Lecture 6: I-Total Physical Response (TPR/Asher, 1970s-humanistic approach)

II-Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

I-Total Physical Response (TPR)

Introduction

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a language teaching method that emerged in the 1970s. It was developed by James Asher, a professor of psychology at San Jose State University (California). It is built around the coordination of speech and action (movement). In other words, it stresses the association of stimulus-response through physical action. It attempts to teach language through physical activity.

TPR draws on several traditions, including developmental psychology, learning theory, and humanistic pedagogy as well as the constructivist theory. It is linked to the " trace theory" of memory in psychology, which holds that the more often or more intensively a memory connection or association is traced, the stronger it will be and the more likely it will be recalled. Retracing can be done verbally (e.g., by rote repetition) and/or in association with motor activity. Combined tracing activities, such as verbal rehearsal accompanied by motor activity, increases the probability of successful recall.

1. Characteristics of Total Physical Response (TPR)

1-Successful adult second language learning is a parallel process to child first language acquisition.

2-The important role of affective (emotional) factors in language learning by reducing learner stress, and creating a positive mood in the learner, which facilitates learning.

3-Developing comprehension skills before speaking, which is linked to a movement in foreign language teaching sometimes referred to as the *Comprehension Approach* (Winitz, 1981). Following this approach, comprehension abilities precede productive skills in learning a language, and teaching speaking should be delayed until comprehension skills are established. Primary importance is placed on listening comprehension, emulating the early stages of mother tongue

acquisition, and then moving to speaking, reading, and writing. Students demonstrate their comprehension by acting out commands issued by the teacher.

4-TPR classroom drills seem to be built on assumptions that owe much to structuralist or grammar-based views of languages that emphasise meaning rather than form. Asher stated that "most of the grammatical structure of the target language and hundreds of vocabulary items can be learned from the skilful use of the imperative by the instructor" (1977, p. 4). He viewed the verb in the imperative as the central linguistic motif around which language use and learning are organised. Therefore, input should be provided through commands in the imperative form. The first group of activities should involve commands, then interaction dialogues, and afterwards dramatization and role-plays. All must include physical action. In this respect, learning is inductive rather than deductive.

5-Language, according to Asher, is composed of abstractions and non-abstractions (represented mainly by concrete nouns and imperative verbs). He argued that learners can acquire "the grammatical structure of a language" without teaching abstractions. Abstractions should be delayed until students have internalized "a detailed cognitive map" of the target language since abstractions are not necessary for people to decode the grammatical structure of a language (1977, pp. 11-12).

6-The learners' L1 is seldom used. If it is used, it is only at the very beginning where the method is explained to students on the first day of class. After that, all interactions are conducted in English.

7-Teachers can evaluate students through simple observation of their actions. It should be noted that students are expected to make errors once they begin speaking. Teachers only correct major errors, and do this unobtrusively (unnoticed process).

2. Procedures of Total Physical Response (TPR)

Learners start by observing the teacher as s/he presents a series of commands (readiness period/silent period). S/he interacts with individual students and with the group while the students respond nonverbally. As a second step, the teacher says and demonstrates the commands, then s/he does the same but this time learners follow along. Then, the teacher just says the commands and learners show understanding by responding with the right physical response and finally learners

themselves give commands when they are "ready to speak" (they are not forced to speak). Technique's steps are organised as follows:

Step 1: The teacher says the commands as he himself performs the action.

Step 2: The teacher says the command as both the teacher and the students then perform the action.

Step 3: The teacher says the command but only students perform the action

Step 4: The teacher tells one student at a time to do commands

Step 5: The roles of teacher and student are reversed. Students give commands to teacher and to other students.

Step 6: The teacher and student allow for command expansion or produces new sentences

For example, when teaching body parts, the teacher gives clear instructions and students perform the different actions, **e.g.** the teacher asks students to form a line and play 'Simon says' (Simon says that they put their right knee on the floor, Simon says that they raise their left hand…)

3. Advantages of Total Physical Response (TPR)

1-It is fun, especially for the little ones.

2-Helps to remember.

3-It is a good activity for those students who learn best through actions and observation, and for those who prefer to be in motion.

4-Can be used in any size class, with any number of students.

5-It is easy to prepare and hardly any materials are needed.

6-Focusing on listening allows students to engage in language acquisition without being in an environment that is conducive to anxiety.

4. Disadvantages of Total Physical Response (TPR)

1-It is not designed for the comprehensive method. It represents a set of ideas rather than a complete method. Asher himself has stressed that TPR should be used in association with other methods.

2-As students progress further, it becomes more difficult to give other commands.

3-Very little emphasis on precision.

4-Students may feel embarrassed.

5-It can be very repetitive.

Conclusion

Proponents of Communicative Language Teaching would question the relevance to real-world learner needs of the TPR syllabus. Therefore, as Asher has recommended in more recent years, practitioners of TPR typically follow his suggestion that TPR represents a useful set of techniques and is compatible with other approaches to teaching. Today TPR activities are often included in training courses for teachers of young learners. TPR practices, therefore, may be effective for reasons other than those proposed by Asher.

