

RESEARCH ARTICLE



LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LANGUAGE LEARNING- CURENT METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Dr.G.B. RAMESH

Lecturer-in-English, College of Education, GHAT, Sebha University
LIBYA



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ABSTRACT

In the present globalized scenario 'Communicative Competence' plays much role in teaching and learning process. It is the ability to say or write something which is grammatical, appropriate, fluent, formally possible, feasible and socially and contextually acceptable. In this situation, the teacher plays much role and orders the forms of the linguistic systems systematically and present them to the students one by one thus builds up language competence. In turn there is another role to be played by the student also. The student also must analyze the data presented to him in the form of natural chunks. According to Ellis there are two kinds of communicative approaches: 1) Formal and 2) Informal

According to Breen and Candlin the teacher has three main roles in the communicative classroom. Facilitator, an independent participant and an observer. Learners should be allowed to struggle to express themselves, as in the case of experimental learners, so that they learn to use the language. The materials introduced should help the learners to use language effectively for their own day to day purposes.

Teachers must provide the stimulation that motivate the students to become more independent in their use of English. The teachers must therefore provide learners with ample opportunities to use the language themselves for communicative purposes, which is otherwise very limited. So. Teachers, students and materials and class room environment all together work towards learning process.

Key Words: Communicative, Communicative Competence, Role of Teacher, Language. and Teaching

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The Oxford Advance Learners' Dictionary defines "communicative" as "ready and willing to talk and give information".

Noam Chomsky's communicative view of language and theory of competence has much to do with linguistic competence. According to him "competence was internalized knowledge of the system of syntactic and phonological rules of the

language that the ideal speaker – hearer possesses in the native language...," communicative competence is the ability to use the language appropriate to given social context. It is the ability to say or write something which is grammatical, appropriate, fluent, formally possible, feasible and socially and contextually acceptable.

Communicative Approach focuses on message rather than medium. In it learners must be able to participate in their own learning process. This implies that the teacher must be prepared to deviate from his plan and enter into real conversation with his students. This highlights to the fact that the role of the teacher is one of facilitator and not of an instructor. A participatory atmosphere is to prevail in the classroom. Here there is a shift in focus of attention from grammatical to the communicative properties of language.

Communicative approach is based on the belief that acquiring a language means to communicate confidently and fluently in the language. The view is that the difficulties that the students encounter arise not so much from a defective knowledge of the system of English, but from unfamiliarity with English use.

There are two types of communicative language teaching. They are the Synthetic and Analytic approaches. Synthetic approach is characterized by the rigorous specification of communicative, coupled with a methodology which is not significantly unlike traditional methodology. In it the teacher isolates and orders the forms of the linguistic systems systematically present them to the student one by one thus builds up language competence. Analytic approach proposed methodological procedures that are quite often revolutionary. In this it is the student who does the analysis form data presented to him in the form of natural chunks.

Ellis identifies two kinds of communicative approach: 1) Formal and 2) Informal

The formal is based on a syllabus of language items to be learnt, selected and graded into units for teaching in the traditional manner except that the syllabus should be based on functions rather than on linguistic items and should suit the needs of the learner if it is to be truly communicative. It is concerned with the product of communication.

The informal is designed to engage the learner in the process of communication in the classroom. In this emphasis is the use of language as a means to some behavioral end. The teacher here becomes more of a participant and facilitator.

In Littlewood's introduction to communicative language teaching, he summarizes four broad domains of skill from the speaker's perspective which make up a person's communicative competence:

1. The learner must attain as high a degree as possible of linguistic competence. That is, he must develop skill in manipulating the linguistic system, to the point where he can use it spontaneously and flexibly in order to express his intended message.
2. The learner must distinguish between the forms he has mastered as part of his linguistic competence, and the communicative functions which they perform. In other words, items mastered as part of a linguistic system must also be understood as part of a communicative system.
3. The learner must develop skills and strategies for using language to communicate meanings as effectively as possible in concrete situations. He must learn to use feedback to judge his success, and if necessary, remedy failure by using different language.
4. The learner must become aware of the social meaning of language forms. For many learners, this may not entail the ability to vary their own speech to suit different social circumstances but rather the ability to use generally acceptable form and avoid potentially offensive ones.

