

Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching

Third Edition

Jack C. Richards and
Theodore S. Rodgers



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5 Communicative Language Teaching

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. Consequently, in recent years there has been a dramatic change in the scope of English language teaching worldwide and, as a result, growing demands on those charged with providing an adequate response to the impact of the global spread of English. There is increasing demand worldwide for language programs that deliver the foreign language skills and competencies needed by today's global citizens and a demand from governments for more effective approaches to the preparation of language teachers. At the same time, there has often been a perception that language teaching policies and practices are not providing an adequate response to the problem. Hence, the regular review of language teaching policies, curriculum, and approaches to both teaching and assessment that has been a feature of the field of language teaching for many years.

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. The language teaching profession undergoes periodic waves of renewal and paradigm shifts as it continually reinvents itself through the impact of new ideas, new educational philosophies, advances in technology, and new research paradigms, and as a response to external pressures of the kind noted above. The movement and approach known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a good example of how a paradigm shift in language teaching reflects these two sources of change.

CLT was the result of a questioning of the assumptions and practices associated with Situational Language Teaching (SLT) (see Chapter 3) – up until the 1960s 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. 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 SLT:

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 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., by Dell Hymes, John Gumperz), as well as work in philosophy (e.g., by John Austin and John Searle).

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. 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. Thus, as mentioned earlier, the second impetus for change resulted from this need and a questioning of the underlying basis of SLT.

Versions of Communicative Language Teaching

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 CLT. 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 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). (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, from the mid-1970s the scope of CLT soon expanded as it became in many parts of the world the new paradigm in language teaching. For example in Malaysia in the 1980s, the Malaysian Communicational Syllabus was the official national syllabus for over ten years and was the instructional guide for several hundreds of thousands of students in upper secondary schools. It stipulated considerable training for 50 regional key personnel who in turn trained all upper secondary language teachers for a period of two weeks. A detailed Teaching Kit, a Handbook, and textbook specifications were developed by special teams of teachers seconded to those tasks. Four series of approved commercial textbooks were produced and distributed within a year of the introduction of the Communicational Syllabus. The plan and its realization received a number of detailed evaluation studies (Rodgers 1984).

Both American and British proponents typically described CLT as an approach (and not a method) that aimed 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. The concept of communicative competence entails a much broader understanding of

language as a means of getting things accomplished in an appropriate manner. The various ways this term has been interpreted will be explained later in this chapter, but essentially, language and communication are interdependent in the sense that language must serve the purpose of communicating the speaker's objectives. The comprehensiveness of CLT thus makes it somewhat different in scope and status from any of the other approaches or methods discussed in this book. No single text or authority on it emerged, nor any single model that was universally accepted as authoritative. For some, CLT meant 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 meant using procedures where learners work in pairs or groups employing available language resources in problem-solving tasks. In her discussion of communicative syllabus design, Yalden (1983) discusses six CLT 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 (1984: 279) distinguished between a "strong" and a "weak" version of CLT:

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."

Advocates of some forms of Task-Based Language Teaching (Chapter 9) see it as an extension and fine-tuning of the principles of CLT in its strong form because task-based teaching builds teaching and learning around real-life tasks from which the aspects of communicative language use and a knowledge of grammar can emerge. The wide acceptance of the Communicative Approach from the 1980s and the relatively varied way in which it was interpreted and applied can be attributed to the fact that practitioners from different educational traditions could identify with it, and consequently interpret it, in different ways. One of its North American proponents, Savignon (1983), for example, offered 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 anti-structural 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. That is, unlike in SLT, communicative production is not postponed until after the mastery of forms and controlled sentence practice has occurred.

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. 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 CLT, 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 CLT around tasks and procedures, the commission 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 CLT is a theory of language teaching that starts from a communicative model of language and language use – that is, a focus on achieving a communicative purpose as opposed to a control of structure – 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 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. Chomsky (1965: 3) 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.

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 with respect to the following:

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

(1972: 281)

This theory of what knowing a language entails offers a much more comprehensive view than Chomsky's cognitive view of competence – a theory of language that deals primarily with abstract grammatical knowledge.

