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Communicative Language Teaching

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KEY QUESTIONS

- What is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)?
- How is CLT related to other proficiency-based approaches to language teaching?
- How relevant or adaptable is CLT to language teaching contexts worldwide?

EXPERIENCE

Experience #1: Teaching Young Adult Learners in an ESL Context

It is Monday morning and a group of young adult English as a second language (ESL) learners have just arrived for their language class. The teacher starts the class by asking the students about their weekend:

Teacher: So what did you do this weekend?

Student 1: I ran my first marathon!

Teacher: Wow! Did you finish?

Student 1: Yes, eventually… But I can barely walk today!

Several students: Congratulations! Way to go!

Student 2: I saw the latest Harry Potter movie!

Student 3:	How did you like it?
Student 2:	It was great but not as good as the last one.
Teacher:	Did anyone else do anything interesting?
Student 4:	I stayed home and finished today's assignment--ha, ha!
Several students:	(Groan…)

The discussion continues for a few more minutes and one student finally asks the teacher if she had a good weekend. She replies and then announces the focus of today's class: producing personal narratives in the past tense.

WHAT IS COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING?

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is an approach to language teaching that emphasizes learning a language first and foremost for the purpose of *communicating* with others. Communication includes finding out about what people did on the weekend, as in Experience #1, or on their last vacation, and learning about classmates' interests, activities, preferences, and opinions and conveying one's own. It may also involve explaining daily routines to others who want to know about them, discussing current events, writing an email message with some personal news, or telling others about an interesting book or article or YouTube clip. Although the concept of communication underlying CLT may seem self-evident as a goal for language education, a generation ago (and still in many parts of the world today) teaching and learning another language was often more concerned with language analysis, literary text analysis, memorization, translation, or high-stakes multiple-choice language testing. Instead of describing one's own weekend, students might have read a passage and changed all present tenses to past

tense forms or translated the passage into their first language (L1). Learning how to express and interpret ideas in speech or in writing in their second language (L2) and getting to know classmates or other L2 users better were not priorities. Often people did not imagine ever needing to communicate with others using the language being taught. Or the educational culture they were in and theories of learning at the time placed a premium on linguistic knowledge, such as the ability to analyze grammar and vocabulary, rather than the ability to use the language to speak or write to others about topics of mutual concern.

This chapter examines the principles and history of CLT, how and why it has evolved, what it represents today, and directions for CLT in the future. The relationship between CLT and other proficiency- or competency-based approaches to language education is also considered. Finally, we consider how communicative competence might be reconceptualized for the purposes of language education given the changes in the nature of communication in the 21st century. This involves a growing assortment of new media and interfaces for communicating and sharing information, especially using English.

Reflections on your own Experiences as a Language Learner

Think of your own experiences of learning another language through formal instruction. Was the language you learned a "modern" language that is used in everyday communication in some region of the world or was it a classical language, such as Latin, learned more for the study or reproduction of particular sacred or literary texts but not widely spoken in society? What were your goals for learning the language? Did the instructional methods used support those goals? Did you have opportunities to interact with others in the classroom using the language or in other contexts outside of class or online? Or, did the instruction place much more emphasis on memorizing lists of vocabulary items, grammatical forms, sentence patterns, and rules mainly for

the purpose of using those structures appropriately on tests of grammar, vocabulary, and translation?

Historically, classical and modern languages were often required courses at school and university and taught as a form of intellectual and literary enrichment, with no expectation that students would ever have the opportunity to use the language for either face-to-face communication or to correspond with other readers and writers of the language for their own purposes. In some contexts, however, the requirements might be much more rigorous, involving speaking and listening and not just reading and writing, beginning with primary education and continuing throughout one's educational and professional career. Yet many such programs place considerable emphasis on grammatical and lexical sophistication and accuracy with much less emphasis on fluency and the ability to use the language for meaningful communication with others.

The traditional grammar- and text-based approach to teaching and learning language for the sake of engaging with literary works or mastering the grammatical conventions of language is still cultivated in many institutions and can constitute important intellectual and meta-linguistic activity (i.e., building an awareness of how language functions as a system). However, people have many other reasons for learning languages than the study of grammar and classic literary texts; these reasons relate to increasing levels of immigration and transnationalism worldwide, migrant worker programs, and opportunities for travel and international education. In addition, the Internet, globalization, more knowledge-based economies, and new information and communication technologies have all had an impact on language learning and use as well as on perceptions about its significance in people's lives. Learners may need to learn and use a second or foreign language such as English in order to participate in public education, to obtain employment, to communicate with relatives, friends, or colleagues who speak that language, to

travel to regions of the world where the language is spoken, or to communicate with newcomers in their own neighborhoods who speak the language.

Experience #2: CLT in a Secondary School English as a Foreign Language Class

It has sometimes been argued that CLT is more appropriate in ESL curricular contexts, as in Experience #1, where English is spoken more widely in the local community, than in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, where it is not the dominant local language. Indeed, there has sometimes been resistance to CLT in EFL contexts (Littlewood, 2011). Yet, there are still ways in which the principles of CLT can be applied, adopted, or adapted in EFL contexts. This was apparent in a 40-minute lesson I observed in 2009 in a well-resourced, public, urban secondary school classroom in China with over fifty Grade 11 (Senior Year 2) students.

The topic is art and architecture, based on a unit in the textbook *Senior English for China, Student Book 2A* (PEP Curriculum Team, 2003b, Unit 3). The teacher begins by asking the students to generate words or phrases that they associate with the word *art* (e.g., they volunteer *beauty, creative, opera, music, architecture,* and *culture*). Using a PowerPoint (PPT), she then shows them images of some famous works of both modern and classical art (e.g., the Mona Lisa and a famous Chinese painting) and then iconic architectural landmarks from around the world, such as the Eiffel Tower. The teacher asks students to guess the name and location of the works shown and to decide what they have in common. They offer such responses as *They are special… beautiful… creatively designed…famous*. The linguistic goal of the lesson is to introduce and review vocabulary related to art and architecture, and also grammatical structures for expressing a preference for one artistic or architectural style over another, such as the advantages and disadvantages of traditional versus modern Chinese houses. Guided by the teacher, students compare images of modern houses (apartments) and more traditional courtyard-

style houses. Then, in groups of four, the students discuss which housing style they would want to live in, and why. Students exchange their personal preferences and compare the different layouts of traditional and modern housing and ways of describing them. Finally, for the main task for the lesson, which takes 10-15 minutes, the students, in small groups again, discuss and design their "dream house" and then present it to the class, after which others give their impressions of the dream house. The lesson ends with a summary of the main conceptual and linguistic points of the lesson (modern vs. traditional architecture, shapes and styles of housing, and building materials, such as concrete or wood).

