

Brief Analysis of Community Language Learning Method

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Abstract

Community Language Learning (CLL) is a humanistic approach to second language acquisition that emphasizes collaboration, emotional support, and learner autonomy. Rooted in psychological counseling principles, CLL fosters a non-threatening learning environment where students actively participate in language construction through dialogue and peer interaction. This paper provides a brief analysis of the method, discussing its theoretical foundation, teaching procedures, advantages, and limitations. While CLL promotes confidence and communicative competence, challenges such as dependency on the teacher and the need for highly skilled facilitators may hinder its effectiveness. The study concludes with reflections on the practical implications of CLL in modern language education.

Keywords

Community Language Learning; Humanistic Approach; Collaborative Learning.

1. Introduction

Community Language Learning (CLL) is an innovative language teaching method developed by Charles A. Curran in the 1970s. Rooted in the principles of counseling psychology and humanistic education, CLL emphasizes the importance of emotional security, collaboration, and learner-centered instruction in language acquisition. Unlike traditional language teaching methods that focus on structured grammar instruction and rote memorization, CLL encourages students to actively construct their knowledge through meaningful communication and peer interaction.

This paper aims to provide a brief analysis of the Community Language Learning method by exploring its theoretical foundation, instructional procedures, advantages, and limitations. By examining the strengths and challenges of CLL, this study seeks to evaluate its effectiveness in fostering language acquisition and its potential application in modern language education.

2. The Reason Why I Choose this Method

To be honest, I know about and even understand the teaching or learning method-Community Language Learning the first time in the formal class of Mr. Yu., who provides a pertinent video for the whole class in which all students are called to identify which method the teacher is using in this video. Actually, I didn't recognize the method he used at that time. And I think it is similar to this teaching method-PPP, short for presentation, practice, and production.

A typical PPP lesson would start by the teacher introducing a new language item, such as vocabulary, grammatical structures in a context, followed by some controlled practice, like drilling, repetition, dialogue reading, and so on. Students then move on to produce the language in a more meaningful way, such as role play, a drama, an interview and so on. And the key point in this stage is focusing on meaning rather than form. PPP is used widespread in classroom but it has some drawbacks. For example, students will be boring about these continuous practices and this will definitely result in their lower and lower interests in English. But when I get to know more about the community language learning method, I find that it pays more attention

to students' emotion and the whole person development, which can better stimulate their interests in learning English and even sustain this sense of interest for a longer time. Therefore, this teaching method seems to make up for the disadvantages of PPP. But every coin has two sides.

In fact, I reckon that community language learning is beneficial for my teaching and students' learning in the future if I have the chance to be a teacher. And there is a chance for me to understand this method in a more systematical and comprehensive way. That is the reason why I choose this method as my assignment. Later, I would like to introduce community language learning from the perspectives of background.

3. The Background of CLL(Community Language Learning)

Charles A. Curran, a distinguished psychologist and professor at the University of Chicago, has spent his academic career researching and teaching in the field of language learning. He is particularly concerned with the impact of learners' social interaction and co-participation on language acquisition. So he, as well as his assistant put forward community language learning, also called counseling learning in the early 1960s in the United States. There are two subjects involved in the process of counseling-doctor and patient. And on the stage of teaching and learning, there are also two protagonists-teacher and student. Against this background, Charles A. Curran popularized the method of psychological counseling as a learning method, called counseling learning.

The basic perspective of CLL is to view language learning as a social process in which a new relationship between teacher and student is established, similar to that of counselor and client in psychological counseling. Teachers do not impart knowledge in the traditional way-cramming method of teaching any more, but become the students' "advisors", responsible for providing support and guidance. Also, students become the "customers", the subjects and decision makers of learning.

Rather than nurturing a genuine passion for knowledge acquisition, some traditional teaching and learning methods prioritize surface-level comprehension. So students are compelled to commit vast amounts of underlying principles and their ability to apply learned concepts in practical contexts will be impeded. Furthermore, their influence will even extend to the mental well-being of students, inducing heightened levels of stress and anxiety. The focus on rote memorization, devoid of genuine understanding, will unavoidably foster an environment rife with exam-oriented concerns and grade-related anxieties. Last but not least, these methods often neglect the cultivation of creativity and independent thinking.