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). In a number of influential books and papers, Halliday elaborated a powerful theory of the functions of language, which complements Hymes's view of communicative 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 now was similarly viewed by proponents of CLT as acquiring the linguistic means to perform these seven basic 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. In other words, Widdowson's focus was a practical one, as opposed to a purely philosophical one, and emphasized the learner's use of speech acts or functions for a communicative purpose.

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. 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 since it was first introduced (e.g. Savignon 1983). Sociocultural learning theory has replaced earlier views of communicative competence in many current accounts of second language learning (see Chapter 2) because of its more comprehensive understanding of the role of social context in discourse.

At the level of language theory, CLT 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.

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 language knowledge (e.g., through using different kinds of communication strategies).

Theory of learning

Several of the learning theories presented in Chapter 2 can be said to underpin CLT, as will be explained below. However, in early accounts of CLT, little was written about learning theory when compared to the amount written about communicative dimensions of language. Neither Brumfit and Johnson (1979) nor Littlewood (1981), for example, offered 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) and inform the design of textbooks and courses since the 1980s that are based on CLT. These and a variety of other more recent learning principles relevant to the claims of CLT are summarized in Skehan (1998) and further discussed in relation to Task-Based Language Teaching in Chapter 19.

Later accounts of CLT, however, identified theories of language learning processes that are compatible with the Communicative Approach. Savignon (1983) surveyed second language acquisition research as a source for learning theories and considers the role of linguistic, social, cognitive, and individual variables in language acquisition. Johnson (1984) and Littlewood (1984) proposed an alternative learning theory that they also saw 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)

Other learning theories that can be cited to support CLT are the creative-construction hypothesis, and particularly interactional theory and sociocultural learning theory, which were referred to above and in Chapter 2. From these perspectives language learning is seen to result from processes of the following kind:

- Interaction between the learner and users of the language
- Collaborative creation of meaning
- Creating meaningful and purposeful interaction through language
- Negotiation of meaning as the learner and his or her interlocutor arrive at understanding
- Learning through attending to the feedback learners get when they use the language
- Paying attention to the language one hears (the input) and trying to incorporate new forms into one's developing communicative competence
- Trying out and experimenting with different ways of saying things
- Learning as social mediation between the learner and another during which socially acquired knowledge becomes internal to the learner
- Learning facilitated through scaffolding by an expert or fellow learner (Vygotsky 1978)
- Learning through collaborative dialogue centering on structured cooperative tasks (Cook 2008).

More recent teaching approaches, such as Task-Based Language Teaching (Chapter 9) and CLIL (Chapter 6), also emphasize many of these processes, particularly the use of strategies to arrive at a shared understanding of meaning.

Design

Objectives

Objectives in CLT courses and materials may relate either to very general language learning goals, or to those linked to learners with very specific needs. In the case of the former, objectives will reflect the type of syllabus framework used, such as whether the course is organized around a topic-based, function-based, or skill-based syllabus. In either case objectives will normally seek to operationalize the notion of communicative competence into more specific descriptions of learning outcomes. In recent years objectives for communicative courses are often linked to the learning outcomes described in the Common European Framework of Reference (see Chapter 8). For example, in *Four Corners 2* (Richards and Bohlke 2012) the learning outcomes or objectives listed for the first two units are as follows:

Unit 1: My interests

Students can:

- ask and talk about interests
- ask for repetition
- ask someone to speak more slowly
- ask and talk about sports and exercise habits
- talk about free-time activities.

Unit 2: Descriptions

Students can:

- ask and talk about someone's personality
- say they think something is true and not true
- ask and talk about people's appearance
- describe their personality and appearance.

The syllabus also specifies the grammar, vocabulary, functions, and other skills used to achieve these learning outcomes. In the case of courses developed for learners with more specific needs, objectives will be specific to the contexts of teaching and learning. These needs may be in the domains of listening, speaking, reading, or writing, 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 CLT, and various versions have been proposed.