In their lesson the following day, they continue with this theme, discussing a reading about some of the buildings designed for the Beijing 2008 Olympics, such as the "Bird's Nest" national stadium. Most of the class is conducted in English.

What aspects of this class are consistent with CLT? First, like the teacher in Experience #1, this teacher has students communicating in English, to the extent possible or desirable, about their personal experiences, opinions, and interests. Second, they discuss students' knowledge and understandings of art and architecture. They also discuss their preferences for certain kinds of artistic form. Third, a great deal of interaction (questions, responses, requests for more information and for their opinions) occurs between the teacher and students. Fourth, to encourage additional oral language practice and a more personalized discussion of the topic, the teacher has students work together, here in groups of four, to create the prototype of their "dream house." They are therefore communicating with one another—negotiating meanings and preferences and showing their creativity through drawings—and then communicating with others in the class, as well. Finally, the students are asked to explain why they chose certain features and not others. There are many points of intersection between the curriculum and the students' own lives, their background knowledge, perspectives, and even hopes or dreams.

The teacher's approach to teaching this lesson is constrained by a number of factors in addition to class size: lesson length, prescribed textbook materials (supplemented by the teacher's PPT slides) and learning outcomes. Teachers and students are held accountable for the curriculum with monthly examinations for all classes in the same grade, culminating in their final year with the high-stakes College Entrance Examination, which determines students' higher education prospects and places considerable emphasis on English grammar. Even so, this very experienced teacher has managed to find ways of engaging students in interactions about the topic, and has also highlighted the language structures required to complete the task effectively that were also in the textbook: e.g., nouns: *architecture; balcony, furniture*; adjectives: *classical, modern*; expressions of preference: *I'd rather…; In my opinion..,; What I like is*…; and grammar (past participles used as object complements: We *want* traditional materials (to be) *used*; and hypothetical conditionals: *If I were to build a house, I would*…). The students seem genuinely interested in the lesson and are able to express themselves. The teacher espouses CLT but concedes that she must provide balanced instruction given the very language-focused curriculum mandated by the province.

CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS OF CLT

The CLT movement, often also referred to as "the communicative approach," began in the 1970s to address shifting priorities in both education and society associated with socio-economic trends at the time in continental Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Addressing the needs of mobile or migrant language learners wishing to convey and interpret meanings in actual social contexts became paramount. They often had very practical needs like getting a job, buying groceries, finding housing, or speaking to neighbors. Giving learners the

tools to communicate and some choice regarding what they might want to say or write as well as the freedom to experiment with language use distinguished CLT from other widely used approaches based on pattern drilling, recitation, and grammatical analysis (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

An important parallel development taking place within theoretical linguistics was an emphasis on understanding the functions of language in a variety of social contexts. This included analyzing the kinds of adaptations that competent speakers know how to make when speaking to others of higher versus lower status, when speaking formally versus informally, when talking about technical or academic topics versus everyday subjects, and when interpreting others' speech and writing, among other facets of sociolinguistics (the study of language use in society). Savignon (1983, 2001, 2005, 2007), an American proponent of CLT, documented some of these shifts in European and British functional linguistics and also their impact on language teaching internationally since then.

The growing convergence in social and functional orientations in linguistics, along with the needs of learners seeking practical language skills for social, academic, occupational, and other purposes in the UK and continental Europe, gave rise to a very pragmatic and learner-centered approach to language teaching and learning. In the United States, similarly, a more socially oriented linguistics was proposed by Hymes (1971). He argued that to function in society, to be able to use language appropriately in social situations, speakers must know how to produce and interpret language for a wide range of purposes, and as part of different types of activities in many settings, and with a variety of interlocutors. This ability to use language effectively, which native speakers of a language often take for granted, is known as *communicative competence*. Communicative competence was contrasted with idealized, abstract representations of grammatical knowledge (linguistic competence) or intuitions that native

speakers have about language (e.g., Chomsky, 1965) with little reference to the observed real-world linguistic behaviors, needs, or intentions of speakers.

In addition to changes in society and linguistics that gave rise to the new field of sociolinguistics, psychological theories of learning were also evolving from more behavioral to more cognitive and social approaches. New insights about the nature of L1 and L2 learning, skill acquisition, comprehension, production, and memory, in particular, acknowledged the interplay of multiple factors in successful language learning and education, going well beyond rote skills. Among the many insights generated by the newer learning theories was that learners need to be actively and socially engaged in constructing meaning (either as readers/listeners or as speakers/writers) by interacting with both their textual environment (e.g., linguistic and non-linguistic material, ideas and texts) and with other language users. They need to attend simultaneously to the basic building blocks of language, such as morphemes (the smallest units of meaning or structure in language), words (which may include more than one morpheme), and grammatical structures (a "bottom-up" approach to processing information) and also to the larger meanings and types of discourse being conveyed (a more "top-down," holistic approach).

In our earlier examples students were engaged in discourse about past events and leisure activities (Experience #1) and preferred types of art, architecture, and housing (Experience #2). Students need to become effective communicators in their L2 using many kinds of language (or discourse)—to compare and contrast items, describe sequences in a complicated process or narrative, categorize and classify information, present the causes and effects of different actions or events, provide evaluations, persuade people by making a good argument, or use language creatively to express themselves. Thus, the ability to learn and use grammar effectively, though clearly important, is only part of being able to communicate well. Appropriate registers or styles of speech (academic, non-academic; formal, informal) and other socially appropriate ways of

engaging in oral or written communication (making requests, complimenting others, complaining, apologizing, expressing humor or passion) are also required in particular situations.

To develop communicative abilities, it was argued, learners need to experience or practice communicating in the language they are learning by negotiating meanings with others (e.g., Scarcella, Andersen, & Krashen, 1990). The term *negotiation of meaning* comes up often in discussions of CLT and it refers to efforts to make oneself understood and to understand others—to convey messages or meanings--by asking such questions as “Is this what you mean?” or “Do you understand what I’m trying to say?” After all, communication—and learning—cannot occur if people don’t understand what others have tried to express. The first wave of research in the new subfield of second language acquisition (SLA), also provided compelling evidence that learners do not simply learn what they are taught or are exposed to, especially if the grammatical and lexical (vocabulary) structures are too complicated or too numerous, or if students are not cognitively (mentally) “ready” to acquire them (Ellis, 1994).

