towards teaching requirements, learning activities as well as humanistic dimensions and feeling of students in the classroom. This shift of attitude facilitates the process of dealing with the challenges of CLT classes for teachers.

Conclusion

Given the fairly dramatic change in attitudes not only to language but also to learners and teachers that came with the development of CLT, it is not surprising that it has taken some time to work out the implications for all aspects of the teaching/ learning process. It is, however, worrying that many people's perceptions of CLT seem to have got stuck at its early stage of questioning and experimentation, before some of the key issues are fully resolved. CLT is by no means the final answer—no doubt the next 'revolution' in language teaching is already under way somewhere. But whatever innovations emerge, they will do so against the background of the changes brought about by CLT, and will need to accommodate or explicitly reject those changes. Some of them are too important to lose: the concern with the world beyond the classroom, the concern with the learner as an individual, the view of language as structured to carry out the functions we want it to perform. In order to ensure that these changes are not pushed aside in future developments, it seems essential to attempt to clear away misconceptions that might otherwise be used to damn them and CLT as a whole.

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towards classic skills (Listening- Speaking –Reading and Writing).

Misconception 3: CLT means pair work, which means role-play

According to Thompson (1996), many teachers have come to this point that the foundation of CLT is group work. However, a glance at the principles of CLT can verify the falsity of this view. Thompson (1996) adds that one of the main features of CLT is that learners need to be given different roles in different situation to practice independently and gain autonomy as soon as possible. Learners should be provided with choices to make decisions. Richards (2006) looks at this point form a different angle and argues that since CLT is a humanistic approach, it values learners' needs and wants. According to Kumaravadivelu (2006), students have a voice (idea) in the process of planning, implementing and assessing different aspects of classroom procedures. The implication of this false belief is that making pair work as the cornerstone of CLT, puts limits on what learners can achieve through whole class and individual activities while this is not the case.

Misconception 4: CLT means expecting too much from the teacher

Though Medgyes (1986) claims that CLT places greater demands on the teacher than certain other widely used approaches, Thompson (1996) clearly rejects this view. He argues that it is true that CLT activities and procedures are unpredictable and challenging, this does not mean that teachers are not ready or not willing to face up such challenges. As mentioned by Richards (2006), teachers' roles have changed to facilitators and monitors. They are not supposed to act as a model in producing error-free sentences. A CLT teacher assumes a different view

misunderstanding on the part of teachers. He provides some reasons. To give some examples, Prabhu (1987) claims that it is impossible to teach grammar because it is too complex to be acquired by learners. The other figure who rejects grammar teaching is Krashen (1988), arguing that grammar teaching is unnecessary because the knowledge of grammar is of a kind which cannot be passed on in the form of statable rules, but can only be acquired unconsciously through exposure to that given language. Richards (2006), rejects this false interpretation and argues that the aim of CLT activities is to boost students' communicative competence through linguistic features to make learners able to communicate effectively and appropriately. He continues that grammar should not be treated the same as it was treated in the traditional method. The focus in CLT is on both meaning and form. In fact, the summary of Richard's claim is that the learner should discover grammar inductively through exposure to different manifestations of forms in different functions (Richards, 2006).

