14 Communicative Language Teaching

Background

The origins of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are to be found in the changes in the British language teaching tradition dating from the late 1960s. Until then, Situational Language Teaching (see Chapter 3) represented the major British approach to teaching English as a foreign language. In Situational Language Teaching, language was taught by practicing basic structures in meaningful situation-based activities. But just as the linguistic theory underlying Audiolingualism was rejected in the United States in the mid-1960s, British applied linguists began to call into question the theoretical assumptions underlying Situational Language Teaching:

> By the end of the sixties it was clear that the situational approach . . . had run its course. There was no future in continuing to pursue the chimera of predicting language on the basis of situational events. What was required was a closer study of the language itself and a return to the traditional concept that utterances carried meaning in themselves and expressed the meanings and intentions of the speakers and writers who created them. (Howatt 1984: 280)

This was partly a response to the sorts of criticisms the prominent American linguist Noam Chomsky had leveled at structural linguistic theory in his now-classic book *Syntactic Structures* (1957). Chomsky had demonstrated that the current standard structural theories of language were incapable of accounting for the fundamental characteristic of language – the creativity and uniqueness of individual sentences. British applied linguists emphasized another fundamental dimension of language that was inadequately addressed in approaches to language teaching at that time – the functional and communicative potential of language. They saw the need to focus in language teaching on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures. Scholars who advocated this view of language, such as Christopher Candlin and Henry Widdowson, drew on the work of British functional linguists (e.g., John Firth, M. A. K. Halliday), American work in sociolinguistics (e.g., Dell Hymes, John Gumperz, and William Labov), as well as work in philosophy (e.g., John Austin and John Searle).
  Another impetus for different approaches to foreign language teaching

came from changing educational realities in Europe. With the increasing interdependence of European countries came the need for greater efforts to teach adults the major languages of the European Common Market. The Council of Europe, a regional organization for cultural and educational cooperation, examined the problem. Education was one of the Council of Europe's major areas of activity. It sponsored international conferences on language teaching, published books about language teaching, and was active in promoting the formation of the International Association of Applied Linguistics. The need to develop alternative methods of language teaching was considered a high priority.

In 1971, a group of experts began to investigate the possibility of developing language courses on a unit-credit system, a system in which learning tasks are broken down into "portions or units, each of which corresponds to a component of a learner's needs and is systematically related to all the other portions" (van Ek and Alexander 1980: 6). The group used studies of the needs of European language learners, and in particular a preliminary document prepared by a British linguist, D. A. Wilkins (1972), which proposed a functional or communicative definition of language that could serve as a basis for developing communicative syllabuses for language teaching. Wilkins's contribution was an analysis of the communicative meanings that a language learner needs to understand and express. Rather than describe the core of language through traditional concepts of grammar and vocabulary, Wilkins attempted to demonstrate the systems of meanings that lay behind the communicative uses of language. He described two types of meanings: notional categories (concepts such as time, sequence, quantity, location, frequency) and categories of communicative function (requests, denials, offers, complaints). Wilkins later revised and expanded his 1972 document into a book titled *Notional Syllabuses* (Wilkins 1976), which had a significant impact on the development of Communicative Language Teaching. The Council of Europe incorporated his semantic/communicative analysis into a set of specifications for a first-level communicative language syllabus. These threshold level specifications (van Ek and Alexander 1980) have had a strong influence on the design of communicative language programs and textbooks in Europe.

The work of the Council of Europe; the writings of Wilkins, Widdowson, Candlin, Christopher Brumfit, Keith Johnson, and other British applied linguists on the theoretical basis for a communicative or functional approach to language teaching; the rapid application of these ideas by textbook writers; and the equally rapid acceptance of these new principles by British language teaching specialists, curriculum development centers, and even governments gave prominence nationally and internationally to what came to be referred to as the Communicative Approach, or simply Communicative Language Teaching. (The terms *notional-*

functional approach and *functional approach* are also sometimes used.) Although the movement began as a largely British innovation, focusing on alternative conceptions of a syllabus, since the mid-1970s the scope of Communicative Language Teaching has expanded. Both American and British proponents now see it as an approach (and not a method) that aims to *(a)* make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and *(b)* develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. Its comprehensiveness thus makes it different in scope and status from any of the other approaches or methods discussed in this book. There is no single text or authority on it, nor any single model that is universally accepted as authoritative. For some, Communicative Language Teaching means little more than an integration of grammatical and functional teaching. Littlewood (1981: 1) states, "One of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language." For others, it means using procedures where learners work in pairs or groups employing available language resources in problem-solving tasks. A national primary English syllabus based on a communicative approach (*Syllabuses for Primary Schools* 1981), for example, defines the focus of the syllabus as the "communicative functions which the forms of the language serve" (p. 5). The introduction to the same document comments that "communicative purposes may be of many different kinds. What is essential in all of them is that at least two parties are involved in an interaction or transaction of some kind where one party has an intention and the other party expands or reacts to the intention" (p. 5). In her discussion of communicative syllabus design, Yalden (1983) discusses six Communicative Language Teaching design alternatives, ranging from a model in which communicative exercises are grafted onto an existing structural syllabus, to a learner-generated view of syllabus design (e.g., Holec 1980).

