

COMMUNITY LANGUAGE LEARNING (CLL) : A
humanistic approach to second language
acquisition

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教学レポート



CALLシステムを利用した授業風景（LL-A教室）

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A humanistic approach to second language acquisition

Maclaren S. Decker

Community language learning:

(CLL), as the name implies, is a language learning method that seeks to treat the second language classroom as a venue for communal language learning and counseling between students and teacher. This creative, dynamic, and non-directive approach to language learning was first elaborated in a new education model developed by Charles Curran in the early 1970's. Curran, at the time, a Jesuit priest and professor of psychology at Loyola University in Chicago, called his new model "Counseling-Learning". Primarily the Counseling-Learning model considers "affective" factors as paramount in the learning process, with the view that learners were to be considered not as a "class", but as a "group". The Counseling-Learning educational model when applied to language learning has come to be known as Community Language Learning. CLL redefines the role of the teacher (referred to as the "knower" or "counselor"), the role of the students (referred to as the "learners" or "clients") as well as the ambiance of the language classroom (hereafter referred to as the CLL environment), which provides a receptive venue for Curran's philosophy of learning, which in turn frequently goes beyond mere methodical pedagogy, and occasionally opens a window to profound,

almost theological reflections on the human condition. Learning a language is not viewed necessarily as an individual accomplishment, but rather as a collective experience.

A typical session in the CLL environment:

In the first session the learners are asked to move their chairs to form a circle, in preparation for recording a learner-generated conversation. The circle's circumference is determined by how tightly the learners can comfortably form it. In the center of the circle is a low table (no more than knee-high), on which is placed a sound recorder and a handheld microphone equipped with a start/stop switch. The learners have an unobstructed view of each other. The counselor stands outside the circle and explains that if and when a learner wants to say anything in the target language (L2) to anyone else or to the group; the learner should raise a hand and pick up the mike. This signals the counselor to discreetly position him/herself directly behind the learner. Then, in a clear, audible voice, the learner will first make the utterance in his/her native language (L1), so that all of the learners can hear and consider how the L2 will formulate. The knower will then bend down and whisper the L2 equivalent into the learner's ear. The learner will attempt to

repeat the entire L2 utterance as fluently as was presented by the knower. If this is not achievable, the knower will present the utterance in manageable whispered fragments. When the knower is satisfied that the learner has faithfully reproduced the L2 utterance to the best of his/her ability, the knower will lightly tap the learner's shoulder. This light tap signals the learner to initiate the recording process. With the mike switched 'on' only while speaking in the target language, the learner will, (depending on the length and difficulty of the utterance), either record the L2 utterance in one breath, or, in a series of manageable sentence fragments being whispered in his/her ear by the knower. Finally, the learner places the mike back on the low table in the center of the circle, where it will remain until another learner raises a hand to start the recording process again. The end result is a precise, uninterrupted recorded version of the conversation in the target language. In this way, the learners are always given the means to say what they want in the target language, even if they are at or near beginner level. This protects the learners from feeling that they can only communicate in a diminished way in the target language, which is a major disincentive to learning. The recording is replayed and the learners make a transcription of the conversation. For the learners to hear themselves expressing their own feelings and ideas in the target language really helps them to feel a part of the language. The knower will then answer questions about the linguistic aspects of the text, or encourage other group members to

do so. The conversation, produced entirely by the group, is the body of language that becomes the text from which they work. This learner-generated text is the fuel that powers the role playing, pair work, reflective listening, and other reinforcement activities that follow the recording segment. The session ends with a reflection session. The reflection session is truly essential in the CLL approach. Trust between the knower and the learners, as well as among the learners themselves is established by sharing their frustrations, feelings, and anxieties. By sharing anxiety, learners build a sense of unity to do one task together, and this in itself remarkably reduces learner anxiety.

A humanistic approach:

Many approaches to language teaching prioritize form over content. That is to say, learners are seen and treated as operatives who recite language, rather than employing it as a medium to communicate real-life meanings and messages. They reiterate input, rather than articulate personal output. Humanistic approaches to language teaching, such as CLL attempt to remedy this imbalance by recognizing the learner as the essential agent in the learning/teaching process. In CLL, the learners are encouraged to speak for and from themselves, not by proxy through responses initiated by a teacher or teaching materials. In short, CLL learners become the authors of their own target language, rather than vehicles for vague repetition.

Curran emphasizes both the role of the client

(learner) as an individual and as a member of the group. He was sensitive to the fear many learners have of appearing foolish when learning a second language, and aware of the anxieties many adults bring to group learning situations. Curran also emphasizes that the aim of the counselor (knower) is to communicate empathy for the clients' linguistic confusion, conflict, and threatened inadequate state, and to assist them linguistically, ensuring that all members of the group can contribute when they feel ready, and to create a relaxed, accepting and non-threatening CLL environment. He views second language learning as a 'rebirth' of oneself including all of the challenges that are associated with birth and maturation, and it is within the context of the empathetic learner-knower relationship that Curran articulated the 5 developmental stages of learner second language acquisition:

Stage 1 (Embryonic stage): The learner doesn't know the target language and is totally dependent on the knower for linguistic content..

Stage 2 (Birth Stage): The learner begins to establish some independence and use the language but with frequent support from the knower

Stage 3 (Child-like Stage): The learner uses the target language independently and confidently, and may even begin to resist assistance/intervention by the knower.

Stage 4 (Role Reversal Stage): The learner is secure enough to accept correction but the knower may be hesitant to correct the learner at this stage.

Stage 5 (Independent Stage): The learner is

able to continue learning independently with very little or no assistance. Interruptions are infrequent, and usually concern enrichment or improvement of style.

Consistent with the humanistic approach and a key element of CLL is knower 'understanding'. Active, empathetic listening is essential to understanding. It's imperative for the knower to be a good listener. When the knower demonstrates true understanding, learners feel more secure and can be more open and non-defensive in learning. Within such a relationship, anxiety dissipates, enhancing the potential for more effective learning.

A closing personal note:

My first exposure to CLL was more years ago than I care to remember. At the time I was a member of the English Materials Development Department at the Matsushita Audio-Visual Educational Research Foundation in Osaka, Japan. As part of my work profile, it became incumbent on me to choose and attend one of several weekly ESL courses being offered by the foundation. I chose and for 9 months faithfully attended the seminar on Community Language Learning. And in retrospect, I feel quite fortunate to have had that opportunity. Suffice it to say, at the very least, the course taught me that defensive learning prevents a second language learner from speaking a foreign language at his/her optimal potential even when he or she knows the target language grammar and has a grasp on linguistic theory, as is often the case with

Japanese learners. It is no great leap for me to conclude that CLL, if properly presented, would be an effective method of second language learning in Japan. Finally, to me, the enduring value of CLL has been its emphasis on whole-person learning; the role of a supportive, non-judgmental knower; the elimination of a pre-planned syllabus, and the passing of responsibility for learning to the learners, (where it belongs).

Should you care to read further, let me suggest:

Curran, C.A. (1977). *Counseling-Learning : A whole-person approach for education.* (2nd

ed.). East Dubuque, IL : Counseling-Learning Publications.

Curran, C.A. & Tyrone. P. (1984). *The Counseling-Learning Approach to Community Language Learning.* Proceedings of the 13th annual University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Linguistics Symposium. Milwaukee, WI: Department of Linguistics, University of Wisconsin.

Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. A. (1991). Foreign Language classroom anxiety. In E. K. Horwitz & D. J. Young. (Eds.), *Language Anxiety*(pp. 27-36). Englewood Cliffs, NJ : Prentice Hall.