

The Foundations of the Communicative Approach and Three of Its Applications

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Abstract

As the quality education develops in the world, foreign language teaching confronts many challenges. The most popular foreign language teaching methods of 1960s like Grammar Translation Method, Audiolingual Method, and Direct method developed a command of grammar rather in language forms and rules, but could not develop the speaking abilities of the non-native speaking learners that were based on memorizing language forms. So there was a need of an approach which could help the students grasp how to use target language to communicate appropriately, fluently, and effectively by being more concerned with students' initiative and interaction rather than simply with teacher-centered direction. The most waited approach came up in the late 1960 was called the Communicative Approach (CA). It was originated from the changes in British language teaching tradition dating back from the late 1960s and got its basic premises expanded in mid-1970s. The goal of the Communicative Approach is to improve student's communicative competence, which is widely accepted to consist of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence (Kachru,1989; Koike and Tanaka,1995). Thus, it can be claimed that CA brought about the relevant change of teaching method under the name Communicative Language Teaching in which communicativeness became one of the outstanding characteristics of 1970s.

Key Words: Communicative Approach, Communicative Language teaching, Behavioristic approach, Communicative competence.

Özet

Dünyada eğitimin kalitesi arttıkça, yabancı dil öğretimi birçok zorlukla karşılaşmaktadır. Dilbilgisi-Çeviri Yöntemi, Dil-Duy-Söyle Yöntemi ve Doğrudan

Yöntem gibi 1960'ların en gözde yabancı dil öğretim yöntemleri, dil yapıları ve kuralları yoluyla, dil yapılarını ezberlemeye dayalı olarak dilbilgisi hakimiyetini geliştirirken yabancı dil öğrencilerinin konuşma becerilerini geliştirmekte eksik kaldılar. Bu nedenle, sadece öğretmen-merkezli olmak yerine öğrenci inisiyatifine ve etkileşimine daha çok önem veren, öğrencilerin hedef dilde doğru, akıcı ve etkin bir şekilde iletişim kurmayı öğrenmelerine yardımcı olabilecek bir yaklaşıma ihtiyaç vardı. Çok uzun süredir beklenen ve 1960'ların sonlarında ortaya çıkan bu yaklaşımın adı İletişimsel Yaklaşım (İY)'dir. Bu yaklaşım kaynağını 1960'ların sonlarında başlayan İngiliz dil öğretim geleneğindeki değişimden almaktadır ve 1970'lerin ortalarında bu yaklaşım dil hakkındaki varsayımlarını daha da genişletti. İletişimsel Metodun amacı, öğrencinin, yaygın bir şekilde kabul edildiği şekliyle dilbilgisi yeterliliği, toplumdilbilimsel yeterlilik, söylem yeterliliği ve stratejik yeterlilikten oluşan iletişimsel yeterliliğini geliştirmektir. Bu nedenle, İY, İletişimsel Dil Öğretimi adı altında ortaya çıkan öğretim yöntemiyle öğretim yönteminde ilgili değişikliklerin meydana gelmesine yol açmıştır. Bu dil öğretim yönteminde, iletişimsellik 1970'lerde öne çıkan özelliklerden biri haline gelmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: İletişimsel yaklaşım, İletişimsel öğretim, Davranışsal yaklaşım, İletişimsel edim.

1. Introduction

Born out of the Communicative Approach (CA), the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was first proposed in 1970s in England as a methodology of teaching English as a Second Language ESL. The Grammar Translation Method (GRM) and Audiolingual Method (ALM) had serious inefficiencies in promoting the grammatical and particularly the speaking skills in students in second and foreign language teaching. Such a situation boils down to mean that there was a serious need of placing an essential emphasis on communication in language learning classrooms, and it was additionally thought that this need would have been filled in by CA. It is because of this reason that CA was regarded as revolutionary. As an ESL methodology, it rapidly gained a widespread acceptance in Europe and in the in English-speaking countries, and later Western and Asian countries. Thus, it began to spread all over the world, including Turkey. The Communicative Approach has been extensively favored adopted by textbooks and curricula in second and foreign language teaching, especially in ESL

countries. For 30 years or so after its invention in 1960s in England, it served as a major source of impact on the creation of new approaches, theories and methods in English language teaching practices in both ESL and EFL environments in the world.

