Community Language Learning

Introduction[1]

The method we will examine in this chapter advises teachers to consider their students as 'whole persons.' Whole-person learning means that teachers consider not only their students' intellect, but they also have some understanding of the relationship among students' feelings, physical reactions, instinctive protective reactions, and desire to learn. The Community Language Learning Method takes its principles from the more general Counseling-Learning approach developed by Charles A. Curran.

Curran studied adult learning for many years. He found that adults often feel threatened by a new learning situation. They are threatened by the change inherent in learning and by the fear that they will appear foolish. Curran believed that a way to deal with the fears of students is for teachers to become language counselors. A language counselor does not mean someone trained in psychology; it means someone who is a skillful 'understander' of the struggle students face as they attempt to internalize another language. The teacher who can understand can indicate his acceptance of the student. By understanding students' fears and being sensitive to them, he can help students overcome their negative feelings and turn them into positive energy to further their learning.

Let us see how Curran's ideas are put into practice in the Community Language Learning Method. We will observe a class in a private language institute in Indonesia. Most of the students work during the day and come for language instruction in the evening. The class meets two evenings a week for two hours a session. This is the first class.

[1] In this chapter, the authors have benefited enormously from the careful reading and helpful comments of Jennybelle Rardin and Pat Tirone of the Counseling-Learning Institutes.

Experience

The students arrive and take their seats. The chairs are in a circle around a table that has a tape recorder on it. After greeting the students, the teacher introduces himself and has the students introduce themselves. In Indonesian, he tells the students what they will be doing that evening: They are going to have a conversation in English with his help. The conversation will be tape-recorded, and afterward, they will create a written form of the conversation—a transcript. He tells the class that the rest of the evening will be spent doing various activities with the language on the transcript. He then explains how the students are to have the conversation.

'Whenever one of you would like to say something, raise your hand and I will come behind you. I will not be a participant in the conversation except to help you say in English what you want to say. Say what you want to say in Indonesian; I will give you the English translation. I will give you the translation in phrases, or "chunks". Record only the chunks, one at a time. After the conversation, when we listen to the recording, your sentence will sound whole. Only your voices in English will be on the tape. Since this is your first English conversation, you may want to keep it simple. We have ten minutes for this activity.'

No one speaks at first. Then a young woman raises her hand. The teacher walks to her chair. He stands behind her. 'Selamat sore,' she says. The teacher translates, 'Good ....' After a little confusion with the switch on the microphone, she puts 'Good' on the tape and turns the switch off. The teacher then gives 'evening,' and she tries to say 'evening' into the microphone but only gets out 'eve ....' The teacher says again in a clear and warm voice, somewhat exaggerating the word, 'Eve ... ning.' The woman tries again. She shows some signs of her discomfort with the experience, but she succeeds in putting the whole word 'evening' onto the recording.

Another student raises his hand. The teacher walks to him and stands behind his chair. 'Selamat sore,' the second student says to the first student. 'Apa kabar?' he asks of a third. The teacher, already sensing that this student is a bit more secure, gives the entire translation, 'Good evening.' 'Good evening,' the student says, putting the phrase on the tape. 'How are you?' the teacher continues. 'How ...,' the student says into the microphone, then turns, obviously seeking help for the rest of the phrase. The teacher, realizing he needed to give smaller chunks, repeats each word separately. 'How,' repeats the teacher. 'How,' says the student into the microphone. 'Are,' repeats the teacher. 'Are,' the student says. 'You,' completes the teacher. 'You,' the student records.
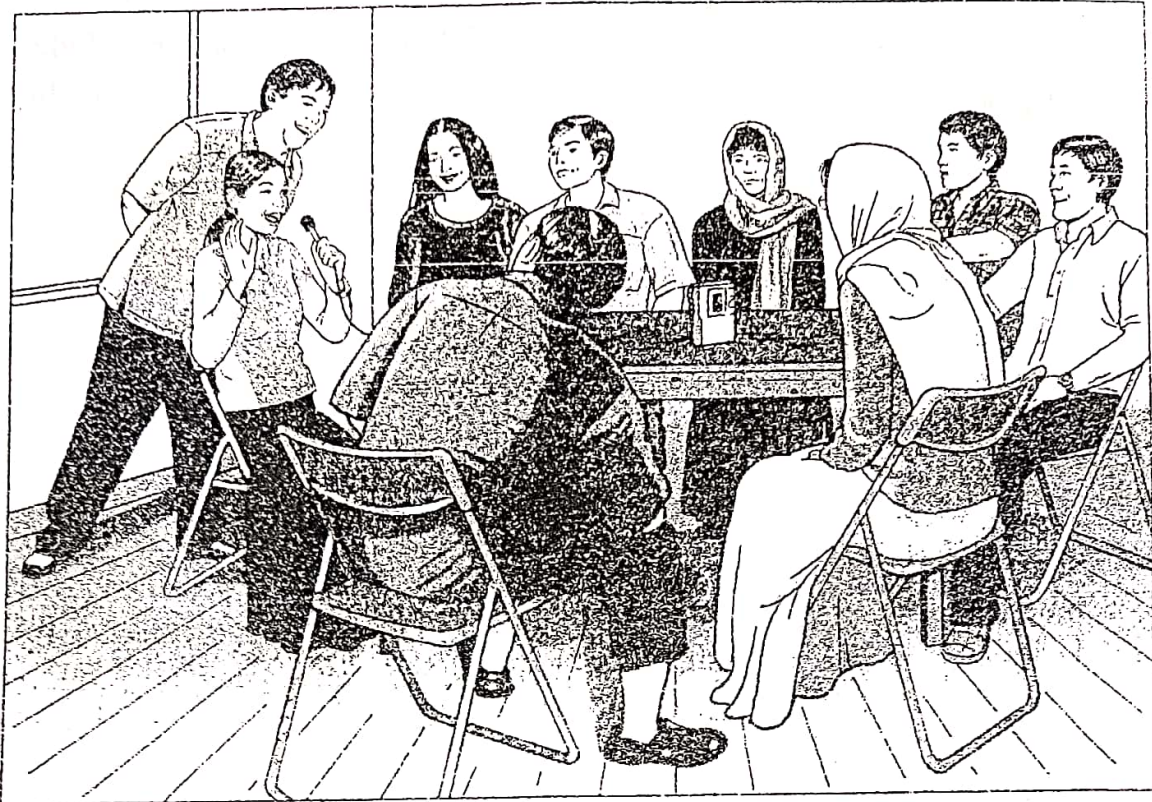
Figure 7.1   A student recording her contribution to the conversation

The student to whom the question was directed raises his hand and the teacher stands behind him. '*Kabar baik. Terima kasih,*' he responds. 'Fine,' the teacher says. 'Fine,' the student records. 'Thank you,' the teacher completes. 'Thank you,' the student confidently puts on the tape.

A fourth student asks of another, '*Nama saudara siapa?*' The teacher steps behind her and says, 'What's ... your ... name?' pausing after each word to give the student time to put her question successfully on the tape.

The other student replies, '*Nama saya Saleh.*' 'My name is Saleh,' the teacher says in English. '*Apa kabar?*' another student asks Saleh. 'How are you?' the teacher translates. '*Saya tidak sehat,*' Saleh answers. 'I am not well,' the teacher translates. '*Mengapa?*' asks another student 'Why?' says the teacher. '*Sebab kepala saya pusing,*' Saleh replies. 'Because I have a headache,' translates the teacher. Each of these English utterances is recorded in the manner of the earlier ones, the teacher trying to be sensitive to what size chunk each student can handle with confidence. The teacher then announces that they have five minutes left. During this time the students ask questions like why someone is studying English, what someone does for a living, and what someone's hobbies are. In this conversation, each student around the table records some English utterance on the tape.

After the conversation has ended, the teacher sits in the circle and asks the students to say in Indonesian how they feel about the experience. One student says that he does not remember any of the English he has just heard. The teacher accepts what he says and responds, 'You have a concern that you haven't learned any English.' The student says, 'Yes.' Another student says he, too, has not learned any English; he was just involved in the conversation. The teacher accepts this comment and replies, 'Your attention was on the conversation, not on the English.' Another student says that she does not mind the fact that she cannot remember any English; she has enjoyed the conversation. The teacher accepts her comment and reassures her and all the students that they will yet have an opportunity to learn the English words—that he does not expect them to remember the English phrases at this time. 'Would anyone else like to say anything?' the teacher asks. Since there is silence, the teacher continues, 'OK, then. Let's listen to your conversation. I will play the tape. Just listen to your voices in English.' The students listen. 'OK,' the teacher says. 'I am going to play the tape again and stop it at the end of each sentence. See if you can recall what you said, and say it again in Indonesian to be sure that everyone understands what was said. If you can't recall your own sentence, we can all help out.' They have no trouble recalling what was said.

Next the teacher asks them to move their chairs into a semicircle and to watch as he writes the conversation on the board. The teacher asks if anyone would like to operate the tape recorder and stop it at the end of each sentence. No one volunteers, so the teacher operates it himself. The teacher then writes line by line, numbering each English sentence. One student asks if he can copy the sentences. The teacher asks him to stay focused on the words being written up at this point and reassures him that there will be time for copying later, if not in this class session, then in the next.

The teacher writes all the English sentences. Before going back to put in the Indonesian equivalents, he quietly underlines the first English word and then pauses. He asks the students to give the Indonesian equivalents. Since no one volunteers the meaning, after a few seconds he writes the literal Indonesian translation. He continues this way until all the sentences are translated, leaving out any unnecessary repetition.

