Chapter 3

Teaching Prose through CLT
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The first among the current trends of ELT is CLT, the others being the Natural Approach, Co-operative Language Learning, Content-Based Instruction and Task-Based Language Teaching.

N.S. Prabhu, through his CTP (Communicational Teaching Project) or the popularly known “Bangalore Project”, brought CLT to India in the 1980’s. He selected two sets of students and called them the Control Group and the Experimental Group. While the Control Group was taught through the traditional methods, the Experimental Group was taught through the CLT, the result was that the CLT proved to be a better method of language learning. The project brought out a major change in ELT. So far, ‘schools, colleges and universities English was taught as a ‘Knowledge Subject’ but in CLT, English is treated as a ‘Skill Subject’. This major shift is an eye-opener for the teachers and the students as well.

The students in colleges/universities have to acquire the communication skills through the language skills in order to have a command in their major subjects.

The aim of the ELT is to train the students to use the language effectively for Listening, Speaking Reading and Writing not only within their classroom and during their examination but also throughout their life.
Already there has been an awareness among the people of India regarding the importance of English. It is evident through the innumerable institutions for Spoken English. With the great influx of MNCs in the country, employment opportunities are plenty to the ones who are good at communication skills and language skills in English.

Therefore the Curriculum designers, Syllabus framers and the teachers have the major responsibility to prepare their students fit to live in the world of growing technologies. A nation’s development lies only in the hands of the empowered youth.

Since the research is on the effectiveness of teaching prose through CLT to the undergraduates of the Part II English in arts and science colleges, the researcher has concentrated on the syllabus for Part-II English in colleges. In all colleges and universities for the UG students, prose lessons have been prescribed. Various methods and approaches have been practised so far in ELT under TLT.

This chapter attempts to analyse how prose lessons can be taught through CLT.

Teaching or learning a ‘skill-based’ language like Tamil, English, or French is different from teaching or learning ‘knowledge-based’ subjects like History, Biology or Commerce. The former has to be learnt whereas the latter has to be taught. The learner-centred language classroom is activity-based whereas the teacher-centred subject classroom is theory-based.

If we look into the growth of English Language Teaching in India, it starts even before the Indian Independence. In its evolution, there has
been shifts in the methods and approaches. The disadvantages of one method or approach have given rise to a new one.

Every method of teaching aims at a particular skill to be developed on the part of the learner. In the process of English language learning, the evolution of methods clearly states that each method has its own advantages and disadvantages. In the late 1960s, when the Language teaching was ready for a paradigm shift, Communicative Language Teaching appeared. It gave priority to the interactive process of communication and hence appealed to many teachers and learners of English.

K. Johnson and K. Morrow (1981) define CLT as one, which recognizes the teaching of ‘Communicative Competence’ as its aim. “ It is on this level of aim that such a teaching distinguishes itself from more traditional approaches where the emphasis is on teaching Structural Competence.

Principles of Communicative Methodology;

There are five principles of Communicative Methodology. They are,

Principle One: Know what you are doing:

According to this principle, the focus of every lesson (or part of lesson) should be performing of some operations; learning how to do something. Every lesson should end with the learner being able to see clearly that he can do something, which he could not do at the beginning.
**Principle Two**: The whole is more than the sum of the parts:

The principle holds the view that, the ability to handle these (formal) elements (of language) in isolation is no indication of the ability to communicate. What is needed is the ability to deal with strings of sentences and ideas and in oral modes (speaking and writing) these strings must be processed in what is called ‘real time’. What is needed is the ability to work in the context of the whole.

**Principle Three**: The processes are as important as the forms:

Three such processes which can be isolated and which can be incorporated either individually or together in teaching procedures are

(i) Information gap
(ii) Choice
(iii) Feed back.

**Principle Four**: To learn it, do it:

The cardinal tenet of learning theory is that one learns to do by doing. Only by practising communicative activities can we learn to communicate.

**Principle Five**: Mistakes are not always a mistake:

According to the principle, trivial mistakes of grammar or pronunciation do not matter as long as the student gets his/her message across. A learner who makes mistakes because he/she is trying to do something he/she has not been told or shown how to do or which he/she has not mastered, is not really making a mistake at all. Nagging criticism of what he/she errs will ultimately destroy the learner’s confidence in his or her ability to use the language.
CLT Principles:

1. Whenever possible, “authentic language” as it is used in real context should be introduced.

2. Being able to figure out the speaker’s or writer’s intention is part of being communicatively competent.

3. The target language is a vehicle for classroom communication, not just the object of study.

4. One function can have many different linguistic forms. Since the focus of the course is on real language use, a variety of linguistic forms are presented together.

5. Students work with language at the discourse or supersentential (above sentences) level. They must learn about cohesion and coherence, those properties of language which bind the sentences together.

