

College of Education for Humanities

English Department



MA. Studies/ Methodology

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Methods of Teaching

“Communicative Language Teaching”

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1. Introduction

The Development of Communicative Language Teaching

There are two interacting sources of influence that shape the field of language teaching, which have accounted for its recent history and which will no doubt determine the direction it takes in years to come.

One comes from outside the profession and reflects the changing status of English in the world. Increasingly, essential features of contemporary societies are an English

- proficient workforce in many key sectors of the economy as well as the ability of people from all walks of life to access the educational , technical , and knowledge resources that proficiency in English makes available.

The second source of change is internally initiated , that is, it reflects the language teaching profession gradually evolving a changed understanding of its own essential knowledge base and associated instructional practices through the efforts of applied linguists, specialists, and teachers in the field of second language teaching and teacher education.

CLT was the result of a questioning of the assumptions and practices associated with Situational Language Teaching (SLT) up until the 1960 s the major British approach to teaching English as a second or foreign language.

In SLT, language was taught by practicing basic structures in meaningful situation - based activities. This was partly a response to the sorts of criticisms the prominent American linguist Noam Chomsky had leveled at structural linguistic theory in his influential book *Syntactic Structures* (1957) .

Chomsky had demonstrated that the then 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), as well as work in philosophy (e.g., by John Austin and John Searle).

2 The “communicative movement” in language teaching was also partly the result of changing educational realities in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. With the increasing interdependence of European countries came the need for greater efforts to teach adults the major languages of the European Common Market.

- Approach :

Theory of language The Communicative Approach in language teaching starts from a functional theory of Language

- one that focuses on language as a means of 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. 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. It was based on a cognitive view of 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. Another linguistic theory of communication favored in CLT theory was Halliday’s functional account of language use.

Here the term functional is expanded to encompass the categories given below, as well as speech acts , another term for functions in the sense used by Wilkins to describe what we do with language (complain , apologize, etc.) “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 1975: 145).

- 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.

A more pedagogically influential analysis of communicative competence was presented in an important paper by 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.-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.
5. Communicative competence entails knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions as well as the following dimensions of language knowledge:
 - Knowing how to vary use of language according to the setting and the participants(e.g., knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication)
 - Knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts (e .g., narratives, reports, interviews, conversations).
 - Knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's