In Canada, French immersion researchers Canale and Swain (1980) began to operationalize communicative competence for the purposes of instructing and assessing English-speaking learners of French in special programs in which most of the instruction was delivered in French. They sought to compare students’ ability to communicate in their L2, French, with that of native French speakers or with learners of French in more traditional L2 programs. In addition to *grammatical competence*, long the hallmark of language teaching internationally, the following three components (defined below) were added: *sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence*, and later, *discourse competence* (Canale, 1983). These four kinds of competence represent interrelated aspects of being able to use language effectively for purposes of communication both inside and outside of classrooms.

Whereas grammatical competence refers to the ability to use and interpret sentence-level features of language effectively, including vocabulary (lexis), syntax (grammar), morphology (word construction), semantics (meaning), and phonology (the mapping of structure and meaning onto sound patterns), the other domains of competence operate across different levels of language—from the word or sentence level to the larger social and discourse contexts. These larger units of language involve strings of phrases, sentences, or spoken utterances and the ability to cope with communicative needs in interactional contexts in strategic ways. An example of strategic language use is being able to paraphrase or find a synonym when unable to retrieve a word or other desired expression. So if learners cannot think of the English word *enormous*, but produce *very large, huge,* or *gigantic,* they have strategically managed their communication by finding a similar expression.

These additional, newly elaborated and tested kinds of competence under the larger umbrella of communicative competence were important because they signaled to teachers, administrators, textbook writers, testers, and language learners themselves that learning phrase-level or sentence-level grammar and vocabulary alone does not enable one to communicate well across a variety of contexts. Furthermore, people must learn to create and comprehend cohesive and coherent oral and written texts on different topics (reflecting discourse competence); that is, they must produce language that makes sense, with ideas tied together in a logical, smooth manner, so the relationship between ideas and sentences is clear, involving neither too much repetition nor too much disconnected switching between topics or other things being discussed. They must also learn to produce and interpret different genres or types of language use (e.g., a dialogue, a short narrative, a news or weather report, a personal letter, or a research paper) and in different disciplines or content areas (e.g., in the sciences vs. the humanities). Learners cannot be expected to know everything there is to know about language across disciplines though—not

even native speakers do—since language learning, including L1 learning, is a lifetime process guided by need and opportunity.

Other aspects of language education not originally given prominence in CLT include critical thinking (e.g., Benesch, 1993) and critical literacies (e.g., Pennycook, 1999), which are now sometimes folded into CLT as well (see Byrd & Schuemann, this volume). Critical thinking refers to the ability to analyze information rationally, solve problems, and discern and evaluate implicit assumptions, values, and points of view, while considering alternative perspectives; critical literacies refers to similar analytic skills applied to various kinds of texts--reading between the lines--to expose issues of bias (both explicit and implicit), misrepresentation, and possible manipulation of readers and listeners by texts and to consider alternative interpretations or versions of the same texts.

Despite CLT's origins in the teaching of European languages in Europe, the UK, and North America, its current reach is much more global, with educators worldwide recognizing the importance of a more functional and practical approach to language education. CLT is by no means a uniform "method," however. If anything, like the term *democracy*, *CLT* is being used to describe an increasingly diverse array of practices, principles, and contexts.

Indeed, many scholars have wondered whether the term CLT has outlived its usefulness because of the many different ways it has been interpreted and applied. However, Littlewood (2011) argues that "CLT still serves as a valuable reminder that the aim of teaching is not to learn bits of language but to 'improve the students' ability to communicate'" and that "every country needs people who can communicate internationally" (p. 542). He also asserts that both *analytical* and *experiential* aspects of language learning are valuable. Therefore, CLT should emphasize learners' experiences with language, life, and the curriculum *and* language analysis.

As was suggested above, the implementation of CLT is very context-dependent, based on local language education policies, educational cultures, assessment practices, and the availability of proficient and trained teachers and resources (e.g., textbooks, multimedia, classroom layouts, and number of students per class). Local demographics and languages and the primary purposes for which languages are being taught and learned must be considered. No two countries or contexts are identical.

According to Richards (2006), language instruction and learning in the early decades of CLT focused on fluency and the integration of language skills, rewarding learners' efforts to speak or write even if errors resulted. Many kinds of instructional activities were recommended, from mechanical language practice initially, involving the entire class or individuals, to much more open-ended communicative practice, some of it requiring either one-way or two-way exchange of information through activities in which partners need to share and consolidate information to carry out the task. These principles still apply. However, now other types of activities such as inductive, discovery-oriented learning are also encouraged where students try to find patterns in language texts and datasets (e.g., common collocations of words, and guess their meanings or usage). The teacher's role is to create a nurturing, collaborative learning community and worthwhile activities for students. Richards' own English language textbooks embody CLT principles as well (e.g., *New Interchange,* Richards, 1998; and *Passages,* Richards & Sandy, 2008). The existence of a flexible curriculum over which the teacher and students have a fair amount of control and input, small class sizes, and relatively little formal assessment is assumed in much CLT pedagogy, however, unlike the situation in Experience #2.

How does CLT Relate to other Proficiency-based Approaches to Language Teaching?

As CLT was developing, particularly for adult English language teaching, other highly compatible theoretical frameworks were being developed. Three are discussed in this section.

1. American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Standards

The first related "proficiency" framework or model that arose alongside CLT is the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Standards for Foreign Language Learning for the 21st Century, also known as the "Five Cs" model. This model consisted of the following components:

- Communication – fostering *communication* within and across cultures (oral and written);
- Cultures – encouraging the development of deep *cultural understanding* and insight;
- Connections – forging *connections* with other disciplines and information sources;
- Comparisons – facilitating metalinguistic and metacultural understanding by *comparing* one's own and the target language;
- Communities – making connections with multilingual *communities* of target-language speakers near and far and becoming lifelong learners (American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages, n.d.).

