

المرحلة : الثالثة مدرس المادة: د. عبدالله عايد المعضادي	جامعة الأنبار كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية قسم اللغة الانكليزية
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Community Language Learning

Introduction

The method we will examine in this chapter advises teachers to consider their students as ‘whole persons.’ **Whole-person learning** means that teachers consider not only their students’ intellect, but they also have some understanding of the relationship among students’ feelings, physical reactions, instinctive protective reactions, and desire to learn. The Community Language Learning Method takes its principles from the more general Counseling-Learning approach developed by Charles A. Curran.

Curran studied adult learning for many years. He found that adults often feel threatened by a new learning situation. They are threatened by the change inherent in learning and by the fear that they will appear foolish. Curran believed that a way to deal with the fears of students is for teachers to become language **counselors**. A language counselor does not mean someone trained in psychology; it means someone who is a skillful ‘understander’ of the struggle students face as they attempt to internalize another language. The teacher who can understand can indicate his acceptance of the student. By understanding students’ fears and being sensitive to them, he can help students overcome their negative feelings and turn them into positive energy to further their learning.

Let us see how Curran’s ideas are put into practice in the Community Language Learning Method. We will observe a class in a private language institute in Indonesia. Most of the students work during the day and come for language instruction in the evening. The class meets two evenings a week for two hours a session. This is the first class.