2. The Birth and Development of the Communicative Approach

Communicative Approach (CA) is a British invention whose application to the field of Foreign/Second language learning and teaching is called Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). CLT teaching began in Britain in the 1960s as a replacement to the earlier Structural Approach and its related method, called Situational Language Teaching. This replacement was partly made in response to Chomsky's criticisms of structural theories of language and is partly based on the theories of British Functional Linguists, such as J. R. Firth, Widdowson, and M. A. K. Halliday, as well as American sociolinguists, such as D. Hymes, J. Gumperz, D. A. Wilkins, and W. Labov along with the writings of J. Austin and J. R. Searle on speech acts and pragmatic communication. It must also be borne in mind that about this time in the 1960s, the discoveries of Anthropological Linguistics and Sociolinguistics exerted some negative impacts on the efficiency of current foreign language teaching methods both in England and America.

In the middle of the 20th century, the scientific application of Behavioristic Approach and its theories to language teaching (namely, Imitation Theory, Reinforcement Theory, Analogy Theory, and partially the Mediation Theory, created a curious enthusiasm. 1960s and 1970s past as a period of intense investigation to unearth the nature of interlanguage systems of the foreign language learners. When it was the decade of 1970s, the inadequacy of traditional Grammar Translation Method and also of 'Structural' and Behaviorist approaches and methods, which discarded the application of real-life situations to foreign language learning and teaching with emphasis on meaningless mechanistic pattern drills, repetition and reinforcement, were firstly captured by the anthropological linguists as weak sides of foreign language teaching activities. For example, D. Wilkins was very unhappy with the fact that Behaviorist Approach concentrated solely on grammar learning.

Thus, being a reactionary approach by nature, the Communicative Approach, as a new trend of foreign language learning, sprang out of the work of British sociolinguists and anthropological linguists, like D. Hymes (1972) and his supporters Canale and Swain

and Firthian linguists (Halliday,1973), and D. Wilkins, who viewed foreign language learning first and foremost as a system for meaningful communication in social interactions. The practice and applications of the works of these scholars in Britain and the USA generated dominance in ELT, EFL, and SLA in many countries and has gained unprecedented popularity throughout the world. With the rising enthusiasm of this new trend, language practitioners, applied linguists, language pedagogists, and foreign language teachers have targeted their researches towards the purpose of how to teach the foreign languages best by developing communicative competence so that foreign language learning could be retainable and productive.

3. The Influence of Technological Inventions

By the late 1960s the world started to get smaller by the invention of new technologies. The possibility of satellite communication by Sputnik after 1957 and the application of computers opened up new opportunities in educational life. In facilitating the improvement of speaking skills for practice to enable students to achieve fluency in speaking to establish a balance between fluency and accuracy the use of computers was a great help, which challenged even the native-speaking teachers. Use of computers became more and more popular after 1970s in educational settings. It brought many advantages to foreign language teaching. Firstly, it helped to make research easy but rich with the statistical procedures, fast and, and inexpensive. Secondly, it also helped in to get rid of student's boredom in foreign language learning. Thirdly, it made the class more active, attractive and effective. Fourthly, its appeal of the visual effect supported by the semiotic approach fascinated and motivated the student's instinct driver. The computer was a tape recorder, camera, video, a multipurpose language lab at the same time at the fingertips of the learners.

So, computer-mediated communication and web-based technologies were a solution to overcome these problems through user-oriented perspective. Communication technologies in computer-mediated foreign language education is found in the Interactionist Theory among second language acquisition (SLA) theories and also in communicative approach to foreign language teaching wherein the use of learner talk, for example, chatting in which learners are encouraged to use the target language in communicative exchanges because language learning is believed to take place through

conversation since native speaker involvement is possible, is supported within a variety of functions of language.

The increasing possibilities in international trade, travel formal meetings, and professional cooperation for business, study and research aims changed the habits and mentality of the people through a growing need for good communication skills in English, which became a lingua franca in the world. For example, according to Richards and Rogers (2001), with the increasing interdependence of European countries came the need for greater efforts to teach the children and adults the major languages of the European Common Market. The Council of Europe, within a regional organization which is still in operation, examined the language learning problem and paid attention to the development of alternative methods in language teaching. So, the growing needs for better communication skills in English has created an immense demand for English language teaching around the world. Globalization and Postmodernist affinities have brought about interesting and unprecedented developments in foreign language teaching and learning.