> **Communicative competence entails knowing not only the language code or the form of language, but also includes having choice in bridging the information gap based on the feedback one receives from a given situation (Kumaravadivelu, 2006)**
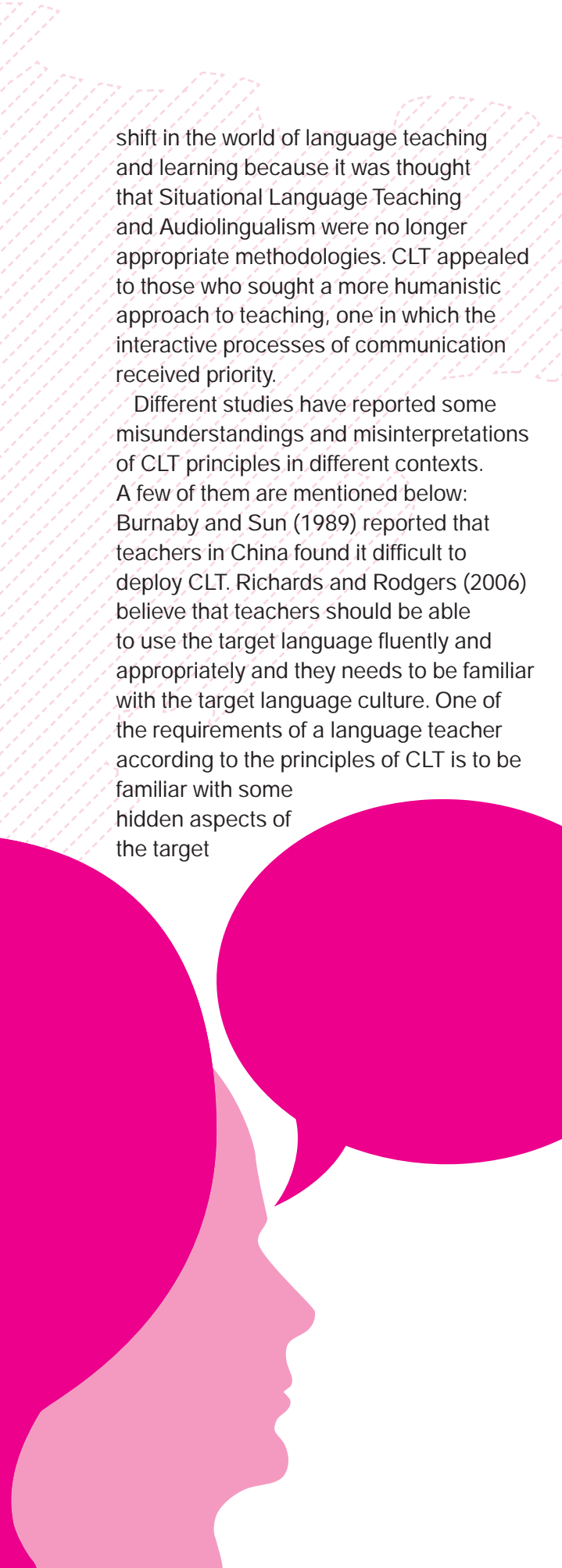
Misconception 2: CLT means teaching only speaking

According to Thompson (1996), since the primary focus of CLT is communication in the target language, many teachers believe that the main goal of this approach is developing speaking ability in pupils.

Thompson (1996) adds that another reason for this misunderstanding on the part of teachers is the fact that students should receive sufficient practice of appropriate use of language through talk. Teacher trainers have operationalized this concept in the form of TTT (Teacher Talking Time) and STT (Students Talking Time). They (teacher trainers) emphasize that the main slogan of CLT is reduction in the rate of TTT and increasing the rate of STT (Thompson, 1996). Again, Richards (2006) clearly rejects this false belief and emphasizes the integration of all four skills in the realm of CLT. In fact, CLT provides a balanced view

shift in the world of language teaching and learning because it was thought that Situational Language Teaching and Audiolingualism were no longer appropriate methodologies. CLT appealed to those who sought a more humanistic approach to teaching, one in which the interactive processes of communication received priority.

Different studies have reported some misunderstandings and misinterpretations of CLT principles in different contexts. A few of them are mentioned below: Burnaby and Sun (1989) reported that teachers in China found it difficult to deploy CLT. Richards and Rodgers (2006) believe that teachers should be able to use the target language fluently and appropriately and they needs to be familiar with the target language culture. One of the requirements of a language teacher according to the principles of CLT is to be familiar with some hidden aspects of the target

As Richards (2006) clearly puts it, CLT can be understood as a framework and flexible approach for achieving the goals of language teaching. It facilitates the process of language learning and paves the way for effective and communicative-based prospect for learners

culture. According to Kumaravadivelu (2006) to act as effectively as possible, the teacher has three roles in the classroom namely, facilitator, participant and observer. Based on the study done by Dahmardeh (2009), it can be concluded that most of the Iranian English language teachers who participated in the study were not proficient enough to assume the right roles in implementing CLT demands. Teachers should also be ready to provide learning opportunities for the students. As Echevarria et al. (2004) have noted:

It can be particularly tempting for teachers to do most of the talking when students are not completely proficient in their use of English, but these students are precisely the ones who need opportunities to practice using English the most. (p. 103)

Misconception 1: CLT means not teaching grammar

According to Thompson (1996), this is the most demanding and challenging

features of language has been replaced by culture-oriented and meaning based views of language teaching. The importance of culture and its roles in the process of negotiation of meaning has been given a great weight in the course of language learning. In a study regarding the place of culture in the Iranian ELT textbooks, Aliakbari (2004) concluded that the ELT textbooks in use in Iranian secondary schools fail to help students develop intercultural competence and cultural understanding.