The notional-functional syllabus

We have seen that one of the first, and ultimately influential, syllabus models 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 it 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." Rather than simply specifying the grammar

and vocabulary that learners needed to master, it was argued that a syllabus should identify the following aspects of language use in order to be able to develop the learner's communicative competence:

1. as detailed a consideration as possible of the *purposes* for which the learner wishes to acquire the target language. For example, using English for business purposes, in the hotel industry, or for travel.
2. some idea of the *setting* in which they will want to use the target language. For example in an office, on an airplane, or in a store.
3. the socially defined *role* the learners will assume in the target language, as well as the role of their interlocutors. For example as a traveler, as a salesperson talking to clients, or as a student in a school setting.
4. the *communicative events* in which the learners will participate: everyday situations, vocational or professional situations, academic situations, and so on. For example, making telephone calls, engaging in casual conversation, or taking part in a meeting.
5. the *language functions* involved in those events, or what the learner will be able to do with or through the language. For example, making introductions, giving explanations, or describing plans.
6. the *notions* or concepts involved, or what the learner will need to be able to talk about. For example, leisure, finance, history, religion.
7. the skills involved in the "knitting together" of discourse: *discourse and rhetorical skills*. For example, storytelling, giving an effective business presentation.
8. the *variety* or varieties of the target language that will be needed, such as American, Australian, or British English, and the levels in the spoken and written language which the learners will need to reach.
9. the *grammatical* content that will be needed.
10. the *lexical content* or vocabulary that will be needed.

(Van Ek and Alexander 1980)

Since the description and dissemination of Threshold Level specifications for various languages, three additional communicative levels have been added – two pre-Threshold levels: Breakthrough and Waystage, and one post-Threshold level: Vantage (Council of Europe 2011).

Discussion of syllabus theory and syllabus models in CLT 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: 254) 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 development of the ability to do things with language, then it is discourse which must be at the center of our attention.

Other syllabus proposals

There have been numerous proposals and models for what a syllabus might look like in CLT throughout the 1980s. Yalden (1983) described the major current communicative syllabus types, summarized below:

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)

Prabhu believed that a task-based approach was the most appropriate model for syllabus design in CLT because meaningful tasks can encourage the development of communicative competence through information-sharing (see Chapter 9).

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 1987: 4)

This approach to a syllabus has been developed in Task-Based Language Teaching – which many see as an extension of the principles of CLT. Other more radical proposals suggested 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. In other words, the syllabus is not predetermined but is an outcome of the kinds of communication and learning that occur in the classroom. This approach is described more fully in the final chapter of this book. Brumfit (1980) represents a more conservative approach, one which favors a grammatically based syllabus around which notions, functions, and communicational activities are grouped.

English for Specific Purposes

Advocates of CLT also recognized that many learners needed English in order to use it in specific occupational or educational settings – they needed English for Specific Purposes (ESP). For such learners it would be more efficient to teach them the specific kinds of language and communicative skills needed for particular roles (e.g., that of nurse, engineer, flight attendant, pilot, biologist, etc.) rather than just to concentrate on more and more general English. This led to the process of *needs analysis* (described more fully in Chapter 21) – the use of observation, surveys, interviews, situation analysis, analysis of language samples collected in different settings – in order to determine the kinds of communication learners would need to master if they were in specific occupational or educational roles and the language features of particular settings. The focus of needs analysis was to determine the particular characteristics of a language when it is used for specific rather than general purposes. Such differences might include

- differences in vocabulary choice;
- differences in grammar;
- differences in the kinds of texts commonly occurring;
- differences in functions;
- differences in the need for particular skills.

Munby's Communicative Syllabus Design (1978) presented a detailed model for conducting needs analysis in ESP course design. ESP courses soon began to appear addressing the language needs of university students, nurses, engineers, restaurant staff, doctors, hotel staff, airline pilots, and so on.

