

BLOCK 4.

The past meets the present: Language teaching methods in the 20th and 21st centuries

Sub-block 4.2. Humanistic or Holistic methods

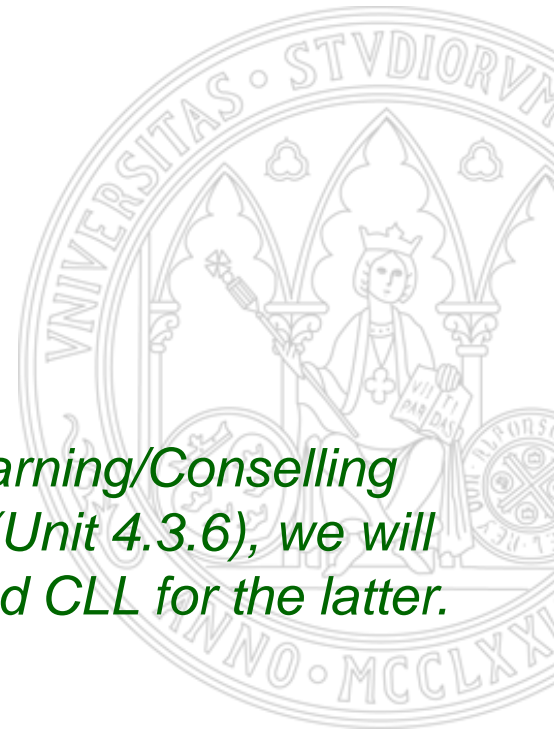
Unit 4.2.5. Community Language Learning / Counselling Learning (CL)

Outline

1. Objectives of this unit
2. Goal of CL
3. Historical background of CL
4. Analysis of the components of CL
5. Critical assessment of CL

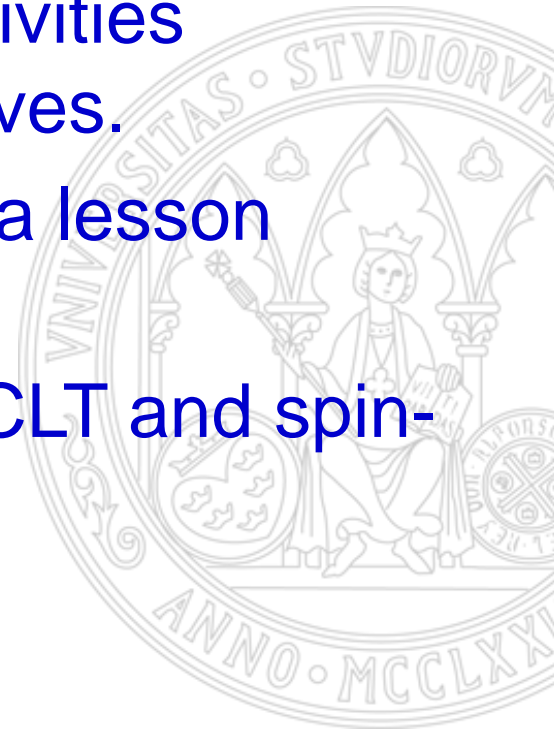


In order to distinguish Community Language Learning/Conselling Learning from Cooperative Language Learning (Unit 4.3.6), we will use the abbreviation CL to refer to the former and CLL for the latter.



1. Objectives of this unit

1. Understand the principles on which CL is based.
2. Analyse the assumptions of CL, the methodology promoted and the activities developed to achieve these objectives.
3. Critically analyse CL in the form of a lesson plan.
4. Identify the influence of CL on the CLT and spin-offs.



2. Goal of CL

To learn to use the target language for everyday oral communication



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3. Historical background of CL

- Curran (1961) → “Counseling Learning / Community Language Learning” (CL).
- Derived from Rogerian counselling (Rogers, 1951)
- Counselling metaphor: teacher (the *Counsellor* or *knower*) and learners (the *clients*). Counsellor-client relationship.
- **Humanistic tradition.**
- *The Community Method could be defined in the following way: it is a supporting linguistic contract that consists of a group experience and reflection. There exist five elements in this definition that are important in order to understand the Community Method correctly: firstly, CM is a learning contract; secondly, CM is a supporting type of learning; thirdly, CM is a group experience; fourthly, CM is a group reflection; fifthly, CM is language learning.*

(La Forge, 1983: 27)

4. Analysis of the components of CL

Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs (approach)

□ Theory of language (nature of language, including approach to culture)

- Not a proper theory of language (= TPR, Silent Way, Suggestopedia) indicated by Curran. Development by La Forge (see below).

- Structuralist view of language:

The foreign language learner's tasks are "to apprehend the sound system, assign fundamental meanings, and to construct a basic grammar of the foreign language." (La Forge, 1983: 4).

- Interactional view of language: language used for communication and for developing understanding and critical thinking.