Authenticity

Authenticity has been a very demanding issue in curriculum development. It is interpreted in terms of the degree of closeness of the textbook texts and activities to the ones used in real life situations. According to Dahmardeh (2009), though Iranian students receive hundreds of hours learning and practicing English language during their education at schools, they cannot communicate effectively and appropriately in real situations even greeting or taking a taxi. This can be attributed to the type of texts and classroom activities that are currently in use in language classes. Aliakbari (2004) found that 28 per cent of reading passages in Iranian English textbooks at the time of the study, lacked identifiable sources of reference.

Role of Meaning and Form

As discussed in the above sections, one of the main features of CLT is communicative competence. Communicative competence entails knowing not only the language code or the form of

language, but also includes having choice in bridging the information gap based on the feedback one receives from a given situation (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). In other words, a well-known description of communicative competence attributed to it is the knowledge of what to say to whom, when, where, and to whom and how.

Since CLT has been interpreted as an approach rather than a method, it is potentially flexible enough to cover a wide range of activities and procedures in different contexts and at different levels. Richards (2006) adds that the emergence of CLT was a radical

and challenging roles and act as catalysts to facilitate the process of language learning. According to Richards (2006), adaptation involves departure from their traditional roles as an authority and model to the new roles of being conductors, guides and cooperators. He further adds that CLT leads the process of learning in a cooperative rather than individualistic manner. Students are supposed to feel responsible for their own learning as well as their peers. Training independent and critical thinkers is the ultimate goal of a CLT oriented approach. According to Ahmed (2014), a teacher in CLT plays the role of a guide and not that of an "all-knowing knowledge provider" (p. 3).

Therefore, the roles of the teacher in CLT are different from their traditional roles and this is one of the most crucial factors in the successful implementation of CLT. According to Kumaravadivelu (2006), information by and from students is used in planning, implementing and evaluating language programs. He argued that the idea is based on a belief that students will bring to the learning situation different beliefs and attitudes about the nature of language and language learning and that these beliefs and attitudes need to be taken into consideration in the selection of content and learning experiences.

CLT in Iran: Real or Artificial?

Though CLT is the dominant approach in the context of Iran nowadays, it will have a long journey to go before it is fully implemented. Based on a research conducted by Ghanbari and Ketabi (2011), Iranian teachers have a vague and doubtful view regarding the application of the new curriculum with its new approach and new roles.

Based on Thompson (1996), certain misconceptions about CLT continue to survive, making it difficult for many teachers to see clearly what is happening and to identify the useful innovations of CLT. According to Ashari & Zarrin (2014), some barriers and constraints that challenge the implementation of real and original CLT in the context of Iran are as follow: cultural issues, authenticity and role of meaning and form as well as large class sizes, mismatches between curriculum and assessment, lack of teacher training programs, and teachers' poor socio-economic conditions. Some of these barriers are discussed below:

Cultural Issues

Culture is among the issues that has attracted CLT proponents vastly. According to Dahmardeh (2009), learning a foreign language involves more than just rules or linguistic features of that language. Acquiring a new language involves induction into a new culture with new indemnities and linguistic behaviors. As Pulverness (2003) argues, the emphasis on linguistic structures and isolated

based prospect for learners. CLT favors those kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and puts emphasis on the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom. As Richards and Rodgers (2001) argue, most experts consider CLT as a viable approach that boosts communicative ability of learners and pays enough attention to all four basic skills. If practiced appropriately, the outcome will be autonomous and competent learners.

The Goals of Language Teaching

The main objective of CLT is to help students learn a language so that they can use it to communicate meaningfully in real life situations. As asserted by Larsen-Freeman (2000), "CLT aims broadly to apply the theoretical perspective of the Communicative Approach by making communicative competence the goal of language teaching and by acknowledging the interdependence of language and communication" (p. 121).

As Ashari and Zarrin (2014) put it, in the field of second language acquisition, there are many theories about the most effective way of acquiring new language forms. Recently more language teachers have shifted to adopt CLT as a result of noticing the failure of form- focused methods such as Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Audio-lingual Method (AM) in developing learners' communicative ability in real life situations. According to Richards (2006), the main goal of CLT is teaching of communicative competence. He adds that we should make a distinction between grammatical competence that refers to the knowledge we have of a language that accounts for our ability to produce sentences in a language and communicative competence

that encourages effective as well as appropriate use of language in different situations and contexts (Richards, 2006).