Types of learning and teaching activities

As well as rethinking the nature of a syllabus, the Communicative Approach to teaching prompted a rethinking of classroom teaching methodology. It was argued that learners learn a language through the process of communicating in it, and that communication that is meaningful to the learner provides a better opportunity for learning than a grammar-based approach. Activities were needed that reflected the following principles:

- Make real communication the focus of language learning.
- Provide opportunities for learners to experiment and try out what they know.
- Be tolerant of learners' errors as they indicate that the learner is building up his or her communicative competence.
- Provide opportunities for learners to develop both accuracy and fluency.
- Link the different skills such as speaking, reading, and listening together, since they usually occur together in the real world.
- Let students induce or discover grammar rules.

In applying these principles in the classroom, new classroom techniques and activities were needed as well as new roles for teachers and learners in the classroom. Instead of making

use of activities that demanded accurate repetition and memorization of sentences and grammatical patterns, activities that required learners to negotiate meaning – a term used to refer to the processes speakers use to arrive at a shared understanding of meaning – and to interact meaningfully, and that developed fluency in language use were required. 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 and engage learners in communication. Classroom activities are often designed to focus on completing tasks that are mediated through language or involve negotiation of information and information-sharing – a feature that has become the primary characteristic of Task-Based Language Teaching. Littlewood (1981) distinguished between “functional communication activities” and “social interaction activities” as major activity types in CLT. 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.

One of the goals of second language learning is to develop fluency, accuracy, and appropriacy in language use. Fluency is natural language use occurring when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible and ongoing communication despite limitations in his or her communicative competence. In CLT fluency was addressed through classroom activities in which students must correct misunderstandings and work to avoid communication breakdowns. Fluency practice can be contrasted with accuracy practice, which focuses on creating correct examples of language use. The differences between these two kinds of activities may be summarized as follows:

Activities focusing on *fluency*

- reflect natural use of language;
- concentrate on achieving communication through negotiation of meaning;
- require meaningful use of language;
- require the use of communication strategies;
- produce language that may not be predictable;
- seek to link language use to context.

Activities focusing on *accuracy*

- reflect classroom use of language;
- concentrate on the formation of correct examples of language;
- practice language out of context;
- practice small samples of language;

- do not require meaningful communication;
- control choice of language.

Teachers were recommended to use a balance of fluency activities and accuracy and to use accuracy activities to support fluency activities. Accuracy work could come either before or after fluency work. For example, based on students' performance on a fluency task, the teacher could assign accuracy work to deal with grammatical or pronunciation problems the teacher observed while students were carrying out the task, or develop a follow-up focus on appropriacy of language use (e.g., the difference between formal and casual speech). While dialogues, grammar, and pronunciation drills did not usually disappear from textbooks and classroom materials at this time, they now appeared as part of a sequence of activities that moved back and forth between accuracy activities and fluency activities.

The dynamics of classrooms also changed. Instead of a predominance of teacher-fronted teaching, teachers were encouraged to make greater use of small-group work, often involving an "information gap" (students negotiating to obtain information that they do not have). Pair and group activities gave learners greater opportunities to use the language and to develop fluency. Common activity types in CLT include:

- *Jig-saw activities.* The class is divided into groups and each group has part of the information needed to complete an activity. The class must fit the pieces together to complete the whole.
- *Task-completion activities.* Puzzles, games, map-reading, and other kinds of classroom tasks in which the focus is on using one's language resources to complete a task.
- *Information-gathering activities.* Student-conducted surveys, interviews, and searches in which students are required to use their linguistic resources to collect information.
- *Opinion-sharing activities.* Activities where students compare values, opinions, beliefs, such as a ranking task in which students list six qualities in order of importance when choosing a date or spouse.
- *Information-transfer activities.* Taking information that is presented in one form, and representing it in a different form. For example, students may read instructions on how to get from A to B, and then draw a map showing the sequence, or they may read information about a subject and then represent it as a graph.
- *Reasoning gap activities.* Deriving some new information from given information through the process of inference, practical reasoning, etc. For example, working out a teacher's timetable on the basis of given class timetables.
- *Role plays.* Students are assigned roles and improvise a scene or exchange based on given information or clues.