II-Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Introduction

The origin of the Communicative Approach or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). can be traced to the 1960s when British applied linguists (Brumfit, Johnson, Candlin, Widdowson, Halliday, Hymes, Gumperz, Austin, Searle, Munby, Canale & Swain…) rejected the structural approach to language teaching and Situational Language Teaching (SLT). They adopted new teaching approaches -the functional and communicative approaches in which communicative competence, a term coined by Hymes (1972), became more important than structure. Consequently, CLT emerged as a reaction to previous methodological principles especially after the development of the functional-notional syllabus by Wilkins in 1972 and his book *Notional Syllabuses* in 1976. Notions (concepts) represent the topics to be discussed (**e.g.** shopping) while functions include why do we need language or what to do with/through the language (**e.g.** requesting something). As explained by Berns (1984):

> Language is interaction; it is interpersonal activity and has a clear relationship with society. In this light, language study has to look at the use (function) of language in context, both its linguistic context (what is uttered before and after a given piece of discourse) and its social, or situational, context (who is speaking, what their social roles are, why they have come together to speak). (p. 5)

The goal of CLT was fostering learners' communicative competence and looking for effective techniques of teaching the four language skills. It is based on "the experience approach" or "learning by doing" by moving to a learner-centred curriculum that takes into consideration learners' needs, and the importance of the sociocultural context as proposed by Malinowski and Firth (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Proponents of CLT were interested in the process of needs' analysis and ESP syllabus design. In this regard, Munby's Communicative Syllabus Design (1978) presented a detailed model for conducting needs' analysis in ESP course design.

1. Definition of Communicative Competence

Communictive competence entails knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions as well as the following dimensions of language knowledge:

-Knowing how to vary use of language according to the setting and the participants (e.g., knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication).

-Knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts (e.g., narratives, reports, interviews, conversations).

-Knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitationsin one'slanguage knowledge (**e.g.**, through using different kinds of communication strategies). (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 90)

2. Dimensions of Communicative Competence

1-Grammatical competence: refers to what Chomsky calls linguistic competence

2-Sociolinguistic competence: an understanding of the social context in which communication takes place, including role relationships, the shared information of the participants, and the communicative purpose for their interaction.

3-Discourse competence: the interpretation of individual message elements in terms of their interconnectedness and of how meaning is represented in relationship to the entire discourse or text.

4-Strategic competence: refers to the coping strategies that communicators employ to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair, and redirect communication. (Canale & Swain, 1980, as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 89)

3. Characteristics of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

1. Classroom goals are focused on all of the components (grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistics/pragmatic and strategic) of communicative competence.

2. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques.

3. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learner meaningfully engaged in language use.

4. Students in a communicative class ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearshed (unplanned) contexts outside the classroom.

5. Students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through understanding of their own styles of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning

6. The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide not an all-knowing bestower (giver/presenter) of knowledge. Students are therefore, encouraged to construct mearning through genuine linguistic interaction with each other. (Brown, 2001, p. 43)

4. Principles of the Communicative Approach

1-The communication principle: Learning is promoted by activities involving real communication.

2-The task principle: Learning is also enhanced through the use of activities in which language is employed for carrying out meaningful tasks.

3-The meaningfulness principle: The learning process is supported by language which is meaningful to the student. Activities should consequently be selected according to how well they involve the learner in authentic and meaningful language use. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001)

5. Accuracy and Fluency in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

One of the goals of CLT is to develop fluency, accuracy, and appropriacy in language use. Teachers were recommended to use a balance of fluency activities and accuracy and to use accuracy activities to support fluency activities. Accuracy work could come either before or after fluency work. For example, based on students' performance on a fluency task, the teacher could assign accuracy work to deal with grammatical or pronunciation problems the teacher observed while students were carrying out the task, or develop a follow-up focus on appropriacy of language use (**e.g.,** the difference between formal and casual speech). In practical terms, this greater emphasis on fluency is familiar to generations of teachers as the final 'P' in the PPP model. Whereas Audiolingualism had concentrated on the first two stages of the model – presentation and practice – CLT prioritized the third – production (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, pp. 96-97).

6. The "strong" vs. the " weak" version of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

-The "strong" version: language is acquired through communication: "using English to learn it".

-The "weak" version: "learning to use" English (Howatt, 1984, p. 279).

7. Common Activities in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Different communicative activities (both pair and group activities) are used:

-**Jigsaw activities:** The class is divided into groups and each group has part of the information needed to complete an activity. The class must fit the pieces together to complete the whole.

-Task-completion activities: Puzzles, games, map-reading, and other kinds of classroom tasks in which the focus is on using one's language resources to complete a task.

-**Information-gathering activities:** Student-conducted surveys, interviews, and searches in which students are required to use their linguistic resources to collect information.

-Opinion-sharing activities: Activities where students compare values, opinions, beliefs, e.g. a ranking task (listing six qualities in order of importance when choosing a spouse).

-**Information-transfer activities:** Taking information that is presented in one form, and representing it in a different form. For example, students may read instructions on how to get from

A to B, and then draw a map showing the sequence, or they may read information about a subject and then represent it as a graph.

-**Reasoning gap activities:** Deriving some new information from given information through the process of inference, practical reasoning, etc. For example, working out a teacher's timetable on the basis of given class timetables.

-**Role plays:** Students arc assigned roles and improvise a scene or exchange based on given information or clues. (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 97).

8. Instructional Materials in CLT

CLT relies on four main materials: text-based (e.g. textbooks), task-based (relying on jigsaw or information-gap activities), realia-based (authentic materials, taken from "real life" and brought into the classroom, such as signs, magazines, newspapers, maps, pictures, graphs, charts, or even objects), and technology-supported materials (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, pp. 100-101).

9. Criticism of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

1-The persistence of errors in learners' language has been attributed to an over emphasis on communication in language teaching at the expense of accuracy. Communicative classroom activities cannot always help learners develop their communicative and linguistic competence.

2-It was not feasible to adopt CLT in countries that have different cultures as methods developed in one context will not necessarily transfer to others. It reflects a Western-based approach to innovation that cannot take into consideration the diversity of students' needs and goals (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, pp. 103-104).

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