Each component represents an interlocking knowledge domain for language education although communication (the first "C") is part of all of them. This model, which evolved in the late 20th century, is widely used in postsecondary and, increasingly, elementary and secondary foreign language ("world language") programs across the United States (Omaggio Hadley, 2001; Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Like CLT, the ACTFL Standards movement stresses contextualizing language itself, contextualizing learning activities and language use, fostering communication, and integrating the learning of language, culture, communication, and (academic) content of different types within and across communities. An emphasis on oral-aural language, particularly at lower

levels, was a remedy to earlier approaches devoted to written literary text analysis and interpretation at the expense of a wider range of functional oral abilities on the part of college-level learners in particular (Higgs & Clifford, 1982).[1]

Also like CLT, learning theories informing the model underscored both top-down and bottom-up orientations to learning and processing language. People must be able to attend to global meanings and structures of texts (What is the overall purpose and meaning of the text and what cultural or other background knowledge is relevant?) and to details (What vocabulary or grammatical forms are involved and what meanings are being conveyed by these?) at more or less the same time (see Shrum & Glisan, 2010). However, when first exposed to oral or written texts, students may need to focus initially on more holistic, top-down strategies which enable them to understand the linguistic elements used. In addition, the three primary modes of communication cultivated by this proficiency-based approach are known as *interpersonal* (e.g., conversing, exchanging ideas or information with others), *interpretive* (providing impressions or understandings of content), and *presentational* (e.g., communicating through oral or written reports, public speaking). Assessment, according to ACTFL guidelines, includes determining the functional level of students as Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, or Superior.[2]

2. <u>Common European Framework of Reference for Languages</u>

A second framework or model with communicative ability and proficiency at its core originated in Europe and is now spreading to other parts of the world. It is known as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2011; see Links). Developed under the direction of the Council of Europe, CEFR is an impressive, functional approach to task-based teaching and assessment designed for at least 20 languages across a broad spectrum of proficiency levels (Broeder & Martyniuk, 2008; Little, 2007). CEFR now guides language teaching policies, planning, and assessment in countries in the European Union and is

gaining ground in the Asia-Pacific region, Canada, and elsewhere. CEFR encourages learners, teachers, and teacher educators to collect evidence of learners' proficiency and language learning biographies through various media, including multimedia personal learning portfolios that include statements and illustrations of what learners *can do* in the various languages that are part of their L2 or multilingual repertoire (Duff, 2008; Little, 2007).

Like ACTFL, which provides descriptors of different levels of proficiency, CEFR is based on a common template that enables people working in different program contexts to have the same (i.e., "common") frame of reference for what is meant by a "basic," "independent," or "proficient" user (using CEFR labels). Functional descriptors help direct pedagogy by focusing teachers' and students' attention on practical competencies and serve as a means of assessing students' abilities and progress. Having a shared framework that is understood by other end-users also allows for greater mobility and information sharing as learners move across or through different institutions and countries. Increasingly, programs adopting one or the other scale (i.e., ACTFL or CEFR) also specify expected learning outcomes in terms of the level students are expected to reach after specified types and amounts (hours or years) of instruction. For example, a "Basic" A2-level learner, according to CEFR (2011), can (or is expected to) do the following:

> Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate basic need (p. 24).

At a much higher level, on the other hand, a "Proficient" C1-level learner is described as follows:

> Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices (p. 24).

3. <u>Canadian Language Benchmarks</u>

A third example of a communicative, proficiency-based framework embodying the principles of CLT is the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) 2000 (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000) project for adult English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in Canada (see Links). The theoretical rationale for the document, which includes benchmarks and tasks for diagnostic/placement, instructional, and assessment purposes, makes its CLT foundations very clear (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2002):

> The Canadian Language Benchmarks is based on a functional view of language, language use, and language proficiency. Such a view relates language to the contexts in which it is used and the communicative functions it performs. The focus of the Canadian Language Benchmarks is thus on communication and communicative proficiency in English as a second language. (p. 5)

The five communicative components promoted through the CLB 2000 also bear a direct relationship to the early theoretical development in Canada and elsewhere (e.g., Bachman, 1990) regarding features of communicative competence that can be assessed: *linguistic competence, textual competence* (coherence and cohesion), *functional competence* (ability to “convey and interpret communicative intent”), *sociocultural competence* (related to sociolinguistic

appropriateness), and *strategic competence* (managing actual communication across all components).

Other Curricular Program Types Compatible with CLT

Several other developments in language education that have had an impact on CLT are dealt with in more depth by other chapter authors in this volume. Here I briefly introduce a few of them.

1. Content-based language teaching

One curricular trend favors attention to content learning together with language learning. Known as *content-based language teaching* (or content and language integrated learning, CLIL, in Europe), this type of curriculum is usually found at intermediate to advanced levels of study and appears to be gaining in popularity worldwide, particularly in programs where English is the medium of instruction but not the language of the wider community or the students' L1. Content-based teaching is often adopted after students have participated in the equivalent of a year of intensive communication-based language instruction or several years of regular L2 coursework incorporating theme-based and task-based discussions and activities. However, these students have not yet studied a particular content area over a sustained period using the L2 (see Snow, this volume). Content-based approaches can also be used at lower proficiency levels, such as early immersion or bilingual programs in which students study curricular subjects (content) through the L2 following an initial period in which language arts and literacy are introduced in that language.

The rationale for content-based approaches is that students must communicate (read, write, speak, listen) in the L2 to make meaning and construct knowledge about topics using "authentic" texts, which are core principles in CLT. *Authentic,* a synonym for *genuine* (vs.

contrived, bookish, or *artificial*), refers to language naturally produced by speakers or writers of the target language; it also refers to the kinds of communication that people might normally engage in when using language. Very often the test of authenticity has been whether the language forms, texts, or types of interaction used for instructional purposes represent contemporary oral or written language produced or used by native speakers for purposes other than language teaching.

2. Academic/professional purposes language teaching

Closely related to content-based instruction is an increasing focus on learning to communicate more effectively in another language for *academic* or *professional purposes* (see Johns & Price, this volume). Teaching languages (especially English) for specific occupational, vocational, scientific, and academic purposes was an early priority of CLT internationally, for engineers, pilots, graduate students, hotel workers, and other groups. However, as more English learners worldwide participate in academic programs requiring high levels of oral and written communication, advanced CLT typically extends into academic study as well. Since learner-centered pedagogy has influenced academia in recent years as well, in lieu of transmission-based approaches in which teachers lecture and students passively take notes, students now work together to solve problems, create projects, and investigate real-world issues of interest to them.

Work from Australia that integrates sociocultural, functional, and communicative aspects of learning language for academic purposes has also had great traction (see Byrnes, 2006), especially in advanced language and literacy education. Much like Hymes' (1971) conceptualization of communicative competence but with a more fully elaborated application to education, Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (e.g., Halliday & Hasan,1985) focuses on text types, different registers and genres of language (e.g., in academic spheres), particular

audiences or interlocutors in various social contexts, and the linguistic resources or choices available to produce or interpret specific meanings.