Learner roles

The emphasis in CLT 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 (1980: 110) 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.

Learners now had to participate in classroom activities that were based on a cooperative rather than individualistic approach to learning. Students had to become comfortable with listening to their peers in group work or pair work tasks, rather than relying on the teacher for a model. They were expected to take on a greater degree of responsibility for their own learning. In the pure form of CLT, 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. (Modified forms do aim to balance fluency and accuracy, as defined above.) 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

The types of classroom activities proposed in CLT also implied new roles in the classroom for teachers, who now had to assume the role of facilitator and monitor. Rather than being a model for correct speech and writing and one with the primary responsibility of making sure students produced plenty of error-free sentences, the teacher had to develop a different view of learners' errors and of his or her own role in facilitating language learning. Breen and Candlin (1980: 99) described 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.

Other roles assumed for teachers are needs analyst, counselor, and group process manager. Observers have pointed out that these roles may not be compatible with the traditional roles teachers are expected to play in some cultures (see below).

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 five-point scale (*strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*) to statements such as the following:

- I want to study English because ...
- I think it will someday be useful in getting a good job.
- It will help me better understand English-speaking people and their way of life.
- One needs a good knowledge of English to gain other people's respect.
- It will allow me to meet and converse with interesting people.
- I need it for my job.
- 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. A good example of how this process was applied in a national language program for immigrants in Australia was given in Nunan (1988).

Counselor

Another role assumed by several CLT approaches is that of counselor, similar to the way this role is defined in Community Language Learning (Chapter 17). 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 this may be an unfamiliar role for teachers in some

cultures. The focus on fluency and comprehensibility in CLT 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. In CLT with low-level learners, students may develop fluency at the expense of accuracy and complexity (see below).

The role of instructional materials

A wide variety of materials have been used to support communicative approaches to language teaching. Practitioners of CLT 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 four kinds of materials currently used in CLT and label these text-based, task-based, realia-based, and technology-supported.

Text-based materials

There are numerous textbooks designed to direct and support CLT. 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, had 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) consisted of two different texts for pair work, each containing different information needed to enact role plays and carry out other pair activities. More recent courses published by international publishers still often cite CLT as providing the methodological framework for the course, for example, *Interchange*, 4th edition (Richards, Hull, and Proctor 2012) and *Four Corners* (Richards and Bohlke 2012). Typically this means the use of an integrated syllabus that draws on the Common European Framework of Reference, which specifies outcomes for various language levels (see Chapter 8), and which includes functions, topics, grammar, vocabulary and the four skills, as noted above.

Task-based materials

A variety of games, role plays, simulations, and task-based communication activities have been prepared to support CLT 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-based materials

Many proponents of CLT 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.

Technology-supported materials

CLT emphasizes the need for teaching to be organized around authentic and meaningful uses of language that are linked to the learner's communicative needs. The goals are to develop fluent, accurate, and appropriate language use through the use of a communicative curriculum built around functional and interactional uses of language. These uses more often require interaction in the modes of reading and writing than in listening and speaking. In a traditional classroom these aims are realized through a variety of activities that, as mentioned, involve negotiation of meaning, natural language use, and the development of communication strategies. However, the classroom context is often an artificial setting for authentic communication to be realized. Technology, on the other hand, provides opportunities for accessing authentic language input, combining texts, images, audio, and video. Chat rooms, discussion boards, and teleconferencing are tools that can be used to encourage authentic interaction. It creates situations in which learners have to employ and expand their communicative resources, supported by the ability to link sound, word, texts, and images in the process. Chat rooms, discussion boards, teleconferencing can all be used in this way. Access to authentic materials and collaboration on tasks with learners in different locations and utilizing different forms of communication can enhance the learning experience. Topics, functions, and activities in a coursebook can be extended through follow-up work in the multimedia lab or at home from a computer, where students work with real examples of the interactions and transactions they practiced in the classroom. Research on computer-mediated communication suggests it has a number of characteristics that reflect the assumptions of CLT (Erben, Ban, and Casteneda 2009: 84–5). These include

- increased participation on the part of the students;
- increased access to comprehensible input;
- increased opportunities for negotiation of meaning;
- group-based learning since CLT creates a context for interaction;
- the creation of a social learning environment that promotes language learning.