Howatt distinguishes between a "strong" and a "weak" version of Communicative Language Teaching:

There is, in a sense, a 'strong' version of the communicative approach and a 'weak' version. The weak version which has become more or less standard practice in the last ten years, stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching. . . . The 'strong' version of communicative teaching, on the other hand, advances the claim that language is acquired through communication, so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of stimulating the development of the language system itself. If the former could be described as 'learning to use' English, the latter entails 'using English to learn it.' (1984: 279)

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Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) contrast the major distinctive features of the Audiolingual Method and the Communicative Approach, according to their interpretation:

Audiolingual	*Communicative Language Teaching*
1. Attends to structure and form more than meaning.	Meaning is paramount.
2. Demands memorization of structure-based dialogues.	Dialogues, if used, center around communicative functions and are not normally memorized.
3. Language items are not necessarily contextualized.	Contextualization is a basic premise.
4. Language learning is learning structures, sounds, or words.	Language learning is learning to communicate.
5. Mastery, or "over-learning," is sought.	Effective communication is sought.
6. Drilling is a central technique.	Drilling may occur, but peripherally.
7. Native-speaker-like pronunciation is sought.	Comprehensible pronunciation is sought.
8. Grammatical explanation is avoided.	Any device that helps the learners is accepted – varying according to their age, interest, etc.
9. Communicative activities only come after a long process of rigid drills and exercises.	Attempts to communicate may be encouraged from the very beginning.
10. The use of the student's native language is forbidden.	Judicious use of native language is accepted where feasible.
11. Translation is forbidden at early levels.	Translation may be used where students need or benefit from it.
12. Reading and writing are deferred till speech is mastered.	Reading and writing can start from the first day, if desired.
13. The target linguistic system will be learned through the overt teaching of the patterns of the system.	The target linguistic system will be learned best through the process of struggling to communicate.
14. Linguistic competence is the desired goal.	Communicative competence is the desired goal (i.e., the ability to use the linguistic system effectively and appropriately).

15. Varieties of language are recognized but not emphasized.	Linguistic variation is a central concept in materials and methodology.
16. The sequence of units is determined solely by principles of linguistic complexity.	Sequencing is determined by any consideration of content, function, or meaning that maintains interest.
17. The teacher controls the learners and prevents them from doing anything that conflicts with the theory.	Teachers help learners in any way that motivates them to work with the language.
18. "Language is habit" so errors must be prevented at all costs.	Language is created by the individual, often through trial and error.
19. Accuracy, in terms of formal correctness, is a primary goal.	Fluency and acceptable language is the primary goal: Accuracy is judged not in the abstract but in context.
20. Students are expected to interact with the language system, embodied in machines or controlled materials.	Students are expected to interact with other people, either in the flesh, through pair and group work, or in their writings.
21. The teacher is expected to specify the language that students are to use.	The teacher cannot know exactly what language the students will use.
22. Intrinsic motivation will spring from an interest in the structure of the language.	Intrinsic motivation will spring from an interest in what is being communicated by the language.

(1983: 91–93)

Apart from being an interesting example of how proponents of Communicative Language Teaching stack the cards in their favor, such a set of contrasts illustrates some of the major differences between communicative approaches and earlier traditions in language teaching. The wide acceptance of the Communicative Approach and the relatively varied way in which it is interpreted and applied can be attributed to the fact that practitioners from different educational traditions can identify with it, and consequently interpret it in different ways. One of its North American proponents, Savignon (1983), for example, offers as a precedent to CLT a commentary by Montaigne on his learning of Latin through conversation rather than through the customary method of formal analysis and translation. Writes Montaigne, "Without methods, without a book, without grammar or rules, without a whip and without

tears, I had learned a Latin as proper as that of my schoolmaster" (Savignon 1983: 47). This antistructural view can be held to represent the language learning version of a more general learning perspective usually referred to as "learning by doing" or "the experience approach" (Hilgard and Bower 1966). This notion of direct rather than delayed practice of communicative acts is central to most CLT interpretations.

The focus on communicative and contextual factors in language use also has an antecedent in the work of the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski and his colleague, the linguist John Firth. British applied linguists usually credit Firth with focusing attention on discourse as subject and context for language analysis. Firth also stressed that language needed to be studied in the broader sociocultural context of its use, which included participants, their behavior and beliefs, the objects of linguistic discussion, and word choice. Both Michael Halliday and Dell Hymes, linguists frequently cited by advocates of Communicative Language Teaching, acknowledge primary debts to Malinowski and Firth.