To some extent, the Community Language Learning method can deal with some existing problems, paying more attention to students' need and true development. Also it is student-centered, creating a free and safe learning environment for students, encouraging independent thinking and helping them build confidence. During this process, teachers not only recognize the identity of learners as "students" and see them as "human", but also pay attention to the inherent value and potential of students, and stimulate their individual creativity. Beyond doubt, emotion is also a decisive factor, which Community Language Learning method pursues for, and teachers should believe that students can give full play to their potential, respect their feelings and opinions, and treat students sincerely. Therefore, in a word, Community Language Learning method is more appropriate than other teaching methods for both teachers and students.

4. An Overview of the CLL

4.1. The Basic Definition of CLL

Charles A. Curran said “Learning is persons. Real learning demands investment in self and others, and authentic relationship and engagement together.” Based on Rodgers’ Humanistic Psychology, Curran advocated a new approach to teaching, which is known as Community Language Learning (CLL). The CLL draws on some of the theories and practices of psychological counseling. It considers teachers as counselors in class. And students are considered clients who need advice. In other words, CLL is a specific application of counseling theory in language learning. It can effectively stimulate students’ learning motivation, cultivate students’ interest, promote their development and improve teaching efficiency (Feng, 2017).

4.2. The Basic Procedures of CLL

In the “community language approach” class, students sitting together in circles will first establish trusting relationships with each other and with teachers in their native language. The teacher will patrol outside the circle, translating what is being learned into the corresponding second language. In this process, students are encouraged to contribute anything they like to the teaching content.

There are five stages in the classroom with CLL. The first stage is “dependence”, in which learners/patients are totally dependent on the teachers/counselors; The second stage is “self-assertive”, where learners have been able to use some simple expressions; The third stage is “resentful and indignant”. Learners are able to understand sentences expressed in the target language and reject unsolicited suggestions. The fourth stage is “tolerant”, where learners are already independent and can organize their expression without teachers’ help. The final stage is “independent”, where learners constantly improve their knowledge and ability to use the language (Li, 2019).

4.3. The Purpose and Elements of CLL

These program aims to foster students’ self-learning abilities, encouraging them to take ownership of their education and develop a passion for lifelong learning. And the ultimate goal of applying Community Language Learning to English classes is to help students develop a native-like spoken English. There are six important psychological requirements in the learning theory: security, attention, aggression, retention, reflection, discrimination (Wang, 2015). And Curran used an acronym SARD to sum up his theory of language learning.

4.4. The Teaching Strategies Used in CLL

4.4.1. From Student:

It’s not easy to apply this method well. And there may be going to be such a number of problems as the boring teaching content, ineffective teaching atmosphere, and students’ high mentality. So it’s important for teacher to make students know the rules and procedures of CLL clearly so that they can get more from it.

To begin with, the advanced preparations are required. The learning results achieved by students in this process benefit from the correct guidance of teachers, but the most important thing depends on the students themselves. Some students may be afraid of speaking something or even refuse to do cooperative work on account of their lower English level. In order to deal with this, teacher can provide teaching content ahead of time for students to prepare the oncoming class better in contents, structure, and so on. And only full participation as well as patience of students can we make full use of this method. What’s more, students’ individual thinking is also a must. CLL requires students to use their brains and contribute wisdom while actively participating, so as to enrich the teaching content and enhance the breadth and depth of language application (Ma, 2019).

4.4.2. From Teacher:

CLL redefines the roles of the teacher and student in the language classroom through metaphors used in counseling. Instead of being indoctrinators of knowledge, teachers become partners and facilitators for students, responsible for creating a safe, supportive learning environment that encourages active participation, self-expression and self-discovery. So, teachers are supposed to do some changes to their own teaching ideas and try their best to adjust roles they play in class. Only in this way can students participate more confidently in class activities, establish a positive learning attitude, stimulate their learning motivation, and gradually improve their English level.

4.4.3. From Class:

There are various forms of CLL to organize classroom, but high-quality classroom discussion has the same characteristics: first, it must have a clear goal orientation. Then, teacher as the “patrol”, should always intervene in time if there is a monopoly among students, and encourage all students to express different opinions. Furthermore, if there is someone who speak Chinese or talk about other off-topic content, it’s teachers’ duty to guide students on the right track. Finally, the activity time is a key point. Unlike teacher-centered teaching, teachers need to pay attention to proportion, grasp the direction, and properly control the time in accordance with teaching objectives.

