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DIRECTIONS IN COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING¹

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1. Introduction

It is already appropriate to speak of the history of communicative language teaching for at least three reasons. First, there is the question about the origins of communicative teaching: historically, it arose partly as a result of dissatisfaction with traditional approaches to language teaching, particularly with the audio-lingual method. The contextualization of language materials used and the measure of interaction that one finds in coursebooks during the later phases of the audio-lingual method (cf., for example, Wakeman 1967) are indicative of a departure from audio-lingual principles. Second, questions that have, legitimately, been asked about the coherence of the communicative approach as language teaching **method** (and that have caused it to be identified by the vaguer term 'approach' rather than 'method', with all the overtones of rigour that the latter term implies), have made it sufficiently clear that the approach embodies different directions and that some consideration of the meaning and impact of each of these is therefore in order. Third, it is appropriate to speak of the history of communicative language teaching simply because it has been with us for more than a decade now, and, in the way of all revolutions, teachers and applied linguists are beginning to ask increasingly incisive questions about its (hoped for) successes and failures.

The purpose of this paper will therefore be to attempt to show that while communicative language teaching is in one sense unified (as regards its basic

1. This is the text of a lecture given at the University of Duisburg and the Centrum voor Levende Talen in the Catholic University of Leuven in October, 1985. The lecture was accompanied by a videotape (Weideman et al. 1985) of approximately 42 minutes, which illustrates some of the basic techniques referred to in the text. It is available upon enquiry from the author or from the Audio-visual Production Centre, Bureau for University Education, University of the Orange Free State, P.O. Box 339, Bloemfontein, 9300, Republic of South Africa. The tape is three-quarters in Afrikaans, with the remaining twenty five percent in both English and Afrikaans.

technique), it nonetheless embodies and has always embodied different directions that remain part of the broad approach, be it with varying degrees of influence. Given the historical undertone of this discussion, the article will also attempt to address, finally, the **future** of communicative language teaching, in suggesting a way out of the dilemmas faced by what will be called the mainstream of this approach.

2. Information gap technique

Language teaching that claims to be communicative is always characterized by the employment of one basic technique: the (lingual bridging of an) information gap. Textbooks and courses that do not proceed from this technique - no matter what claims are made in the introduction in the form of an acknowledging nod to the side of Hymes (1971) - are simply not communicative.

An information gap exercise is invariably based on the principle of A knowing something that B does not know, and that A (after perhaps being requested by B) must tell or inform B, or direct and instruct him/her, or explain, or do whatever is appropriate in the situation so that B may also know, understand, act, etc. An information gap presupposes that there are at least two parties involved in the language process, and in the type of teaching exercise that proceeds from this premiss **lingual expression** is elevated to the level of authentic **communication**. Such exercises may be simple information gap exercises² that are created by putting up a physical barrier between the participants at talk. The attractiveness of these exercises lies in the fact that they can be done with the most modest of means: by using a piece of cardboard as concrete physical barrier, for example, one student may be asked to give instructions to another on building a model similar to his/hers with a few blocks that have been given to both. Completing the model is a collaborative effort in which language plays a major role.

The point of these exercises is the establishment of authentic communication - something with which teachers in the later phases of audiolingualism were no doubt familiar, since here too there were glimpses of a defined context in

2. illustrated in the first of the four types of communicative exercise on the tape.

which language was being used, as well as of a measure of interaction between the parties engaged in talk.

Developments within what became known as the communicative approach to language teaching were, however, so simultaneous and so fast that, in spite of the employment in one form or another of the basic information gap technique, 'communicative language teaching' is to this day still to some not much more than an umbrella term for different methods. This is one of the reasons why the term 'approach' is often preferred when dealing with this kind of language teaching. Also, using the term 'method' has, at least since the days of audiolingualism, always conjured up an image of inflexibility, 'correctness' (of teaching technique) and an almost dogmatic adherence to a fixed set of theoretically justified principles. All these were stances to which the communicative approach has reacted negatively, and it is to a discussion of the four main directions that this response has taken that the rest of this paper will be devoted.

3. Authentic texts

The (historically) first kind of communicative language teaching that will be discussed here places much emphasis on the use of 'texts' from ordinary or specialized uses of language, be it for the purposes of reading, discussion, giving instructions, making deductions, learning to write, etc. The aim here is to bring language teaching closer to the language that we encounter in real life. The idea that second and foreign language teaching should be paying attention to units of language above and beyond the level of the sentence has also gained greater importance within this type of communicative teaching. While later developments showed that modifications may be made to texts encountered outside the classroom so as to facilitate learning and teaching, the initial emphasis of this trend was on using **authentic** material.