6. Games are important because they have certain features in common. Games enable the students to acquire the language without much conscious effort apart from ensuring spontaneous participation from the students.

7. Errors are tolerated and seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills.

8. One of the teacher’s responsibilities is to establish situations likely to promote communication.
9. The social context of the communicative event is essential in giving meaning to the utterances.

10. The grammar and vocabulary that the students learn to follow are from the function, situational context, and the roles of the interlocutors.

**CLT Procedure:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communicative Task - 1</th>
<th>Presentation and Drilling</th>
<th>Communicative Task - 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students use whatever language they have at their disposal. Errors are not corrected</td>
<td>The teacher presents the required forms and drills to fluency. Errors are corrected</td>
<td>Students are given an opportunity to use the new forms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Teacher’s Role in the CLT:**

When the learners perform a communicative activity, the teacher should not unnecessarily interfere. This may prevent the learner’s involvement in the activity and thus hinder the development of their communicative skills. This does not mean that he should be a passive observer. His function becomes less important. The teacher can give advice or provide necessary language items. If the learner struggles hard
to cope with the demands of a situation, he can be a source of guidance and help. While the learners are performing, the teacher should monitor their strengths and weaknesses. He can use weaknesses as signs of learning needs which he must cater for later. In some cases the teacher has to exercise a more immediate influence over the language used. He may need to discourage learners if the error is so important. He has to correct it at once, to prevent it from becoming fixed in the learners’ mind.

The teachers should play the role of the initiators. M.Breen and C.N.Candlin (1980) describe teacher’s roles in the following terms.

The teacher has two main roles: the first is to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom and between these participants and the various activities and texts. The second role is to act as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group... A third role for the teacher is that of researcher and learner. The other roles assumed by teacher are needs analyst, counsellor and group process manager. (99)
According to W. Little (1981),

In communicative activities, the teacher will need to provide communicative feedback altogether. However the teacher must be aware that excessive correction will encourage learners to shift their focus from meanings to forms. For this reason, he may often withhold structural correction or postpone it until after the activity. (91)

The quality of communication at the initial stages of the second language learning will heavily depend on the competence of the learners and the teachers, their motivation and the effective use of communicative strategies in communication situations.

According to Canale and Swain the guiding principles of Communicative Approach are:

i) To facilitate the integration of grammatical, socio-linguistic, discourse and strategic competence.

ii) To respond to the dynamic communicative needs and interests of the learner.

iii) To take part in meaningful communicative interaction with highly competent teachers, particularly in realistic situations.
iv) To make an optimal use of the communication skills to participate in real communication situations.

v) To provide information, practice and the utmost experience needed to meet the communication needs in the second language.

Communicative Competence is the ultimate goal of CLT. The International Encyclopedia of Language (1985) defines ‘Communicative Competence’ as the effective use of language in social contexts. Communicative competence is different from linguistic competence. While linguistic competence teaches the language, the communicative competence helps the usage of language.

To Canale and Swain (1980), Communicative competence is understood as the underlying systems of knowledge (ideas about the language and its use) and skill (application of the knowledge in actual communication) required for communication.

Learner’s Role in the CLT:

M.Breen and C.N.Candlin (1980) describe the learner’s role within the CLT in the following terms:

The role of learner as negotiator between the self the learning process and the object of learning emerges from the interaction with the role of joint negotiator within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities which the group undertakes.
The implication for the learner is that he should contribute as much as he gains and thereby learn in an independent way. (The Essentials of Communicative Curriculum in Language Teaching: Applied Linguistics 110)

Students are above all, communicators. They are actively engaged in negotiation in trying to make themselves understood even when their knowledge of the target language is incomplete. They learn to communicate by “communicating”.

CLT has certain traits. The major focus of communicative language is to develop communication through activities and by creating communicative pressure in the students. How communicative competence is developed in the students through the activities and the objectives of the method, is consciously pointed through features of CLT by Jack C Richards and Theodore S Rodgers in their book, Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching (second edition 2002) have discussed the features of CLT, which are as follows:

**Features of CLT;**

1. In India, the teaching of English is content-based rather than skill-based.

2. Here contextualization is a basic premise.

3. Meaning is paramount.
4. Language learning is learning to communicate.

5. Effective communication is sought.

6. Drilling may occur, but peripherally.

7. Comprehensible pronunciation is sought.

8. Judicious use of native language is accepted.

9. Translation may be used where students need or benefit from it.

10. The target linguistic system will be learned best through the process of struggling to communicate.

11. Communicative competence is the desired goal.

12. Linguistic variation is a central concept in materials and methodology.

13. Attempts to communicate may be encouraged from the beginning and reading and writing can start from the first day itself.