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 CLT, description of typical classroom procedures used in a lesson based on

CLT principles is not feasible. Nevertheless, CLT procedure did evolve from the existing procedures in place for Situational Language Teaching and other earlier methods, and the Presentation-Practice-Production (or PPP) format (see Chapter 3) continued to be used by some proponents of CLT. 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: 107–8)

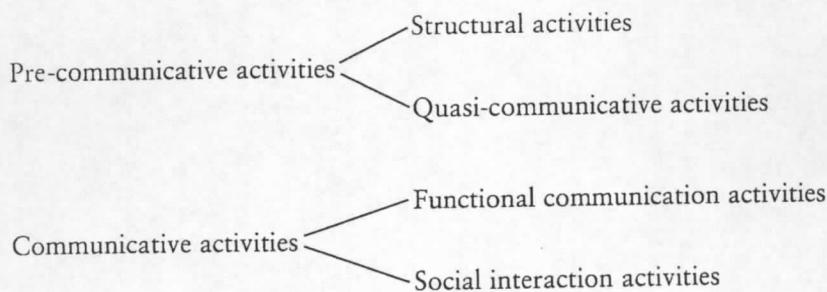


Figure 5.1 Activity types in CLT

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) and in more recent series such as *Interchange* and *Four Corners*. Teaching points are often 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 Figure 5.1 above (Littlewood 1981: 86).

Savignon (1972, 1983), however, rejected the notion that learners must first gain control over individual skills (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary) before applying them in communicative tasks; she advocated providing communicative practice from the start of instruction – a feature that has since become central in task-based teaching.

An example of a communicative textbook lesson may be found in the appendix to this chapter.

Criticisms of CLT

Although CLT has become a widely used set of principles and procedures for the design of language courses and teaching materials, it is not without its critics. Criticisms of CLT take several different forms, including the following:

- *It promotes fossilization.* The persistence of errors in learners’ language has been attributed to an over-emphasis on communication in language teaching at the expense of accuracy. The promise that the communicative classroom activities would help learners develop both communicative and linguistic competence did not always happen. Programs where there was an extensive use of “authentic communication,” particularly in the early stages of learning, reported that students often developed fluency at the

expense of accuracy, resulting in learners with good communication skills but a poor command of grammar and a high level of fossilization (Higgs and Clifford 1982).

- *It reflects “native-speakerism.”* Holliday (1994) argued that the communicative orthodoxy taught to teachers who are native speakers of English reflects a view of teaching and learning that closely reflects culturally bound assumptions derived from the cultures of origin – Britain, Australasia, and North America (which Holliday refers to as BANA contexts). The teaching methods developed in these countries’ centers reflect the kinds of learners who study in institutes and universities serving students who generally have instrumental reasons for learning English, namely for academic or professional purposes or as new settlers. Their needs, however, may be very different from learners learning English in state-based educational programs (e.g. public schools) in other parts of the world – studying in tertiary, secondary, or primary settings (referred to as TESEP contexts). Methods developed in one context will not necessarily transfer to others. As Holliday points out, most of the literature on CLT reflects a primarily BANA understanding of teaching, learning, teachers, learners, and classrooms. In these contexts, “English language teaching tends to be instrumentally oriented, in that it has grown up within a private language school ethos where there has been a considerable freedom to develop classroom methodology as a sophisticated instrument to suit the precise needs of language learners.” In TESEP settings, by comparison, “English ... is taught as part of a wider curriculum and is therefore influenced and constrained by wider educational, institutional, and community forces, quite different from those in the BANA sector” (Holliday 1994: 4).
- *It is not applicable in different cultures of learning.* Attempts to implement CLT in non-European settings were often less than successful due to different assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning that learners in countries such as China, East Asia, and other contexts bring to learning (Ahmad and Rao 2012). Jin and Cortazzi (2011: 571) comment:

In China in the 1980s and 1990s the national take-up of communicative approaches was slow; teachers often spoke of “the Chinese context” and of “the need for an eclectic approach,” which took account of some communicative techniques but also maintained traditional approaches.