Next, the teacher tells the students to sit back and relax as he reads the transcript of the English conversation. He reads it three times, varying the instructions each time. The first time, students just listen. The next time they close their eyes and listen. The last time they silently mouth the words as the teacher reads the conversation.
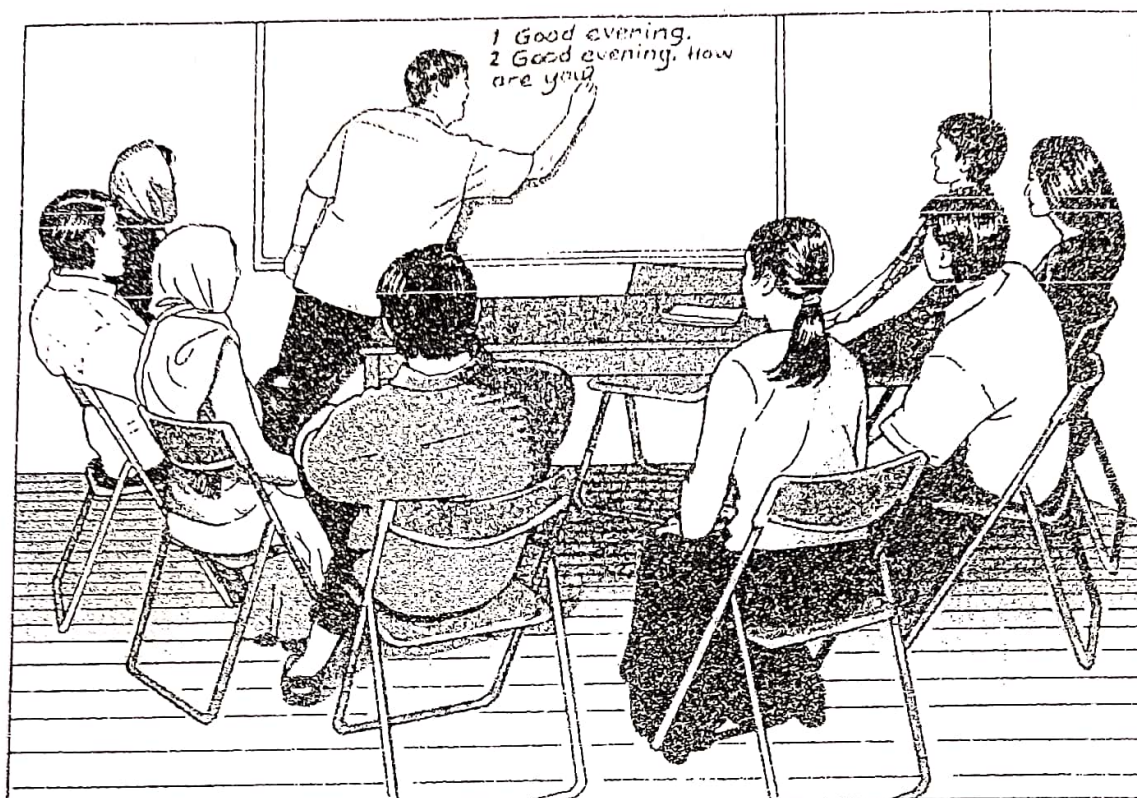
Figure 7.2 The teacher writing up the student conversation

For the next activity, the Human Computer™, the students are told in a warm manner, 'For the next five to ten minutes I am going to turn into a 'human computer' for you. You may use me to practice the pronunciation of any English word or phrase or entire sentence on the transcript. Raise your hand, and I'll come behind you. Then you say either the sentence number or the word you want to practice in English or Indonesian. As the computer, I am programmed to give back only correct English, so you will have to listen carefully to see if what you say matches what I am saying. You may repeat the word, phrase, or sentence as many times as you want. I will stop only when you stop. You control me; you turn the computer on and off.'

A student raises his hand and says, 'Thank you.' He has trouble with the sound at the beginning of 'thank.' The teacher repeats the phrase after him and the student says it again. The teacher repeats it. Three more times the student starts the computer by saying, 'Thank you.' After the teacher has said it for the third time, the student stops, which in turn stops the computer.

Another student raises his hand and says, 'What do you do?' a question from the transcript. Again the teacher moves behind the student and repeats the question the student has chosen to practice. The student works on this question several times just as the first student did. Several others practice saying some part of the transcript in a similar manner.

The teacher then asks the students to work in groups of three to create new sentences based upon the words and phrases of the transcript. Each group writes its sentences down. The teacher walks from group to group to help. The first group writes the sentence 'Adik not work in a bank.' The teacher gives the correct sentence to the group: 'Adik does not work in a bank.' The second group writes 'What is my name?' 'OK,' says the teacher. After the teacher finishes helping the group, each group reads its sentences to the class. The teacher replays the tape two more times while the students listen.

Finally, the teacher tells the class they have 10 minutes left in the session. He asks them to talk in Indonesian about the experience they have had that evening, their English, and/or their learning process. As students respond, the teacher listens carefully and reflects back to the students in such a way that each feels he or she has been understood. Most of the students are positive about the experience, one student saying that it is the first time she has felt so comfortable in a beginning language class. 'I now think I can learn English,' she says.

For the next two classes the teacher decides to have the students continue to work with the conversation they created. Some of the activities are as follows:

1 The teacher selects the verb 'be' from the transcript, and together he and the students conjugate it for person and number in the present tense. They do the same for the verb 'do' and for the regular verb 'work.'

2 The students work in small groups to make sentences with the new forms. They share the sentences they have created with the rest of the class.

3 Students take turns reading the transcript, one student reading the English and another reading the Indonesian. They have an opportunity to work on their English pronunciation again as well.

4 The teacher puts a picture of a person on the whiteboard, and the students ask questions of that person as if they have just met him.

5 The students reconstruct the conversation they have created.

6 They create a new dialogue using words they have learned to say during their conversation.

When they finish these activities, the class has another conversation, records it, and uses the new transcript as the basis for subsequent activities.

Thinking about the Experience

Let us now turn our attention to analyzing what we saw. On the left, we can list our observations, and on the right, we can list the principles we derive from our observations.

Observations	Principles
1 The teacher greets the students, introduces himself, and has the students introduce themselves.	Building a relationship with and among students is very important.
2 The teacher tells the students what they are going to do that evening. He explains the procedure for the first activity and sets a time limit.	Any new learning experience can be threatening. When students have an idea of what will happen in each activity, they often feel more secure. People learn nondefensively when they feel secure.
3 Students have a conversation.	Language is for communication.
4 The teacher stands behind the students.	The superior knowledge and power of the teacher can be threatening. If the teacher does not remain in the front of the classroom, the threat is reduced and the students' learning is facilitated. Also this fosters interaction among students, rather than only from student to teacher.
5 The teacher translates what the students want to say in chunks.	The teacher should be sensitive to students' level of confidence and give them just what they need to be successful.
6 The teacher tells them that they have only a few minutes remaining for the conversation.	Students feel more secure when they know the limits of an activity.
7 Students are invited to talk about how they felt during the conversation.	Teacher and students are whole persons. Sharing their feelings about their learning experience allows learners to get to know one another and to build community.

8 The teacher accepts what each student says.	Guided by the knowledge that each learner is unique, the teacher creates an accepting atmosphere. Learners feel free to lower their defenses, and the learning experience becomes less threatening.
9 The teacher understands what the students say.	The teacher 'counsels' the students. He does not offer advice, but rather shows them that he is really listening to them and understands what they are saying. By understanding how students feel, the teacher can help students gain insights into their own learning process as well as transform their negative feelings, which might otherwise block their learning.
10 The students listen to the tape and give the Indonesian translation.	The students' native language is used to make the meaning clear and to build a bridge from the known to the unknown. Students feel more secure when they understand everything.
11 The teacher asks the students to form a semicircle in front of the whiteboard so they can see easily.	The teacher should take the responsibility for structuring activities clearly in the most appropriate way possible for successful completion of an activity.
12 The teacher reassures the students that they will have time later on to copy the sentences.	Learning at the beginning stages is facilitated if students attend to one task at a time.
13 The teacher asks the students to give the Indonesian equivalents as he points to different phrases in the transcript. He points to the first phrase and pauses; if no one volunteers the meaning, he writes it himself.	The teacher encourages student initiative and independence, but does not let students flounder in uncomfortable silences.
14 The teacher reads the transcript three times. The students relax and listen.	Students need quiet reflection time in order to learn.

15 In the Human Computer™ activity, the students choose which phrase they want to practice pronouncing; the teacher, following the student's lead, repeats the phrase until the learner is satisfied and stops.

Students learn best when they have a choice in what they practice. Students develop an inner wisdom about where they need to work. If students feel in control, they can take more responsibility for their own learning.

16 The students learn to listen carefully to see if what they say matches what the teacher is saying.

Students need to learn to discriminate, for example, in perceiving the similarities and differences among the target language forms.

17 Students work together in groups of three.

In groups, students can begin to feel a sense of community and can learn from each other as well as the teacher. Cooperation, not competition, is encouraged.

18 The teacher corrects by repeating correctly the sentence the students have created.

The teacher should work in a non-threatening way with what the learner has produced.

19 The students read their sentences to the other members of the class.

Developing a community among the class members builds trust and can help to reduce the threat of the new learning situation.

20 The teacher plays the tape two more times while the students listen.

Learning tends not to take place when the material is too new or, conversely, too familiar. Retention will best take place somewhere in between novelty and familiarity.

21 The students are once again invited to talk about the experience they have had that evening.

In addition to reflecting on the language, students reflect on what they have experienced. In this way, they have an opportunity to learn about the language, their own learning, and how to learn from one another in community.

