

COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING ENGLISH AT SPECIALITY “APPLIED INFORMATICS”

Maria Anishevici

Universitatea Tehnica A Moldovei

Maria_anisch@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract. *This paper tried to demonstrate the concept “communicative language teaching” (CLT) as applied to the teaching process for the students of specialty IAE at the faculty of Computers, Informatics and Microelectronics. This presentation highlights the main principles of CLT based on three components: organizational competence, pragmatic competence and strategic competence. Content-based instruction is an acquisition activity: learners explore a rich piece of discourse for its own value. Our goal as language teachers is to be sure that lesson language is focused on in an explicit, directed way so that learners can control the language they need to manipulate the content. Only when we have provided students with knowledge of language and the capacity to execute the competence, can we use communicative language ability properly in a certain context. Furthermore, some pedagogical applications are suggested to achieve these competences.*

Keywords: *communication; communicative competence; Communicative Language Teaching (CLT);*

1. Introduction

The primary function of language is interaction and effective communication. Our motto is to encourage attempts to communicate right from the very beginning. As one of the most popular words in the 20th century, “communication” has great influence in the language teaching world. That is not only because of its high frequency appearance in the research world, but because of its essential meaning that represents the gradual globalization in the past century. When teachers use various communicative teaching materials in the CLT classrooms, they are actually teaching students to participate in the communication of their human world and how to learn the foreign language.

2. Development

We use the communicative pedagogical applications in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to achieve dimensions of communicative competences: organizational competence, communicative competence and strategic competence. Organizational competence consists of two types of abilities: grammatical and contextual. As Bachman (1990, pp. 87-88) defines, grammatical competence comprises the competencies involved in language usage, while textual competence includes the knowledge of joining utterances together to form a unit of language by applying the rules of cohesion and rhetorical organization. All these could be generalized as linguistic competence, which is the basic notion that belongs to one of the sources for CLT. Mastery of the language code (verbal and non-verbal) is the main issue to develop organizational competence. In classroom learning CLT puts the focus on the learner. In order to satisfy learners’ communicative needs, developing organizational competence in both speaking and writing is the necessity. However, the knowledge of the language and the development of the language itself, are divided into two versions: “using English to learn it” and “learning to use English”. Ten principles offered by the CLT are our guidance to achieve any of these objectives. To achieve organizational competence, CLT should base on the principle of the intention to mean, which implies that language itself should fulfill a meaning or purpose rather than simply practicing a structural model.

Thus, some of the classroom activities, such as reporting, persuading, studying literacy and other cognitively demanding texts, discussing, debating, reaching a consensus, and relaying instructions etc. are widely used to practice organizational ability. From communicative competence we move on to communicative language teaching through integrating performance skills in order to provide a clearer and

more complete picture of communicative competence. It includes the knowledge of the pragmatic conventions to perform acceptable language functions as well as the knowledge of the sociolinguistic conventions to perform language functions appropriately in a given context. The principles of information gap and unpredictability are the basis in the CLT classroom to practice pragmatic ability. Moreover, being authentic and with legitimacy of tasks could enhance the motivation of the students and prepare them to cope with real-life events. In order to provide the chances for the learners to perform activities and tasks in the foreign language, we apply communicative games which are based on the principle of the information gap, including finding the differences (or similarities), describe and arrange, story reconstruction or poem reconstruction. Nevertheless, in the communicative teaching, performance is not restricted to speaking and writing skills, but extends to interpretation and comprehension as other productive skills. The simulation technique concerns either what the participants say and do, or what they think. Simulation was introduced into CLT classrooms to emphasize cohesive and functional language in use so that a functional purpose could be fulfilled. It creates motivation among the participant to break up the silences in class and take up their own responsibilities to integrate the experiences outside the classroom with their knowledge inside the class. After a simulation experience, some follow-up activities such as project work, role-play exercises, games, informal drama etc. are proposed. To sum up, language competence we are trying to create in our students means that the learners are capable of applying the knowledge of grammatical rules and the cultural patterns or codes to a particular context to achieve particular communicative goals appropriately, effectively and successfully.

Studies show that when a L2 speaker wants to solve his/her lexical problem and maintain his/her communicative intent, two main referential strategies are adopted. Thus, in CLT classroom teachers need to teach students to be adept at making full use of what s/he knows to perform a function using language willingly and flexibly. We suggest some practices in test tasks. For instance, doing reading comprehension, the student should learn to recognize the information outside the discourse to answer questions requiring inference.

COMMUNICATIVE LESSONS ARE — Task-Oriented, Needs-Based, Learning-Centered, and Contextualized; they are situated in discourse and recursive. Task orientation implies that, for instance, the focus of a lesson is not on the present progressive tense, but on “talking about plans”—plans that students could well make themselves—and ideally, plans they will actually carry out with pair or group work, there should be some resulting outcome that can be used in the next phase of the lesson, not just practice for practice’s sake, e.g., “you will practice this activity in pairs in order to...” . When designing curriculum we try to answer two basic questions: how are our students most likely to use English? and how would our students most likely use this language? We tend to show why we are doing this and why we are doing it in this particular way. Available materials should be exploited to the fullest.

A great emphasis is placed with learner experience. The teacher relates to course objectives and previous and future lesson features and makes lesson activities inter-related, as well having all activity items in the same context. Topics and situations are developed as we really interact in them in communicative events, students are engaged in the kinds of things we really do with language in the real world. In order for the students to be able to easily imagine themselves engaging in learning experiences the teacher ensures that the activity’s discourse structure is faithful to reality and appeals to a variety of learning strategies and styles. When we structure activities to correspond to our notion of what effective learning is we bear it in mind that just getting the language right isn’t enough—we have to get the behaviors, conventions, roles, and practices that go with the language right as well. It is also important to maintain a high ratio of language use in relation to time spent talking about language. We fully agree that pair and small group problem-solving increases interaction and negotiation and the activities planned for our classes are structured so that students have opportunities to experiment with the language. Attention is paid to reintegrating previously taught features into later lessons and lexical items are reintroduced in and across lessons. At the upper-intermediate and advanced levels we move from Inductive Learning to Deductive Learning (from discovery and deduction to clear explanation and models to practice/application of the models) and encourage students to Acquisition activities: engage in rich, authentic discourse for its own sake; the teacher scaffolds the student discovery process rather than following an explicit, directed, and pre-established activity structure. Learning Activities: are clearly sequenced and follow explicit explanation and models: they support the student’s learning and allow them to access structures and language they may not yet have acquired. It is the task of the teacher to provide students with the language, skills, and strategies necessary to successfully carry out the activities (e.g., you need a lot more than the knowledge of tenses to be able to carry out an authentic job interview role play).

3. Conclusion

In this article, we have tried to demonstrate the framework of communicative language teaching methods as applied at our university. Thus, three aspects of communicative competence and their teaching are explored. They are organizational, pragmatic and strategic competence. Organizational competence concerns about grammatical and contextual abilities, which is the knowledge aspect of communicative competence. Communication competence is a system of rules that enable us to match the functions with linguistic structures in the certain contexts, which decides the aspect of ability. And strategic competence could be regarded as a technique or a tool to make the most effective use of available abilities to carry out verbal or non-verbal tasks.

CLT has been a usual practice in language teaching but some of the possible problems we could not ignore. For example, we need to consider the size of the class, the fair opportunities to communicate in the class, the proper percentage of error-correction, the specific cultural context and the availability of authentic materials, etc. Anyway, communicative competence is always worthwhile aim of language learning and teaching.

4. References

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