3. <u>Task-based language teaching</u>

CLT spawned important developments in *task-based language teaching and learning* in the late 1970s that continue to be researched in terms of theory, pedagogy, and task and curriculum design (see Nunan, this volume). Now there is an increasing focus on more elaborate, multiskill and multimodal collaborative project work that involves many sub-tasks over an extended curricular period (e.g., Beckett & Miller, 2006).

4. <u>Service learning</u>

An additional area of increased curricular and extra-curricular activity for the development of communicative competence and community wellbeing is (community) *service learning*. Students are encouraged to use the language they are learning to assist other speakers of that language living within their own community—thereby gaining genuine language practice but also contributing to society by helping others. Service learning is now included in many language programs' community outreach and global citizenship efforts, for which students can receive course credit (e.g., Wurr & Hellebrandt, 2007). It is sometimes combined with content-based language learning, where issues related to immigration, housing, or social justice, for example, are dealt with in course readings and discussion. This academic content provides advanced linguistic material and helps students better understand the learning contexts they are in. In the U.S., for example, learners of Spanish might reach out to local (Spanish-speaking) Latino communities, or ESL learners in Canada might spend time at soup kitchens feeding local homeless people or interact with English-speaking seniors at a local nursing home. Thus, a growing number of approaches to contemporary language teaching stress communication skills, intercultural sensitivity, and social action, together with language and content learning.

CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS: ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES OF CLT IN TESOL

Two additional examples of English teaching informed by CLT are provided in this section, involving young children in an EFL context (Experience #3) and students in an academic preparation program at a Canadian university (Experience #4).

Experience #3: Teaching Young Learners in an EFL Context

In an elementary school in China, an enthusiastic English teacher is teaching nine-year-old students a lesson about discussing the weather. She begins by asking the students about the weather outside that day. Individual students reply: *It's warm… cloudy… sunny… fine,* and so on. The teacher continues by asking about the weather in other parts of China—e.g., up north, where it's much colder. She even pretends that she has caught a cold, shivering and sneezing, and asks the students to guess what is wrong. She then goes overs a dialog about two characters named Zip and Zoom, one of whom has traveled up north, where the weather is cold, and has caught a cold. The students do role plays of the dialog seated in pairs and then perform it at the front of the class. Later they sing a song about the weather. In subsequent classes, the teacher asks students about the weather at the beginning of class.

The colorful textbook series used at the school, *PEP Primary English* (PEP Curriculum Team, 2002, 2003a), in other chapters has students talk about their school, their families, their friends, their own personal characteristics (height, size, health, likes and dislikes), about holidays, and how they spent the last weekend. The curriculum aims to prepare students for language use that relates to their own lives and interests and not just those of the human and animal characters in the textbook. Section headings in each lesson also reflect CLT principles:

Let's Learn, *Let's Play*, *Let's Try*, *Let's Talk*, *Group Work*, *Let's Read*, *Pair Work*, *Task Time*, *Let's Sing*, *Story Time*, and *Let's Chant*.

However, as in all educational contexts, the same textbook and lesson content can be used in many different ways by different teachers, some much more effectively than others. This teacher tried to make the lesson as meaningful as possible to the children, relating the content to their lives and settings, and she also gave them opportunities to practice the lesson content in a variety of social participation formats (whole class, pairs, and groups of four), despite the large class size (60-70 students).

Experience #4: Fostering Communication in English for Academic Purposes Classes

Now consider what CLT principles might look like when applied to a completely different educational context, in an English for Academic Purposes (Listening and Speaking Skills) class at a university in western Canada. In addition to espousing principles of CLT, the instructor incorporates in the curriculum a social justice orientation to teaching known as critical pedagogy, which raises students' awareness of, and seeks to redress, various forms of oppression and unfairness in society (e.g., Benesch, 2001; Norton & Toohey, 2004). The students here are lower-advanced international and immigrant students. Students reflect on, discuss, and listen to news reports and watch and discuss films about social issues (e.g., discrimination) of different types, based on race, gender, class, sexuality, and certain political and cultural ideologies (see Royal, 2010).

First, the instructor aims to engage the students in a "negotiated curriculum" (Breen & Candlin, 1980), in which students have some choice regarding the topics to be included in the course, or aspects of assignments. This level of student involvement is not uncommon in CLT and particularly in ESL classes with adult immigrant students--to make it relevant to the students

and to give them a sense of ownership of the curriculum. One class activity early in the course asks students to discuss “the five most serious problems facing the world and then the five most serious concerns in their own lives.” The purpose is not only to broach social justice at the macro-societal level (about which students needed to reach group consensus and make a short presentation to the class later), but also to deal with students’ own lives and to give them a chance to discuss their perspectives with others in small groups. In the process, they get to know one another better, practice speaking English and listening to others, and offer advice and feedback to one another about homesickness, parental pressure, and the lack of opportunities to practice English outside of class. They also report back to the class the world problems they have identified. The curriculum involves problem-solving and role-plays related to academic life, and discussions about cultural issues in the community (e.g., arranged marriages). The students later report that they appreciated being able to discuss real-life problems, learn more about Canadian society and culture, talk about issues that were personally meaningful to them, and consider human rights, critical media literacy, and social and political issues not talked about in their countries of origin. These aspects are all clearly connected with learning to use English for both everyday and academic communication. The learning objectives included listening and speaking subskills, content objectives related to social justice, and employability skills, such as being able to take part in discussions, presentations, and interviews (for course purposes and job-seeking).

Although the contexts and goals for these two courses are completely different, both aim to make clear connections between the topics being discussed and the world outside the classroom. Both help build up students’ linguistic knowledge, enabling them to produce and interpret oral, written, and multimedia texts, use language actively, and relate topics to their own lives, interests, and understandings, whether as children or young adults.

Challenges in CLT

1. CLT in theory vs. practice

In an influential early study on CLT, Spada (1987) documented how teachers might say they were using a particular teaching method, especially a popular one such as CLT, but observations of their classroom teaching revealed wide disparities in their self-reports and actual practice. Some of the teaching processes the teachers characterized as "CLT" in her study were not at all communicative and seemed indistinguishable from earlier, more traditional approaches to language teaching.

My observations have also revealed how differently the same curriculum materials and objectives are taken up by individual teachers--some more focused on recitation and rote work and others more focused on truly communicating about topics in addition to working on language structures and skills. The teachers' confidence—and competence--in teaching and using English, managing class time, and covering the curriculum are major factors.

