

College of Education for Humanities

Department of English Language

Lecturer's Name :Dr. Ibtisam Jassim Mohammed

Course Title: Practicum

Year: M.A Students

Topic: Communicative Curriculum 1

Academic Year: 2025-2026



1. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CURRICULUM?

The communicative curriculum defines language learning as learning to communicate within a socio-cultural group by mastering its social conventions. This is a variable process where participants balance convention-following and convention-creating through the negotiation of potential meanings.

To engage in this creative meaning-making process, learners must master a unity of ideational, interpersonal, and textual knowledge. This system is permeated by affects—personal and socio-cultural attitudes and values—which serve as the driving force for learning and the motivation for everyday communication.

Ultimately, learning to communicate is a socialization process integrated with the learner's broader psychological and social experiences. It requires the refinement of social roles and social identity, positioning the goal of language teaching as the development of communicative knowledge within the context of the learner's overall personal and social development.

2. WHAT UNDERLIES THE ULTIMATE DEMANDS ON THE LEARNER?

The communicative curriculum specifies its goals through a target repertoire based on a sociolinguistic analysis of the target situation. However, the ultimate demand on the learner is the development of the underlying target competence, defined as the capacity for actual language use.

This competence is a dual system comprising knowledge systems and communicative abilities:

1. The Knowledge Systems

Target competence requires a unified system of ideational, interpersonal, and textual knowledge, all of which are permeated by affects (attitudes and values). This knowledge represents the shared conventions of the target community.

2. The Primary Communicative Abilities

To act upon this knowledge, the learner must develop three "primary" abilities that interrelate during communicative performance:

- Interpretation: The ability to decode the meanings of others.
- Expression: The ability to manifest one's own meanings.
- Negotiation: The central ability that operates between participants and within the learner's own mind as they bridge their existing competence with new learning.

3. The Role of Skills

The traditional skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing serve as the manifestation of these underlying abilities. They are the "meeting point" where target competence is translated into observable communicative performance.

3. WHAT ARE THE LEARNER'S INITIAL CONTRIBUTIONS?

In a communicative curriculum, the learner is the starting point. Instead of treating a new language as a list of grammar rules to be memorized, this approach connects the learner's initial competence (what they already know) to the target competence (what they need to learn). It recognizes that even if a student doesn't know the new language yet, they are already an experienced communicator in their first language.

In the past, language teaching often "objectified" the language, treating it like a cold, static object separate from the person learning it. Teachers focused mostly on linguistic competence, which is the knowledge of syntax and sentence structure.

However, a communicative approach views this grammatical knowledge as just "the tip of the iceberg." Beneath the surface lies a learner's ideational and interpersonal knowledge. The curriculum aims to activate the learner's process competence, meaning their ongoing ability to actually use language to communicate, rather than just knowing how it works on paper.

Learners don't just bring skills; they also bring expectations. These include:

- Their personal view of how a language should be learned.

- Their specific interests and motivations.
- Their own definition of their "language learning needs."

Because every student is different (heterogeneity) and their goals may change over time, the curriculum must be flexible. It shouldn't be a one-size-fits-all plan but a framework that adapts as the learner grows.

Finally, the communicative curriculum relies on a process of negotiation. This means the teacher and the student work together to align the student's personal goals with the requirements of the course. By involving the student in this way, the curriculum encourages intersubjective responsibility. The learner is no longer a passive student but an active partner who takes responsibility for their own communication and growth.

4. HOW ARE THE CURRICULUM PURPOSES TO BE ACHIEVED?

4.1 Methodology as a communicative process

To achieve its goals, a communicative curriculum moves away from traditional "lecturing." Instead, it treats language learning as a communicative interaction—a lively process where teachers, students, and materials work together through cooperative negotiation and joint interpretation.

In this model, the classroom is a forum for action. Students use a wide variety of text-types (spoken, written, and visual) to build their skills. A key idea here is that communication and metacommunication go hand-in-hand. While "communicating" is using the language, "metacommunicating" means stepping back to analyse and monitor how the language works.

This process recognizes that communicative abilities (the underlying "engine") power all specific skills like speaking or reading. Because these abilities are connected, improving your reading often helps your speaking, and vice-versa. The goal is to develop the learner's process competence—their ability to use the language as they are learning it.

4.2 Methodology as a differentiated process

The interactive nature of the communicative curriculum highlights the need for differentiation. a) A communicative curriculum differentiates between the target repertoire and the communicative knowledge and abilities that underlie it. b) It also distinguishes the learner's process competence from the target competence, recognizing that different learners may use different processes to reach the same target.

These distinctions involve differentiation at the curriculum level between purposes and the methodology adopted to achieve such purposes. Within methodology, differentiation applies to participants, activities, text-types, and how abilities are used.

Exploring Differentiation within Methodology

1. Learners' contribution

Individual learners contribute to language learning through their initial competence, expectations, and evolving needs, interests, and motivations. Every student has a different process competence. Two students might reach the same goal, but they will use different mental tools to get there.

2. Routes

A communicative curriculum allows for different "paths." Some students might need to go slower, while others might want to focus on specific topics. This involves choosing different combinations of skills (like focusing on speaking first vs. reading first).

3. Media

To accommodate personal interests, ease of access, and alternative perspectives, learners should work with various media, each offering authentic text-types. A text-type is authentic if it follows the principle of verisimilitude—truth to the medium—meaning learners engage with texts appropriately: reading written texts, listening to spoken ones, and viewing visual ones.

4. Abilities

Instead of forcing everyone to learn the same way, a communicative methodology takes advantage of heterogeneity. If one student learns best through visual aids and another through social interaction, the curriculum should support both.

4.3 Methodology exploits the communicative potential of the learning- teaching context

The communicative curriculum views the classroom not as an artificial setting but as a unique social environment with its own human activities, conventions, and constructed reality. This uniqueness implies a communicative potential to be exploited.

In the communicative curriculum, a distinction is made between “formal” classroom contexts, offering learning best generated in a group context, and “informal” learning, an individual commitment beyond the classroom. Within a communicative curriculum, the classroom becomes the focal point of a communicative and differentiated learning-teaching process and a meeting-place for communication-as-learning, communication about learning, and metacommunication, where knowledge is jointly offered and sought, reflected upon, and acted upon. The classroom also provides feedback that helps refine the learner’s process competence and supports the learner’s personal curriculum beyond the classroom.

To fully exploit both formal and informal contexts, a communicative methodology must relate them by engaging with phenomena from the learner’s outside world. In this way, the classroom functions authentically as both an observatory of everyday communication and a laboratory for discovering new knowledge and developing abilities.

The classroom becomes "artificial" only when we treat it like a rehearsal studio. However, when the classroom is used for realistically motivated communication, it becomes an authentic site of learning.

5. What is the role of the teacher within a communicative methodology?

1. Facilitator of the Communicative Process

Facilitates communication between all participants, activities, and texts.

2. Interdependent Participant in the Learning-Teaching Group

- Organiser of Resources (and a resource himself).
- Guide within classroom procedures and activities.

- Provider and Seeker of Feedback at appropriate moments in activities.
- A “Seer of Potential”, shaping individual and group knowledge and exploitation of abilities by focusing on learners’ process competences.
- Shares responsibility for learning and teaching.

3. Researcher and Learner (Participant-Observer)

- Contributes in terms of appropriate knowledge and abilities, actual and observed experience of the nature of learning, and organisational capabilities.
- “Steps back” to monitor and reflect on the communicative learning-teaching process.