Communication is more than just a message being transmitted from a speaker to a listener. The speaker is at the same time both subject and object of his own message [...] Communication is an exchange which is incomplete without a feedback reaction from the destinee of the message.

(La Forge, 1983: 3).

- Culture is seen as the L2 speakers' conceptualization of the world.

4. Analysis of the components of CL

Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs (approach)

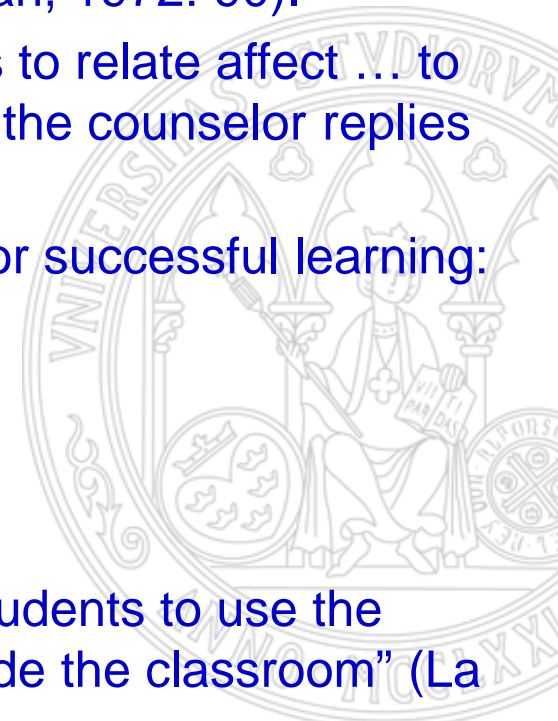
□ Theory of learning (learning principles)

- Holistic → *whole-person learning*.

“an interaction [...] in which both [the teacher and the students] experience a sense of their own wholeness” (Curran, 1972: 90).

“One of the functions of the counseling response is to relate affect ... to cognition. Understanding the language of ‘feeling’, the counselor replies in the language of cognition” (Curran, 1976: 26).

- Six psychological requirements or commitments for successful learning: SARD (Curran, 1976: 6) →
 - **S**: security.
 - **A**: attention and aggression
 - **R**: retention and reflection.
 - **D: discrimination**. It ultimately “enables the students to use the language for purposes of communication outside the classroom” (La Forge, 1983: 69)



4. Analysis of the components of CL

Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs (approach)

□ Theory of learning (learning principles)

- Five learning stages compared to the “ontogenetic development of a child” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 92):

STAGE 1: learner is totally dependent: he doesn't know anything.

Repeats utterances as a child...

STAGE 2: some independence is gained. First traces of independence.

Learner is able to elicit some simple utterances.

STAGE 3: learners begin to understand others in the target language.

Some assistance from counsellor not needed (as children from parents...)

STAGE 4: the adolescence of learning. Independence is gained. The learner must learn from the counsellor how to get an advanced level of proficiency in the target language.

STAGE 5: the independent state in language use.

4. Analysis of the components of CL

Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs (approach)

□ Theory of teaching (pedagogical principles)

- Teaching must be adapted to the five stages of learning
- Teaching must foster both conscious and unconscious learning, since language learning involves both affective and cognitive factors
- Interactive activities are emphasised. Two types of interaction:
 - Between learners and knowers and between learners.
 - Teacher is the counsellor and guide of the classroom
- Students are active participants and must get involved in cooperative learning

4. Analysis of the components of CL

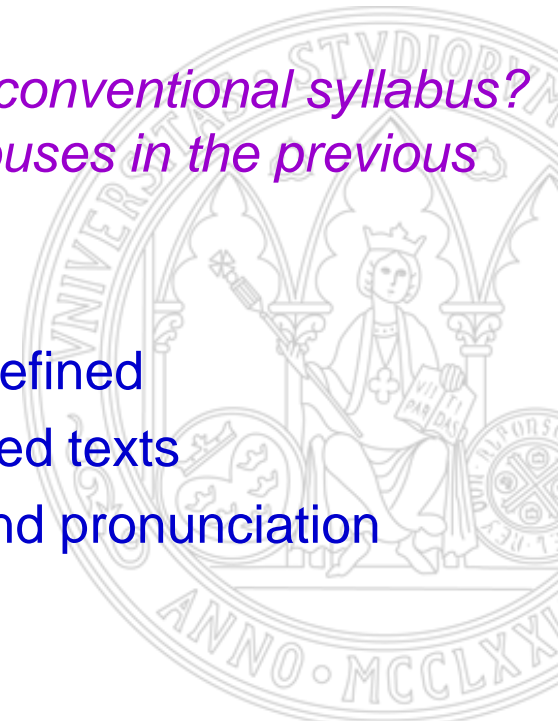
Axis 2. The What. Objectives of teaching. Syllabus specifications

- ❑ Not a conventional language syllabus (no linguistic or communicative objectives or contents predefined)



*Why do you think that the CL does not offer a conventional syllabus?
What is the common characteristic of all syllabuses in the previous methods?*

- ❑ Topic-based progression
- ❑ No linguistic or communicative objectives pre-defined
- ❑ Model of language: informal or student-generated texts
- ❑ Emphasised language areas: lexis, grammar and pronunciation extracted from the students' conversations.
- ❑ Emphasised skills: oral skills.



