

Analysis on Community Language Learning

Hong Tu

School of Foreign Languages, China West Normal University, Nanchong 637001, China

Abstract

Community Language Learning is a representative method that uses Counseling-Learning theory to teach languages. It not only pays attention to learners' cognitive development but also lay emphasis on their affective development, which is consistent with the teaching ideology of current education, such as all-round development of the individual and learner-centeredness. Therefore, community language learning can still be adjusted and adopted in the present language teaching. More researches should be done from the perspective of the application of CLL in different class types in different learning stages so that the function of CLL can be fully utilized.

Keywords

Community Language Learning; Language Teaching; Language Teaching Method.

1. Introduction

In the early 1960s, Community Language Learning (CLL) was proposed by Professor Charles A. Curran and his associates. Curran is a professor of psychology at Loyola University in Chicago. He is also a counseling expert and his application of psychological counseling techniques to learning is known as Counseling-Learning. Community Language Learning is a representative method that uses Counseling-Learning theory to teach languages. Community Language Learning draws on the counseling metaphor to describe the relationship between teachers and learners as the counselor-client relationship. It regards teachers as counselors in classrooms who give advice, assistance, and support to others and regards students as clients who need to counsel (Rogers, 1951).

The teaching procedures of Community Language Learning are as follows. To begin with, a group of learners form a small circle in a classroom. The teacher stands out of the circle. Then, a learner whispers a message or meaning he or she wants to express in mother tongue and the teacher translates it into the target language. The learner uses the target language to repeat the message and record it. Learners use the foreign language to convey more information with the help of teachers. Finally, learners reflect and report on their experience of the class, as a class or in groups.

There are two important features of Community Language Learning. On the one hand, CLL can create a harmonious learning atmosphere by the learning group and learners are treated as the center of teaching. Learning is a combination of individuality and collective, and learners actually need the support of group members. The ultimate goal of CLL is to help learners develop a habit of keeping lifelong learning and to promote learners' socialization. On the other hand, the second main characteristic of CLL is that language is acquired through interacting with their community members. In the class, students listen to the teacher carefully first. Then, students freely express their opinions and exchange information with their group members and repeat the language that the the teacher has taught. In this process, teachers and community members both play roles as scaffoldings.

2. Theoretical Basis of Community Language Learning

2.1. Theory of Language

Community Language Learning theory. La Forge goes beyond the structural view of language and elaborates an alternative theory of language which is referred to as language is a social process. According to this theory, communication is more than a message being transmitted from a speaker to a listener but an exchange which is incomplete without a feedback reaction from the speaker and listener. Community Language Learning argues that language is persons in contact and in response (La Forge, 1983).

Since the class becomes a community, the interaction between learners has a great impact on learners' exchanges of knowledge. In order to keep intimacy with other members, learners need to push themselves to keep pace with the learning of their peers. In CLL, language is thought to be acquired through building up social relationships. Successful language learning depends on successful relationship between learners and teachers as well as learners and learners. Learning is viewed as a personal and social experience. The learner is no longer seen as learning in isolation.

2.2. Theory of Language Learning

Community Language Learning is a representative of Affective-Humanistic Approach and derives from the ideology of humanistic education. Humanistic education theory is based on the humanistic psychology. It advocates holistic view of education because "true" human learning is both affective and cognitive, which is termed whole-person learning. It advocates that students' feeling should be paid more attention when students learn the target language. In the process of language teaching, teachers need to help students acquire self-approval rather than self-denial. Students will form the sense of self-esteem through learning.

CLL stresses that students have the potentiality of self-development. Teachers pay attention to students' emotion and opinions, respect their personal experience and have an insight into their inner world. Besides, teachers help students to build the sense of security and confidence towards learning and help them get rid of various spiritual threats and frustration. In conclusion, students, especially their affective aspects, are regarded as the center of learning.

3. Comments on Community Language Learning

3.1. The Advantages of Community Language Learning

First of all, Community Language Learning puts learners in the center of teaching. The teacher is a facilitator in the teaching process of CLL and a participant in students' learning activities. All the assistance provided by the teacher depends on students' needs. Meanwhile, it attaches great importance to learners' affective aspects, including their emotions and feelings. Instead of only focusing on the learning of knowledge, CLL emphasizes the whole development of learners because real human learning is both cognitive and affective. During the class of CLL, the teacher is not the authority of knowledge but regarded as a language counselor. Students are encouraged to express their ideas.

Then, under the CLL teaching approach, the language class becomes a learning community. All learners are members of a community and they learn through interacting with other community members including their fellow learners and the teacher. In this way, students can learn to cooperate with their community members in a team and their cooperative ability can be developed, which also provides a relaxing atmosphere environment for students to learn and their anxiety for learning can be reduced.

Thirdly, CLL is an innovation for Audio-lingual method and grammar-translation method through paying attention to learners' psychology to reduce their anxiety in the process of

language learning. In the process of learning, teachers mainly play the role of facilitator and guiders and students need to take their responsibility of learning to become independent and automatic learners. Although Community Language was produced in the 1960s, its teaching principles about language learning and teaching are not outdated and consistent with learner-centeredness which plays students in the center of teaching and aims to cultivate students' comprehensive language ability.