Widdowson argues that language teaching should move away from an emphasis on the properties of sentences in isolation to a concern for the use of sentences in combination. He draws a careful distinction between two different kinds of meaning. One kind of meaning is that which language items have as elements of the language system, and the other is that which they have when they are actually put to use in acts of communication. He calls the first kind of meaning signification and the second kind value.

According to Widdowson the present approach is directed at the teaching of signification rather than value and it is for this reason that it is

inadequate for the teaching of English as communication.

According to Widdowson it is a radical mistake to suppose that knowledge of how sentences are put to use in communication follows automatically from knowledge of how sentences are composed and what signification they have as linguistic units. Learners have to be taught what values they may have as predictions, qualifications, reports, descriptions and so on. There is no simple equation between linguistic form and communicative functions.

Widdowson suggests that one should consider ways of adapting communicative approach to the teaching of English so as to incorporate the systematic teaching of communicative value. He proposes that in the process of grading and presentation one should think not only in terms of linguistic structures and situational settings but also in terms of communicative acts.

According to Breen and Candlin the teacher has three main roles in the communicative classroom. The first is to act as facilitator of the communicative process between all participants in the classroom and between the participants and various activities and texts. The second is to act as an independent participant – within the teaching – learning group. The third is to act as an observer and learner.

From the above discussion some of the characteristics of the communicative view of language can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Language is a system for the expression of meaning.
- 2) The primary function of language is for interaction and communication.
- 3) The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
- 4) The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features but categories of functional and communicative meaning exemplified in discourse

One would get an excellent model of language use if one uses Searle's illocutionary acts to fill in Holiday's matrix

of language functions. Significantly, J.A. Van Ek (1979:113), while setting up his list of language functions, has distinguished six main categories of verbal communication:

1. Imparting and seeking factual information;
2. expressing and finding out intellectual attitudes;
3. expressing and finding out emotional attitudes,
4. expressing and finding out moral attitudes;
5. getting things done (suasion);
6. socializing

Communicative competence thus rests on a set of composite skills. Emphasising the communicative aspect of language learning Canale and Swain (1980:27) have observed:

"Communicative competence is composed minimally of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and communicative strategies, or what we will refer to as strategic competence. There is no strong theoretical or empirical motivation for the view that grammatical competence is any ore or less crucial to successful communication than is sociolinguistic competence or strategic competence. The primary goal of a communicative approach must be to facilitate the integration of these types of knowledge for the learner, an outcome that is not likely to result from overemphasis on one form of competence over the other throughout a second language programme."

Communicative Language Teaching, like any other kind of language teaching, should be geared to the objectives of the course and the learners' needs. Piepho (1981:8) has discussed the following levels of objectives in a communicative approach:

1. interactive and content level (language as a means of expression)
2. linguistic and instrumental level (language as a semiotic system)

3. affective level of interpersonal relationships (language as a means of expressing value judgments).
4. level of individual learning needs (remedial learning)
5. level of general extra-linguistic needs.

D.A. Wilkins proposed a need-based, functional or communicative definition of language that could serve as a basis for developing communicative syllabi for language teaching. Wilkins described two types of meanings: notional categories (concepts such as time, sequence, quantity, location, frequency etc) and categories of communicative functions (requests, denials, offers, complaints etc). Wilkins's views, which he later revised and expanded in 1976, had a considerable impact on the development of Communicative Language Teaching. Wilkins (1979) groups notional categories into two sections. The first is made up of semantico-grammatical categories, which comprise time, quantity, space, matter, case and diexis, each of which may be further sub-categorized. The second set of notional categories consists of communicative functions and includes modality, moral evaluation, suasion, argument, rational enquiry/exposition, personal emotions, emotional relations, and interpersonal relations.

Rahman (2002) was particularly useful because of the clear view he gives of the ELT position on the Indian subcontinent. Especially so his clarity in the different perceptions of language learning, wherein there is a helpful enunciation of the various levels of language learning in an Indian classroom:

1. Rational language learning which is the demand for learning a language in order to empower one's self by acquiring the potential to achieve employment.
2. Resistance language-teaching that is the teaching of one's ethnic language for the purpose of resisting the domination of a language of power.
3. Extra-rational language learning is purely for the purpose of self-gratification or for other emotional or private reasons, for the pleasure of it.