Hird (1995 cited by Liao 2000) comments:

The teachers believed that it was not feasible to adopt CLT because China had its special characteristics. These characteristics included the teachers’ inability to teach communicatively and grammar-focused examination pressure ... And maybe that is just as well because China is a vastly different English language teaching environment from the one that spawned and nurtured the communicative approach.

Observers in other regional contexts give similar accounts. Vasilopoulos (2008), describing CLT in Korea, notes:

Many years have passed since the introduction of the CLT approach in Korea; however, despite curriculum reform and the passage of time, many remain skeptical of the effectiveness of communicative methodology in the Korean English language class room.

Chowdhry (2010) wrote that,

In Bangladesh, students expect teachers to be authority figures and the teaching methods to conform to the traditional “lock-step” teacher-centered approach where the teacher gives orders to students, who then comply ... In the pre-university year, students are not exposed to skills development course. Hence, the more communicative approach ... seems to them foreign. Students feel tempted to discard the new style and complain that the teacher is not teaching ... They knew their status and role had suddenly been violated by something new. They are no longer familiar with the rules of this new game.

- *It reflects a Western-based top-down approach to innovation.* A more radical critique of the influence of CLT and similar Western or “center-based” methods is given by Kumaravadivelu (2012), as we saw in Chapter 1, who argues that the communicative syllabus and common procedures for its implementation do not capture the diversity of students’ needs and goals.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have considered the development of Communicative Language Teaching, the many different ways CLT has been interpreted, as well as some of the more recent criticisms. CLT 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. Among these principles are the following:

- 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.

CLT appeared at a time when language teaching in many parts of the world was ready for a paradigm shift. The demand for more effective approaches to language teaching came from many quarters, including the Council of Europe and many national ministries of education. 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).

Jacobs and Farrell (2003) suggested that the CLT paradigm shift that began in the 1980s has led to eight major changes in approaches to language teaching – changes which go beyond CLT itself and can be seen reflected in other more recent language teaching approaches and proposals such as CLIL (Chapter 6), Text-Based Instruction (Chapter 10) and Task-Based Language Teaching (Chapter 9). These changes are:

1. *Learner autonomy.* Giving learners greater choice over their own learning, both in terms of the content of learning as well as processes they might employ (see Chapter 19). The use of small groups is one example of this, as well as the use of self-assessment.
2. *The social nature of learning.* Learning is not an individual private activity but a social one that depends upon interaction with others. The movement known as Cooperative Language Learning (Chapter 13) reflects this viewpoint as does sociocultural learning theory that is sometimes cited in support of both CLIL and Task-Based Language Teaching.
3. *Curricular integration.* The connection between different strands of the curriculum is emphasized, so that English is not seen as a stand-alone subject but is linked to other subjects in the curriculum. Text-Based Instruction (see below) reflects this approach and seeks to develop fluency in text-types that can be used across the curriculum. Project work in language teaching also requires students to explore issues outside of the language classroom – a feature of CLIL.
4. *Focus on meaning.* Meaning is viewed as the driving force of learning. Content-Based Instruction and CLIL reflect this view and seek to make the exploration of meaning through content the core of language learning activities (see Chapter 6).
5. *Diversity.* Learners learn in different ways and have different strengths. Teaching needs to take these differences into account rather than try to force students into a single mold. In language teaching this has led to an emphasis on developing students' use and awareness of learning strategies (see Chapter 19).