3.2. The Drawbacks of Community Language Learning

For one thing, Community Language Learning lacks a syllabus and the teaching content is scattered and not integrated, which makes it difficult to have clear objectives to evaluate its accomplishment. Besides, the focus is on fluency rather than accuracy, which may lead to inadequate control of the grammatical system of the target language and is not beneficial to develop students' language ability.

For another, Community language learning is demanding for language teachers because they need to be highly proficient and sensitive to all aspects of the first language and the second language. Meanwhile, they must be sympathetic in counseling-learning as roles of counselors.

4. Relevant Research on Community Language Learning

4.1. Previous Studies on Community Language Learning Abroad

In the early 1960s, American psychologist Charles A. Curran firstly proposed Community Language Learning. Other linguists such as Moskowitz, Mackey and La Forge have studied this field for many years. La Forge (1971) started a pilot study about Community Language Learning. Mackey (1972) put forwards that Community Language Learning is linked with a set of practices used in certain kinds of bilingual education programs which is referred to as "language alternation". In language alternation, a message or lesson is presented first in the native language and then again in the second language. La Forge (1977) explored the uses of social silence in the interpersonal dynamics of Community Language Learning. Moskowitz (1978) described CLL techniques as humanistic techniques that engage the whole person, including the emotions and feelings (the affective realm) as well as linguistic knowledge and behavioral skills. La Forge (1983) studied the relationship between counseling and culture in the second language acquisition. Ellis (1985) once mentioned that CLL borrow some theories and practical methods of psychological counseling from psychology in his book. Hopkin (1985) regards the teacher as a counselor in the classroom and students as clients who need to counsel. That is to say, CLL is the concrete application of counseling theory to language learning. Samimy (1989) carried out a comparative study of teaching Japanese in the Audio-Lingual Method and the Counseling-Learning Approach. Shannon (1994) made an experiment with a community language learning principle in an ESL second language writing class to explore the effect of CLL in English writing teaching.

In recent years, although few researches completely focus on CLL, many researches begin to pay attention to build up learning communities in language learning and teaching to help learners create a more authentic learning environment and take advantage of community members to provide assistance for learners. To some extent, this is the development and progress of CLL. At the same time, with the development of technology, scholars try to explore the online and visual community in language learning.

From what has been described, it can be concluded that CLL stems from abroad and is based on the counseling-learning theory of psychology. The researches of CLL focus on the affective aspects in the beginning and then turn to comparing CLL with other language teaching approaches. Meanwhile, some empirical studies are carried out to explore the application of CLL in English teaching. Then, with the development of society and the emergence of many new

language teaching methods, increasingly fewer researches focus on Community Language Learning. However, CLL has been spread to many other countries and the idea of “community” has been broadened. Nowadays, whether in real life or online, language learning community is advocated because in this way CLL is combined with new situations and more appropriate the new trend of language teaching. Communication in language teaching is extremely important and CLL can create a language learning community and help learners to achieve the goal of communication. Therefore, Community Language Learning should not be abandoned and more researches are supposed to be done about how to apply CLL in present Language teaching to build up a language learning community.

4.2. Previous Studies on Community Language Learning at Home

Although the study on Community Language Learning in China is relatively later than abroad, domestic scholars have also done many researches on CLL in recent decades. CLL aims to create a relaxing atmosphere and reduce learners’ affective barriers to improve the effect of foreign language teaching. Chen Haisong (2004) puts forward that Community Language Learning can be equally applied to adult education with some necessary modification. With the emergence of various new teaching approaches, the impact of affective factors on foreign language teaching attracts increasing attention. From the point of affection, Li hui (2007) argued that CLL should attach more importance to emotional factors and analyzed how to deal with motivation, anxiety and inhibition in CLL. She mentioned that CLL could use various emotional factors to optimize foreign language teaching.

As for the role of learners and teachers, Dai Jingjing (2008) points out that the position of students is equal with the position of teachers in the five different phases of CLL. From the perspective of the function of CLL in language teaching, Wang Xiaoli (2008) explores how to take advantage of Community Language Learning to cultivate learners’ automatic learning ability. Yang Cune (2009) advocated that CLL mainly came from Rodgers’s “student as the center” theory. She analyzed that the elements of “non-directive teaching” and “whole-person” are included in CLL.

Meanwhile, many scholars began to pay attention to its application in classroom teaching. Liu Zehai (2008) studied how to apply CLL to reduce students’ anxiety in foreign language learning. To overcome the drawbacks of the current English teaching model in university, Huang Yabin (2011) used the CLL and humanistic psychology to explore the reform of the college English teaching model. Qu Yayuan (2012) believed that CLL was very useful for the new interactive English learning method. She argued that CLL could provide independent study space for college students and help them to increase confidence and improve their communicative ability in English Audio-visual-oral courses. Lv Xiaojuan (2015) studied how to apply CLL into higher vocational education to help students overcome anxieties in English learning because CLL could create a harmonious atmosphere and help establish a good relationship between teachers and students in class, which can improve the effect of English teaching. Many scholars have explored the application of CLL in English oral teaching, but few researches have paid attention to its application in writing teaching. Therefore, some study carried out an experiment to test the effect of CLL in junior English writing teaching and also studied the application of CLL in senior English writing teaching.