Sometimes teachers simply need additional mentoring and constructive suggestions from trusted colleagues to help them extend language practice into more personally meaningful directions. In one elementary school EFL classroom I observed, for example, an enthusiastic young teacher was teaching a lesson based on transportation and specifically about how people get to school. The class energetically rehearsed and even acted out statements in their textbook lesson such as "I go to school by bus" or "I go to school by taxi;" they also sang songs and chanted relevant lyrics and seemed fully engaged with the material. However, the teacher never asked any of the students how *they themselves* travel to school: On foot, by bus, bicycle, or by other means? By moving beyond the structures and prompts in materials from the textbook, PPT, and audio-recordings, the teacher could quite easily help students make connections between the

English expressions being taught and their own routines. This extension of the lesson would take relatively little time and would make the language more engaging and memorable.

One strategy to help preservice or inservice teachers learn concrete new ways of making their teaching more consistent with desired or mandated methods is to invite them to take part in "lesson study," an instructional approach in which sample lessons taught by highly effective teachers are videorecorded (with permission) and then analyzed for professional development purposes by groups of teachers.[3]

Even teachers who subscribe to the principles of communicative methodology must sometimes compromise their own beliefs about instruction in order to prepare students well for high-stakes assessment that might reward very traditional forms of knowledge, such as grammar and written error-detection. This negative effect of assessment practices on teaching, known as negative *washback*, plagues language teaching all over the world when written examinations do not match the curriculum, typically giving short shrift to oral, integrative communication skills because they are more expensive and logistically challenging to assess than grammatical or lexical knowledge.

Teachers embracing a communicative orientation usually need to be resourceful, constantly looking for current print-based and multimedia materials of potential interest to the class, and new formats for activities. Sometimes students are asked to bring in relevant materials as well. For example, the lessons in the Chinese English teaching materials for middle school students that I examined dealt with a number of topics that students said appealed to them, such as heroes (e.g., "great women," "freedom fighters"), Special Olympics, Australia, World Englishes, pop culture (movies, music), new technologies, and advertising. Sometimes students were asked to do Internet searches before class to contribute examples for the different topics.

2. <u>CLT and language education reforms</u>

Savignon (2007) offers examples of curricular reform in the direction of more communicative language education in Asia and Central America. She also documents some of the factors conspiring against a more truly communicative approach, related to testing or teacher development, teachers' L2 proficiency, and their epistemologies. Such challenges are particularly salient when teaching is extended to new contexts with inadequate preparation of teachers, such as in elementary schools in many regions of the world where the age of initial English education has been lowered and teachers are expected to teach English with insufficient training and L2 proficiency. Similarly, Hasanova and Shadieva (2008) describe challenges with implementing CLT in Uzbekistan. An online search of research on CLT yields a long list of dissertations around the world that have examined its relevance, utility, implementation, effectiveness and reception on the part of teachers, parents, administrators, students, and other stakeholders along with some of the challenges facing language education reform.

3. CLT and English as a lingua franca

Teaching in contexts where English is a *lingua franca,* or a widely used language among speakers of mutually unintelligible languages, also raises interesting challenges for CLT in terms of the desired accuracy-fluency balance that CLT now embraces (see Kirkpatrick, 2007). For example, many learners of English, even advanced speakers, often produce similar sorts of ungrammatical features (e.g., deleting 3rd-person *–s*, in *he go* instead of *he goe*s) and yet understand one another quite well. The argument goes: Why insist on accuracy in such structures when they are pervasive and do not seem critical to mutual understanding? However, some forms of ungrammatical language use can have serious consequences for L2 users. The issue, then, is how to determine what levels of accuracy are appropriate (and worth attaining) and for what purposes.

4. Classroom management and social organization

Finally, while CLT can be a very promising way of helping students to learn and use language, the social organization of activities must also be carefully considered and monitored to ensure its effectiveness. How students are perceived, referred to, or even grouped in class by themselves, by teachers, or by classmates in terms of their abilities, identities, proficiency level, or cultural backgrounds can have a direct impact on their learning and retention in courses (Duff, 2012).

FUTURE TRENDS

How and Why is CLT Evolving in the 21st Century?

Proponents of CLT maintain that, although it might not be possible to create exactly the kind of learning environment described by Richards (2006) for a variety of cultural and institutional reasons, much can nevertheless be learned from CLT to try to make learning under other conditions more meaningful, effective, and rewarding. CLT is evolving in response to contextual constraints, priorities, technological possibilities, and preferences. As Savignon (2007) points out, although certain aspects of CLT are commonly observed in Western teaching contexts, especially those involving European target languages, CLT does not or need not involve primarily oral or face-to-face communication and small group work, nor should CLT preclude the development of students' metalinguistic or meta-communicative awareness (i.e., understanding and being able to discuss both nonverbal and verbal elements of communication). Spada (2007) and Littlewood (2011) concur strongly with that view. Spada also notes that avoidance of the learners' L1 is not a necessary feature of CLT, although in early CLT that practice was common because migrant learners in the same class might come from diverse

language backgrounds and not share any common language apart from the L2. Furthermore, the goal was to have learners practice using the L2 as much as possible in all four skills.

In CLT, contextualization, meaning-making, and the usefulness of the language being learned and the activities being engaged in should be very evident in curriculum and instruction, keeping in mind that communication takes place in different ways, using different media. For example, I might read an online article in my L2 about the environment, but never discuss it with others. Yet I am interacting with the text and with its author. I might also write a journal in my L2 that is not intended for anyone but myself. But that too is certainly a form of communication and self-expression.

Information and communication technologies and CLT

Contemporary educational policy, curriculum, and pedagogy have been profoundly affected by impressive new global information and communication technologies used in many sectors of society. Twenty-first century competencies include being able to collaborate with others in processes of problem solving, data mining and induction, textual co-construction and negotiation, and cooperative report production and presentation even when working in different locations and connected by these new technologies. Language education is no exception. With growing access to Internet resources in many parts of the world, English language learners have a wealth of authentic oral, written, and multimodal texts at their disposal as well as linguistic corpora or concordancing programs, to help them solve linguistic puzzles of their own choosing and to work on projects with others elsewhere (see McCarthy & O'Keeffe, and Sokolik, this volume). They can take part in interactive YouTube creation or analysis or in blogs with English language users worldwide with shared interests (Dudeney, 2007; Dudeney & Hockly, 2007). Indeed, one of the benefits of developing communicative competence in more than one language

is precisely to tap into such resources for a variety of interpersonal, informational, and creative purposes.