Another frequently cited dimension of CLT, its learner-centered and experience-based view of second language teaching, also has antecedents outside the language teaching tradition per se. An important American national curriculum commission in the 1930s, for example, proposed the adoption of an Experience Curriculum in English. The report of the commission began with the premise that "experience is the best of all schools. . . . The ideal curriculum consists of well-selected experiences" (cited in Applebee 1974: 119). Like those who have urged the organization of Communicative Language Teaching around tasks and procedures, the committee tried to suggest "the means for selection and weaving appropriate experiences into a coherent curriculum stretching across the years of school English study" (Applebee 1974: 119). Individual learners were also seen as possessing unique interests, styles, needs, and goals, which should be reflected in the design of methods of instruction. Teachers were encouraged to develop learning materials "on the basis of the particular needs manifested by the class" (Applebee 1974: 150).

Common to all versions of Communicative Language Teaching is a theory of language teaching that starts from a communicative model of language and language use, and that seeks to translate this into a design for an instructional system, for materials, for teacher and learner roles and behaviors, and for classroom activities and techniques. Let us now consider how this is manifested at the levels of approach, design, and procedure.

Approach

Theory of language

The Communicative Approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as "communicative competence." Hymes coined this term in order to contrast a communicative view of language and Chomsky's theory of competence. Chomsky held that

linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitation, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. (Chomsky 1965: 3)

For Chomsky, the focus of linguistic theory was to characterize the abstract abilities speakers possess that enable them to produce grammatically correct sentences in a language. Hymes held that such a view of linguistic theory was sterile, that linguistic theory needed to be seen as part of a more general theory incorporating communication and culture. Hymes's theory of communicative competence was a definition of what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community. In Hymes's view, a person who acquires communicative competence acquires both knowledge and ability for language use with respect to

1. whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible
2. whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available
3. whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated
4. whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what its doing entails

(Hymes 1972: 281)

   This theory of what knowing a language entails offers a much more comprehensive view than Chomsky's view of competence, which deals primarily with abstract grammatical knowledge. Another linguistic theory of communication favored in CLT is Halliday's functional account of language use. "Linguistics . . . is concerned . . . with the description of speech acts or texts, since only through the study of language in use are all the functions of language, and therefore all components of meaning, brought into focus" (Halliday 1970: 145). In a number of influential books and papers, Halliday has elaborated a powerful theory of the functions of language, which complements Hymes's view of communica-

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tive competence for many writers on CLT (e.g., Brumfit and Johnson 1979; Savignon 1983). He described (1975: 11–17) seven basic functions that language performs for children learning their first language:

1. the instrumental function: using language to get things
2. the regulatory function: using language to control the behavior of others
3. the interactional function: using language to create interaction with others
4. the personal function: using language to express personal feelings and meanings
5. the heuristic function: using language to learn and to discover
6. the imaginative function: using language to create a world of the imagination
7. the representational function: using language to communicate information

Learning a second language was similarly viewed by proponents of Communicative Language Teaching as acquiring the linguistic means to perform different kinds of functions.

Another theorist frequently cited for his views on the communicative nature of language is Henry Widdowson. In his book *Teaching Language as Communication* (1978), Widdowson presented a view of the relationship between linguistic systems and their communicative values in text and discourse. He focused on the communicative acts underlying the ability to use language for different purposes. A more pedagogically influential analysis of communicative competence is found in Canale and Swain (1980), in which four dimensions of communicative competence are identified: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. *Grammatical competence* refers to what Chomsky calls linguistic competence and what Hymes intends by what is "formally possible." It is the domain of grammatical and lexical capacity. *Sociolinguistic competence* refers to an understanding of the social context in which communication takes place, including role relationships, the shared information of the participants, and the communicative purpose for their interaction. *Discourse competence* refers to the interpretation of individual message elements in terms of their interconnectedness and of how meaning is represented in relationship to the entire discourse or text. *Strategic competence* refers to the coping strategies that communicators employ to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair, and redirect communication. The usefulness of the notion of communicative competence is seen in the many attempts that have been made to refine the original notion of communicative competence. Canale and Swain's extension of the Hymesian model of communicative competence discussed earlier was in turn elaborated in some complexity by Bachman (1991). The Bachman model has been, in turn, extended by Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1997).

At the level of language theory, Communicative Language Teaching

has a rich, if somewhat eclectic, theoretical base. Some of the characteristics of this communicative view of language follow:

1. Language is a system for the expression of meaning.
2. The primary function of language is to allow 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 as exemplified in discourse.

Theory of learning

In contrast to the amount that has been written in Communicative Language Teaching literature about communicative dimensions of language, little has been written about learning theory. Neither Brumfit and Johnson (1979) nor Littlewood (1981), for example, offers any discussion of learning theory. Elements of an underlying learning theory can be discerned in some CLT practices, however. One such element might be described as the communication principle: Activities that involve real communication promote learning. A second element is the task principle: Activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning (Johnson 1982). A third element is the meaningfulness principle: Language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process. Learning activities are consequently selected according to how well they engage the learner in meaningful and authentic language use (rather than merely mechanical practice of language patterns). These principles, we suggest, can be inferred from CLT practices (e.g., Littlewood 1981; Johnson 1982). They address the conditions needed to promote second language learning, rather than the processes of language acquisition. These and a variety of other more recent learning principles relevant to the claims of Communicative Language Teaching are summarized in Skehan (1998), and are further discussed in relation to Task-Based Language Teaching in Chapter 18.

