

Difficulties and Challenges in Implementing CLT in Rural Colleges of Tamilnadu

Dr. K.Padmavathi

Assistant Professor of English, Anjalai Ammal - Mahalingam Engineering College, Kovilvenni, Thiruvarur.

Abstract:

Communicative Language Teaching has gained importance and attention as English is realized to be the most widely used language in almost all the fields. Though various steps are being taken for the implementation of CLT in the English classrooms, teachers face various difficulties and challenges in adopting the methods of CLT. This paper analyses these challenges and the sources from which they arise.

Keywords: CLT, challenges, implementation

Introduction:

Teaching a foreign language itself is a challenge to English teachers and it becomes all the more difficult when the learners belong to the rural students 'community'. Both the teacher and the learners encounter various problems in the process of implementing CLT. CLT aims at improving the communicative competence of the English learners. Communicative competence is the knowledge of the language and also the usage of the knowledge in real time situations. In other words it is not merely understanding the rules of the language but using the language for communication and interaction. Therefore CLT is not merely teaching the language. It is one of the approaches through which the learners should be made to acquire the second language. The present scenario of the rural colleges in Tamilnadu places many hurdles in the path of the teachers when they proceed to implement CLT in their classrooms. Difficulties arise from various factors which are discussed below.

Students of rural colleges:

The present condition of the students is itself a hurdle. Most of the students are from a rural background and they are found to be the first graduates in their families. Obviously they do not have anyone to guide at home. Their only place to learn and practise the language is their colleges. As many experts have proved, listening to English leads to speaking of English. But, unfortunately these students do not have any opportunity of listening to English. Many of them are from Tamil medium schools and they have been viewing English not as a language but as one of the subjects like Mathematics and Science. Though they have been accustomed to English for nearly twelve years, their aim has been only to score marks in English. This is because their next immediate need was to get admitted in a college. After entering the college, they dream about jobs and this is where they understand the importance of English. Today's job scenario strictly demands communication skill in English but communication in English cannot be acquired magically. And so the struggle begins.

Though students want to improve their communication at least for the sake of getting jobs, they are not ready to practise the language. The only reason for their hesitation is fear of mistakes. They are afraid of comments and criticism. They do not want to be ridiculed amidst their fellow mates. They fail to make use of the opportunity provided by CLT. Students' involvement and self-motivation are very important for the implementation of CLT. When this reduces, implementation of CLT becomes a challenge. The learners should be active and ready to interact. They should be made to understand that mistakes are very natural in the process of learning. They should also feel free to commit mistakes and proceed to acquire the language in a relaxed way.

Teachers:

Many teachers are not ready to come out of their traditional personality. They strongly believe that they are the masters of the class and so they become authoritative. They pose themselves as strict disciplinarians and start behaving like dictators. Most of the teachers do not have enough training in CLT. They rely mostly on text books and other prescribed study materials. They are overloaded with classes and other academic works and they do not have time to prepare materials for communicative language teaching. They are pressurized with the prescribed syllabus and their first priority is obviously to complete the syllabus and prepare the students for their examination. Due to heavy work load they are unable to show interest in the implementation of CLT.

Education system:

Today's education system puts forth many challenges in the implementation of CLT. Many rural colleges of Tamilnadu are overloaded with students and so the strength of the classes is too large to handle. Communicative language teaching becomes almost impossible in large classes. The pattern of examination is such that it tests the grammar competency of the students. The two important skills namely listening and speaking are not tested in the examination and so the teachers and the learners do not show interest in the practice of these two skills. Many institutions are not ready to spend money for purchasing tools and equipment which may be used for implementing CLT. The management and authorities do not show much interest in encouraging CLT as their main intention lies in producing good results.

Drawbacks of CLT:

As far as the rural colleges are concerned, certain aspects of CLT will also be a threat for the implementation of CLT. Lack of materials is another weakness in CLT. There is not enough material to train the students. The teachers have to prepare their own materials which may satisfy the needs of the learners. Many of the teachers are only capable of using the readymade material as they do not have enough training and experience in designing learning materials. There is also not a definite method to test the understanding or the performance of the students. Testing tools are not adequate in CLT.

Suggestions:

The interest and involvement of the students should be raised by lot of motivation and interesting activities. Anything that is against the need or the interest of the students should not be thrust on them. The teacher should generate communication through activities like role plays, games and real life simulations. Teachers' training and development programmes should be conducted in an elaborate and

systematic way. Special training should be given to the teachers with regard to the preparation of learning materials. Materials should be developed with an aim to make the students learn the language with pleasure and ease. The principles and procedures of CLT must be made well known to the English teachers through workshops and seminars. Web based resources may be exploited as this would arouse the curiosity of the students. At least during English classes, the students of a class may be divided into two batches so that the strength of the class will create a feasible atmosphere for the implementation of CLT. More number of English teachers should be appointed and they should not be pressurized with heavy work load.

Conclusion:

Undoubtedly, CLT is one of the best approaches for Teaching English as the second language to the students of the rural colleges of Tamilnadu. Though there are many difficulties in implementing CLT, they can be easily overcome with wise ideas and sincere efforts.

References:

1. Ellis, R. (1982), "Informal and Formal Approaches to Communicative Language Teaching", *ELT Journal*, 36(2), 73-81.
2. Richards, J. C. (2006). *Communicative Language Teaching Today*, New York: Cambridge University Press.