22 Other activities with the transcript of the first conversation occur. Then the learners have a new conversation.

In the beginning stages, the 'syllabus' is generated primarily by the students. Students are more willing to learn when they have created the material themselves.

Reviewing the Principles

Let us now review the principles of the Community Language Learning Method (CLL). In answering our 10 questions, some additional information about the method will also be provided.

1 **What are the goals of teachers who use the Community Language Learning Method?**

Teachers who use CLL want their students to learn how to use the target language communicatively. In addition, they want their students to learn about their own learning, to take increasing responsibility for it, and to learn how to learn from one another. All of these objectives can be accomplished in a nondefensive manner if the teacher and learner(s) treat each other as whole persons, valuing both thoughts and feelings.

2 **What is the role of the teacher? What is the role of the students?**

The teacher's initial role is primarily that of a counselor. This does not mean that the teacher is a therapist, or that the teacher does no teaching. Rather, it means that the teacher recognizes how threatening a new learning situation can be for adult learners, so he skillfully understands and supports his students in their struggle to master the target language.

Initially, the learners are very dependent upon the teacher. It is recognized, however, that as the learners continue to study, they become increasingly independent. Community Language Learning methodologists have identified five stages in this movement from dependency to mutual interdependency with the teacher. In Stages I, II, and III, the teacher focuses not only on the language but also on being supportive of learners in their learning process. In Stage IV, because of the students' greater security in the language and readiness to benefit from corrections, the teacher can focus more on accuracy. It should be noted that accuracy is always a focus even in the first three stages; however, it is subordinated to fluency. The reverse is true in Stages IV and V.

3 **What are some characteristics of the teaching/learning process?**

In a beginning class, which is what we observed, students typically have a conversation using their native language. The teacher helps them express what they want to say by giving them the target language translation in chunks. These chunks are recorded, and when they are replayed, it sounds like a fairly fluid conversation. Later, a transcript is made of the conversation, and native language equivalents are written beneath the target language words. The transcription of the conversation becomes a 'text' with which students work. Various activities are conducted (for

example, examination of a grammar point, working on pronunciation of a particular phrase, or creating new sentences with words from the transcript) that allow students to further explore the language they have generated. During the course of the lesson, students are invited to say how they feel, and in return the teacher understands them.

According to Curran, there are six elements necessary for nondefensive learning. The first of these is security. Next is aggression, by which Curran means that students should be given an opportunity to assert themselves, be actively involved, and invest themselves in the learning experience. One way of allowing for this in the lesson we observed was for students to conduct their own conversation. The third element is attention. One of the skills necessary in learning a second or foreign language is to be able to attend to many factors simultaneously. To facilitate this, especially at the beginning of the learning process, the teacher helps to narrow the scope of attention. Recall that the teacher in our lesson asked the students not to copy the transcript while he was writing it on the board. Instead, he wanted them to attend to what he was writing and to add what translation they may have recalled in order to complete the transcript.

The fourth element, reflection, occurred in two different ways in our lesson. The first was when the students reflected on the language as the teacher read the transcript three times. The second was when students were invited to stop and consider the active experience they were having. Retention is the fifth element, the integration of the new material that takes place within the whole self. The last element is discrimination, sorting out the differences among target language forms. We saw this element when the students were asked to listen to the Human Computer™ and attempt to match their pronunciation to the computer's.

4 **What is the nature of student–teacher interaction? What is the nature of student–student interaction?**

The nature of student-teacher interaction in CLL changes within the lesson and over time. Sometimes the students are assertive, as when they are having a conversation. At these times, the teacher facilitates their ability to express themselves in the target language. He physically removes himself from the circle, thereby encouraging students to interact with one another. At other times in the lesson, the teacher is very obviously in charge and providing direction. At all times initially, the teacher structures the class; at later stages, the students may assume more responsibility for this. As Rardin (1988) has observed, the Community Language Learning Method is neither student-centered, nor teacher-centered, but rather teacher–student centered, with both being decision-makers in the class.

Building a relationship with and among students is very important. In a trusting relationship, any debilitating anxiety that students feel can be reduced, thereby helping students to stay open to the learning process. Students can learn from their interaction with each other as well as their interaction with the teacher. A spirit of cooperation, not competition, can prevail.

5 How are the feelings of the students dealt with?

Responding to the students' feelings is considered very important in CLL. One regular activity is inviting students to comment on how they feel. The teacher listens and responds to each comment carefully. By showing students he understands how they feel, the teacher can help them overcome negative feelings that might otherwise block their learning.

Student security in this lesson was provided for in a number of ways. Some of these were the teacher's use of the students' native language, telling students precisely what they would be doing during the lesson, respecting established time limits, giving students only as much language at a time as they could handle, and taking responsibility for structuring activities clearly in the most appropriate way. While security is a basic element of the learning process, the way in which it is provided will change depending upon the stage of the learner.

6 How is the language viewed? How is culture viewed?

Language is for communication. Curran writes that 'learning is persons,' meaning that both teacher and students work at building trust in one another and the learning process. At the beginning of the process, the focus is on 'sharing and belonging between persons through the language tasks.' Then the focus shifts more to the target language which becomes the group's individual and shared identity. Curran also believes that in this kind of supportive learning process, language becomes the means for developing creative and critical thinking. Culture is an integral part of language learning.

7 What areas of language are emphasized? What language skills are emphasized?

In the early stages, typically the students generate the material since they decide what they want to be able to say in the target language. Later on, after students feel more secure, the teacher might prepare specific materials or work with published textbooks.

Particular grammar points, pronunciation patterns, and vocabulary are worked with, based on the language the students have generated. The

most important skills are understanding and speaking the language at the beginning, with reinforcement through reading and writing.

8 What is the role of the students' native language?

Students' security is initially enhanced by using their native language. The purpose of using the native language is to provide a bridge from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Where possible, literal native language equivalents are given to the target language words that have been transcribed. This makes their meaning clear and allows students to combine the target language words in different ways to create new sentences. Directions in class and sessions during which students express their feelings and are understood are conducted in the native language. In later stages, of course, more and more of the target language can be used. By the time students are in Stages III and IV, their conversations have few native language words and phrases. In a class where the students speak a variety of native languages, conversations take place right from the start in the target language. Meaning is made clear in other ways, with pantomime, pictures, and the use of target language synonyms, for example.

9 How is evaluation accomplished?

Although no particular mode of evaluation is prescribed in the Community Language Learning Method, whatever evaluation is conducted should be in keeping with the principles of the method. If, for example, the school requires that the students take a test at the end of a course, then the teacher would see to it that the students are adequately prepared for taking it.

Also, a teacher-made classroom test would likely be more of an integrative test than a discrete-point one. Students would be asked to write a paragraph or be given an oral interview, rather than being asked to answer a question which deals with only one point of language at a time. (Compare this with the evaluation procedures for the Audio-Lingual Method.)

Finally, it is likely that teachers would encourage their students to self-evaluate—to look at their own learning and to become aware of their own progress.

10 How does the teacher respond to student errors?

Teachers should work with what the learner has produced in a nonthreatening way. One way of doing this is for the teacher to recast the student's error, i.e. to repeat correctly what the student has said incorrectly, without calling further attention to the error. Techniques depend on where the students are in the five-stage learning process, but are consistent with sustaining a respectful, nondefensive relationship between teacher and students.

Reviewing the Techniques

We will review the techniques described in this CLL lesson and provide a little more detail. You may have agreed with some or all of the answers to our 10 questions and might like to try to incorporate some of these techniques into your own approach to language teaching. Of course, there may also be techniques you are currently using that can be adapted so that they are consistent with the whole-person approach we have explored here.

* **Recording Student Conversation**

This is a technique used to record student-generated language as well as to give the opportunity for community learning to come about. By giving students the choice about what to say and when to say it, students are in a good position to take responsibility for their own learning. Students are asked to have a conversation using their native language or a language common to the group. In multilingual groups with no common language, other means will have to be employed. For instance, students can use gestures to get their meaning across. After each native language utterance or use of a gesture, the teacher translates what the student says or acts out into the target language. The teacher gives the students the target language translation in appropriate-sized chunks. Each chunk is recorded, giving students a final recording with only the target language on it. In the lesson we observed, a tape recorder was used; however, these days, other teachers might use a digital voice-recording device, such as an MP3 player, a cell phone, or a computer. Such recording technology allows for instant 'repeats' without rewinding. Also, a teacher can burn a CD or send an MP3 (or other) file to students electronically, which allows students to listen to the recording in their own time.

After a conversation has been recorded, it can be replayed. Since the students have a choice in what they want to say in the original conversation, it is easier for them to associate meaning with a particular target language utterance. Being able to recall the meaning of almost everything said in a first conversation is motivating for learners. The recording can also be used to simply listen to their voices in the target language.

Recording student conversation works best with 12 or fewer students. In a larger class, students can take turns being the ones to have the conversation.

* **Transcription**

The teacher transcribes the students' recorded target language conversation. Each student is given the opportunity to translate his or her

utterances and the teacher writes the native language equivalent beneath the target language words. Students can copy the transcript after it has been completely written up on the board or on large, poster-sized paper, or the teacher may provide them with a copy. The transcript provides a basis for future activities. If poster-sized paper is used, the transcript can be put up in the classroom for later reference and for the purpose of increasing student security.

Thinking about the Experience

The teacher takes time during and/or after the various activities to give the students the opportunity to reflect on how they feel about the language learning experience, themselves as learners, and their relationship with one another. As students give their reactions, the teacher understands them—shows that he has listened carefully by giving an appropriate understanding response to what the student has said. He does not repeat what the learner says, but rather shows that he understands its essence. You may wish to return to the lesson we observed where the teacher understood the students' reactions to their conversation. Such responses can encourage students to think about their unique engagement with the language, the activities, the teacher, and the other students, thus strengthening their independent learning.

