

Evaluation and Teaching Suggestions of the Communicative Language Teaching

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Abstract

Since the Communicative Language Teaching which takes the communicative competence as its main goal was brought into China in the late 1970s, lots of English teachers and scholars have applied CLT in middle schools and colleges. However, the teaching effectiveness of CLT has not been fully brought into play in China. This thesis firstly explains the practical significance of the implementation of CLT in English teaching in China. Then, it analyzes the drawbacks of CLT in English teaching in China. Finally, it points out teaching suggestions for the further implementation of CLT in China to facilitate its teaching effectiveness.

Keywords

Communicative Language Teaching; English Teaching; Communicative Competence.

1. Introduction

As the linguistic theories underlying the Audiolingual method and the Situational Language Teaching were questioned by linguists during the 1960s, Communicative Language Teaching appeared (Richards, J. C. & Rogers, T. S, 2000) [1]. Communicative Language Teaching, also called Communicative Approach, is a kind of teaching method widely used in foreign language teaching all over the world. With the accelerated development of global economic, technological trade, and the process of economic globalization, people have paid more and more attention to English and have never stopped exploring English teaching methods. Since Communicative Language Teaching was introduced into China in the 1970s, it has been greatly sought after by all walks of life, and it has become one of the most important teaching methods in foreign language teaching in China, and has exerted a profound influence on our teaching concepts and methods. However, CLT is faced with difficulties in English teaching in China so that its teaching effectiveness has not been fully brought into play. This paper aims to offer English teachers some useful and practical suggestions to maximize the teaching effectiveness of CLT by analyzing the difficulties faced by the CLT objectively.

2. Practical Significance of the Implementation of CLT in English Teaching in China

With the enhancement of Chinese comprehensive national strength, the communication between Chinese people and people of the world is becoming more and more frequent, which raises the requirements for the communicative competence of English talents in all aspects. CLT takes the cultivation of communicative competence as its main goal of foreign language teaching (Li Yujun, 2001) [2]. Thus, CLT is widely adopted in English teaching of China.

2.1. CLT Can Stimulate Students' Interest in Learning English

CLT puts students in the center of learning. The organization of teaching activities is based on students' language ability, needs and practical conditions in daily life, which can arouse

students' interest of English learning. Meanwhile, interest is the prerequisite of learning English well.

2.2. CLT Can Offer Students Chances to Communicate in Practical Conditions

Teachers use English to teach and students answer questions in English to achieve English communication between teachers and students. In CLT, the teachers usually organize many kinds of oral activities so that students have enough chances to communicate in English. Meanwhile, lots of oral activities are related to the practical conditions in students' daily life. Moreover, related activities do not only work in the classroom but also allow students to bring classroom activities into applications after completion of the lessons.

To sum up, CLT takes the communicative competence as the main goal, which meets the need of English talents in China due to the increasing communication between China and other countries.

3. Drawbacks of CLT in English Teaching in China

3.1. Lack of Real Communication in the Classroom

It has been several decades since the introduction of communicative teaching method in China. However, the so-called communicative classroom rarely has real communication from its practical application. Firstly, many teachers believe that they guide students to carry out oral exercises, such as reciting dialogues and oral answers to questions is to cultivate students' communicative competence. This is not real communicative competence since students still can't practically apply what they have learned in the classroom into real communication in life. The CLT encourages teachers to employ related teaching and learning materials and tools from living communities and societies (Dos Santos, 2019) [3]. What's worse, affected by the test-oriented teaching conditions in China, teachers seldom organize activities that provide students with enough time to speak. Teachers make use of the valuable teaching time to get students ready for the final exam to get higher scores. Teachers make students concentrate on the types of questions that required by the exams. Students seldom have opportunities to speak a lot in the classroom, let alone real communication.

