

# COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

**Viorica BANCIU**

University of Oradea

Tel: 00-40-259-408439 E-mail: myconferences18@gmail.com

**Angela JIREGHIE**

“Vasile Goldiș” Western University of Arad

Tel: 0040-257-282324 E-mail: ajireghie@ yahoo.com

## **Abstract**

*This paper focuses on the idea of an effective communication between teacher and students aiming to prove that classroom activities maximize opportunities for learners to use target language in a communicative way for meaningful activities. The emphasis lies on meaning (messages they are creating or tasks they are completing) rather than form (correctness of language and language structure).*

**Keywords: communication, teaching, language, methods, activities**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Communicative Language Teaching is usually characterized as a broad approach to teaching, rather than as a teaching method with a clearly defined set of classroom practices.

Historically, Communicative Language Teaching has been seen as a response to the Audio-Lingual Method and as an extension or development of the Notional-Functional Syllabus. As an extension of the notional-functional syllabus, Communicative Language Teaching places great emphasis on helping students use the target language in a variety of contexts and on learning language functions.

Unlike the Audio-Lingual Method, its primary focus is on helping learners create meaning rather than helping them develop perfectly grammatical structures or acquire native-like pronunciation. This means that successfully learning a foreign language is assessed in terms of how well learners have developed their communicative competence, which can loosely be defined as their ability to apply knowledge of a language with adequate proficiency to communicate. „Der kommunikative Ansatz verarbeitet Anregungen der Sprechakttheorie und der kommunikativen Kompetenz. Die Sprache wird pragmatisch gesehen, die Muster der unterschiedlichen Sprechabsichten stehen im Vordergrund.” (Biris, Tirban, Milancovici, 2010, 46)

Communicative Language Teaching is most often defined as a list of general principles or features. One of the most recognized of these lists is David Nunan's (1991) five features of Communicative Language Teaching:

- an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language,
- the introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation,
- the provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the learning management process,
- an enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning
- an attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

These five features are claimed by practitioners of Communicative Language Teaching to show that they are very interested in the needs and desires of their learners, as well as the connection between the language as it is taught in their class and as it used outside the classroom. Under this broad definition, any teaching practice that helps students develop their communicative competence in an authentic context is considered an acceptable and beneficial form of instruction.

The concept of communication is the process by which people assign and convey meaning in an attempt to create shared understanding. It is through communication that collaboration and cooperation occur. Communication is the articulation of sending a message, through different media whether it be verbal or nonverbal, so long as a being transmits a thought, provoking idea, gesture or action. I considered several types of communication: verbal (by means of language, dialogue) and non-verbal communication.

### **WHAT CAN COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING IMPLY?**

It makes use of real-life situations that generate communication. The teacher sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life. Unlike the audio-lingual method of language teaching, which relies on repetition and drills, the communicative approach can leave students in suspense as to the outcome of a class exercise, which will vary according to their reactions and responses. The real-life simulations change from day to day. Students' motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics. Several concepts related to communicative language teaching are presented here.

The ultimate role that teaching must assume is to generate communication. A language communicates meaning. Grammar instances should be presented and practiced in order to achieve this goal. This is why I described the place of grammar in language teaching with its four stages: presentation, isolation and explanation, practice and test.

We consider that knowledge of grammatical rules is essential to the mastery of a language. The teacher has to prepare an organized, balanced plan of classroom teaching/learning procedures through which the learners will be enabled to spend some of their time concentrating on mastering one or more

of the components of the target language on their way to acquiring it as a whole.

The practical hints and communicative activities designed to stimulate conversation and communication among students in the English class, the activities and exercises should be ranged starting from the ones applied to early students (in my case, third year students) and moved on to more complex communicative activities, applicable to older learners. „Der Lehrer beklagt sich häufig, dass die Schüler 'faul' seien. Die Motivationsforschung versucht derartige Erklärungszirkel zu durchbrechen.“ (Biriş, 2010, 475) Activities to present and reinforce language should be fun but challenging and should follow a deliberate progression.