* **Reflective Listening**
  The students relax and listen to their own voices speaking the target language on the recording. Another possible technique is for the teacher to read the transcript while the students simply listen, with their eyes open or shut. A third possibility is for the students to mouth the words as the teacher reads the transcript.

* **Human Computer™**
  A student chooses some part of the transcript to practice pronouncing. She is 'in control' of the teacher when she tries to say the word or phrase. The teacher, following the student's lead, repeats the phrase as often as the student wants to practice it. The teacher does not correct the student's mispronunciation in any way. It is through the teacher's consistent manner of repeating the word or phrase clearly that the student self-corrects as she tries to imitate the teacher's model.

* **Small Group Tasks**
  The small groups in the class we observed were asked to make new sentences with the words on the transcript. Afterward, the groups

shared the sentences they made with the rest of the class. Later in the week, students working in pairs made sentences with the different verb conjugations.

There are a lot of different activities that could take place with students working in small groups. Teachers who use small group activities believe students can learn from each other and get more practice with the target language by working in small groups. Also, small groups allow students to get to know each other better. This can lead to the development of a community among class members.

Conclusion

As indicated earlier in this chapter, the particular class that we observed represents the first lesson of what is considered a Stage I experience in the Community Language Learning Method. The principles we have drawn from it can also be seen in Stage II, III, IV, and V relationships, although they will be implemented in different ways in order to respond appropriately to learner growth.

The two most basic principles which underlie the kind of learning that can take place in CLL are summed up in the following phrases:

1 'Learning is persons,' which means that whole-person learning of another language takes place best in a relationship of trust, support, and cooperation between teacher and students and among students.
2 'Learning is dynamic and creative,' which means that learning is an ongoing developmental process.

Do you agree with these two basic principles? Do you believe that a teacher should adopt the role of a counselor, as Curran uses the term? Should the development of a community be encouraged? Do you think that students should be given the opportunity for, in effect, creating part of their own syllabus? Which of these or any other principles is compatible with your personal approach to teaching?

Do you think you could use the technique of recording your students' conversation? Should you give your students an opportunity to reflect on their experience? Can you use the Human Computer™? Which of the other techniques can you see adapting to your teaching style?

8

Total Physical Response

Introduction

Let us first consider a general approach to foreign language instruction which has been named the Comprehension Approach. It is called this because of the importance it gives to listening comprehension. Most of the other methods we have looked at have students speaking the target language from the first day. In the 1960s, James Asher's research gave rise to the hypothesis that language learning starts first with understanding and ends with production. After the learner internalizes an extensive map of how the target language works, speaking will appear spontaneously. Of course, the students' speech will not be perfect, but gradually speech will become more target-like. Notice that this is exactly how an infant acquires its native language. A baby spends many months listening to the people around it long before it ever says a word. The child has the time to try to make sense out of the sounds it hears. No one tells the baby that it must speak. The child chooses to speak when it is ready to do so.

There are several methods being practiced today that have in common an attempt to apply these observations to language instruction. One such method is Krashen and Terrell's Natural Approach. The Natural Approach shares certain features with the Direct Method, which we examined in Chapter 3. Emphasis is placed on students' developing basic communication skills through receiving meaningful exposure to the target language (comprehensible input). Meaning is given priority over form and thus vocabulary acquisition is stressed. The students listen to the teacher using the target language communicatively from the first day of instruction. They do not speak at first. The teacher helps her students to understand her by using pictures and occasional words in the students' native language and by being as expressive as possible. It is thought that if the teacher uses language that is just in advance of students' current level of proficiency (i+1), while making sure that her input is comprehensible, acquisition will proceed 'naturally.' Unconscious

acquisition, then, is favored over more conscious learning. Creating a low affective filter is also a condition for acquisition that is met when the classroom atmosphere is one in which anxiety is reduced and students' self-confidence is boosted. The filter is kept low as well by the fact that students are not put on the spot to speak; they speak when they are ready to do so.

Another method that fits within the Comprehension Approach is Winitz and Reed's self-instructional program and Winitz' *The Learnables.* In this method, students listen to tape-recorded words, phrases, and sentences while they look at accompanying pictures. The meaning of the utterance is clear from the context the picture provides. The students are asked to respond in some way, such as pointing to each picture as it is described, to show that they understand the language to which they are listening; however, they do not speak. Stories illustrated by pictures are also used as a device to convey abstract meaning.

A third method that fits here is the Lexical Approach. Although its originator, Michael Lewis, claims that the Lexical Approach is an approach, not a method, it really belongs under the category of the Comprehension Approach, we feel. This is because the Lexical Approach is less concerned with student production and more concerned that students receive and comprehend abundant input. Particularly at lower levels, teachers talk extensively to their students in the target language, while requiring little or no verbal response from them. Students are also given exercises and activities that raise their awareness about multi-word lexical items, such as 'I see what you mean,' and 'Take your time.' Like Krashen and Terrell, Lewis emphasizes acquisition over learning, assuming that 'It is exposure to enough suitable input, not formal teaching, which is key to increasing the learner's lexicon (Lewis 1997: 197).

A fourth method, James Asher's Total Physical Response (TPR), is the one we will examine in detail here in order to see how the principles of the Comprehension Approach are put into practice. Based on his research cited above, Asher reasoned that the fastest, least stressful way to achieve understanding of any target language is to follow directions uttered by the instructor (without native language translation). We will learn about Total Physical Response through our usual way of observing a class in which it is being used. The class is located in Sweden. It is a beginning class for 30 Grade 5 students. They study English for one class period three times a week.

Experience[1]

We follow the teacher as she enters the room, and we take a seat in the back of the room. It is the first class of the year, so after the teacher takes attendance,

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[1] This lesson is based upon the one in Asher (1982).

she introduces the method they will use to study English. She explains in Swedish, 'You will be studying English in a way that is similar to the way you learned Swedish. You will not speak at first. Rather, you will just listen to me and do as I do. I will give you a command to do something in English, and you will do the actions along with me. I will need four volunteers to help me with the lesson.'

Hands go up, and the teacher calls on four students to come to the front of the room and sit with her on chairs that are lined up facing the other students. She tells the other students to listen and to watch.

In English the teacher says, 'Stand up.' As she says it, she stands up and she signals for the four volunteers to rise with her. They all stand up. 'Sit down,' she says, and they all sit. The teacher and the students stand up and sit down together several times according to the teacher's command; the students say nothing. The next time that they stand up together, the teacher issues a new command, 'Turn around.' The students follow the teacher's example and turn so that they are facing their chairs. 'Turn around,' the teacher says again and this time they turn to face the other students as before. 'Sit down. Stand up. Turn around. Sit down.' She says, 'Walk,' and they all begin walking towards the front row of the students' seats. 'Stop. Jump. Stop. Turn around. Walk. Stop. Jump. Stop. Turn around. Sit down.' The teacher gives the commands and they all perform the actions together. The teacher gives these commands again, changing their order and saying them quite quickly. 'Stand up. Jump. Sit down. Stand up. Turn around. Jump. Stop. Turn around. Walk. Stop. Turn around. Walk. Jump. Turn around. Sit down.'

Once again the teacher gives the commands; this time, however, she remains seated. The four volunteers respond to her commands. 'Stand up. Sit down. Walk. Stop. Jump. Turn around. Turn around. Walk. Turn around. Sit down.' The students respond perfectly. Next, the teacher signals that she would like one of the volunteers to follow her commands alone. One student raises his hand and performs the actions the teacher commands.

Finally, the teacher approaches the other students who have been sitting observing her and their four classmates. 'Stand up,' she says and the class responds. 'Sit down. Stand up. Jump. Stop. Sit down. Stand up. Turn around. Turn around. Jump. Sit down.' Even though they have not done the actions before, the students are able to perform according to the teacher's commands.

