

Communicative Approach for the Language Acquisition

Kurdadze Ekaterine – Assistant Professor, Department of English Philology, Akaki Tsereteli State University, Kutaisi, Georgia

Demetradze Nino – Assistant Professor, Department of English Philology, Akaki Tsereteli State University, Kutaisi, Georgia

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(Integration of the learning process and the research)

Introduction and aim: Present day teachers would probably like to think that their classes are “communicative” in the widest sense of the word. Most teachers probably use activities where learners communicate and tasks are completed by means of interaction with other learners. Thus, teacher’s role in this case is to facilitate and to monitor, usually without interruption and to provide feedback on the success of the communication.

Research methodology: What is communication and why has communicative approach become the accepted “standard” in English language teaching? Real communication should always be informative and unpredictable. If the teacher is always informative and interesting students will be disposed for a good class. But if the previous class is just the same as the next one undoubtedly students will be bored.

Results and implications: During a language lesson a good teacher should use the dialogue that can reflect spontaneous situation, because unexpected dialogues are really communicative and they stimulate active thinking process and use of language in the frame of fixed communicative habits.

Conclusion: The communicative language teaching method has various features that distinguish it from other methods: • understanding through active interaction; • teaching by using authentic English materials; • importance is given to learner’s personal experiences and spontaneous situations that contribute much to the content of the class.

Keywords: communicative approach; meaningful language, feedback; interaction; spontaneous situations; thinking process; communicative activities, competences

In present day world where communication and information technology have broken new considerable ground, communicative approach of teaching can play an important role in education.

The communicative approach is based on the idea that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning. When learners are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used, and this will allow them **to learn to use the language.** **Thus, the mentioned approach leads to meaningful communication.** Language is meaningful only in context. This is one of the emphases of the communicative approach.

So in the communicative approach, a lot of talking is done by the students as they start practicing words roll off of their tongues. They don’t just sit in class and listen as a teacher lists every exception to a grammar rule. Students interact with each other guided by their teacher, they engage in all real-world situations where there’s a need to communicate meaning. With the communicative approach, interaction becomes both the method and the goal of teaching.

Since the teacher's role is less dominant, the teaching/learning process is student centered rather than teacher-centered. In other words, it is the learner who plays a great role in a large proportion of the process of learning. The teacher is not a model for correct speech and writing and does not have the primary responsibility of making students produce plenty of error-free sentences. The teacher is a facilitator/ advisor, answering questions, monitoring their performance, note making of their errors, and co-communicator. Roles of Learners in the Classroom Communicators should participate in classroom activities cooperatively rather than individualistically, be comfortable with listening to their peers in group work or pair work tasks, rely less on the teacher as a model, and take on a greater degree of responsibility for their own learning.

We use language for various reasons:

- to create interaction with others;
- to express personal feelings;
- to create a world of imagination;
- to communicate information.

Instead of describing the core of language through traditional concepts of grammar and vocabulary, applied linguists attempted to show the systems of meaning underlying the communicative use of language.

The idea of communicative learning is broken up in notions and functions. A notion is a specific framework of communication and function is a particular purpose for a speaker in a precise context. In other words, a “notion” is a particular context in which people communicate. A “function” is a specific purpose for a speaker in a given context. For example, the “notion,” of *travelling* requires numerous language “functions,” such as *asking for information, expressing likes, dislikes, giving your opinion, saying you are interested, etc.*

Linguists mostly describe four dimensions of communicative competence.

- Grammatical competence: refers to what Chomsky calls linguistic competence.
- Sociolinguistic competence: refers to an understanding of the social context in which communication takes place.
- Discourse competence: refers to the interpretation of individual message elements in terms of their interconnectedness and how meaning is represented in relationship to the entire discourse or text.
- Strategic competence: refers to the coping strategies that participants use to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair and redirect communication.

We are going to focus on two competences mentioned above which we consider to be most useful for communicative approach in teaching English as a foreign language – *sociolinguistic* and *strategic* competencies.

Sociolinguistic competence enables an individual to manage and produce knowledge. It does not matter how well a person knows grammar, if he or she does not know how it must be used for successful communication, how to use it in the native environment. In some cases learners are presented with artificial outdated situations that offer limited information on how the language is used at the time it is being introduced to a learner. There are many examples demonstrating the information that might cause annoying delay in a learner’s progress. In order to have successful performance, learners have to become aware of the possibilities in which communication is taking place, in other

words they need to be sensitive to the context to which their linguistic knowledge has prepared. Most importantly learners must be intuitive of the ways in which interaction will take them to a place where different interactions will occur. So, socio cultural competence goes beyond grammar, style and register. Using the language as a means of communication in different situations students will observe how language changes to accommodate new discoveries, how language transforms according to social changes. Thus, it is important to note that learning a language includes learning everything behind the language and beyond the grammar. In other words, the gradual language acquisition and development transforms students into learners who gain knowledge of the language and the way it is used.