4. Chomsky's Influence in L1 Studies

The Behavioristic Approach was severely criticized (Chomsky, 1959). In 1965 Chomsky coined the term *linguistic competence* whose main components were words and rules in interaction. He gave top priority to grammatical competence. Reacting against Chomsky's term, Dell Hymes, who was both a sociologist and anthropologist, coined the term *communicative competence* in 1966. He thought that the term called linguistic competence created by Chomsky was too limited to show the foreign language learning realities. Canale and Swain in 1980 redefined the elements of the communicative competence as:

1. Grammatical competence: words and rules.
2. Sociolinguistic competence: appropriateness.
3. Discourse competence: cohesion and coherence.
4. Strategic competence: appropriate use of communicative strategies.

So, the birth of the Communicative Approach is said to have been triggered by the coinage of the term *linguistic competence* in 1965. The dissatisfaction coming from the previous methods and approaches in foreign language teaching in the 1960s, the work of the European Council, the research of the linguists and applied linguists gave rise to the birth of the CA (or Notional-functional Approach). According to Galloway (1993), the

CA can be said to be a product of educators and linguists who had grown dissatisfied with the Audiolingual and Grammar Translation Method of foreign language instruction.

By the 1920s, the popularity of the Direct method had declined through the criticisms of the Reform Movement whose main figure was H. Sweet, who claimed that this method lacked a methodological basis. H. Sweet was also a serious critique of Grammar Translation Method (GTM); he said that the GTM had no theory to be based on. In addition, CA emerged in the 1960s as a reaction to the Audiolingual Method that used mechanical practice of foreign language patterns and therefore rejected in the USA in the 1960s. Chomsky gravely criticized the basic precepts of the Behavioristic Approach in 1957. Then, during the 1960s the popularity of the Audio-lingual Method and Situational Approach had already declined. Moreover, the scientific discoveries of the century, the theories of British functional linguistics, and Chomsky's criticisms pointed to the fact that the foreign language learners should be oriented towards more meaningful and authentic language usage. Such repercussions exerted a growing dissatisfaction with the prevailing foreign language teaching methodologies. In such an atmosphere, the CA started to move in Britain in the 1970s as a reaction and replacement to all these approaches and methods that utilized inadequate, inconsistent and inappropriate methodologies.

5. The Impact of the Communicative Approach in Foreign Language Learning

Since 1980s the CA, which is also called Communicative Language Teaching, has been widely influential in the field of foreign language teaching and learning. It still has its effects of many more approaches, theories and methods even today.

6. Essential Guiding Principles of the Communicative Approach

The theory of CA rests on the functional view of language. It holds that the teaching process itself is communicative. Essential guiding principles can be stated as follows:

1. Learner's needs are of utmost importance; syllabus must be based on students' needs and interests: teaching materials should meet the needs of students' communication.

2. Errors are to be ignored to a certain extent; other students and teachers ignore errors during the class sessions. In other words, "errors are tolerated and seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills. Since the activity was working on

fluency, the teacher did not correct the student, but simply noted the error, which he will return to at a later point (Larsen-Freeman 2000:127.)

3. Speaking is prior to other skills. The speaking skills should be integrated from the beginning. To achieve this aim, “students should work on discourse or suprasegmental features (above the sentence level)(Larsen-Freeman 2000:126).

4. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use (Brown 2000; 266-267). Fluency must be emphasized over accuracy.

5. Using the real-life and real- world type of language is highly important. Authentic language and materials, taken from real-life and real-world, must be used. Age-old texts must be avoided, and study and practice materials must relate to pupils' own lives, being fresh and real-life like.

6. Functions are emphasized over forms. That is, learning to use the functions of the forms appropriately is important. It should be borne in mind that one function can have many different forms during the communicative activity.

7. In terms of methodology, the emphasis is placed on message-focus, on the ability to understand the meaning of the messages in conveying and using them in the foreign language (Harmer, 2007: 68). So, message and meaning-focused communicative tasks will take care of foreign language learning.

8. The teacher should be able to use the target language fluently and appropriately by acting as an advisor or facilitator.

9. Native speaking teachers, just like in the Direct Method, are preferable.

10. The use of the mother tongue should be discouraged as much as possible; its use is allowed to a little extent.

11. Cooperation in class is a must and students must have cooperative relationship among each other. Students must regularly work in groups or do pair-work to transfer (and, when necessary, negotiate) meaning in situations where one student has information that the other(s) lack.