These scholars have made a great contribution to the development of Community Language Learning in English teaching and learning. In the beginning, most literature mainly focuses on the function of CLL in English teaching including cultivating students’ automatic learning ability and reducing their anxiety for English learning. Then, scholars begin to explore how to apply CLL in English teaching to improve the teaching effect from colleges to middle schools. The application of CLL changed from oral English to English writing teaching for the purpose of

creating a relaxing learning atmosphere, reducing students' learning anxiety and cultivating their cooperative ability.

Although there are some researches on CLL, it is still far from adequate. Nearly there are no more than three articles for each topic about CLL. Domestic scholars can pay more attention the development of CLL and adjust it in English teaching according to different teaching situations. Most of these researches focus on the theoretical level, but CLL need to be more put into practice in the future. What' s more, CLL in fact is consistent with the advocated idea of cooperative learning and learner-centeredness nowadays. However, CLL is few mentioned in present English teaching and few researches pay attention to combine CLL with other new teaching method to make it appropriate for the present language teaching. It is necessary to integrate CLL into different class types of English including speaking, reading and writing from junior, senior high schools to college English. In fact, there are many perspectives of CLL are worth exploring deeply.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, there is no denying the fact that Community Language Learning is a teaching approach that is beneficial to help learners develop comprehensive language ability and cooperative ability. It not only pays attention to learners' cognitive development but also lay emphasis on their affective development, which is consistent with the teaching ideology of current education, such as all-round development of the individual and learner-centeredness. Therefore, community language learning can still be adjusted and adopted in the present language teaching. More researches should be done from the perspective of the application of CLL in different class types in different learning stages so that the function of CLL can be fully utilized.

References

- [1] Abraham Daniela B. (2023). Cultivating Community through Language Learning in a Benedictine Seminary Network. *Religions*, 14(3), 299-299.
- [2] Ellis, R. (1985). *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [3] Hopkins, D. A. (1985). *Teacher's Guide to Classroom Research*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- [4] Jack C, Richards. & Theodore S, Rodgers. (2012). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press : Cam.
- [5] La Forge, P. G. (1977). Uses of Social Silence in the Interpersonal Dynamics of Community Language Learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 11(4), 373-382.
- [6] La Forge, P. G. (1983). *Counseling and Culture in Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- [7] Mackey, W. F. (1972). *Bilingual Education in a Binational School*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.
- [8] Moskowitz, G. (1978). *Caring and Sharing in the Foreign Language Class*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.
- [9] Rogers, C. R. 1951. *Client-Centered Therapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- [10] Samimy, K. A. (1989). Comparative Study of Teaching Japanese in the Audio-Lingual Method and the Counseling- learning Approach. *The Modern Language Journal*.
- [11] Shannon, J. (1994). Experimenting with a community language learning principle in an ESL second language writing class. ERIC Document ED373583.
- [12] Yuqian Huang. (2023). New Dimensions of Professional Development of Middle School Foreign Language Teachers from the Perspective of Learning Community. *International Journal of New Developments in Education*, 5(10).

- [13] Chen Haisong (2004). Club Language Learning Method and Adult English Teaching Journal of Anhui University of Education (01), 102-103.
- [14] Dai Jingjing (2008). Rogers' dual subject thinking from "student-centered" to the club learning method Technology Information (Academic Research) (12).
- [15] Huang Yabin, Zhang Jianhui & Chen Ying (2011). Exploring a new model of college English teaching that adapts to social development based on the theory of community language learning method Journal of Heilongjiang Ecological Engineering Vocational College (04), 121-123.
- [16] Li Hui (2007). The manifestation of emotional factors in club language learning methods Technology Information (Academic Research) (32), 26+29.
- [17] Li Yufei (2019). The Application of Club Language Learning Method in High School English Teaching Farm Staff (08), 268.
- [18] Liu Zehai (2008). Using the club learning method to solve foreign language learning anxiety Science and Technology Information (Science Teaching and Research) (07), 23-24.
- [19] Lv Xiaojuan (2015). The Application of Club Language Learning Method in English Classroom Teaching in Vocational Colleges Literary Education (Part 2) (03), 88-89.
- [20] Ma Yaxing (2019). Exploring the Teaching Strategies of Club Language Learning (CLL) under the Background of College English Teaching Reform Journal of Changchun Normal University (01), 176-178+186.
- [21] Qu Yayuan (2012). The application of club learning method in the design of interactive English audio-visual teaching Overseas English (10), 112-113+128.
- [22] Yang Cun (2009). Interpretation of Club Learning Method Journal of Hotan Normal College (28).