4. Analysis of the components of CL

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

□ Activities (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 93-94)

- *Translation.*
- *Group work.*
- *Transcription.*
- *Analysis.*
- *Repetition.*
- *Reflection and observation.*
- *Listening.*
- *Free conversation.*



4. Analysis of the components of CL

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

□ Procedure. Five stages (Lado, 1988: 29-30):

In the first stage,

A small circle of students sit in a circle with a counselor behind them. The counselor is a native speaker or one who knows the language well enough to function as one. When the students wish to speak to the group they turn to the counselor and tell him/her in the native language what they wish to say. The other students overhear what each wants to say and are ready to hear it in the second language. The counselor tells the student how to say it, and the student turns to face the others and says it.

4. Analysis of the components of CL

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

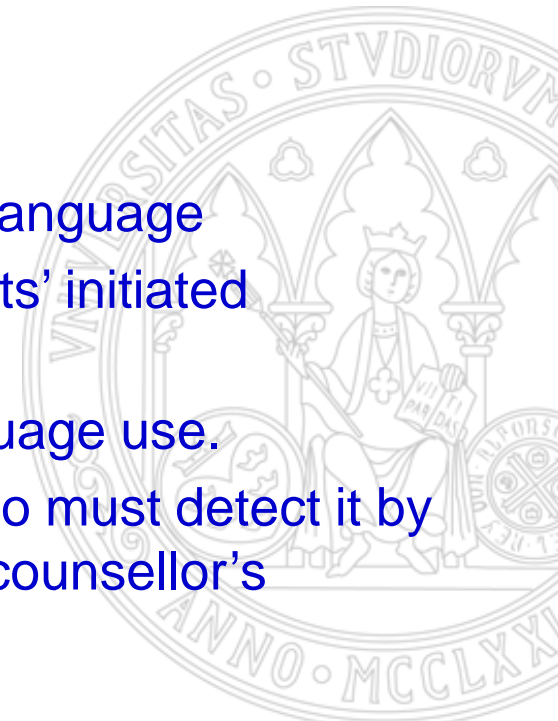
□ Procedure. Five stages (Lado, 1988: 29-30. Our highlighting):

*In the **second stage**, the learner no longer waits for the counselor to supply the foreign language version, but begins saying it after telling the counselor in the native language what he or she intends to say. The counselor intervenes only if the student falters or makes errors. In a **third stage**, the learner no longer tells the counselor what is going to be said, but begins speaking in the target language directly to the group. From the context, the counselor is able to help as needed. In **stages four and five**, the student speaks freely in the foreign language, and the counselor intervenes only to make grammatical and pronunciation corrections or aid in communication as needed.*

4. Analysis of the components of CL

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

- ❑ Roles of teacher (including feedback issues)
 - **Essential distinctive feature of this method.**
 - Learning guide. Facilitator of learning.
 - Counsellor.
 - Early stages: supportive role and model of language
 - Intermediate stages: monitor role as students' initiated interactions emerge
 - Later stages: corrector and advisor on language use.
 - Error correction will be asked by the learner, who must detect it by contrasting his/her production with the teacher/counsellor's (Sánchez, 2009: 239)



4. Analysis of the components of CL

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

❑ Roles of students

Members of a community. Learning must be undertaken actively and cooperatively. Responsibility for learning.

❑ Roles of instructional materials (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 86):

- Textbooks not regarded as necessary.



Why do you think so?

- Teacher-developed materials: summaries on the blackboard or overhead projector of linguistic features extracted from students' conversations. Transcripts of conversations.
- Learner-developed materials: scripts for dialogues and mini-dramas.

5. Critical assessment of CL



Can you think of any positive and negative aspects of CL?



5. Critical assessment of CL

□ Positive aspects


Stressed the humanistic and affective factors in language learning

□ Negative aspects (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 97-98; Lado, 1988: 30)

- Very demanding method for teachers: pedagogical and psychological training required
- Lack of syllabus and resulting unclear language objectives
- Feasible to implement in small intensive classes –how to extrapolate the whole method to real-life secondary classes with more than 10 students per class?

5. Critical assessment of CL

□ Influence of CL on FLT

- Echoed in Cooperative Language Learning  *Unit 4.3.6*
- Variety of teacher's roles accepted in mainstream education nowadays (Harmer, 2007: 88)
- Value of learner as reflecting upon his/her own learning experiences (Harmer, 2007: 88)



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