14. Language is created by the individual often through trial and error.

15. Fluent and acceptable language is the primary goal. Accuracy is judged not in the abstract but in context.

16. The teachers motivate the students to work with the language.

17. Students are expected to interact with other people.
18. Intrinsic motivation will spring from an interest in what is being communicated by the language.

19. The teachers do not know exactly what language the students will use.

Communicative Activities:

Communicative activities are an integral part of CLT and they are very much objective-based and purposeful. They are emphasized over forms. A variety of forms are introduced for each function. Only the simple forms would be presented first. But as students get more proficient in the target language, the functions are reinforced and more complex forms are learned. Students work with language at the suprasentential or discourse level. They learn about cohesion and coherence. Students work on all four skills from the beginning.

Pre-Communicative Activities:

Pre-communicative activities aim at equipping the learner with some of the skills required for communication without actually requiring him to perform communicative acts. The criterion for success is therefore not so much whether he has managed to convey an intended meaning, but rather whether he has produced an acceptable piece of language. (Littlewood 85)
Role Play in CLT:

The Communicative Approach which emphasizes the process of communication rather than mastery of language form, stresses the importance of role play to promote the practice in using language freely over a long period of time.

Students are expected to interact with each other and with the teacher. CLT methodologists recommend that learners learn to see a failed communication as a joint responsibility of the speaker and the listener and a successful communication as an accomplishment jointly achieved and acknowledged by both of them.

The present study is to examine the effectiveness of CLT in teaching prose lessons to the undergraduate learners. Meanwhile TLT is also followed for a parallel analysis.

The prose books prescribed in the chosen colleges and the lessons chosen for TLT and CLT experiment for this study are given under:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the College of Research</th>
<th>Name of the Prose Book</th>
<th>Name of the Lesson Closem for Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M KU Evening college, Dindigul</td>
<td>Perceptions, a selection of Modern English Writing. Ed. By Shantha Rameshwar Rao</td>
<td>“A Different kind of Learning” by Jade Snow Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.V.M.Govt. Arts College(W), Dindigul.</td>
<td>Perceptions, a selection of Modern English Writing. Ed. By Shantha Rameshwar Rao</td>
<td>“A Night with the Bears” by Dom de sa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teaching of prose lessons is the best way to make learners acquire an integrated skill of the basic skills of learning language, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing.
Prose lessons are the best means through which we can teach vocabulary, grammar, comprehension and composition. In communication, fluency and accuracy could be possible only when learners possess a sound vocabulary and grammar with comprehension. In a lighter way, the teaching of prose can be made more pleasurable if the teacher introduces lots of communicative activities while the lesson is being taught. Once the learners get rid of their inhibition as they are using a foreign language like English, they can very well shatter the barriers of communication outside the class room in their social interaction process.

The teachers of English need to be innovative or creative and keen with regard to the current news round the world to enable the communicative ability in the familiar stories in the news items.

If the teachers of English aim at developing the wholesome personality of the students, the best way is to promote the language ability in them with proper understanding for the desired expressions.

Teaching Vocabulary in the Classroom:

Dr.K.S.Joseph of M.S University of Baroda has published an article in the JELT, Vol.xxix, No.4, July-August 1994, entitled, “Help your pupils build up their vocabulary”.

Words are the blocks with which the edifice of a language is built. They are the symbols either spoken or written that stand for objects, ideas, persons, or places. Every word is the translation of an idea. In the process of communication we need sentences where in we need words to be arranged in acceptable patterns. Inadequate vocabulary not only
makes our communication imperfect but also holds us back socially, professionally and intellectually. Hence we need to have a large treasure of vocabulary from which we can draw at will as situation demands.

Norman Lewis (1980), a master craftsman in the art of vocabulary building argues that there is an intimate relation between vocabulary and intelligence. He further states that, ‘Word-Power’ means ‘success’. Tests have proved again and again that people who do not possess large vocabulary are the ones who fail in today’s competitive world. Modern life demands verbal knowledge. “The person who can say what he ‘means’ comes out on top in his business, in school and in his personal affairs”.

Dr Joseph further says that the gift of vocabulary is not something that is inherited. It is learnt like all skills. He quotes Rosalind Birley (Improve Your Word Power, 1990):

Like all skills, ability with words is something that must be learnt and not given at birth. Verbal ability comes from developing good habits and practices as much as any other skill like playing an instrument or learning a foreign language. (Help your pupils 107)

Active and Passive Vocabulary:

Our vocabulary is the range of words we use in our everyday life. Our vocabulary belongs to four different areas. We have a listening and a
reading vocabulary just as we have a speaking and a writing vocabulary. Our listening vocabulary if experienced well is larger than our speaking vocabulary. Similarly, our reading vocabulary is larger than our writing vocabulary. In other words we have a passive (receptive) vocabulary and an active (productive) vocabulary. We are able to recognize and understand more words than we actually use. This means that our passive vocabulary exceeds the active one. If we take keen interest in words, we can enlarge both. As we try to build vocabulary, we attempt to constantly narrow down the gap between an active and an ever-growing passive vocabulary.

