

An Analysis of Communicative Language Teaching (Clt) Approach: Difficulties and Implementations

Xiuhui Xu

Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, United Kingdom

Keywords: Clt, Audio-lingual method, Difficulties, Implementation

Abstract: It seems obvious that CLT is playing an increasing significant role in improving communicative competence. However, there are still many teachers and students find it difficult to understand and follow in language teaching practice. Therefore, CLT will be analyzed and discussed in the following parts: Firstly, CLT will be compared with another method called the audio-lingual method in terms of different origins, aims, features and the way and content of teaching. Secondly, CLT is not a perfect approach, thus the next part aims to analyse some possible reasons why teaching CLT is difficult from the perspectives of teachers, students, different education policies and teaching materials. Based on these limitations, the final part will provide some implementations to complement CLT in language teaching. Although CLT seems to be considered as a useful approach in language teaching, it may be more effective if combining different approaches together in language teaching classes, depending on different aims, situations, as well as learners' needs and preferences.

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, English has become an essential language and played a significant role in various ways of communication in the world. Therefore, it has been widely used as a tool in the fields of science, technology, art as well as social relations, especially in communication. (Ilyas, 2017). In addition, the ability of English communication skill has become an urgent need for most of the people, and the demand for the communication competence of the target language is higher than ever before, which means that an increasing number of people use English in various fields of everyday life, not only written forms but also spoken communication, in order to meet the need for the globalized society. (Ahmad and Rao, 2013). Ilyas (2017) also introduces some approaches and methods and the communicative approach is one of them. He points out that the communicative approach is an effective way in language teaching on account of the encouragement of students , actively involvement. Moreover, communicative language teaching (also known as CLT) is aiming to express thoughts, feelings and ideas, in other words, all human beings need to communicate. Thus, this is the reason why interactive activities are integrated into the language teaching. (Toro et al., 2018)

From the perspectives mentioned above ((Ilyas, 2017, Ahmad and Rao, 2013, Toro et. al, 2018), it seems obvious that the status of English has become increasingly significant, especially in the

aspects of communicative competence in different fields of life, which means that in order to develop this skill, it may be valuable if communicative approach is applied in English language teaching and integrated into teaching materials. However, not all the research shows a positive attitude toward it.

1.1 Definition and Origin

According to Maleki (2005), the decline of direct method results in the emergence of audio-lingual method which was very popular and widely used during the second world war on account of the need for communicating between Americans and their friends as well as enemies. Thus, it is also known as the army method and the improvement of the direct method. In addition, Richards and Rogers (2014) explain that the root of audio-lingual method could be traced back to structural linguistics. They state that the teachers' responsibility is to introduce the grammatical patterns of foreign language to learners.

1.2 Aims

Apart from the different definition and origin, the aim is another difference between these two methods. According to Chung (2017), audio-lingual method is more likely to focus on the activities in terms of correct pronunciation, spelling convention as well as grammatical forms. In addition, audio-lingual seems favour in oral forms and hierarchical structure of language, which aims to teach dialogue mode to the learner and makes them familiar to it through repetitive practice, finally they may be able to automatize the utterances. (Keskil, 2000). Unlike audio-lingual, CLT aims to use the basic function to communicate in real life instead of grammar studies, which means that communication competence is of great importance while grammar forms or structures are considered to be inferior. (Hymes, 1972). Moreover, Brown (1994) also states that the classroom activities with CLT prefer the way of more meaningful and authentic to attract the learners to use the target language to communicate. In other words, learning is a process of interactive and interpersonal communication.

1.3 Features

In addition, the features are different between the audio-lingual method and CLT. one of the distinct features of the audio-lingual method is that teachers emphasize the accuracy in terms of pronunciation and intonation so that they may easier to correct the errors before becoming permanent or fossilized (Melhim and Rahman, 2009) (cited in Abu-Melhim, 2009). However, CLT is more likely to highlight the meaning rather than accuracy and focus on meaningful activities in order to improve the communication skills, including spoken and written activities. (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2013). Besides, Richards and Rogers (2014) also point out that CLT advocates the learners to experience and make mistakes, which indicates the high tolerance of low accuracy in CLT in order to inspire and motivate the learners. Another different feature is the role of teachers and students. Freeman and Freeman (1992) notes that audio-lingual classrooms are teacher-centred while students are considered as passive learners, teachers usually guide the students to form correct pronunciation, word and sentence order through repeated practice.