12. Social context of the communicative event is essential in giving meaning to the utterances (Larsen-Freeman, 2000:127).

13. Teacher should let the Students often engage in role-play or dramatization to adjust their use of the target language to different social contexts, and observe what problems students have.

14. The goal of foreign language learning is to achieve communicative competence in the target language.

15. A Certain level of proficiency in the target language must be attained at.

16. Students need to learn cohesion and coherence (Larsen-Freeman 2000:127).

17. Students must be given an opportunity to express their ideas and opinions (Larsen-Freeman, 2000:126).

18. Idiomatic and everyday language is used (even some slang words can be practiced to some extent). This is kind of language, being a real-life form, should be used in communication between people.

19. Activities in the classroom that involve real communication promote learning. CA uses almost any activity that engages learners in authentic communication.

20. Language that is meaningful to the learner promotes learning.

21. Learning activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks will naturally promote learning.

22. Classroom should provide for all students opportunities for rehearsal of real-life situations and provide opportunity for real-world like communication. Emphasis made on such activities like creative role-plays, simulations, dramatizations, surveys, projects, playlets, dialogues, sketches all produce spontaneity and improvisation - not just repetition and drills.

23. The teachers should let their students communicate first and then they must build on their accuracy after (McKay, 2002).

24. Opposite to the teacher-centered classroom advocated by the earlier approaches and methods, the CA prefers the student-centered classroom in which while the teacher plays a mediating role, students play an acting role and their participation almost penetrates into the whole teaching procedure. In the teacher-centered classroom, the teacher is the main resource of knowledge and information; only the teacher has the say, but students almost are activated and not heard. However, the student-centered classroom, supported by CA, assumes the teacher to act many roles: conductor, mediator, facilitator, organizer, an observer.....

Most of the essential guidelines mentioned up to now can also be encountered in Johnson and Johnson (1999).

7. Basic Suggestions Based on Communicative Approach for Teachers

The main problem of CA stems from this question: how to combine communicative fluency with formal fluency. Teachers of CA employ the notional-functional syllabuses to organize the teaching units according to the communicative notions that the learners are in need of to communicate successfully and fluently.

8. The Birth of the Applications of Communicative Lesson Plans

Application 1: These are the steps, proposed by **Jill Kerper Mora**, E. D. (2002b). "A Lesson Outline for the *Communicative Approach*. *San Diego State University*: (<http://coe.sdsu.edu/people/jmora/CALssnOutline.htm>), to follow in planning a lesson using the communicative or natural approach to second-language teaching:

1. Presentation of a situation or context through a brief dialogue or several mini-dialogues, preceded by a motivational activity relating the dialogue to learners' experiences and interest. This includes a discussion of the function and situation: People, roles, setting, topic and the level of formality or informality the function and situation demand.

2. Brainstorming or discussion to establish the vocabulary and expressions to be used to accomplish the communicative intent, aiming to include a framework or means of structuring a conversation or exchange to achieve the purpose of the speakers.

3. Questions and answers based on the dialogue topic and situation: Inverted, wh-questions, yes/no, either/or and open-ended questions.

4. Study of the basic communicative expressions in the dialogue or one of the structures that exemplifies the function, using pictures, real objects, or dramatization to clarify the meaning.

5. Learner discovery of generalizations or rules underlying the functional expression or structure, with model examples on the chalkboard, underlining the important features, using arrows or referents where feasible.

6. Oral recognition and interpretative activities including oral production proceeding from guided to freer communication activities.

7. Reading and/or copying of the dialogues with variations for reading/writing practice.

8. Oral evaluation of learning with guided use of language and questions/answers, e.g. "How would you ask your friend to _____? And how would you ask me to _____?"

9. Homework and extension activities such as learners' creation of new dialogues around the same situation.

10. To complete the lesson cycle, provide opportunities to apply the language learned the day before in novel situations for the same or a related purpose.

Application 2: Gill Hart, (<http://socyberty.com/education/english-teaching-what-is-the-communicative-approach/http://socyberty.com/education/english-teaching-what-is-the-communicative-approach/>), gives the following 13 main core suggestions which make the CA the most successful language learning approach in use today.

1. A teacher's main role is a facilitator and monitor rather than leading the class. In other words, "the guide by the side" and not "the sage on the stage".

2. Lessons are usually topic or theme based, with the target grammar "hidden" in the context e.g. a job interview (using the Present Perfect tense.)