Teaching vocabulary in the classroom:

Our main purpose of teaching words to our students is to enable them to communicate effectively and to assimilate the hard words that occur during the course of each lesson to facilitate better communication.

Hill, A. and Dobbyn, M. (A Teacher Training Course for Teachers of EFL) list out the techniques with a few examples of words of how to teach vocabulary to our students.

Teaching by Demonstration:

Walk, read, write, shut, dance, under, are words that could be taught through demonstration easily within the four walls of the classroom.

Teaching by Pictures:

While teaching, most of the words may be found related as they are taken a single lesson. Such related words could easily be taught by incorporating them into a story or a narration of an event or a situation.
Sea, submarine, wreck, treasure, diver, vanish, etc. are some examples that could be taught through context.

Teaching by Definition:

Some words could more readily be taught by definition than through any other technique.

An optimist, a telescope, a tape recorder, a seismograph, etc. are examples of such words.

Teaching by Translation:

Some words like catamaran, tattoo, volcano, comet, etc., could be taught with a judicious use of our students Mother Tongue to understand the meaning of words instantly and effectively.

Teaching by Association:

Words like Tsunami, charity, violence, inhibition etc., could be taught through this technique of associating the happenings around.

Dr. Joseph is also aware of the limitations in teaching vocabulary in the classroom. He suggests that teachers may reach for modes and avenues that they can create interesting words, encourage wide reading, practice language games and exercises and train the students of how to use a dictionary.

**Teaching pronunciation through prose lessons:**

The teaching of prose gives a good opportunity for the teachers of English to teach the pronunciation of English words. Normally for the learners of English, pronunciation is a great barrier because there is no one-to-one correspondence between the letter of the English alphabet.
with that of its sound. For example, many English words are with silent letters which are spelt but not at all pronounced, like,

Debt
Receipt
Comb
Knife
Psychology
Pneumonia
Write
Psalm
Board

and so on

In the course of the lesson, the teacher may impart the knowledge of right pronunciation and the silent letters. The art of spelling may also be taught.

Pit Corder has referred to the acquisition of the pronunciation that it is quite a different process from the acquisition of grammar. These are two psychologically different problems altogether. The acquisition of a pronunciation, the phonological structure and phonetics of the second language is a process of gradual adaptation of the mother tongue pronunciation system in the direction of the target language pronunciation system. Pronunciation is the exact counterpart of handwriting which interferes with communication in the second language.
N.S. Prabhu (Second language 19) calls language learning a matter of organic development as it is not a sequential process. Organic development is all parts growing at the same time and not at a time implicitly.

Teaching Prose lessons surely helps in the organic development of the learners, namely while listening to the teacher, they could sharpen their keen listening, check their pronunciation, learn the art of speaking English with proper modulation, learn stress and intonation and so on. The spelling of words, arrangement of words into meaningful phrases, clauses and sentences, grammatical structures, sentence patterns and kinds of sentences could be learned in the prose lessons while reading and writing. While expressing their views about what they learned about the prescribed lessons, the students are able to communicate with their teachers and fellow students and others. The activity-oriented communicative language games help them to learn the lessons with interest and curiosity. The values of life are imbibed by them unconsciously through the lessons. Their knowledge about the worldly affairs and other related subjects could be learned through the prose pieces. Their skill in writing is also developed in their class tasks and in their examination.

In the book entitled, The Teaching of English in Schools, edited by Vivian De Sola Pinto, among the collection of papers presented in the symposium held at London in 1963, Agnes M.C.Latham has presented a paper on The Study of Prose.
She says.

Prose means matter, information conveyed and manner, the way of conveying it. It means nearly all writing, most speaking and a good deal of conscious thinking. It extends far beyond the boundaries of the English Classrooms, and when a child leaves the school, he will owe the manner of his thinking, speaking and writing to very great many persons besides his English Teacher (100).

The researcher chose teaching prose lessons for her research because she was convinced that prose lessons are not prosaic presentation of ideas and information but can be a pleasurable experience of acquiring language and communicative skills through activities in the classroom. The researcher has tried to include all aspects of teaching prose, namely comprehending information presented, enriching the vocabulary, learning to pronounce and spell and imbibing grammar. The packages she has planned and designed include these activities taught through language games, communicative activities and meaningful interaction within a stipulated time frame. Her experiments are presented in the following chapter.