1.4 The Way and Content of Teaching

Furthermore, the way and content of teaching are distinct as well. The way to teach in audio-lingual class is to introduce structure first, and then ask the students to practice these structures until

they master them orally. Besides, the content consists of repetition, replacement, expansion, conversion, integration, formation and practice of asking, answering and pronunciation. (Richards and Rogers, 2014). The reason why audio-lingual is often regarded as boring is the repetition mode of learning requires them to learn by rote and memorize mechanically. Indeed, learners would be unable to communicate spontaneously like native speakers. on the contrary, they are more likely to remember the fixed phrases and repeat them. (Margolis,1982).

2. The Reasons for the Difficulties of CLT

It seems obvious that CLT is superior to audio-lingual in language teaching in terms of communication competence. For example, a research conducted in stain watampone shows that there is a significant difference in spoken grade through CLT and audio-lingual method, the CLT students seem much better than the audio-lingual students. (Ilyas, 2017). However, CLT is not a perfect approach and there are still many teachers and students find it difficult to or understand in teaching practice. Therefore, it is essential to analyse the possible reasons for the difficulties.

2.1 Factors about Teachers

One of the reasons why CLT is criticized is due to the teachers. For instance, an English language classroom in Bangladesh refused to apply CLT is on account of the ignorance of teachers , beliefs and needs. To be specific, the CLT class is designed through a bottom-up process without concerning the teachers , opinions, which means that they do not understand or follow the principles of CLT clearly and comprehensively. As a result, it built up the complexity during the implementation process in teaching practice. (Ali and walker, 2014). Bantwini (2010) also believe that if teachers are not involved in the process of curriculum exploitation, they may lack of understanding in terms of curriculum alternation, reformation as well as innovation. In addition, unfortunately, some of the teachers are considered unqualified.

2.2 Factors about Students

In addition to the reasons related to the teachers, students also influence the effectiveness of CLT, and this type of language teaching is not suitable for all the students. It seems obvious that speaking is the way to practice oral English in the CLT class. However, many of the students are afraid to speak aloud in front of the teachers and classmates because they are lack of confidence and fluency, especially for low-level students. For example, a study conducted in stain watampone shows that most of the students are reluctant to speak or actively participate in the speech due to the disfluency of spoken English. As a result, CLT is more likely to be ineffective. (Ilyas, 2017).

2.3 Factors about Varying Education Policies

Apart from the different levels of students which may cause difficulties in CLT, the education policy in different countries is another obstacle for CLT in teaching practice.

Generally speaking, CLT would be more effective if implemented in small class size because it provides students more opportunities to interact and discuss in pairs or in groups. However, some of the countries such as China, Bangladesh where class sizes are quite large. (Rahman, Pandian & Kaur, 2018) According to the teachers who are interviewed in Bangladesh, some of them mention that they tried to let the students work in pairs, but it seems not working. (Rahman, Pandian and Kaur, 2018). Indeed, they could possibly divide the students into several groups and then ask one student as a representative to give a speech in each group.

2.4 Factors about Teaching Materials and Equipment

In addition to the different education policies, the teaching materials and equipment are another difficulty in CLT class. Tomlinson (2003) states that although most of the textbooks are full of collaborative activities, they have nothing to do with the course. Besides, the CLT classroom requires teachers to implement more activities due to the communicative purpose, nevertheless, they fail to concern the course background and learners' needs. (Tomlinson, 2003). Moreover, it seems that there is a mismatch between materials and the assessment. CLT emphasizes spoken and listening activities, which means that authentic materials such as videos and radios collected from native speaking environment are essential. Unfortunately, some countries, especially in some developing such as Bangladesh, classrooms are not provided with the equipment to play the CDs accompany the textbooks. (Rahman, Pandian and Kaur, 2018). Therefore, students are not allowed to practice communicative and listening skills in CLT class.