> To compensate for the limitations of the traditional language teaching methods such as Grammar Translation Method or Audio - Lingual Method, CLT has been introduced in EFL settings to improve students' ability to use English in real contexts (Littlewood, 2007)

The Roles of Teachers and Learners in CLT

As Richards (2006) argues, with the emergence of CLT, teachers and learners are supposed to play new and demanding roles and depart from their traditional views. CLT demands a knowledgeable as well as a hard-working teacher to facilitate and conduct the process of language learning in a constructive and effective way. Teachers now have to adapt to new

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Introduction

During the recent years, Iranian English teachers, especially teachers of English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL teachers), have been required to use CLT approach in their classes. As English is considered as an international language all over the world and people use it for their different purposes in the fields of industry, sciene or business, the importance of English learning and teaching has been increased significantly. Additionally, the increasing demand for internet access has increased the importance of English. CLT can be interpreted as a set of principles about the objectives of language teaching, the types of classroom activities that effectively promote learning, and the responsibility of teachers and learners in the classroom (Richards, 2006).

What is CLT?

To compensate for the limitations of the traditional language teaching methods such as Grammar Translation Method or Audio Lingual Method, CLT has been introduced in EFL settings to improve students' ability to use English in real contexts (Littlewood, 2007). According to Power (2003), CLT is an overarching term that covers different approaches. CLT was developed in the 1970s in a critical reaction to the audio-lingual teaching method. The proponents of CLT criticize the mechanistic nature of the audio-lingual pattern drills, which fail to prepare learners for a productive use of the target language in diverse communicative situations of everyday life. The common goal of communicative approaches is communicative competence. Savignon (2007) argued:

It would be inappropriate to speak of CLT as a teaching 'method' in any sense of that term as it was used in the 20th century. Rather, CLT is an approach that understands language to be inseparable from individual identity and social behavior. (p. 217)

As Richards (2006) clearly puts it, CLT can be understood as a framework and flexible approach for achieving the goals of language teaching. It facilitates the process of language learning and paves the way for effective and communicative-

Communicative Language Teaching and Iranian English Teachers: Some Misunderstandings

چکیده

اگر هدف تدریس یک زبان خارجی اســتفاده مؤثر از آن زبان اســت، رویکرد ارتباطی مسیری درست در جِهت این مهم است. طبق نظر ادی (۲۰۱۲)، برای برقراری ارتباط مؤثر و درست، رویکرد ارتباطی انتخاب شایسته‌ای است. اخیراً رویکرد ارتباطی در برنامه درســی کشور ایران رایج شده است. وقتی از بیشــتر معلمان زبان در ایران سؤال می‌شود که روش آن‌ها در کلاس درس چیســت، پاســخ اکثر آن‌ها رویکرد ارتباطی است. با این وجود، وقتی از آن‌ها خواسته می‌شــود که رویکرد ارتباطی را توصیف کنند، پاسخ‌هایشــان متفاوت و شخصی می‌شود. اینجا چند ســؤال اساسی مطرح می‌شود: مهم‌ترین اصل‌های رویکرد ارتباطی چیست؟ آیا هدف این رویکرد صرفاً تدریس گرامر و یا مکالمه است؟ جایگاه فعالیت‌های باز و با جواب‌های متفاوت کجاست؟ آیا معلمان ایرانی درکی عمیق و اصولی از این رویکرد (ارتباطی) دارند؟ باید دانست که اگرچه رویکرد ارتباطی از سوی بسیاری از زبان‌شناسان و معلمان به‌عنوان رویکردی مؤثر پذیرفته شده، اما به دلیل برداشت‌های مختلف و بعضاً نادرست، به‌تدریج از تأثیر این رویکرد کاســته شده است. هدف مقاله حاضر معرفی این رویکرد به‌طور خلاصه و بررسی بعضی از برداشت‌های نادرست در رابطه با آن است.

کلیدواژه‌ها: رویکرد ارتباطی، معلمان آموزش زبان در ایران، برداشت‌های نادرست

Abstract

If the am of language teaching is to use language effectively, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT hereafter) can be the ideal channel to move forward. According to Adi,(2012), to communicate effectively and appropriately, CLT can be a right choice. Recently, CLT has become the most fashionable approach in the context of Iran. When asked about the approach they use in their classrooms, most Iranian EFL teachers' answers will be CLT approach. However, when asked to give a detailed and comprehensive picture of CLT, their interpretation will be somehow different and personal. Regarding CLT, the main questions are: What are the basic tenets of CLT? Does CLT mean teaching grammar or conversation? What is the role of open-ended activities in CLT? Do Iranian EFL teachers have a deep and logical understanding of CLT slogans to be implemented? Although many applied linguists and teachers have accepted CLT as an effective approach, different conceptions of CLT, some of which seem to be false, have diminished its efficacy. This paper, then, tries to introduce CLT briefly, set out the main misconceptions and discuss them in detail.

Key Words : CLT, Iranian EFL teachers, misconceptions