The teacher is satisfied that the class has mastered these six commands. She begins to introduce some new ones. 'Point to the door,' she orders. She extends her right arm and right index finger in the direction of the door at the side of the classroom. The volunteers point with her. 'Point to the desk.' She points to her own big teacher's desk at the front of the room. 'Point to the chair.' She points to the chair behind her desk and the students follow.
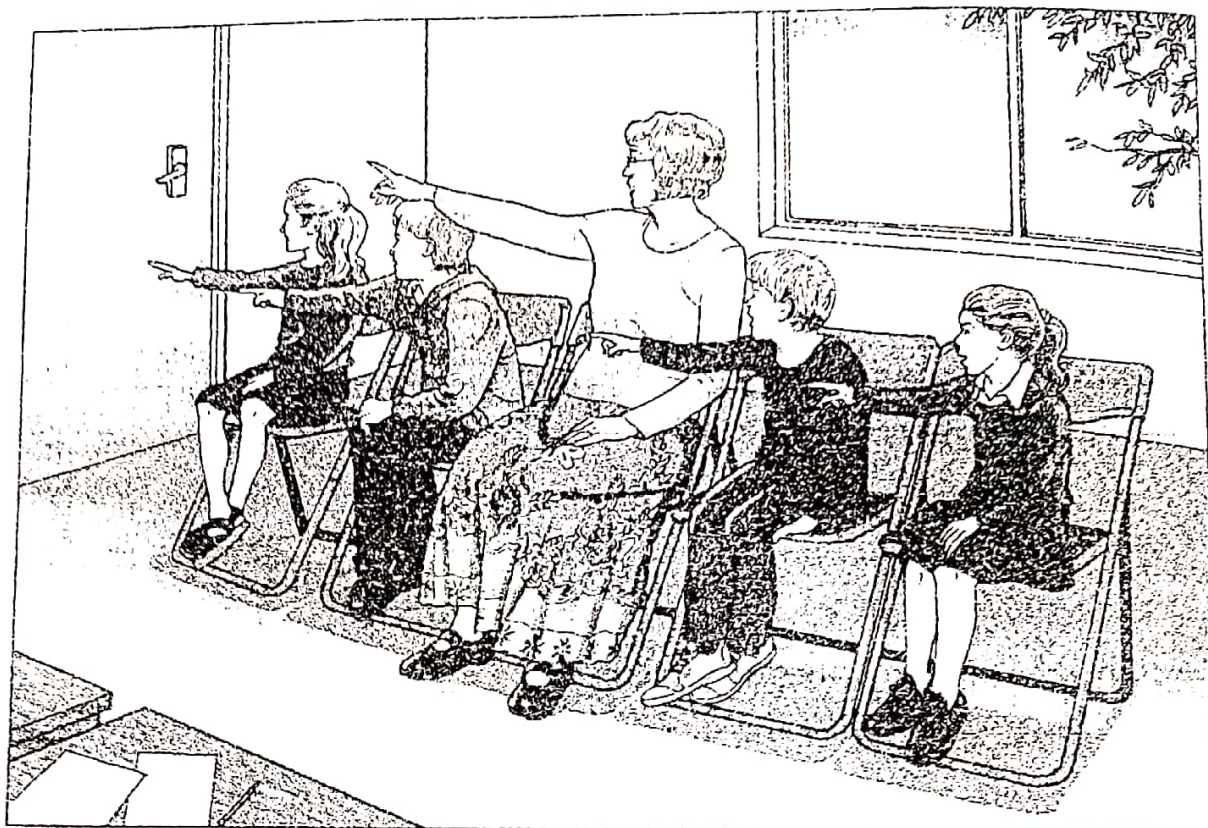
Figure 8.1   Students and teacher acting out the teacher's command

'Stand up.' The students stand up. 'Point to the door.' The students point. 'Walk to the door.' They walk together. 'Touch the door.' The students touch it with her. The teacher continues to command the students as follows: 'Point to the desk. Walk to the desk. Touch the desk. Point to the door. Walk to the door. Touch the door. Point to the chair. Walk to the chair. Touch the chair.' She continues to perform the actions with the students, but changes the order of the commands. After practicing these new commands with the students several times, the teacher remains seated, and the four volunteers carry out the commands by themselves. Only once do the students seem confused, at which point the teacher repeats the command which has caused difficulty and performs the action with them.

Next the teacher turns to the rest of the class and gives the following commands to the students sitting in the back row: 'Stand up. Sit down. Stand up. Point to the desk. Point to the door. Walk to the door. Walk to the chair. Touch the chair. Walk. Stop. Jump. Walk. Turn around. Sit down.' Although she varies the sequence of commands, the students do not seem to have any trouble following the order.

Next, the teacher turns to the four volunteers and says, 'Stand up. Jump to the desk.' The students have never heard this command before. They hesitate a second and then jump to the desk just as they have been told. Everyone laughs at this sight. 'Touch the desk. Sit on the desk.' Again, the teacher uses

a novel command, one they have not practiced before. The teacher then issues two commands in the form of a compound sentence, 'Point to the door, and walk to the door.' Again, the group performs as it has been commanded. As the last step of the lesson, the teacher writes the new commands on the board. Each time she writes a command, she acts it out. The students copy the sentences into their notebooks.

The class is over. No one except the teacher has spoken a word. However, a few weeks later when we walk by the room we hear a different voice. We stop to listen for moment. One of the students is speaking. We hear her say, 'Raise your hands. Show me your hands. Close your eyes. Put your hands behind you. Open your eyes. Shake hand with your neighbor. Raise your left foot.' We look in and see that the student is directing the other students and the teacher with these commands. They are not saying anything; they are just following the student's orders.

Thinking about the Experience

Now that we have observed the Total Physical Response Method being used in a class, let us examine what we have seen. We will list our observations and then try to understand the principles upon which the teacher's behavior is based.

Observations	Principles
1 The teacher gives a command in the target language and performs the action with the students.	Meaning in the target language can often be conveyed through actions. Memory is activated through learner response. Beginning-language instruction should address the right hemisphere of the brain, the part which controls nonverbal behavior. The target language should be presented in chunks, not just word by word.
2 The students say nothing.	The students' understanding of the target language should be developed before speaking.
3 The teacher gives the commands quite quickly.	Students can initially learn one part of the language rapidly by moving their bodies.

4 The teacher sits down and issues commands to the volunteers.	The imperative is a powerful linguistic device through which the teacher can direct student behavior.
5 The teacher directs students other than the volunteers.	Students can learn through observing actions as well as by performing the actions themselves.
6 The teacher introduces new commands after she is satisfied that the first six have been mastered.	It is very important that students feel successful. Feelings of success and low anxiety facilitate learning.
7 The teacher changes the order of the commands.	Students should not be made to memorize fixed routines.
8 When the students make an error, the teacher repeats the command while acting it out.	Correction should be carried out in an unobtrusive manner.
9 The teacher gives the students commands they have not heard before.	Students must develop flexibility in understanding novel combinations of target language chunks. They need to understand more than the exact sentences used in training. Novelty is also motivating.
10 The teacher says, 'Jump to the desk.' Everyone laughs.	Language learning is more effective when it is fun.
11 The teacher writes the new commands on the board.	Spoken language should be emphasized over written language.
12 A few weeks later, a student who has not spoken before gives commands.	Students will begin to speak when they are ready.
13 A student says, 'Shake *hand with your neighbor.'	Students are expected to make errors when they first begin speaking. Teachers should be tolerant of them. Work on the fine details of the language should be postponed until students have become somewhat proficient.

Reviewing the Principles

We will next turn to our 10 questions in order to increase our understanding of Total Physical Response.

1 What are the goals of teachers who use TPR?

Teachers who use TPR believe in the importance of having their students enjoy their experience of learning to communicate in another language. In fact, TPR was developed in order to reduce the stress people feel when they are studying other languages and thereby encourage students to persist in their study beyond a beginning level of proficiency.

The way to do this, Asher believes, is to base foreign language learning upon the way children learn their native language.

2 What is the role of the teacher? What is the role of the students?

Initially, the teacher is the director of all student behavior. The students are imitators of her nonverbal model. At some point (usually after 10–20 hours of instruction), some students will be 'ready to speak.' At that point, there will be a role reversal with individual students directing the teacher and the other students.

3 What are some characteristics of the teaching/learning process?

The first phase of a lesson is one of modeling. The teacher issues commands to a few students, then performs the actions with them. In the second phase, these same students demonstrate that they can understand the commands by performing them alone. The observers also have an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding.

The teacher next recombines elements of the commands to have students develop flexibility in understanding unfamiliar utterances. These commands, which students perform, are often humorous.

After learning to respond to some oral commands, the students learn to read and write them. When students are ready to speak, they become the ones who issue the commands. After students begin speaking, activities expand to include skits and games.

4 What is the nature of student–teacher interaction? What is the nature of student–student interaction?

The teacher interacts with the whole group of students and with individual students. Initially, the interaction is characterized by the teacher speaking and the students responding nonverbally. Later on, the students become more verbal and the teacher responds nonverbally.

Students perform the actions together. Students can learn by watching each other. At some point, however, Asher believes observers must demonstrate their understanding of the commands in order to retain them.

As students begin to speak, they issue commands to one another as well as to the teacher.

5 How are the feelings of the students dealt with?

One of the main reasons TPR was developed was to reduce the stress people feel when studying other languages. One of the primary ways this is accomplished is to allow learners to speak when they are ready. Forcing them to speak before then will only create anxiety. Also, when students do begin to speak, perfection should not be expected.

Another way to relieve anxiety is to make language learning as enjoyable as possible. The use of zany commands and humorous skits are two ways of showing that language learning can be fun.

Finally, it is important that there not be too much modeling, but that students not be too rushed either. Feelings of success and low anxiety facilitate learning.

6 How is the language viewed? How is culture viewed?

Just as with the acquisition of the native language, the oral modality is primary. Culture is the lifestyle of people who speak the language natively.

7 What areas of language are emphasized? What language skills are emphasized?

Vocabulary and grammatical structures are emphasized over other language areas. These are embedded within imperatives. The imperatives are single words and multi-word chunks. One reason for the use of imperatives is their frequency of occurrence in the speech directed at young children learning their native language.

Understanding the spoken word should precede its production. The spoken language is emphasized over written language. Students often do not learn to read the commands they have already learned to perform until after 10 hours of instruction.

8 What is the role of the students' native language?

TPR is usually introduced in the student's native language. After the introduction, rarely would the native language be used. Meaning is made clear through body movements.

9 How is evaluation accomplished?

Teachers will know immediately whether or not students understand by observing their students' actions. Formal evaluations can be conducted simply by commanding individual students to perform a series of actions. As students become more advanced, their performance of skits they have created can become the basis for evaluation.

10 How does the teacher respond to student errors?

It is expected that students will make errors when they first begin speaking. Teachers should be tolerant of them and only correct major errors. Even these should be corrected unobtrusively. As students get more advanced, teachers can 'fine tune'—correct more minor errors.

Reviewing the Techniques

The major technique, as we saw in the lesson we observed, is the use of commands to direct behavior. Asher acknowledges that, although this technique is powerful, a variety of activities is preferred for maintaining student interest. A detailed description of using commands is provided below. If you find some of the principles of Total Physical Response to be of interest, you may wish to devise your own techniques to supplement this one.