Other accounts of Communicative Language Teaching, however, have attempted to describe theories of language learning processes that are compatible with the Communicative Approach. Savignon (1983) surveys second language acquisition research as a source for learning theories and considers the role of linguistic, social, cognitive, and individual variables in language acquisition. Other theorists (e.g., Stephen Krashen, who is not directly associated with Communicative Language Teaching) have developed theories cited as compatible with the principles of CLT (see Chapter 15). Krashen sees acquisition as the basic process involved in

developing language proficiency and distinguishes this process from learning. Acquisition refers to the unconscious development of the target-language system as a result of using the language for real communication. Learning is the conscious representation of grammatical knowledge that has resulted from instruction, and it cannot lead to acquisition. It is the acquired system that we call upon to create utterances during spontaneous language use. The learned system can serve only as a monitor of the output of the acquired system. Krashen and other second language acquisition theorists typically stress that language learning comes about through using language communicatively, rather than through practicing language skills.

Johnson (1984) and Littlewood (1984) consider an alternative learning theory that they also see as compatible with CLT – a skill-learning model of learning. According to this theory, the acquisition of communicative competence in a language is an example of skill development. This involves both a cognitive and a behavioral aspect:

The *cognitive* aspect involves the internalisation of plans for creating appropriate behaviour. For language use, these plans derive mainly from the language system – they include grammatical rules, procedures for selecting vocabulary, and social conventions governing speech. The *behavioural* aspect involves the automation of these plans so that they can be converted into fluent performance in real time. This occurs mainly through *practice* in converting plans into performance. (Littlewood 1984: 74)

This theory thus encourages an emphasis on practice as a way of developing communicative skills.

Design

Objectives

Piepho (1981) discusses the following levels of objectives in a communicative approach:

1. an integrative and content level (language as a means of expression)
2. a linguistic and instrumental level (language as a semiotic system and an object of learning)
3. an affective level of interpersonal relationships and conduct (language as a means of expressing values and judgments about oneself and others)
4. a level of individual learning needs (remedial learning based on error analysis)
5. a general educational level of extra-linguistic goals (language learning within the school curriculum)

<div align="right">(Piepho 1981: 8)</div>

These are proposed as general objectives, applicable to any teaching situation. Particular objectives for CLT cannot be defined beyond this level of specification, since such an approach assumes that language teaching will reflect the particular needs of the target learners. These needs may be in the domains of reading, writing, listening, or speaking, each of which can be approached from a communicative perspective. Curriculum or instructional objectives for a particular course would reflect specific aspects of communicative competence according to the learner's proficiency level and communicative needs.

The syllabus

Discussions of the nature of the syllabus have been central in Communicative Language Teaching. We have seen that one of the first syllabus models to be proposed was described as a notional syllabus (Wilkins 1976), which specified the semantic-grammatical categories (e.g., frequency, motion, location) and the categories of communicative function that learners need to express. The Council of Europe expanded and developed this into a syllabus that included descriptions of the objectives of foreign language courses for European adults, the situations in which they might typically need to use a foreign language (e.g., travel, business), the topics they might need to talk about (e.g., personal identification, education, shopping), the functions they needed language for (e.g., describing something, requesting information, expressing agreement and disagreement), the notions made use of in communication (e.g., time, frequency, duration), as well as the vocabulary and grammar needed. The result was published as *Threshold Level English* (van Ek and Alexander 1980) and was an attempt to specify what was needed in order to be able to achieve a reasonable degree of communicative proficiency in a foreign language, including the language items needed to realize this "threshold level."

Discussion of syllabus theory and syllabus models in Communicative Language Teaching has been extensive. Wilkins's original notional syllabus model was soon criticized by British applied linguists as merely replacing one kind of list (e.g., a list of grammar items) with another (a list of notions and functions). It specified products, rather than communicative processes. Widdowson (1979) argued that notional-functional categories provide

only a very partial and imprecise description of certain semantic and pragmatic rules which are used for reference when people interact. They tell us nothing about the procedures people employ in the application of these rules when they are actually engaged in communicative activity. If we are to adopt a communicative approach to teaching which takes as its primary purpose the

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development of the ability to do things with language, then it is discourse which must be at the center of our attention. (Widdowson 1979: 254)

There are several proposals and models for what a syllabus might look like in Communicative Language Teaching. Yalden (1983) describes the major current communicative syllabus types. We summarize below a modified version of Yalden's classification of communicative syllabus types, with reference sources to each model:

Type	*Reference*
1. structures plus functions	Wilkins (1976)
2. functional spiral around a structural core	Brumfit (1980)
3. structural, functional, instrumental	Allen (1980)
4. functional	Jupp and Hodlin (1975)
5. notional	Wilkins (1976)
6. interactional	Widdowson (1979)
7. task-based	Prabhu (1983)
8. learner-generated	Candlin (1976), Henner-Stanchina and Riley (1978)

There is extensive documentation of attempts to create syllabus and proto-syllabus designs of Types 1–5. Descriptions of interactional strategies have been given, for example, for interactions of teacher and student (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975) and doctor and patient (Candlin, Bruton, and Leather 1974). Although interesting, these descriptions have restricted the field of inquiry to two-person interactions in which there exist reasonably rigid and acknowledged superordinate-to-subordinate role relationships.