3.2. It is more Demanding for the English Teacher

In the process of the implementation of CLT, the role of the teacher has changed from the absolute controller to the organizer, and the teacher has no way to predict any questions that learners may have in the teaching activities. The teacher can't heavily depend on the textbooks any more. Besides, teachers should have communicative competence. For example, if the teacher has poor pronunciation, students' communicative competence will be negatively affected. However, it is not uncommon to see that there are lots of teachers lack of appropriate communicative competence in the rural areas of China.

3.3. Overly Student-centered

In CLT, the teacher's role is less autocratic than before, but its importance is not diminished at all (Littlewood, 1981) [4]. Many English teachers in middle school change their traditional roles and put students in the center of learning to avoid traditional cramming teaching. However, they are overly student-centered. For example, they mistakenly believe that increasing the amount and time for students to speak in the class is vital. The diversity of the forms speaking practice and the richness of oral content are ignored. The teachers ignore the importance of their organization. The classroom becomes a place for students to discuss and communicate freely without necessary guidance of the teacher. Some students with poor speaking ability even don't know what to speak next. Students don't have clear learning objectives due to the

lack of necessary guidance of the teacher. Thus, some students who are not confident enough to speak freely in class are more likely to lose interest in English learning.

4. Teaching Suggestions for the Implementation of CLT in China

4.1. Create Authentic Conditions for Students to Speak

We must offer students chances to use the language, and they should have enough time to speak (Wilkins, 1998) [5]. Besides, students need to be accessible to real communication so that they can apply what they have learned into practical conditions better. Authenticity requires personal process of engagement. Real communication exists only when students can express their real thoughts in English. Thus, we may safely draw a conclusion that teachers should consider students' language ability, needs and interests when organize activities in CLT. Teachers should create connections with students' daily life in the English classroom to facilitate students' expressions of real thoughts.

4.2. Change the Role of the Teachers Reasonably

The teachers are no longer the center of the classroom in CLT, but this does not mean that the teachers are excluded from the classroom teaching completely. Meanwhile, CLT raises the requirements for the teachers. Firstly, the teachers are the organizers. They should organize the activities appropriately. They need to consider students' language ability, needs and interests to engage students in the activities actively. Secondly, the teachers are participants. It's advisable that the teachers participate in the activities with the students. Not every student is confident enough to turn to the teacher in the class. For example, when some students with poor language ability faced with problems, the teachers can provide help with them as the participants. When teachers participate in the activities with students, they can observe the progress of the activities carried by the students in a better way. Thirdly, the teachers are the guides. For example, in the oral class, the teacher asks the students to talk freely with group members. The teacher can walk around the classroom to observe the progress of students' talking. When students are talking about something that are not related to the classroom, the teacher can interrupt them in time since learner-centeredness doesn't mean learners are completely free in the classroom. Necessarily, the teacher can offer necessary guidance when students are faced with difficulties. Finally, the teachers are the evaluators. When students make common mistakes that other students often make, teachers need to correct the mistakes to avoid more mistakes made by more students. However, teachers need to correct the mistakes appropriately. Teachers should never interrupt students to correct individual grammatical mistakes at the expense of their successful fluency.

4.3. Improve Teacher'S Communicative Competence and Teaching Proficiency

To improve student's communicative competence, we should improve teacher's communicative competence first in CLT. We cannot expect a teacher with poor communicative competence to help students acquire communicative competence. We should no longer only focus on the certificates such as TEM-8 of the teachers. Moreover, it's quite necessary to require teachers' communicative competence. English teachers in rural areas should be accessible to more teaching training related to communicative competence. Then, teachers should be facilitated with teaching proficiency since teachers can't heavily depend on the textbooks in CLT.

5. Conclusion

CLT has its practical significance in Chinese English teaching, which can meet the need of English talents in China due to the increasing communication between China and other

countries. However, its teaching effectiveness hasn't been brought into play fully due to its drawbacks in Chinese English teaching. Thus, we need to take measures flexibly to improve the implementation of CLT in Chinese English teaching to facilitate students' communicative competence.

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