In addition, forms of delivery and venues for CLT or communication-driven learning activity now increasingly include both in-class and out of class online programs involving websites, Internet-based project work, email, chat, blogs, wikis, Skype (a free means of teleconferencing or video-chatting with others via the computer), podcasts, and electronic portfolios. However, as new online tools and devices (e.g., mobile phones and small portable “tablet” computers with wireless capability) become more widely available and more versatile, new possibilities will exist for people to access and produce language in innovative ways online.

One particular innovation that is likely to evolve further is “virtual” or simulated worlds for educational purposes, such as Second Life.[4] Three-dimensional online sites (“worlds”) such as Second Life allow users to create different personas or identities for themselves. They can then interact with others (real people using their personas in that same virtual space), which they also co-create, by means of the L2 and tools for building a simulated physical or cultural environment. Language practice in such a game-like environment often appeals to adolescents and young adults accustomed to video gaming. However, virtual worlds such as Second Life are more than games. They provide a site for social, cultural, and intellectual networking mediated by language and increasingly, they are being used in university education in support of problem-solving, improved communication, and creativity (e.g., Bradley, 2009).

Live tutoring systems and other social networking tools that enable language learners to practice using language with others around the world are another growing phenomenon made possible by the Internet.[5] Indeed, the Internet, Skype, and other digital tools provide endless possibilities for teachers and students to connect with other L2 users for a variety of meaningful purposes, including the creation or analysis of pop culture (see Duff & Zappa-Hollman, in press;

Sokolik, this volume). Online discussion forums and distance learning, furthermore, are increasingly part of language courses and (other) academic courses as well, providing students alternative means of participating in and contributing to discussions outside of class (e.g., Yim, 2011). Students and classes in different locations can meet online via email, Skype, or other programs through formal or informal class exchanges or partnerships.

However, having access to a wealth of resources and new communication media does not in itself lead to learning; nor does it constitute sound pedagogy. Teachers (and learners in more self-directed learning contexts) must carefully select sites, activities, and texts to ensure that they are appropriate for the cognitive, social, and linguistic level of their students. For example, WebQuests[6] allow students to engage in tasks or projects involving sets of (authentic) online materials and media carefully preselected in advance by teachers, or students, if they are designing the WebQuest, from which students can use choose sources (see example in Dudeney & Hockly (2007) on how to be a responsible consumer of running shoes). But these activities should not just be a low-cost substitute for textbooks or printed handouts. Because of their multimodality (e.g., images, text, sound, links) and the ease of providing updates and thus recency of materials, students can easily access important media materials for analysis, synthesis, evaluation, transformation, and presentation.

CONCLUSION

Whereas early CLT focused on functional (oral) language ability in which fluency and comprehensibility were key, CLT now typically also integrates formal attention to language features in a variety of ways, from direct instruction and metalinguistic awareness-raising to more inductive learning through the use of language-corpus data (e.g., Spada, 2007; see also

McCarthy & O'Keeffe, this volume). In addition, a wider range of learning and communication formats now exist. Clearly CLT cannot offer a common template or prescription for all L2 teaching and learning contexts, or different ages and stages of learning, or all the different purposes for learning. However, making connections between formal instruction and students' own lives, interests, prior knowledge, and existing linguistic and sociocultural knowledge is a central tenet of not just CLT but current learning theory and pedagogy.

Developments in digital information and communication technologies, moreover, offer students almost limitless access to language input, interaction, and output; they also offer real purposes for communicating. Yet, like other innovations, the actual learning, skills, and forms of participation should be monitored carefully to ensure that they are compatible with learning objectives of the students and the programs. That is, novel interaction formats may initially engage students' interests but soon wear off if content is unsubstantial and motivation is not sustained in meaningful ways (see Dörnyei, this volume).

There is a renewed emphasis in education on teaching for global citizenship, intercultural understanding, and lifelong learning and not only for the development of language proficiency across skill areas for more immediate, local purposes. However, there is also a greater wariness of educational colonialism and orthodoxies that export language curricula, materials, tests, and methods to very diverse parts of the world but that might be incompatible with local priorities, purposes, and sensibilities. Moreover, new understandings of how communication takes place among speakers of English (as an L2 and lingua franca) suggest that a priority in language teaching (and teacher education), quite in keeping with the original focus of CLT, should be to maximize speakers' (or writers') intelligibility and comprehensibility—that is, their functional ability in real contexts of need and use--and not focus relentlessly on grammatical accuracy or any one culture's notions of cultural or sociolinguistic niceties.

In addition, according to sociocultural and critical pedagogical perspectives, the goals of language education should be to help learners find an appropriate "voice" and identity in their target language and feel confident enough as legitimate users of the language to pursue their own educational, career, and personal aspirations (Duff, 2012). After all, as we learn additional languages, we learn possibly as much about ourselves and our own languages and cultural frames of reference as we do about those of others (Kramsch, 1993). As Rifkin (2006) has pointed out, however, learners, programs, and those who make language education policies often underestimate how much time, exposure, and instruction is required to help learner achieve high levels of proficiency or communicative competence. The instruction needs to take place over a well-articulated, multi-year period and must be very carefully planned and delivered with students having ample opportunities to use the language.

SUMMARY

- CLT focuses on helping language learners communicate effectively in another language by enabling them to convey and interpret messages and meanings of various types for various real, or realistic, purposes.
- Some core principles of CLT include developing learners' confidence, fluency, resourcefulness (strategies) and autonomy in the L2, making language practice interesting and social, and teaching language skills, content, and forms that are useful, relevant, and meaningful.
- Teachers must ensure that learning is contextualized in discourse that is relevant to learners and appropriate to the curriculum; that the language appears in the kinds of genres or text types normally associated with a particular activity; and that activities are structured

(designed, modeled) in such a way that students have the means, the motivation, and the assistance to carry out tasks on their own and with others.

- CLT has evolved over the past four decades and has been adapted for use in a wide variety of curricular and cultural contexts and with new information and communication technologies.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Answer the questions in the section on "Reflections on your own experiences as a language learner" (p. X) and compare your experiences with those of two classmates.
2. What kinds of topics, communication activities (e.g., activities, role plays, presentations, debates), and participation formats (teacher-fronted, pair, small group) did you most enjoy using as a language learner, and why? Which did you enjoy using the least? Did the instruction enable you to use the language later in non-instructional situations? Can you recall any activity or project that integrated listening, speaking, reading and writing?
3. How do (or might) you use technology for language teaching and learning in your context? What constraints do you face? Do you think that you as a language learner or your (future) students would want to engage in virtual or simulated learning environments online? Why or why not? What possibilities might there be for other non-face-to-face interactions (via chat,

email, or online discussion groups) as a way of developing learners' communicative competence? What advantages do those have over more traditional print-based or face-to-face instruction and practice?