Strategic competence is of crucial importance for foreign language learners since it involves strategies which are used when communication is difficult. We are familiar with situations when students with a good knowledge of grammar and a wide range of vocabulary get stuck and are unable to carry out their communicative intention. We came across some unpleasant experience when some of our “brilliant” students failed oral exams, because they lack strategic competences. At the beginning our students have zero competence and gradually they are moving along the line of inter language stages and approaching a native speaker competence by successive approximations. In oral interaction learners have some kind of communicative goal but they meet a problem if their command of the linguistic and socio cultural code is not adequate. For example, reduction strategies can affect modality (markers of politeness) or whole speech acts. In opening telephone conversation, learners may do without starters as *Am I ringing at a bad time?* which are sometimes useful. Such failures are not always serious, but they may lead to false perceptions on the listener’s part. So is it desirable, on wider pedagogic grounds, to train students in the use of strategies? The answer is that if we want to identify and describe communication strategies we must give up the idea of being prescriptive and giving rules: in other words, we should try to discover possible patterns and regularities between and across sentences, but we should treat this as a frequent behavior in a given context, not as fixed norms.

There should be a distinction between *learning* and *acquiring*. Acquisition is an unconscious process that involves the naturalistic development of language proficiency while learning is the conscious adoption of the rules of language. It results in explicit knowledge about the forms of language and the ability to verbalize this knowledge.

Do your students care about your course material? How well do we know what our students already know, what their interests are, what they want to learn, and what lessons they walk away with from our teaching?

To meet the needs of the greatest number of students we should tailor a well-known technique - the “K-W-L technique” asking our students to list what they **know**, what they **want to know**, and what they **learned** each class.

To encourage students to develop effective reading skills, there are various teaching and learning strategies that can be used by the teachers in classroom. Most of the teaching and learning strategies usually focus on a particular strategy or skill. KWL (Know, Want, Learned) strategy is one of teaching and learning strategies used mainly for information text. Its aims are more diverse. It helps readers elicit prior knowledge of the topic of the text; set a purpose for reading; monitor their comprehension; assess their comprehension of the text; and expand ideas beyond the text. KWL charts assist teachers in activating students' **prior knowledge** of a subject or topic and encourage inquisition, active reading, and research. KWL charts are especially helpful as a prereading strategy when reading expository text

and may also serve as an assessment of what students have learned during a unit of study. The K stands for what students know, the W stands for what students want to learn, and the L stands for what the students learn as they read or research.

The experience at Georgian schools illustrates the complexity of teaching and learning. Some proven effective teaching and learning strategy in different contexts may not produce the same expected results in a new learning context. Factors like students' interests, standards and background, teaching materials, teachers' expectations and beliefs, and time will affect teachers' decisions in adopting or rejecting certain teaching strategy, like KWL in this case. When some teachers said this "reading strategy did not work well" in their classes, they meant more than the strategy itself. They had other expectations and considerations which the strategy failed to address. Not only did they want their students to interact with and understand the text, but also to express their ideas freely in English. In case the KWL strategy cannot accommodate these intended outcomes, the teacher may need to resort to other teaching and learning strategy, or modify the teaching and learning materials to lessen the information load for weaker students when using the KWL strategy to handle complex information text.

There is an unlimited source of communicative activities, but it is up to a teacher to select them in accordance with the class level, aim, etc. Doing surveys can be a useful way of getting your students to interact, produce question forms and collect and analyze real information. It's a good idea to get the class thinking about school subjects and comparing themselves to others in the class. This activity gives them the chance to practice target language in context and it also prepares them for the survey with students they may not know.

Errors are seen as a natural outcome of the development of the communication skills and are therefore tolerated. Learners trying their best to use the language creatively and spontaneously are bound to make errors. Constant correction is unnecessary and even counter-productive. Correction noted by the teacher should be discreet. Let the students talk and express themselves and the form of the language becomes secondary. If errors of form are tolerated and are seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills, students can have limited linguistic knowledge and still be successful communicators.

The communicative approach is only deemed successful if the teacher understands the student. The goal is to help students speak the language fluently enough for native speakers to understand what they are saying. Compared with other methods and approaches, communicative language teaching (CLT) activities are more difficult to design and implement and place greater burden on EFL teachers. Not only the implementation, but also the assessment of this method seems to be difficult for EFL teachers who are usually used to clear-cut assessment procedures. Considering the perceived difficulties in utilizing CLT demands and what the EFL situation in many countries allows, it can be concluded that such problems need to be resolved if CLT is to be successfully implemented in EFL contexts. Awareness of such problems can provide EFL teachers and learners with insightful ideas about how to manage and, if required, to change their teaching and learning activities for the successful implementation of this method.

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