＊ Using Commands to Direct Behavior

It should be clear from the class we observed that the use of commands is the major teaching technique of TPR. The commands are given to get students to perform an action; the action makes the meaning of the command clear. Since Asher suggests keeping the pace lively, it is necessary for a teacher to plan in advance just which commands she will introduce in a lesson. If the teacher tries to think them up as the lesson progresses, the pace will be too slow.

At first, to clarify meaning, the teacher performs the actions with the students. Later the teacher directs the students alone. The students' actions tell the teacher whether or not the students understand.

As we saw in the lesson we observed, Asher advises teachers to vary the sequence of the commands so that students do not simply memorize the action sequence without ever connecting the actions with the language.

Asher believes it is very important that the students feel successful. Therefore, the teacher should not introduce new commands too fast. It is recommended that a teacher present three commands at a time. After students feel successful with these, three more can be taught.

Although we were only able to observe one beginning class, people always ask just how much of a language can be taught through the use of imperatives. Asher claims that all grammar features can be communicated through imperatives. To give an example of a more advanced lesson, one might teach the past tense as follows:

TEACHER: Ingrid, walk to the blackboard.
(Ingrid gets up and walks to the blackboard.)
TEACHER: Class, if Ingrid walked to the blackboard, stand up.
(The class stands up.)
TEACHER: Ingrid, write your name on the blackboard.
(Ingrid writes her name on the blackboard.)
TEACHER: Class, if Ingrid wrote her name on the blackboard, sit down.
(The class sits down.)

• Role Reversal

Students command their teacher and classmates to perform some actions. Asher says that students will want to speak after 10–20 hours of instruction, although some students may take longer. Students should not be encouraged to speak until they are ready.

• Action Sequence

At one point we saw the teacher give three connected commands. For example, the teacher told the students to point to the door, walk to the door, and touch the door. As the students learn more and more of the target language, a longer series of connected commands can be given, which together comprise a whole procedure. While we did not see a long action sequence in this very first class, a little later on students might receive the following instructions, which they act out:

Take out a pen.
Take out a piece of paper.
Write a letter. (imaginary)
Fold the letter.
Put it in an envelope.
Seal the envelope.
Write the address on the envelope.
Put a stamp on the envelope.
Mail the letter.

This series of commands is called an action sequence, or an 'operation.' Many everyday activities, like writing a letter, can be broken down into an action sequence that students can be asked to perform.

Conclusion

Now that we have had a chance to experience a Total Physical Response class and to examine its principles and techniques, you should try to think about how any of this will be of use to you in your own teaching. The teacher we observed was using TPR with Grade 5 children; however, this same method has been used with adult learners and younger children as well.

Ask yourself: Does it make any sense to delay the teaching of speaking the target language? Do you believe that students should not be encouraged to speak until they are ready to do so? Should a teacher overlook certain student errors in the beginning? Which, if any, of the other principles do you agree with?

Would you use the imperative to present the grammatical structures and vocabulary of the target language? Do you believe it is possible to teach all grammatical features through the imperative? Do you think that accompanying language with action aids recall? Would you teach reading and writing in the manner described in this lesson? Would you want to adapt any of the techniques of TPR to your teaching situation? Can you think of any others you would create that would be consistent with the principles presented here?

Activities

Check your understanding of Total Physical Response.

1 Asher believes that additional language instruction can and should be modeled on native language acquisition. What are some characteristics of his method that are similar to the way children acquire their native language?

2 One of the principles of TPR is that when student anxiety is low, language learning is enhanced. How does this method lower student anxiety?

Apply what you have understood about Total Physical Response.

1 Although the teacher uses imperatives, she does so in a gentle, pleasant way, the way a parent would (usually) do with a child. Her voice, facial expression, and manner are kind. Practice giving the commands in this chapter in this way.

2 A lot of target language structures and vocabulary can be taught through the imperative. Plan part of a TPR lesson in which the present continuous tense, or another structure in the target language, is introduced.

Communicative Language Teaching

Introduction

You may have noticed that the goal of most of the methods we have looked at so far is for students to learn to communicate in the target language. In the 1970s, though, educators began to question if they were going about meeting the goal in the right way. Some observed that students could produce sentences accurately in a lesson, but could not use them appropriately when genuinely communicating outside of the classroom. Others noted that being able to communicate required more than mastering linguistic structure, due to the fact that language was fundamentally social (Halliday 1973). Within a social context, language users needed to perform certain functions, such as promising, inviting, and declining invitations (Wilkins 1976). Students may know the rules of linguistic usage, but be unable to use the language (Widdowson 1978). In short, being able to communicate required more than linguistic competence; it required communicative competence (Hymes 1971)—knowing when and how to say what to whom. Such observations contributed to a shift in the field in the late 1970s and early 1980s from a linguistic structure-centered approach to a Communicative Approach (Widdowson 1990; Savignon 1997).

Applying the theoretical perspective of the Communicative Approach, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) aims broadly to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching. What this looks like in the classroom may depend on how the principles are interpreted and applied. Indeed, Klapper (2003) makes the point that because CLT lacks closely prescribed classroom techniques, as compared with some of the other methods we have just looked at, CLT is 'fuzzy' in teachers' understanding. This fuzziness has given CLT a flexibility which has allowed it to endure for thirty years. However, its flexibility also means that classroom practices differ widely even when teachers report that they are practicing CLT. It is probably fair to say that there is no one single agreed upon version of CLT. Nevertheless, we will

follow our usual way of understanding the theory and associated practices by visiting a class in which a form of Communicative Language Teaching is being practiced.

The class we will visit is one being conducted for immigrants to Canada. These twenty people have lived in Canada for two years and are at a high-intermediate level of English proficiency. They meet two evenings a week for two hours each class.

Experience

The teacher greets the class and distributes a handout. There is writing on both sides. On one side is a copy of a sports column from a recent newspaper. The reporter is discussing the last World Cup competition. The teacher asks the students to read it and then to underline the predictions the reporter makes about the next World Cup. He gives them these directions in the target language. When the students have finished, they read what they have underlined. The teacher writes what they have found on the board. Then he and the students discuss which predictions the reporter feels more certain about and which predictions he feels less certain about:

> France is very likely to win the next World Cup.
> Spain can win if they play as well as they have lately.
> Germany probably won't be a contender next time.
> Argentina may have an outside chance.

Then he asks the students to look at the first sentence and to tell the class another way to express this same prediction. One student says, 'France probably will win the next World Cup.' 'Yes,' says the teacher. 'Any others?' No one responds. The teacher offers, 'France is almost certain to win the World Cup.' 'What about the next?' he asks the class. One student replies, 'It is possible that Spain will win the World Cup.' Another student offers, 'There's a possibility that Spain will win the World Cup.' Each of the reporter's predictions is discussed in this manner. All the paraphrases the students suggest are evaluated by the teacher and the other students to make sure they convey the same degree of certainty as the reporter's original prediction.

Next, the teacher asks the students to turn to the other side of the handout. On it are all the sentences of the article that they have been working on. They are, however, out of order. For example, the first two sentences on this side of the handout are:

> Argentina may have an outside chance.
> In the final analysis, the winning team may simply be the one with the most experience.

The first sentence was in the middle of the original sports column. The second was the last sentence of the original column. The teacher tells the students to unscramble the sentences, to put them in their proper order by numbering them. When they finish, the students compare what they have done with the original on the other side of the handout.

The teacher then asks the students if they agree with the reporter's predictions. He also asks them to get into pairs and to write their own prediction about who will be the next World Cup champion.

The teacher then announces that the students will be playing a game. He divides the class into small groups of five people each. He hands each group a deck of 13 cards. Each card has a picture of a piece of sports equipment. As the students identify the items, the teacher writes each name on the board: basketball, soccer ball, volleyball, tennis racket, skis, ice skates, roller skates, football, baseball bat, golf clubs, bowling ball, badminton racket, and hockey stick.

The cards are shuffled and four of the students in a group are dealt three cards each. They do not show their cards to anyone else. The extra card is placed face down in the middle of the group. The fifth person in each group receives no cards. She is told that she should try to predict what it is that Dumduan (one of the students in the class) will be doing the following weekend. The fifth student is to make statements like, 'Dumduan may go skiing this weekend.' If one of the members of her group has a card showing skis, the group member would reply, for example, 'Dumduan can't go skiing because I have her skis.' If, on the other hand, no one has the picture of the skis, then the fifth student can make a strong statement about the likelihood of Dumduan going skiing. She can say, for example, 'Dumduan will go skiing.' She can check her prediction by turning over the card that was placed face down. If it is the picture of the skis, then she knows she is correct.

The students seem to really enjoy playing the game. They take turns so that each person has a chance to make the predictions about how a classmate will spend his or her time.

For the next activity, the teacher reads a number of predictions like the following:

By 2030, solar energy will replace the world's reliance on fossil fuels.

By 2050, people will be living on the moon.

The students are told to make statements about how probable they think the predictions are and why they believe so. They are also asked how they feel about the prediction. In discussing one of the predictions, a student says he does not think it is *like that a world government will be in place by the twenty-second century. The teacher and students ignore his error and the discussion continues.