Some designers of communicative syllabuses have also looked to task specification and task organization as the appropriate criteria for syllabus design.

The only form of syllabus which is compatible with and can support communicational teaching seems to be a purely procedural one – which lists, in more or less detail, the types of tasks to be attempted in the classroom and suggests an order of complexity for tasks of the same kind. (Prabhu 1983: 4)

An example of such a model that has been implemented nationally is the Malaysian communicational syllabus (English Language Syllabus in Malaysian Schools 1975) – a syllabus for the teaching of English at the upper secondary level in Malaysia. This was one of the first attempts to organize Communicative Language Teaching around a specification of communication tasks. In the organizational schema three broad communicative objectives are broken down into twenty-four more specific objectives

determined on the basis of needs analysis. These objectives are organized into learning areas, for each of which are specified a number of outcome goals or products. A *product* is defined as a piece of comprehensible information, written, spoken, or presented in a nonlinguistic form. "A letter is a product, and so is an instruction, a message, a report or a map or graph produced through information gleaned through language" (*English Language Syllabus* 1975: 5). The products, then, result from successful completion of tasks. For example, the product called "relaying a message to others" can be broken into a number of tasks, such as *(a)* understanding the message, *(b)* asking questions to clear any doubts *(c)* asking questions to gather more information, *(d)* taking notes, *(e)* arranging the notes in a logical manner for presentation, and *(f)* orally presenting the message. For each product, a number of proposed situations are suggested. These situations consist of a set of specifications for learner interactions, the stimuli, communicative context, participants, desired outcomes, and constraints. These situations (and others constructed by individual teachers) constitute the means by which learner interaction and communicative skills are realized.

As discussion of syllabus models continues in the CLT literature, some have argued that the syllabus concept be abolished altogether in its accepted forms, arguing that only learners can be fully aware of their own needs, communicational resources, and desired learning pace and path, and that each learner must create a personal, albeit implicit, syllabus as part of learning. Others lean more toward the model proposed by Brumfit (1980), which favors a grammatically based syllabus around which notions, functions, and communicational activities are grouped.

Types of learning and teaching activities

The range of exercise types and activities compatible with a communicative approach is unlimited, provided that such exercises enable learners to attain the communicative objectives of the curriculum, engage learners in communication, and require the use of such communicative processes as information sharing, negotiation of meaning, and interaction. Classroom activities are often designed to focus on completing tasks that are mediated through language or involve negotiation of information and information sharing.

These attempts take many forms. Wright (1976) achieves it by showing out-of-focus slides which the students attempt to identify. Byrne (1978) provides incomplete plans and diagrams which students have to complete by asking for information. Allwright (1977) places a screen between students and gets one to place objects in a certain pattern: this pattern is then communicated to students behind the screen. Geddes and Sturtridge (1979) develop "jigsaw" lis-

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tening in which students listen to different taped materials and then communicate their content to others in the class. Most of these techniques operate by providing information to some and withholding it from others. (Johnson 1982: 151)

Littlewood (1981) distinguishes between "functional communication activities" and "social interaction activities" as major activity types in Communicative Language Teaching. Functional communication activities include such tasks as learners comparing sets of pictures and noting similarities and differences; working out a likely sequence of events in a set of pictures; discovering missing features in a map or picture; one learner communicating behind a screen to another learner and giving instructions on how to draw a picture or shape, or how to complete a map; following directions; and solving problems from shared clues. Social interaction activities include conversation and discussion sessions, dialogues and role plays, simulations, skits, improvisations, and debates.

Learner roles

The emphasis in Communicative Language Teaching on the processes of communication, rather than mastery of language forms, leads to different roles for learners from those found in more traditional second language classrooms. Breen and Candlin describe the learner's role within CLT in the following terms:

The role of learner as negotiator – between the self, the learning process, and the object of learning – emerges from and interacts with the role of joint negotiator within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities which the group undertakes. The implication for the learner is that he should contribute as much as he gains, and thereby learn in an interdependent way. (1980: 110)

There is thus an acknowledgment, in some accounts of CLT, that learners bring preconceptions of what teaching and learning should be like. These constitute a "set" for learning, which when unrealized can lead to learner confusion and resentment (Henner-Stanchina and Riley 1978). Often there is no text, grammar rules are not presented, classroom arrangement is nonstandard, students are expected to interact primarily with each other rather than with the teacher, and correction of errors may be absent or infrequent. The cooperative (rather than individualistic) approach to learning stressed in CLT may likewise be unfamiliar to learners. CLT methodologists consequently recommend that learners learn to see that failed communication is a joint responsibility and not the fault of speaker or listener. Similarly, successful communication is an accomplishment jointly achieved and acknowledged.