5. How to Design a CLL-oriented English Class

5.1. Choosing Proper Teaching Content

The teaching content I choose is from PEP Unit2 Section A 2d Conversation under Grade 7. This dialogue is pertinent to how to ask others’ daily routine. It is appropriate for students to recreate because the content is close to their daily life and easy for them to understand. But this dialogue is presented by interviewer and interviewee, which may be a little formal for students while spoken English that students use is somehow informal, simple, and full of pauses.

5.2. Grouping Students and Creating A Dialogue in Native Language

Before class, divide the students into groups of 6-8 people, and group them into different teams according to their knowledge level and performance ability. All groups sit in a circle so that they can talk with each other freely. Then they are asked to create a daily dialogue based on the relationship between interviewer and interviewee in native language. In this way can students feel less stressful and create more communicative sentences. Teacher can give some hints such as workplaces and daily activities and record the Chinese dialogue created by the students, deleting some words appropriately to make the sentences easier to translate. During this process, teacher should choose some creative group members.

5.3. Translating the Dialogue

In a real class, the “owner” of class is student. So the job as translator isn’t teacher, but other group members. Teacher asks students to translate the sentences created just now in English. In the translation process, depending on the difficulty, teachers ask questions of students at different levels and offer help in the process in time.

5.4. Practicing the Dialogue

This step aims to deepen students’ familiarity with the dialogue and practice their pronunciation. First of all, students read the dialogue in Chinese while teacher reads corresponding translating version in English. After that, students follow and the teacher gives feedback on the students’ pronunciation. Within this process, the creating members should read the whole English dialogue and other group members are able to choose some parts in which they are interested and unfamiliar. These may be a word, a phrase and a sentence. In

other words, it's free for students to do practicing. However, teacher should always circles around students to make sure that they are talking about the topic rather than other things unrelated to the class content.

5.5. Creating and Performing

It aims to train students to use the target vocabulary in relevant contexts and exercise the students creative ability to some extent. Teacher should provide students with enough context so that they can better create their own conversations. Students are given some topics or tasks, and they need to choose one that is attractive to themselves and then finish it in a cooperative way. For example:

Task 1: Make several independent sentences with some vocabulary have learned in this class.

Task 2: Create a totally new dialogue using what you have learned today.

Task 3: Add new sentences based on the English dialogue created in this class to enrich the teaching content.

If time permits, teacher can choose one of the students' performances from the three tasks respectively and offer corresponding feedback.

6. Conclusion

After describing many details about Community Language Learning, I find that it also has many drawbacks. Firstly, it is demanding for teacher. In the community language learning, the role of the teacher has changed from the traditional knowledge imparts to the instructor and facilitator. This requires teachers to have higher teaching skills and intercultural communication ability to adapt to the new teaching requirements. Secondly, because of the approach's focus on personalized learning, learners' progress can be uneven. High-level students will get more benefits, which requires teachers to pay attention to each student. Thirdly, Community Language Learning method needs more teaching resources, such as teaching materials and teaching equipment. This can be a challenge for districts and schools with limited resources. What's more, this method requires learners to have high self-management ability and initiative, which may be difficult for some learners who are less motivated to learn or have poor self-management skills. Last but not least, traditional paper-and-pencil tests may not be able to fully assess learners' learning outcomes owing to the emphasis of CLL on process learning and emotional engagement. Therefore, more diversified assessment methods are needed to comprehensively evaluate learners' learning outcomes.

Nevertheless, we cannot deny that there are many advantages and students can also benefit a lot. For example, it will eliminate anxiety with a relaxing atmosphere, in which students can say more, create more. Also, it focuses on the needs and interests of each learner and allows learners to learn at their own pace and interests, thus improving the initiative and enthusiasm of learning. In short, the Community Language Learning is an innovative and practical language teaching method, which has significant advantages in improving learners' oral ability and cultivating cross-cultural communication ability. However, in practical applications, it is also necessary to pay attention to its limitations and take corresponding measures to overcome these limitations. Natural Science Foundation.

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