Next, the teacher has the students divide into groups of three. Since there are 20 students, there are six groups of three students and one group of two. One member of each group is given a picture strip story. There are six pictures in a column on a piece of paper, but no words. The pictures tell a story. The student with the story shows the first picture to the other members of her group, while covering the remaining five pictures.
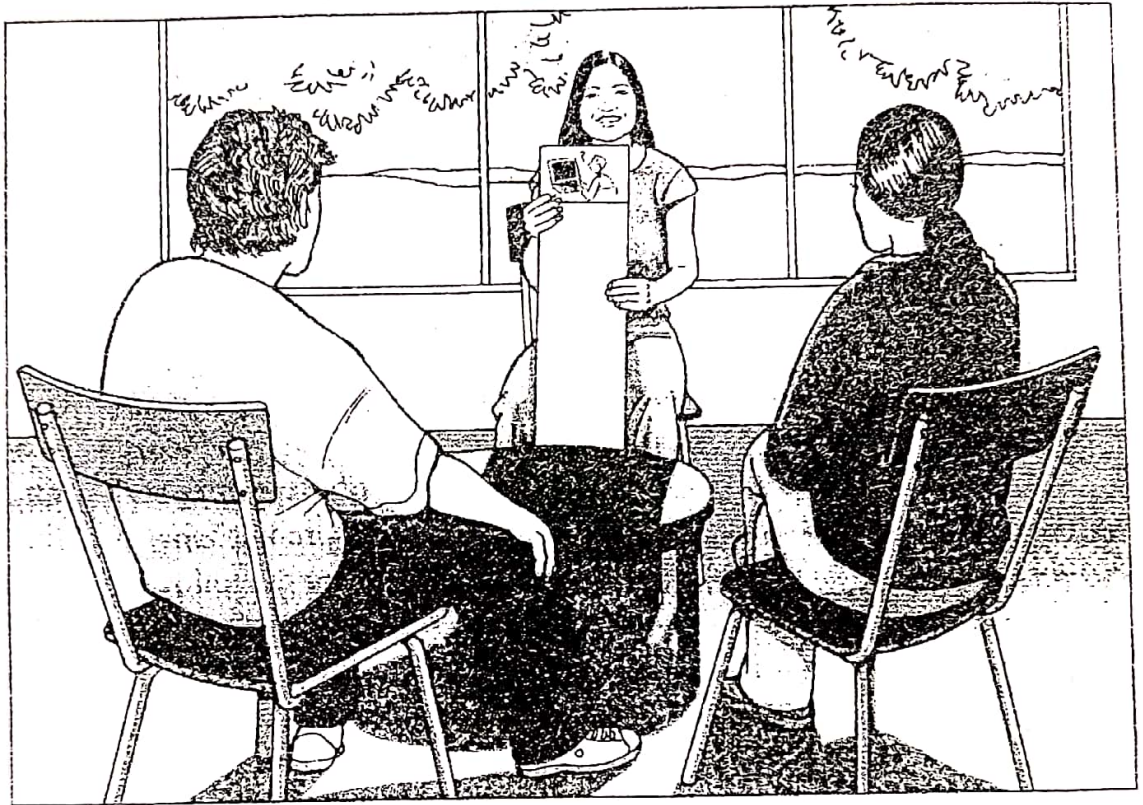
Figure 9.1   Students making predictions about a strip story

The other students try to predict what they think will happen in the second picture. The first student tells them whether they are correct or not. She then shows them the second picture and asks them to predict what the third picture will look like. After the entire series of pictures has been shown, the group gets a new strip story and they change roles, giving the first student an opportunity to work with a partner in making predictions.

For the final activity of the class, the students are told that they will do a role-play. The teacher tells them to get into groups of four. They are to imagine that they are all employees of the same company. One of them is the others' boss. They are having a meeting to discuss what will possibly occur as a result of their company merging with another company. Before they begin, they discuss some possibilities together. They decide that they can talk about topics such as whether or not some of the people in their company will lose their jobs, whether or not they will have to move, whether or not certain policies will change, whether or not they will earn more money. 'Remember,'

says the teacher, 'that one of you in each group is the boss. You should think about this relationship if, for example, she makes a prediction that you don't agree with.'

For 10 minutes the students perform their role-play. The teacher moves from group to group to answer questions and offer any advice on what the groups can discuss. After it is over, the students have an opportunity to pose any questions. In this way, they elicit some relevant vocabulary words. They then discuss what language forms are appropriate in dealing with one's boss. 'For example,' the teacher explains, 'what if you know that your boss doesn't think that the vacation policy will change, but you think it will. How will you state your prediction? You are more likely to say something like "I think the vacation policy might change," than "The vacation policy will change."'

'What if, however,' the teacher continues, 'it is your colleague with whom you disagree and you are certain that you are right. How will you express your prediction then?' One student offers, 'I know that the vacation policy will change.' Another student says, 'I am sure that the vacation policy will change.' A third student says simply, 'The vacation policy will change.'

The class is almost over. The teacher uses the last few minutes to give the homework assignment. The students are to find out what they can about two political candidates running against each other in the upcoming election. The students are then to write their prediction of who they think will win the election and why they think so. They will read these to their classmates at the start of the next class.

Thinking about the Experience

As we have seen before, there are important principles underlying the behavior we have observed. Let us now investigate these by compiling our two lists: our observations and the underlying principles.

Observations	Principles
1. The teacher distributes a handout that has a copy of a sports column from a recent newspaper.	Whenever possible, **authentic language**—language as it is used in a real context—should be introduced.
2. The teacher tells the students to underline the reporter's predictions and to say which ones they think the reporter feels most certain of and which he feels least certain of.	Being able to figure out the speaker's or writer's intentions is part of being communicatively competent.

3 The teacher gives the students the directions for the activity in the target language.	The target language is a vehicle for classroom communication, not just the object of study.
4 The students try to state the reporter's predictions in different words.	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. The emphasis is on the process of communication rather than just mastery of language forms.
5 The students unscramble the sentences of the newspaper article.	Students should work with language at the discourse or suprasentential (above the sentence) level. They must learn about **cohesion** and **coherence**, those properties of language which bind the sentences together.
6 The students play a language game.	Games are important because they have certain features in common with real communicative events—there is a purpose to the exchange. Also, the speaker receives immediate feedback from the listener on whether or not she has successfully communicated. Having students work in small groups maximizes the amount of communicative practice they receive.
7 The students are asked how they feel about the reporter's predictions.	Students should be given an opportunity to express their ideas and opinions.
8 A student makes an error. The teacher and other students ignore it.	Errors are tolerated and seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills. Since this activity was working on fluency, the teacher did not correct the student, but simply noted the error, which he will return to at a later point.
9 The teacher gives each group of students a strip story and a task to perform.	One of the teacher's major responsibilities is to establish situations likely to promote communication.

10 The students work with a partner or partners to predict what the next picture in the strip story will look like.	Communicative interaction encourages cooperative relationships among students. It gives students an opportunity to work on negotiating meaning.
11 The students do a role-play. They are to imagine that they are all employees of the same company.	The social context of the communicative event is essential in giving meaning to the utterances.
12 The teacher reminds the students that one of them is playing the role of the boss and that they should remember this when speaking to her.	Learning to use language forms appropriately is an important part of communicative competence.
13 The teacher moves from group to group offering advice and answering questions.	The teacher acts as a facilitator in setting up communicative activities and as an advisor during the activities.
14 The students suggest alternative forms they would use to state a prediction to a colleague.	In communicating, a speaker has a choice not only about what to say, but also how to say it.
15 After the role-play is finished, the students elicit relevant vocabulary.	The grammar and vocabulary that the students learn follow from the function, situational context, and the roles of the interlocutors.
16 For their homework, the students are to find out about political candidates and to make a prediction about which one will be successful in the forthcoming election.	Students should be given opportunities to work on language as it is used in authentic communication. They may be coached on strategies for how to improve their comprehension.

Reviewing the Principles

The answers to our 10 questions will help us come to a better understanding of Communicative Language Teaching. In some answers new information has been provided to clarify certain concepts.

1 **What are the goals of teachers who use Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)?**

The goal is to enable students to communicate in the target language. To do this, students need knowledge of the linguistic forms, meanings, and functions. They need to know that many different forms can be used to perform a function and also that a single form can often serve a variety of functions. They must be able to choose from among these the most appropriate form, given the social context and the roles of the interlocutors. They must also be able to manage the process of negotiating meaning with their interlocutors. Communication is a process; knowledge of the forms of language is insufficient.

2 **What is the role of the teacher? What is the role of the students?**

The teacher facilitates communication in the classroom. In this role, one of his major responsibilities is to establish situations likely to promote communication. During the activities he acts as an advisor, answering students' questions and monitoring their performance. He might make a note of their errors to be worked on at a later time during more accuracy-based activities. At other times he might be a 'co-communicator' engaging in the communicative activity along with students (Littlewood 1981).

Students are, above all, communicators. They are actively engaged in negotiating meaning—in trying to make themselves understood—even when their knowledge of the target language is incomplete.

Also, since the teacher's role is less dominant than in a teacher-centered method, students are seen as more responsible for their own learning.

3 **What are some characteristics of the teaching/learning process?**

The most obvious characteristic of CLT is that almost everything that is done is done with a communicative intent. Students use the language a great deal through communicative activities such as games, role-plays, and problem-solving tasks (see discussion of these in the review of the techniques).

Activities that are truly communicative, according to Morrow (Johnson and Morrow 1981), have three features in common: information gap, choice, and feedback.

An information gap exists when one person in an exchange knows something the other person does not. If we both know today is Tuesday, and I ask you, 'What is today?' and you answer, 'Tuesday,' our exchange is not really communicative. My question is called a display question, a

question teachers use to ask students to display what they know, but it is not a question that asks you to give me information that I do not know.

In communication, the speaker has a choice of what she will say and how she will say it. If the exercise is tightly controlled, so that students can only say something in one way, the speaker has no choice and the exchange, therefore, is not communicative. In a chain drill, for example, if a student must reply to her neighbor's question in the same way as her neighbor replied to someone else's question, then she has no choice of form and content, and real communication does not occur.