6. *Thinking skills.* Language should serve as a means of developing higher-order thinking skills, also known as critical and creative thinking. In language teaching this means that students do not learn language for its own sake but in order to develop and apply their thinking skills in situations that go beyond the language classroom.
7. *Alternative assessment.* New forms of assessment are needed to replace traditional multiple-choice and other items that test lower-order skills. Multiple forms of assessment (e.g. observation, interviews, journals, portfolios) can be used to build up a comprehensive picture of what students can do in a second language.
8. *Teachers as co-learners.* The teacher is viewed as a facilitator who is constantly trying out different alternatives (i.e., learning through doing). In language teaching this has led to an interest in action research and other forms of classroom investigation.

By the twenty-first century, the assumptions and practices of CLT seem on the one hand to be commonplace and part of a generally accepted and relatively uncontroversial canon of teaching theory and practice. They are sufficiently general to support a wide range of practices. On the other hand, language teaching today is a much more localized activity, subject to the constraints and needs of particular contexts and cultures of learning, and the use of global and generic solutions to local problems is increasingly seen as problematic. Research and documentation on local practices is needed to determine the nature of such practices and whether the philosophy of CLT is compatible with or has served as an input to local language teaching practices.

Discussion questions

1. CLT has been interpreted in different ways at the level of approach, design, and procedure. What are some of these variations? Having read this chapter, how would you define CLT to a colleague? What are some of the ways that CLT has evolved over time?
2. "There was no future in continuing to pursue the chimera of predicting language on the basis of situational events" (p. 83). Can you think of situations where it would be possible to predict to a high degree the actual language that will be used? Even where prediction is possible, can you think of disadvantages to using language that native speakers predict as the basis for a language syllabus?
3. Explain to a colleague the difference between notions and functions and how their specifications were used to underpin the communicative syllabus in Europe.
4. You read in the chapter that "Both American and British proponents typically described it as an approach (and not a method) that aimed 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." Why would they have called it an approach rather than a method (refer back to Anthony's description of approach, method, and technique on p. 21 of Chapter 2 if necessary)?

5. A colleague comes to you and is worried he or she spends too much time on grammar. Using Canale and Swain's (1980) four dimensions of communicative competence, how could you advise your colleague on balancing these four areas?

Grammatical competence
Sociolinguistic competence
Discourse competence
Strategic competence

6. What are some of the theories of learning that underpin the Communicative Approach? Can you give an example of how each theory might translate to classroom procedure?
7. You have read about the distinction between activities focusing on accuracy and those focusing on fluency. Which type of activity are the following?

Filling in an immigration form
Talking to a colleague over lunch
Giving a presentation at a business meeting
Reporting a theft to the police
Calling out for help in an emergency

How do you feel accuracy and fluency can be balanced within CLT? Do you feel it is important to focus equally on both?

8. One purpose of a learner-generated syllabus (p. 97-8) is to give learners more control over the learning process and to encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning. How would you respond to these colleagues' concerns:

"This would never work with my students; they have no idea what they need."
"Maybe this works with adult learners but with my 10-year-olds it will be mayhem."
"Sounds like a nice idea in theory, but how will I be able to make sure the students are prepared for the national exam?"

9. In the chapter you read about the difference between "functional communication activities" and "social interaction activities." Explain this difference to a colleague and give examples of such activities.
10. "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. (p. 98)." Compare this with the way errors are treated in the Audiolingual Method (Chapter 4) or the Oral Approach (Chapter 3). How is it different?
11. At the end of the chapter a number of criticisms of CLT are discussed. Are there any that you agree with? Do you think they could be resolved in some way (e.g., by adapting CLT), or do they lead to the need for an entirely different way of language teaching?

12. Van Ek and Alexander suggested that the development of learners' communicative competence requires the syllabus to include information on the aspects of communication in the table below. Review the description of these aspects of communication on page 93. Then take a current textbook you are familiar with, and find examples of activities where each of these are implemented or communicated to the student. One example is given.

<i>Language aspect</i>	<i>Implementation in the textbook</i>
Purpose	For example: in this unit students are asked to write a letter to their lecturer, asking for an extension.
Setting	
Role	
Communicative events	
Language functions	
Notions	
Discourse and rhetorical skills	
Variety	
Grammatical content	
Lexical content	

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