Teacher roles

Several roles are assumed for teachers in Communicative Language Teaching, the importance of particular roles being determined by the view of CLT adopted. Breen and Candlin describe teacher roles in the following terms:

The teacher has two main roles: the first role is to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and texts. The second role is to act as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group. The latter role is closely related to the objectives of the first role and arises from it. These roles imply a set of secondary roles for the teacher; first, as an organizer of resources and as a resource himself, second as a guide within the classroom procedures and activities. . . . A third role for the teacher is that of researcher and learner, with much to contribute in terms of appropriate knowledge and abilities, actual and observed experience of the nature of learning and organizational capacities. (1980: 99)

Other roles assumed for teachers are needs analyst, counselor, and group process manager.

NEEDS ANALYST

The CLT teacher assumes a responsibility for determining and responding to learner language needs. This may be done informally and personally through one-to-one sessions with students, in which the teacher talks through such issues as the student's perception of his or her learning style, learning assets, and learning goals. It may be done formally through administering a needs assessment instrument, such as those exemplified in Savignon (1983). Typically, such formal assessments contain items that attempt to determine an individual's motivation for studying the language. For example, students might respond on a 5-point scale (*strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*) to statements such as the following:

I want to study English because . . .
1. I think it will someday be useful in getting a good job.
2. it will help me better understand English-speaking people and their way of life.
3. one needs a good knowledge of English to gain other people's respect.
4. it will allow me to meet and converse with interesting people.
5. I need it for my job.
6. it will enable me to think and behave like English-speaking people.

On the basis of such needs assessments, teachers are expected to plan group and individual instruction that responds to the learners' needs.

COUNSELOR

Another role assumed by several CLT approaches is that of counselor, similar to the way this role is defined in Community Language Learning. In this role, the teacher-counselor is expected to exemplify an effective communicator seeking to maximize the meshing of speaker intention and hearer interpretation, through the use of paraphrase, confirmation, and feedback.

GROUP PROCESS MANAGER

CLT procedures often require teachers to acquire less teacher-centered classroom management skills. It is the teacher's responsibility to organize the classroom as a setting for communication and communicative activities. Guidelines for classroom practice (e.g., Littlewood 1981; Finocchiaro and Brumfit 1983) suggest that during an activity the teacher monitors, encourages, and suppresses the inclination to supply gaps in lexis, grammar, and strategy but notes such gaps for later commentary and communicative practice. At the conclusion of group activities, the teacher leads in the debriefing of the activity, pointing out alternatives and extensions and assisting groups in self-correction discussion. Critics have pointed out, however, that nonnative teachers may feel less than comfortable about such procedures without special training.

The focus on fluency and comprehensibility in Communicative Language Teaching may cause anxiety among teachers accustomed to seeing error suppression and correction as the major instructional responsibility, and who see their primary function as preparing learners to take standardized or other kinds of tests. A continuing teacher concern has been the possible negative effect in pair or group work of imperfect modeling and student error. Although this issue is far from resolved, it is interesting to note that some research findings suggest that "data contradicts the notion that other learners are not good conversational partners because they can't provide accurate input when it is solicited" (Porter 1983).

The role of instructional materials

A wide variety of materials have been used to support communicative approaches to language teaching. Unlike some contemporary methodologies, such as Community Language Learning, practitioners of Communicative Language Teaching view materials as a way of influencing the quality of classroom interaction and language use. Materials thus have the primary role of promoting communicative language use. We will consider three kinds of materials currently used in CLT and label these text-based, task-based, and realia.

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TEXT-BASED MATERIALS

There are numerous textbooks designed to direct and support Communicative Language Teaching. Their tables of contents sometimes suggest a kind of grading and sequencing of language practice not unlike those found in structurally organized texts. Some of these are in fact written around a largely structural syllabus, with slight reformatting to justify their claims to be based on a communicative approach. Others, however, look very different from previous language teaching texts. Morrow and Johnson's *Communicate* (1979), for example, has none of the usual dialogues, drills, or sentence patterns and uses visual cues, taped cues, pictures, and sentence fragments to initiate conversation. Watcyn-Jones's *Pair Work* (1981) consists of two different texts for pair work, each containing different information needed to enact role plays and carry out other pair activities. Texts written to support the Malaysian *English Language Syllabus* (1975) likewise represent a departure from traditional textbook modes. A typical lesson consists of a theme (e.g., relaying information), a task analysis for thematic development (e.g., understanding the message, asking questions to obtain clarification, asking for more information, taking notes, ordering and presenting information), a practice situation description (e.g., "A caller asks to see your manager. He does not have an appointment. Gather the necessary information from him and relay the message to your manager."), a stimulus presentation (in the preceding case, the beginning of an office conversation scripted and on tape), comprehension questions (e.g., "Why is the caller in the office?"), and paraphrase exercises.

