become aware of their limitations very quickly when they try to express complex ideas on paper. As a final note course books do not necessarily always help us develop writing. We need materials that provide relevant, real and communicative practice. This is rare.

Possible solutions for the problems

We need to make a distinction between writing to learn (other things, like structures, spelling and vocabulary) and learning to write. If we understand this

distinction and make sure our learners do too then the communicative purpose of writing will be clearer.

We need to work hard on developing ways of responding to the content of what our learners write - the message - and not just the level of language. If we can do this effectively, then our learners will make more effort to communicate when they write for us. This can support an emphasis on the importance of writing for a real audience, but we do also need to find real audiences for learner writing. This could include ourselves if we can respond as readers, other learners and groups, and public forums such as blogs, websites and letter pages.

We need to find ways to integrate writing with other skills and activities, giving it more relevance and importance - and also making it more interesting. We need to use meaningful, realistic and relevant writing tasks, based on our learners' needs and interests. We may need to design individual tasks based on what individual learners need to write. In addition, we should talk about writing with our learners, how we write well, why we write and for who, and what makes it difficult. Learner training like this can provide valuable support and motivation.

Finally, we need to evaluate the impact on our learners' written English when most of our focus on writing is as homework. Are we supporting them as well as we could as they tackle the difficulties we discussed above?

Productive ideas to improve communicative writing

• Find ways to publish learners' writing, on websites such as in journals and newspapers.

• Get learners to create individual and group profiles on social utility sites such as Facebook. Publish a class magazine of previous writing work.

• Encourage learners to write with a clear purpose and for a clear audience, for example in letters to newspapers, pen friends, to teachers and other students.

• Find challenging and rewarding tasks which can support a variety of learning aims and integrate other skills and language systems, such as summarizing, project work, translation, writing up notes from interviews, and preparing a briefing or talk.

• Use relevant and realistic tasks such as writing notes, recipes, e-mails, filling in forms and preparing signs for the class.

• Respond to the content of the work that your learners give you as well as correcting the errors they make, by adding your own comments to their homework or establishing a dialogue through e-mail and learner diaries.

• Make writing easier and more fun by doing group writing activities and group correction and editing of work

• Support writing with reading. This not only helps learners develop the sub-skills they need but also helps them understand that good writing is a powerful and important communication tool.

Trying to get students excited about writing in a second language can be a difficult task – but it doesn't have to be torture! With the help of a great teaching activity, you may find your learners don't want to put their pens down. We've put together a few of our favorite activities to get students scrawling on the page. Why not see if these tasks get your own class ready to write… here are some useful games that help to improve pupils writing skills!

Consequences

This is an old school game that is just as fun today as it ever was! All you need for this activity is a pen and a piece of paper for each student. The Folded Story game work best with small classes of 6-12 students, but it can be adapted to larger classes if your students are confident enough to read and write together in small groups.

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