Notwithstanding its limitations and variousness the communicative approach to

language teaching is a stimulating and useful way of teaching language. It presupposes that the learners are exposed to authentic materials and 'real-life' language rather than to artificial paradigms.

A useful distinction can be made between 'functional communication activities' and 'social interaction activities' (Littlewood 1981). The first kind of activities include acts such as the learner comparing sets of pictures and noting similarities/differences; working out a likely sequence of events in a set of pictures, discovering missing features in a picture or map; communicating from behind a screen to give instructions to do things, and solving problems from shared clues. The other kind of activities, i.e. social interaction activities, would include conversation and discussions, dialogues and role playing, simulations, skits, debates, improvisations, and a so on. Learning activities, however, should be selected according to how well the teacher engages the learner in meaningful and authentic language use. The basic principle working behind all these activities would be that activities that involve real communication promote language learning; that activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks facilitate learning, and that language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process.

In communicative language teaching the teacher needs to adopt a variety of role. In it the teacher is a general overseer of his students' learning, must aim to coordinate the classroom activities so that they form a coherent progression, leading towards greater communicative ability. The teacher is responsible for grouping classroom activities into lessons and may act as a consultant or advisor and monitor the strengths and weakness of the learners as a basis for planning future learning activities. He may participate in an activity as a co-communicator with the learners. In this role he can stimulate and present new language without taking the main initiative for learning away from the learners themselves.

CONCLUSION

Language teaching programmes must be oriented towards catering to the needs of the learners so that in an acquisition – poor environment, the learning of English is facilitated by

the intrinsic motivation and interest of the learners. The teacher can facilitate this process by providing opportunities for active language use to the learners. The teacher needs to function as an organizer and a facilitator in the classroom and provide the learners opportunities for language use. In an acquisition – poor environment the teacher needs to be especially sensitive to the motivation or needs of the learners for learning the language. So that he/she may adopt the materials and organize the learning environment to fulfill the learner's needs.

Communication is most important function of a language. Opportunities to communicate or "use" the language must form the core of any language learning programme. Newspaper clippings, magazine advertisements, official forms (railway reservation, telegram form), etc. can be used to motivate the learners to use English in authentic real life situations.

This kind of language learning environment where exposure to the target language is very limit, the language class needs to provide opportunities to the learners to use or experiment with the language. The learners should not be spoon-fed with answers to exercise at the end of the lessons as in the case of control group learners. They should be allowed to struggle to express themselves, as in the case of experimental learners, so that they learn to use the language. They should be encouraged to speak to each other and the teacher in English so that the sense of hesitation and anxiety that they feel in using the target language gradually disappears. The materials introduced should help the learners to use language effectively for their own day to day purposes.

Teaching materials play an important role in taking the learners to the threshold of independent language use. Incorporating authentic materials, creating realistic situations and encouraging learners to participate in activities which help develop communicative skills and strategies should be a concern for the teachers. By encouraging learner's interest, challenging their intellect, teachers can provide much of the stimulation, which will motivate them to become more independent in their use of English. It is not

enough to teach learners how to manipulate the structures of the second language. They must also develop strategies for relating these structures to their communicative functions in real situations and real time. The teachers must therefore provide learners with ample opportunities to use the language themselves for communicative purposes, which is otherwise very limited. The learner can be placed in situations where he must use language as an instrument for satisfying immediate communicative needs, and where the criterion for success is functional effectiveness rather than structural accuracy. The learner can be helped to use language as an instrument for social interaction in which emphasis is on both the communicative effectiveness and the social acceptability of the language used.

The portfolio assessment showed that as learners achieve greater independence in their learning and use of language, they will be able to move more swiftly from the initial learning of new language to the point where they have integrated it into their repertoire and can use it in more independent forms of interaction. Portfolio assessment activates learners as it is the assessment of evidence of effort, progress and product and provides the learners with feedback and assistance at their individual levels, helping learners to become meta-cognitive.

The development of communicative competence can take place if learners have motivation and opportunity to express their own identity and to relate with people around them. It therefore requires a learning atmosphere, which gives them a sense of security and value as individuals. In turn, this atmosphere depends to a large extent on the existence of interpersonal relationships which do not create inhibitions but are supportive and accepting.

The teacher needs to be especially sensitive to the motivation or need of the learners for learning the language, so that the learner may adapt the materials and organize the learning environment to fulfill the learner's needs and lower the affective filter.

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