3. Some Possible Implementations in Clt

3.1 Implementations for Teachers

From the perspective of teachers, there are some complementary strategies which may be beneficial for CLT in teaching. Firstly, teachers need to be provided with more training opportunities in order to have a better understanding of CLT and become more qualified in teaching, especially in remote areas. Rahman, Pandian and Kaur (2018) suggest that in-service teachers need more effective school-based training courses because the real environment of the school enables the teachers to learn more and the training effect and process could be observed and evaluated immediately.

3.2 Implementations for Students

In addition to the implementation for teachers, the following possible strategies aimed at students in terms of motivation and language levels. Motivation of students is of great significance in language teaching class. As Ahmad and Rao (2013) mentions, if students are motivated and willing to use the target language, it could not only develop the teachers' enthusiasm but also change the passive class environment. Therefore, students are more likely to learn and speak actively. In order to motivate the learners in CLT class, games and certain activities are considered as beneficial. Besides, Littlewood (1981) suggests some functional communicative activities to improve fluency in CLT. For example, students are required to use the target language to describe how to draw a pattern or picture, and how to guide the direction according to a map, how to share the information in order to solve a problem.

3.3 Implementations Suited to Different Education Policies

Apart from the implementation for learners, different education policies also need to be taken into consideration. Some countries like Korea and China seem more grammar and examination-oriented, which means that accuracy in terms of grammar and writing should not be underestimated. It seems that traditional grammar class is regarded as boring and ineffective because learners are more unmotivated and passive (Richards and Rogers, 2014). Therefore, in order to make grammar explanation more effective, one of the possible implementations is to teach in the contexts.

Therefore, such “artificial” language should not be criticized because sometimes they seem more flexible to meet the need for different cultures and preferences. Thus, it may be better if authentic materials could be combined with “artificial” ones. (Ögeyik and Dogruer, 2009).

4. Conclusion

It seems obvious that CLT is playing a significant role in the communicative competence. However, there are still many teachers and students find it difficult to understand and follow in teaching practice. Therefore, this essay intended to analyse some questions about CLT. Firstly, CLT was compared with another method called the audio-lingual method in terms of different origins, aims, features and the way and content of teaching.

In fact, there is no perfect teaching approach in language teaching and it seems inappropriate to implement only one approach in the language teaching class because they are likely to complement rather than contradict each other. Therefore, it may be more effective if combining different approaches together in language teaching classes, in other words, the point is that different approaches depend on different aims, situations, as well as learners , needs and preferences. It is the teachers , responsibility to select appropriate approaches wisely and flexibly.

References

- [1] Ahmad, s. & Rao, C. (2013), “Applying Communicative Approach in Teaching English as a Foreign Language: a Case study of Pakistan”, *Porta Linguarum*, no. 20, pp. 187-203.
- [2] Alamri, w. A. (2018). *Communicative Language Teaching: Possible Alternative Approaches to CLT and Teaching Contexts*. *English Language Teaching*, 11(10), 132-138.
- [3] Ali, M. & walker, A.L. (2014), “Bogged down . ELT in Bangladesh: Problems and policy: Investigating some problems that encumber ELT in an EFL context”, *English Today*, vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 33-38.
- [4] Bantwini, B. D. (2010). *How teachers perceive the new curriculum reform: Lessons from a school district in the Eastern Cape Province, south Africa*. *International journal of educational development*, 30(1), 83-90.
- [5] Richards, J.C. & Rodgers, T.s. (2014), *Approaches and methods in language teaching*, Cambridge university press.
- [6] Margolis, F.s. (1982), “Encouraging spontaneous speech in the Audiolingual Classroom”, *Foreign Language Annals*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 127-131.
- [7] Littlewood, w. & william, L. (1981), *Communicative language teaching: An introduction*, Cambridge university press.