True communication is purposeful. A speaker can thus evaluate whether or not her purpose has been achieved based upon the information she receives from her listener. If the listener does not have an opportunity to provide the speaker with such feedback, then the exchange is not really communicative. Forming questions through a transformation drill may be a worthwhile activity, but it is not in keeping with CLT since a speaker will receive no response from a listener. She is thus unable to assess whether her question has been understood or not.

Another characteristic of CLT is the use of authentic materials. It is considered desirable to give students an opportunity to develop strategies for understanding language as it is actually used.

Finally, we noted that activities in CLT are often carried out by students in small groups. Small numbers of students interacting are favored in order to maximize the time allotted to each student for communicating. While there is no explicit theory of learning connected with CLT, the implicit assumption seems to be that students will learn to communicate by practicing functional and socially appropriate language.

4 What is the nature of student–teacher interaction? What is the nature of student–student interaction?

The teacher may present some part of the lesson. At other times, he is the facilitator of the activities, but he does not always himself interact with the students. Sometimes he is a co-communicator, but more often he establishes situations that prompt communication between and among the students.

Students interact a great deal with one another. They do this in various configurations: pairs, triads, small groups, and whole group.

5 How are the feelings of the students dealt with?

One of the basic assumptions of CLT is that by learning to communicate students will be more motivated to study another language since they will

feel they are learning to do something useful. Also, teachers give students an opportunity to express their individuality by having them share their ideas and opinions on a regular basis. Finally, student security is enhanced by the many opportunities for cooperative interactions with their fellow students and the teacher.

6 How is the language viewed? How is culture viewed?

Language is for communication. Linguistic competence, the knowledge of forms and their meanings, is only one part of communicative competence. Another aspect of communicative competence is knowledge of the functions that language is used for. As we have seen in this lesson, a variety of forms can be used to accomplish a single function. A speaker can make a prediction by saying, for example, 'It may rain,' or 'Perhaps it will rain.' Conversely, the same form of the language can be used for a variety of functions. 'May,' for instance, can be used to make a prediction or to give permission ('You may leave now.').

Thus, the learner needs knowledge of forms and meanings and functions. However, to be communicatively competent, she must also use this knowledge and take into consideration the social situation in order to convey her intended meaning appropriately (Canale and Swain 1980). A speaker can seek permission using 'may' ('May I have a piece of fruit?'); however, if the speaker perceives his listener as being more of a social equal or the situation as being informal, he would more likely use 'can' to seek permission ('Can I have a piece of fruit?').

Culture is the everyday lifestyle of people who use the language. There are certain aspects of it that are especially important to communication—the use of nonverbal behavior, for example, which might receive greater attention in CLT.

7 What areas of language are emphasized? What language skills are emphasized?

Language functions might be emphasized over forms. Typically, although not always, a functional syllabus is used. A variety of forms are introduced for each function. Only the simpler forms would be presented at first, but as students get more proficient in the target language, the functions are reintroduced and more complex forms are learned. Thus, for example, in learning to make requests, beginning students might practice 'Would you ...?' and 'Could you ...?' Highly proficient students might learn 'I wonder if you would mind ...'

Students work with language at the discourse or suprasentential level. They learn about cohesion and coherence. For example, in our lesson the

students recognized that the second sentence of the scrambled order was the last sentence of the original sports column because of its introductory adverbial phrase, 'In the final analysis ...' This adverbial phrase is a cohesive device that binds and orders this sentence to the other sentences. The students also recognized the lack of coherence between the first two sentences of the scrambled order, which did not appear connected in any meaningful way.

Students work on all four skills from the beginning. Just as oral communication is seen to take place through negotiation between speaker and listener, so too is meaning thought to be derived from the written word through an interaction between the reader and the writer. The writer is not present to receive immediate feedback from the reader, of course, but the reader tries to understand the writer's intentions and the writer writes with the reader's perspective in mind. Meaning does not, therefore, reside exclusively in the text, but rather arises through negotiation between the reader and writer.

8 What is the role of the students' native language?

Judicious use of the students' native language is permitted in CLT. However, whenever possible, the target language should be used not only during communicative activities, but also for explaining the activities to the students or in assigning homework. The students learn from these classroom management exchanges, too, and realize that the target language is a vehicle for communication, not just an object to be studied.

9 How is evaluation accomplished?

A teacher evaluates not only his students' accuracy but also their fluency. The student who has the most control of the structures and vocabulary is not always the best communicator.

A teacher can evaluate his students' performance informally in his role as advisor or co-communicator. For more formal evaluation, a teacher is likely to use an integrative test which has a real communicative function. In order to assess students' writing skill, for instance, a teacher might ask them to write a letter to a friend.

10 How does the teacher respond to student errors?

Errors of form are tolerated during fluency-based activities and are seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills. Students can have limited linguistic knowledge and still be successful communicators. The teacher may note the errors during fluency activities and return to them later with an accuracy-based activity.

Reviewing the Techniques

There may be aspects of CLT that you find appealing. This review has been provided in the event you wish to try to use any of the techniques or materials associated with CLT.

* **Authentic Materials**

  To overcome the typical problem that students cannot transfer what they learn in the classroom to the outside world, and to expose students to natural language in a variety of situations, adherents of CLT advocate the use of authentic language materials.[1] In this lesson we see that the teacher uses a newspaper article. He also assigns the students homework, requiring that they learn about two political candidates who are running for election.

  Of course, the class that we observed was at the high-intermediate level of proficiency. For students with lower proficiency in the target language, it may not be possible to use authentic language materials such as these. Simpler authentic materials (for example, the use of a weather forecast when working on predictions), or at least ones that are realistic, are most desirable. It is not so important that the materials be genuine as it is that they be used authentically, with a communicative intent.

  Another possibility for the use of authentic materials with a lower-level class is to use items of realia that do not contain a lot of language, but about which a lot of discussion could be generated. Menus in the target language are an example; timetables are another.

* **Scrambled Sentences**

  The students are given a passage (a text) in which the sentences are in a scrambled order. This may be a passage they have worked with or one they have not seen before. They are told to unscramble the sentences so that the sentences are restored to their original order. This type of exercise teaches students about the cohesion and coherence properties of language. They learn how sentences are bound together at the suprasentential level through formal linguistic devices such as pronouns, which make a text cohesive, and semantic propositions, which unify a text and make it coherent.

  In addition to written passages, students might also be asked to unscramble the lines of a mixed-up dialogue. Or they might be asked to put the

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[1] Of course, what is authentic and natural to native speakers of the target language is not so to learners in the classroom. What is important is that these materials are used in a way that is real for learners (Widdowson 1998).

pictures of a picture strip story in order and write lines to accompany the pictures.

- **Language Games**

  Games are used frequently in CLT. The students find them enjoyable, and if they are properly designed, they give students valuable communicative practice. Games that are truly communicative, according to Morrow (ibid. 1981), have the three features of communication: information gap, choice, and feedback.

  These three features were manifest in the card game we observed in the following way: An information gap existed because the speaker did not know what her classmate was going to do the following weekend. The speaker had a choice as to what she would predict (which sport) and how she would predict it (which form her prediction would take). The speaker received feedback from the members of her group. If her prediction was incomprehensible, then none of the members of her group would respond. If she got a meaningful response, she could presume her prediction was understood.

- **Picture Strip Story**

  Many activities can be done with picture strip stories. We suggested one in our discussion of scrambled sentences.

  In the activity we observed, one student in a small group was given a strip story. She showed the first picture of the story to the other members of her group and asked them to predict what the second picture would look like. An information gap existed—the students in the groups did not know what the picture contained. They had a choice as to what their prediction would be and how they would word it. They received feedback, not on the form but on the content of the prediction, by being able to view the picture and compare it with their prediction.

  The activity just described is an example of using a problem-solving task as a communicative technique. Problem-solving tasks work well in CLT because they usually include the three features of communication. What is more, they can be structured so that students share information or work together to arrive at a solution. This gives students practice in negotiating meaning.

- **Role-play**

  We already encountered the use of role-plays as a technique when we looked at Desuggestopedia. Role-plays are very important in CLT because they give students an opportunity to practice communicating in different

social contexts and in different social roles. Role-plays can be set up so that they are very structured (for example, the teacher tells the students who they are and what they should say) or in a less structured way (for example, the teacher tells the students who they are, what the situation is, and what they are talking about, but the students determine what they will say). The latter is more in keeping with CLT, of course, because it gives the students more of a choice. Notice that role-plays structured like this also provide information gaps since students cannot be sure (as with most forms of communication) what the other person or people will say (there is a natural unpredictability). Students also receive feedback on whether or not they have communicated effectively.

Conclusion

Perhaps the greatest contribution of CLT is asking teachers to look closely at what is involved in communication. If teachers intend students to use the target language, then they must truly understand more than grammar rules and target language vocabulary.

Is achieving communicative competence a goal for which you should prepare your students? Would you adopt a functional syllabus? Should a variety of language forms be presented at one time? Are there times when you would emphasize fluency over accuracy? Do these or any other principles of CLT make sense to you?

Would you ever use language games, problem-solving tasks, or role-plays? Should all your activities include the three features of communication? Should authentic language be used? Are there any other techniques or materials of CLT that you would find useful?

Activities

Ⓐ Check your understanding of Communicative Language Teaching.

1 Explain in your own words Morrow's three features of communication: information gap, choice, and feedback. Choose one of the activities in the lesson we observed and say whether or not these three features are present.

2 Why do we say that communication is a process?

3 What does it mean to say that the linguistic forms a speaker uses should be appropriate to the social context?