4. Is it reasonable to assume that CLT can be implemented in the same sort of curriculum and manner in EFL contexts, where students may never need or be able to interact in the target language as in ESL contexts where English is the dominant language in the wider community? How might you motivate students in EFL contexts to use English to take part in communicative activities?
5. Related to the previous question, how might the principles of CLT be applied or adapted to meet the challenges posed by the following sorts of contexts? Choose three situations from the list below to discuss with a classmate:
    a. Learners have limited access to new information and communication technologies or to authentic samples of oral or written language.
    b. Existing teaching materials represent a very different orientation to teaching.
    c. The goals are much more traditional, such as to help students pass high-stakes language tests like TOEFL.
    d. Class sizes are very large and acoustics are poor.
    e. Students seem to be shy and unaccustomed to discussing topics of a personal or social nature with one another and the teaching approach is very teacher-centered.
    f. Teachers (and students) have difficulty teaching using the L2 primarily due to a lack of proficiency in it.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Consider the generic topics of (1) My Community, (2) Technology in Modern Life, and (3) Popular Culture and Education. Together with a partner, brainstorm possibilities for creating a lesson plan (or possibly a whole unit related to one of these topics, comprising several lessons); include possible tasks that would allow you, as a teacher using CLT, to engage learners of specific ages and proficiency levels in a variety of stimulating, integrated oral and written activities related to one of these topics.
    a. What strategies would you use initially to arouse students' interest in the topic?
    b. What vocabulary and grammatical structures might be useful? How would you teach them?
    c. What images or multimedia might further arouse interest in the topic? What kind of pair- or small-group work would you have them do (if any)?
    d. What core task might be the focus?
    e. How might you adapt your teaching of these themes for more academic purposes?
    f. What cultural themes might be incorporated?
    g. How might you adapt the topic further if you wanted to address community issues more critically?
    h. What kind of project could students do if an entire unit or course focused on the topic?
    i. What kinds of literacy activities and assessment might you include?
2. Observe a language class and note which aspects of CLT seem to be present. Discuss ways in which the same lesson could be taught (even) more communicatively. If the original lesson was already consistent with CLT, discuss some alternate activities that you could use if you were to teach the same lesson.

3. For the lessons described in Examples #1 to #4 in the chapter, how might you adapt the topics for students of different ages (much younger or much older) and proficiency levels (much lower or much more advanced)?

FURTHER READING

Brandl, K. (2008). *Communicative language teaching in action: Putting principles to work.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall.

This is a very user-friendly, practical book especially suitable for novice foreign language teachers. Many examples of classroom activities are included.

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The author's approach to CLT, to theoretical understandings of communicative competence in language education, and to the professional development of teachers are worth examining.

Savignon, S. (Ed.). (2002). *Interpreting communicative language teaching: Contexts and concerns in teacher education.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

This edited volume examines some of the challenges of implementing CLT in language classrooms in different parts of the world, addressing issues of technology, learner autonomy, the misplaced emphasis on the "native speaker" as teacher and as goal, and problems with high stakes assessment that thwarts communicative teaching.

Spada, N. (2007). Communicative language teaching: Current status and future prospects. In J. Cummins & C. Davis (Eds.), *International handbook of English language teaching* (pp. 271-288). New York, NY: Springer.

The author's observations of CLT as a teacher educator and researcher are very insightful.

LINKS

http://www.actfl.org/files/public/StandardsforFLLexecsumm_rev.pdf

The ACTFL Standards can be found here.

http://www.learner.org/resources/series185.html?pop=yes&pid=2002

The ACTFL Standards are also presented and exemplified for a variety of languages in free online videos available courtesy of the Annenberg Foundation's (U.S.) series, Teaching Foreign Languages K-12: A Library of Classroom Practices, available here.

http://www.language.ca

The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000 provides an elaborate rationale for a communicative approach to teaching adult ESL and sample tasks, assessment, and literacy activities (for those with limited prior literacy).

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre_en.asp

The Common European Framework of Reference for Language also provides a set of benchmarks, framed as "can do" statements and objectives, and related tasks, for teaching languages to learners at different age and proficiency levels.

http://www.cambridge.org/other_files/downloads/esl/booklets/Richards-Communicative-Language.pdf

Richards, J. (2006). *Communicative language teaching today*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. This short booklet, available (free) online, provides a

very accessible introduction to some of the basic principles underlying CLT, together with examples and questions and tasks for further reflection from new teachers

http://oelp.uoregon.edu/shaping.html

Opp-Beckman, L., & Klinghammer, S. (2006). *Shaping the way we teach English: Successful practices from around the world.* Washington, DC: Office of English Language Programs, US Department of State. This series, produced at the University of Oregon, includes 14 free video-based modules (and a pdf manual) that exemplify best practices and principles in EFL in different contexts. Especially helpful are opportunities to observe and analyze actual English teachers' CLT practices.

AUTHOR BIO

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GLOSSARY

authentic	the notion that language or tasks approximate those used in the real world for non-pedagogical purposes.
communicative language teaching (CLT)	an approach to language teaching from the 1970s that emphasizes the learning of language for (and by) meaningful interactions with others either through speech or writing, but usually with everyday speech as a priority initially.
communicative competence	the ability to use language, both oral and written, appropriately in diverse social situations for different purposes and with a variety of interlocutors or audience types, according to local community norms.
meta-communicative	awareness of and ability to objectify or discuss the forms and functions of communication.
metalinguistic	awareness of and ability to objectify or discuss language forms, functions, and systems.
proficiency	one's (functional) ability in a given second or foreign language.

ENDNOTES

[1] In addition, in the post-World War II period (and again in the post-9/ll era), U.S. personnel in the military, foreign service, and other federal domains were found to be relatively ill-prepared for the high levels of functional proficiency required across a range of "critical" languages. Grammar was recast as one tool among many others required for effective communication, and not simply an end in itself and this has paved the way for a wider implementation of CLT in the U.S.

[2] The ACTFL proficiency guidelines for speaking are writing are available at http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=4236.

[3] I learned about this initiative when participating in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Education Network meeting in Xian, China, in January, 2008. Examples using

mathematics education in Japan were modelled and lesson study was recommended for international modern language education as well. See http://hrd.apec.org/index.php/Projects

[4] See http://www.secondlife.com

[5] Livemocha is one such online peer tutoring system: http://www.livemocha.com

[6] See http://www.WebQuest.org