In a communicative classroom for beginners, the teacher might begin by passing out cards, each with a different name printed on it. The teacher then proceeds to model an exchange of introductions in the target language:

e.g Teacher: *Good morning. What's your name?*

Reply: *Hello! My name is Mary.*

Using a combination of the target language and gestures, the teacher conveys the task at hand, and gets the students to introduce themselves and ask their classmates for information. They are responding in English to a question in English. They do not know the answers beforehand, as they are each holding cards with their new identities written on them; hence, there is an authentic exchange of information.

Later during the class, as a reinforcement listening exercise, the students might hear a recorded exchange between two English kids meeting each other for the first time at the gym doors. Then the teacher might explain, in Romanian, the differences among English greetings in various social situations. Finally, the teacher might explain some of the grammar points and structures used.

The stages for an effective communicative activity and several games which offer the students opportunities to use the language they are learning in non-threatening, enjoyable contexts should be taken into account.

The teacher should have feedback for each activity that students are involved in. This is why I presented some ways of testing the students' competences (both formal and informal ways of evaluation were considered). By testing the students (orally or in writing), teacher will find out if, how much, and how well the learner has acquired the new material. It is also important to depict the mistakes and

deficiencies of their work. Testing includes grading but it is not restricted to it. As alternative means of evaluation I mentioned systematic observation, the project, the self- evaluation method and the portfolio.

During communicative activities a classroom is far from quiet. The students do most of the speaking, and frequently the scene of a classroom during a communicative exercise is active, with students leaving their seats to complete a task.

Because of the increased responsibility to participate, students may find they gain confidence in using the target language in general. Students are more responsible managers of their own learning. In communicative classrooms teachers will find themselves talking less and listening more, becoming active facilitators of their students' learning. The teacher sets up the exercise, but because the students' performance is the goal, the teacher must step back and observe, sometimes acting as a monitor.

All obstacles can be overcome if the role of the teacher is clearly set. When setting up an activity of any kind within a language class, establishing the role of the teacher is essential in creating a positive atmosphere for the success of the activity.

The communicative approach puts great emphasis on listening, which implies an active will to try to understand the others.

Thus, communicative language teaching often takes the form of pair and group work requiring negotiation and cooperation between learners, fluency-based activities that encourage learners to develop their confidence, role-plays in which students practice and develop language functions, as well as judicious use of grammar and pronunciation focused activities. Some of the most frequently classroom activities used in communicative language teaching are:

- > e.g. Activities,
- > Role-play,
- > Interviews,
- > Information Gap,
- > Games,
- > Language Exchanges,
- > Surveys,
- > Pair Work

The communicative approach emphasizes the idea of an effective communication between the teacher and the students and focuses on language as a medium of communication. It recognizes that all communication has a social purpose - learners have something to say or find out. Classroom activities maximize opportunities for learners to use target language in a communicative way for meaningful activities. The emphasis lies on meaning (messages they are creating or

task they are completing) rather than form (correctness of language and language structure) - as in first language acquisition.

### **CONCLUSION**

Communicative approach is not just limited to oral skills. Reading and writing skills need to be developed to promote pupils' confidence in all four skill areas. By using elements encountered in a variety of ways (reading, summarizing, translating, discussion, debates) language is made more *fluid* and pupils' manipulation of language more fluent. It is important not to be restricted to one textbook; text-book must not be used from cover to cover. It can be considered only a tool, a starting-point. With a little inspiration and imagination, text-books can be manipulated and rendered more communicative. Teacher must free him/herself from it, rely more on his/her own command of language and his/her professional expertise as to what linguistic items, idioms, phrases, words, need to be drilled, exploited or extended. Spontaneous and improvised practice helps to make minds more flexible and inspire confidence in coping with unforeseen, unanticipated situations. There is a need to use different registers and develop alternative ways of saying things.

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