TASK-BASED MATERIALS

A variety of games, role plays, simulations, and task-based communication activities have been prepared to support Communicative Language Teaching classes. These typically are in the form of one-of-a-kind items: exercise handbooks, cue cards, activity cards, pair-communication practice materials, and student-interaction practice booklets. In pair-communication materials, there are typically two sets of material for a pair of students, each set containing different kinds of information. Sometimes the information is complementary, and partners must fit their respective parts of the "jigsaw" into a composite whole. Others assume different role relationships for the partners (e.g., an interviewer and an interviewee). Still others provide drills and practice material in interactional formats.

REALIA

Many proponents of Communicative Language Teaching have advocated the use of "authentic," "from-life" materials in the classroom. These might include language-based realia, such as signs, magazines, advertisements, and newspapers, or graphic and visual sources around which communicative activities can be built, such as maps, pictures, symbols, graphs, and charts. Different kinds of objects can be used to support communicative exercises, such as a plastic model to assemble from directions.

Procedure

Because communicative principles can be applied to the teaching of any skill, at any level, and because of the wide variety of classroom activities and exercise types discussed in the literature on Communicative Language Teaching, description of typical classroom procedures used in a lesson based on CLT principles is not feasible. Savignon (1983) discusses techniques and classroom management procedures associated with a number of CLT classroom procedures (e.g., group activities, language games, role plays), but neither these activities nor the ways in which they are used are exclusive to CLT classrooms. Finocchiaro and Brumfit offer a lesson outline for teaching the function "making a suggestion" for learners in the beginning level of a secondary school program that suggests that CLT procedures are evolutionary rather than revolutionary:

1. Presentation of a brief dialog or several mini-dialogs, preceded by a motivation (relating the dialog situation[s] to the learners' probable community experiences) and a discussion of the function and situation — people, roles, setting, topic, and the informality or formality of the language which the function and situation demand. (At beginning levels, where all the learners understand the same native language, the motivation can well be given in their native tongue.)
2. Oral practice of each utterance of the dialog segment to be presented that day (entire class repetition, half-class, groups, individuals) generally preceded by your model. If mini-dialogs are used, engage in similar practice.
3. Questions and answers based on the dialog topic(s) and situation itself. (Inverted *wh* or *or* questions.)
4. Questions and answers related to the students' personal experiences but centered around the dialog theme.
5. Study one of the basic communicative expressions in the dialog or one of the structures which exemplify the function. You will wish to give several additional examples of the communicative use of the expression or structure with familiar vocabulary in unambiguous utterances or mini-dialogs

(using pictures, simple real objects, or dramatization) to clarify the meaning of the expression or structure. . . .

6. Learner discovery of generalizations or rules underlying the functional expression or structure. This should include at least four points: its oral and written forms (the elements of which it is composed, e.g., "How about + verb + ing?"); its position in the utterance; its formality or informality in the utterance; and in the case of a structure, its grammatical function and meaning. . . .

7. Oral recognition, interpretative activities (two to five depending on the learning level, the language knowledge of the students, and related factors).

8. Oral production activities – proceeding from guided to freer communication activities.

9. Copying of the dialogs or mini-dialogs or modules if they are not in the class text.

10. Sampling of the written homework assignment, if given.

11. Evaluation of learning (oral only), e.g., "How would you ask your friend to _____? And how would you ask me to _____?"

(Finocchiaro and Brumfit 1983: 107–108)

Such procedures clearly have much in common with those observed in classes taught according to Structural-Situational and Audiolingual principles. Traditional procedures are not rejected but are reinterpreted and extended. A similar conservatism is found in many "orthodox" CLT texts, such as Alexander's *Mainline Beginners* (1978). Although each unit has an ostensibly functional focus, new teaching points are introduced with dialogues, followed by controlled practice of the main grammatical patterns. The teaching points are then contextualized through situational practice. This serves as an introduction to a freer practice activity, such as a role play or improvisation. Similar techniques are used in *Starting Strategies* (Abbs and Freebairn 1977). Teaching points are introduced in dialogue form, grammatical items are isolated for controlled practice, and then freer activities are provided. Pair and group work is suggested to encourage students to use and practice functions and forms. The methodological procedures underlying these texts reflect a sequence of activities represented in Littlewood (1981: 86) as follows:

Pre-communicative activities
— Structural activities
— Quasi-communicative activities
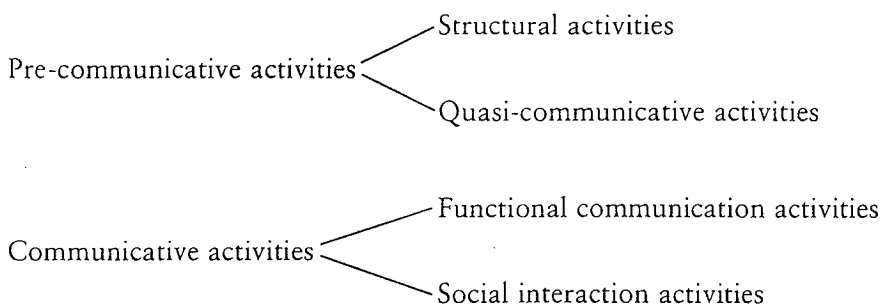
Communicative activities
— Functional communication activities
— Social interaction activities

Savignon (1972, 1983), however, rejects the notion that learners must first gain control over individual skills (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary) before applying them in communicative tasks; she advocates providing communicative practice from the start of instruction. How to implement the CLT principles at the level of classroom procedures thus remains central to discussions of the Communicative Approach. How can the range of communicative activities and procedures be defined, and how can the teacher determine a mix and timing of activities that best meets the needs of a particular learner or group of learners? These fundamental questions cannot be answered by proposing further taxonomies and classifications, but require systematic investigation of the use of different kinds of activities and procedures in L2 classrooms (see Chapter 19).