3. Lessons are built round situations/functions practical and authentic in the real world e.g. asking for information, complaining, apologizing, job interviews, telephoning.

4. Activities set by the teacher have relevance and purpose to real life situations - students can see the direct benefit of learning.

5. Dialogues are used that centre around communicative functions, such as socializing, giving directions, making telephone calls.

6. Emphasis on engaging learners in more useful and authentic language rather than repetitive phrases or grammar patterns.

7. Emphasis on communication and meaning rather than accuracy. Being understood takes precedence over correct grammar. The fine tuning of grammar comes later.

8. Emphasis is put on the “appropriacy” of language. What is the most appropriate language and tone for a particular situation?

9. Communicative competence is the desired goal. i.e. being able to survive, converse and be understood in the language.

10. Emphasis is put on correct pronunciation and choral (group) and individual drilling is used.

11. Authentic listening and reading texts are used more often, rather than artificial texts simply produced to feature the target language.

12. Use of songs and games are encouraged and provide a natural environment to promote language and enhance correct pronunciation.

13. Feedback and correction is usually given by the teacher after tasks have been completed, rather than at the point of error, thus interrupting the flow.

Application 3: A lesson Outline for the Communicative Approach proposed by Jill Kerper Mora, Ed.D, (2002b) San Diego State University <http://www.google.com.tr/#hl=tr&source=hp&biw=1024&bih=579&q=by+Jill+Kerper+Mora%2C+Ed.D%2C+>

Mora (2002b) suggests the following steps to follow in planning a lesson using the communicative or natural approach to second-language teaching:

1. Presentation of a situation or context through a brief dialogue or several mini-dialogues, preceded by a motivational activity relating the dialogue to learners’ experiences and interest. This includes a discussion of the function and situation: People, roles, setting, topic and the level of formality or informality the function and situation demand.

2. Brainstorming or discussion to establish the vocabulary and expressions to be used to accomplish the communicative intent. It includes a framework or means of structuring a conversation or exchange to achieve the purpose of the speakers.

3. Questions and answers based on the dialogue topic and situation: Inverted, wh-questions, yes/no, either/or open-ended questions.

4. Study of the basic communicative expressions in the dialogue or one of the structures that exemplifies the function, using pictures, real objects, or dramatization to clarify the meaning.

5. Learner discovery of generalizations or rules underlying the functional expression or structure, with model examples on the chalkboard, underlining the important features, using arrows or referents where feasible.

6. Oral recognition and interpretative activities including oral production proceeding from guided to freer communication activities.

7. Reading and/or copying of the dialogues with variations for reading/writing practice.

8. Oral evaluation of learning with guided use of language and questions/answers, e.g. "How would you ask your friend to _____? And how would you ask me to _____?"

9. Homework and extension activities such as learners' creation of new dialogues around the same situation.

10. To complete the lesson cycle, provide opportunities to apply the language learned the day before in novel situations for the same or a related purpose.

Apparently, it is very clear that, apart from being suitable to the teaching speech skills, CA is very practical and applicable to the teaching of various foreign language learning and teaching skills, the application of the steps proposed by Mora (2002b) and Hart (2007) create more room for the practical application of the Communicative Approach on the other skills the field of foreign language learning and teaching.

9. Conclusion

The Communicative Language Teaching is originated from the application in the CA in British language teaching tradition dating back from the late 1960s. The framework of the CA got expanded in mid-1970s via the invention and application of technical equipments. Thus, communicativeness became one of the outstanding characteristics of 1970s (Swan, 1985a.). The CA in language the field of foreign language teaching and learning is based on the theory of communicative competence proposed by D.H. Hymes. Instead of a coherent theory supporting a set of skill- based techniques for language teaching, it emphasizes functional view of language on the language teaching process from communicative sources, using language appropriately in real communicative situation that promote or lead to the teaching and learning of a language as and for communication (Nunan,1999). Until the early 1980s, the CA mingled with the field of second language pedagogies, and brought remarkable reforms to second language teaching and learning. It aroused people's awareness of the development of communicative competence, dethroning the concept Chomsky's *linguistic competence*. It selects authentic, real-life-based teaching materials, which trigger to increase students' interest, expand students' knowledge and arouse students' motivation towards the language and people of the target language. This way, the teaching of culture comes to the stage ; it is culturally appropriate and usable as foreign language teaching approach (Ellis, 1996).

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