

# **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

## **Learning theory**

According to the communicative approach, in order for learning to take place, emphasis must be put on the importance of these variables:

- Communication: activities that involve real communication promote learning.
- Tasks: activities in which language is used to carry out meaningful tasks supports the learning process.
- Meaning: language that is meaningful and authentic to the learner boosts learning.

## **Acquiring or learning?**

Stephen Krashen later advocated in his language learning theory that there should be a distinction between *learning* and *acquiring*. He sees acquisition as the basic process involved in developing language proficiency and distinguishes this process from learning. Acquisition is an unconscious process that involves the naturalistic development of language proficiency while learning is the conscious internalization of the rules of language. It results in explicit knowledge about the forms of language and the ability to verbalize this knowledge. Learning according to Krashen cannot lead to acquisition.

## **Syllabus**

Communicative language teaching syllabus organizes the teaching according to the notional and functional categories of language rather than according to its structures. It concentrates on the following:

- Interactions: using language to communicate,
- Tasks: using language to perform meaningful tasks
- Learner: putting the learner's interests, needs in the forefront.

## **Advantages of CLT**

There are many advantages in teaching according to the communicative approach:

- CLT is a holistic approach. It doesn't focus only on the traditional structural syllabus. It takes into consideration communicative dimension of language.
- CLT provides vitality and motivation within the classroom.

- CLT is a learner centered approach. It capitalizes on the interests and needs of the learner.
- In a world where communication of information and information technology have broken new considerable ground, CLT can play an important role in education.

## **Disadvantages**

- Notional syllabus was criticized as merely replacing one kind of list, namely a list of grammatical structures, with another list of notions and functions.
- The various categories of language functions are overlapping and not systematically graded like the structures of the language.
- The communicative approach focuses on the use of language in everyday situations, or the functional aspects of language, and less on the formal structures. There must be a certain balance between the two. It gives priority to meanings and rules of use rather than to grammar and rules of structure. Such concentration on language behavior may result in negative consequences in the sense that important structures and rules would be left out.
- The approach relies extensively on the functional-notational syllabus which places heavy demands on the learners.
- A major principle underlying this approach is its emphasis on learners' needs and interests. This implies that every teacher should modify the syllabus to fit the needs of the learners.
- The requirements are difficult. Not all classrooms can allow for group work activities and for teaching aids and materials.

In spite of its critics, CLT has gained widespread acceptance in the world of language study. CLT can succeed, as long as teachers don't completely reject the need for the structure provided by grammar. Teachers must strive for moderation and shouldn't neglect the merits of other methods. CLT, in the hands of a balanced teacher, can bring new life and joy to the classroom. Its vitality makes it an important contributor to language learning approaches.