Conclusion

Communicative Language Teaching is best considered an approach rather than a method. It refers to a diverse set of principles that reflect a communicative view of language and language learning and that can be used to support a wide variety of classroom procedures.
These principles include:

- Learners learn a language through using it to communicate.
- Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities.
- Fluency is an important dimension of communication.
- Communication involves the integration of different language skills.
- Learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error.

Communicative Language Teaching appeared at a time when language teaching in many parts of the world was ready for a paradigm shift. Situational Language Teaching and Audiolingualism were no longer felt to be appropriate methodologies. CLT appealed to those who sought a more humanistic approach to teaching, one in which the interactive processes of communication received priority. The rapid adoption and worldwide dissemination of the Communicative Approach also resulted from the fact that it quickly assumed the status of orthodoxy in British language teaching circles, receiving the sanction and support of leading applied linguists, language specialists, and publishers, as well as institutions such as the British Council (Richards 1985).

Since its inception CLT has passed through a number of different phases as its advocates have sought to apply its principles to different dimensions of the teaching/learning process. In its first phase, a primary concern was the need to develop a syllabus that was compatible with the

notion of communicative competence. This led to proposals for the organization of syllabuses in terms of notions and functions rather than grammatical structures (Wilkins 1976). In the second phase, CLT focused on procedures for identifying learners' needs and this resulted in proposals to make needs analysis an essential component of communicative methodology (Munby 1978). In its third phase, CLT focused on the kinds of classroom activities that could be used as the basis of a communicative methodology, such as group work, task-work, and information-gap activities (Prabhu 1987).

Johnson and Johnson (1998) identify five core characteristics that underlie current applications of communicative methodology:

1. *Appropriateness:* Language use reflects the situations of its use and must be appropriate to that situation depending on the setting, the roles of the participants, and the purpose of the communication, for example. Thus learners may need to be able to use formal as well as casual styles of speaking.
2. *Message focus:* Learners need to be able to create and understand messages, that is, real meanings. Hence the focus on information sharing and information transfer in CLT activities.
3. *Psycholinguistic processing:* CLT activities seek to engage learners in the use of cognitive and other processes that are important factors in second language acquisition.
4. *Risk taking:* Learners are encouraged to make guesses and learn from their errors. By going beyond what they have been taught, they are encouraged to employ a variety of communication strategies.
5. *Free practice:* CLT encourages the use of "holistic practice" involving the simultaneous use of a variety of subskills, rather than practicing individual skills one piece at a time.

We noted in the introduction to Part III that the approaches considered in this section can be considered direct descendants of Communicative Language Teaching. However, the characteristics of communicative methodology just cited address very general aspects of language learning and teaching that are now largely accepted as self-evident and axiomatic throughout the profession. In some sense, then, almost all of the newer teaching proposals discussed in this book could claim to incorporate principles associated with Communicative Language Teaching. However, these proposals address different aspects of the processes of teaching and learning.

Some focus centrally on the *input* to the learning process. Thus Content-Based Teaching stresses that the content or subject matter of teaching is of primary importance in teaching. Not only should the language input be authentic but modes of learning should be authentic to the study of the subject as well. Lexical and corpus-based approaches to

teaching start with a corpus of discourse relevant to learners' interests and needs and the goal of methodology is to engage learners directly with this material.

Some teaching proposals focus more directly on *instructional* factors. Cooperative Learning for example, which shares many of the characteristics of CLT, promotes learning through communication in pairs or small groups. Cooperative organization and activities are central with this approach. Task-Based Language Teaching advocates the importance of specially designed instructional tasks as the basis of learning.

Other more recent proposals take learners and *learning factors* as the primary issues to address in teaching and learning. Whole Language belongs to the humanistic tradition, which argues "Learner first, learning second." Learner engagement is a priority. Neurolinguistic Programming emerges from a therapeutic tradition in which individual growth and personal change are the focus, whereas Multiple Intelligences focuses on learner differences and how these can be accommodated in teaching.

Outcome is another dimension of the process of communication and is central in Competency-Based Language Teaching. Outcomes are the starting point in program planning with this approach.

Today, Communicative Language Teaching thus continues in its "classic" form, as is seen in the huge range of course books and other teaching resources based on the principles of CLT. In addition, it has influenced many other language teaching approaches and methods that subscribe to a similar philosophy of language teaching.

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