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NEED OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING METHOD IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

spite o f n developments in English Language Teaching and popularity of CLT in many countries as a comprehensive approach, there are many states in India where English language is still facing a very precarious situation. These include mainly the north Indian states. Overall scenario of teaching English in these states is dismal as the graduates passing out from the colleges and universities here are unemployable. No need to say that the sole reason for such a large number o f unemployables is lack of communicative competency in the students. So, it is the need of the hour to change the existing syllabuses and reframe the new ones by following CLT approach. It will definitely bring about a positive change in the Indian scenario of small towns where the young ones have inferiority complex just



because of their being incompetent in communicative skills.

KEY WORDS: CLT, EFL in India, Efforts in India...and soon.

INTRODUCTION:

In recent decades, teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have been encouraged to implement Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to help develop students' abilities to use English appropriately in context. CLT advocates teaching practices that develop communicative competence in authentic contexts (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). To improve students' abilities to use English in real contexts, CLT has been adopted in the settings of EFL colleges (Littlewood, 2007, pp.40, 243-249). However, the theories and practices of CLT have faced various challenges in many EFL contexts (Anderson, 1993, 21, 417-480; Ellis, 1996, pp.213-218; Li, 1998, 677-703; Liao, 2000, 6(10); Wu, 2001, 191-194; Takanashi, 2004, 17(1), 1-14).

CLT ADVANTAGE

As said above, there are few universities which have changed their syllabuses and follow the l a t e s t t e a c h i n g t e c h n i q u e s. M a n y teachers who have taught and observed the development of students in both earlier 'literature focused curriculum' and the current curriculum 'focusing on communicative competence' feel that the CLT approach for teaching English has certainly an edge over the earlier approaches. This is because of the following factors:

• Students stay engaged throughout the class because there are lots of activities which keep them busy.

• The interest level of the students is much more than their interest level in the old syllabus because the topics chosen are related to their day to day problems.

• The confidence of the learners automatically increases very fast because of each individual's participation.

• Hesitation goes away.

• Exam fear also goes away due to the lesser number of texts.

• The learners develop their own sense of answering when many things are discussed with them beyond the text.

• Inclusion of soft-skills in the curriculum

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designed on CLT approach prepares the learners for the job market.

Due to the integrated skills approach in a syllabus designed on CLT pattern, the entire four skills essential for a language are covered. Whereas reading and writing skills are covered in the usual classes, Language Labs cover the listening and speaking skills. The difference in students between the two stages i.e. pre and post Language Labs becomes obvious after a certain period. It clearly indicates that the Language labs give a tremendous ignition to the desire of a learner to speak English. The learner's accent, pronunciation, stress, tone etc. are controlled and modified according to the standard pattern.

ACCURACY/FLUENCY

Developing fluency is also one of the goals of Communicative Language Teaching. Fluency is natural language use occurring when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible and ongoing communication despite limitations in his or her communicative competence. Fluency is developed by creating classroom activities in which the students must negotiate meaning, use communication strategies, correct misunderstandings and work to avoid communication breakdowns.

RESPONSIBILITY

The need for good communication skills has always been there. But good communication skills have become crucial in the information age we live in. For this, the teachers must make the learners realize the importance of communication skills (in English) in today's world. With the number of foreign investors flocking to India and the growth of outsourcing, English has come to play a key role in professional relationships between foreign and Indian companies. With the onslaught of IT and ITES companies, English has become the language of employability and good command over it is considered a unique qualification. So, now, more than ever it becomes the moral duty of the teachers of English not only to create and sustain motivation levels of the college students, but also adopt new innovative methods while teaching, to make the learners communicatively competent.

As said above, it is the duty of a teacher to adopt the best method or technique while teaching English, but the teacher will be helpless in a situation where the authorities/central bodies that control the institutions do not help him/her. It is because the syllabuses based on CLT pattern are generally Task Based and Learner Centred. The tasks or activities carried out in the classrooms require some infrastructure different from the usual old styled classrooms. For example, the usual desks/benches in colleges are heavy and become a hindrance if groups or pairs are to be formed for discussions etc. For that purpose, light weight separate chairs are required. Also, since the students do not rely on the teacher for a model but be comfortable with listening to their peers in group or pair work tasks, the classrooms tend to become noisy which may disturb the adjacent classes. So, not only the infrastructure but an entire separate wing for the language classes is needed. In addition, shorter class sizes, treating English as an important subject like other subjects and supporting the innovative teachers can help to improve the scenario of bad communication skills. For these and other such things the support of the governing authorities becomes essential.

But again, in spite of the above said factors about the governing bodies, the teacher cannot run away from his/her responsibility. The teacher has to develop a different view of learners' errors and of his/her own role in facilitating language learning. It becomes his or her utmost duty to devote maximum time to the activities to be carried out and give every chance for the learners to speak. In the task based syllabuses, the selected texts are contemporary, relevant to the socio-cultural needs of the students and are usually kept smaller in length and lesser in number. This is done so as to devote maximum number of teaching hours to the activities to enhance the learners' communicative competence. So, only such teachers, who are trained and believe in the positive result of these kinds of activities, can do justice while following CLT approach.

EFFORTS IN INDIA

In the recent past, some efforts have definitely been made in India to improve the teaching of English. With the inception of 'Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)' in late 1960s, English teaching has been affected positively showing some hopeful signs of modifications and modernization. These signs include introduction of CLT curriculum by Central Board of School Education in all its affiliated schools, introduction of 'English for Specific

Purposes (ESP)' in some Indian schools, infusion of technology with the teaching of English in the form of Language Labs, availability of the native English Language to the Indian people with the widespread availability of cable Television in India, realization of English as the most preferred language of the global information highway by the new generation with the rise of computer expertise and internet and reframing of the curriculum by some universities on CLT pattern. But there still remain many problems and there are few universities which follow the CLT pattern.

NEED TO ADOPT CLT METHOD

The need for good communication should be realized by one and all. Also, fluency in English being a prerequisite for success and advancement in many fields of employment in today's world, the demand for an appropriate teaching methodology is therefore as strong as ever. Obviously, when communicative competence is the essential requirement in the global scenario today, CLT becomes the best approach to be followed. Communicative Language Teaching has been widely implemented since 1990s. The wide acceptance of the Communicative Approach and the relatively varied way in which it is interpreted and applied can be attributed to the fact that practitioners from different educational traditions can identify with it and consequently interpret it in different ways. And since it draws on a number of diverse sources, there is no single or agreed upon set of principles that characterizes current CLT. CLT today refers to a set of generally agreed upon principles that can be applied in different ways, depending on the teaching context, the age of the learners, their level, and their learning goals and so on. Today, Communicative Language Teaching continues in its classic form around the world as seen in the huge range of course books and other teaching resources that cite CLT as the source of their methodology. In addition it has influenced many other language teaching approaches that subscribe to a similar philosophy of language teaching.

CONCLUSION:

It seems that Communicative Language Teaching will continue to be the major general language teaching methodology in the coming years as its principles are supported by the English language teaching profession and by ELT/TESOL specialists and applied linguists. The comprehensiveness of this approach makes Communicative Language Teaching different in scope and status from all the other approaches in the teaching of English and hence its success so far.

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