There is much to say about this direction. *inter alia* that authentic texts have always been used as classroom materials by good teachers, be it then for only a small proportion of the time, as well as that the teacher could, by using authentic materials, give attention to those grammatical constructions and vocabulary that went unheeded in our (always limited) grammatical insights and descriptions. The main reason why this trend began to gain influence in language teaching, however, was probably that it was thought

capable of capturing the interest of the learner, thus also increasing his/her motivation to learn the language (Cock 1981).

As a direction within communicative language teaching, the use of authentic texts implies a criticism of the simple information gap type of exercise discussed above. The latter kind of exercise can, no doubt, always be construed so as to give what is authentic communication, for an information gap is in these exercises always in the process of being bridged. But how **relevant** to the needs of the learner are such exercises, one may ask? It is true that many second language learners of course have to learn to give instructions to other people, but certainly this need not apply to all learners? As long as the materials used in the classroom remain both authentic and **relevant** to the needs of the learner, no similar accusation can of course be levelled against it. The implied criticism of the almost mechanical multiplication of information gap exercises by teachers is, as I see it, one of the important legacies of this direction within communicative teaching.

The most influential work done in this direction of communicative language teaching most certainly is that of Widdowson (cf. for example Widdowson 1978), and the so-called 'Language across the curriculum' movement, which sees language instruction as an integral **part** of the teaching of other subjects in the school curriculum, such as mathematics, natural science, history, biology, and so forth. The notion of teaching language for specific purposes has derived some strong justification from this kind of communicative teaching, while at the same time also receiving justification from the next direction in communicative teaching to be discussed below.

4. Communicative language teaching: the mainstream

An important section of the so-called British school in communicative language teaching is constituted by the enormous amount of effort that went into work done for the Council of Europe. In this kind of communicative teaching there is no question of the language 'structures' first being acquired and then being filled with 'language' (meaning) as in audiolingualism, for here meaning is the central issue right from the start. Especially in the influential work of Wilkins (1976) the emphasis is in the first instance on the **functions** of language and only subsequently on the

different grammatical realizations of these functions (such as making judgements, voicing approval, giving advice, arguing, persuading, etc.).

Establishing the real (functional) language needs of students has top priority in this type of communicative language teaching. In this case language teaching is done not for its own sake, but for some purpose lying outside the classroom, which explains why this approach is so attractive to both teachers and students.

The priority given to the language needs of students explains the importance attached to syllabus design. A language syllabus must be based on such needs only after a careful analysis of the following five contours (cf. Littlewood 1981:82-84):

- (a) the different situations in which the students may be required to use the target language;
- (b) the various topics that are relevant in such situations;
- (c) the different media (telephone, letter) and/or skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) through which communication is made possible in the relevant situations;
- (d) the possible language functions (for example for greeting, requesting, apologizing, thanking, etc.) that have the greatest prominence in the situations identified under (a);
- (e) the grammatical forms that are the varying possible realizations of such communicative functions in the different situations.

It is this strong emphasis on syllabus design according to the real language needs of students that explains why this form of communicative teaching has been labelled an 'L' (linguistic) approach (cf. Stern 1981 and Roberts 1982). It also explains the strong theoretical support that the LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) movement derives from this direction in communicative language teaching. Yet, in spite of the 'linguistic' emphasis, there is the beautiful paradox that is characteristic of all four directions in communicative teaching, viz. that the eventual aim of such teaching focusses on a goal that lies outside the boundaries of language. This is a point that I shall be returning to below.

In summary, the following are the major objections that can be raised regarding this form of communicative language teaching: it requires (sometimes extremely) competent and skilful teachers, not the least because of the unpredictability of conversational as well as other types of discourse. By the same token, language functions are also much more difficult to grade than the more predictable grammar of a language. Other, more practical problems are of a logistical nature: do our teachers have access to classrooms with furniture that can easily be moved around and re-arranged? Especially at tertiary institutions, where physical planners and architects until very recently foresaw the need only for lecture theatres, there may be a problem.

Another question that has become central for those who are sceptical about this form of communicative teaching is this: is it really necessary to make elaborate needs analyses to have truly communicative teaching? Or could we perhaps, especially in syllabuses for mass-learning settings, as in secondary schools, merely make do with a specification of those functions that are considered to be crucial? Or, taking the criticism one step further still, if information gap exercises already give us 'authentic' communication, do we really, as applied linguists and teachers of second or foreign languages, need anything else? As has been noted above, one may indeed have 'authentic' communication without necessarily catering for any relevant language need on the part of the student, and this is also the expected and usual response from those who support the mainstream of communicative teaching and those who are working on some form of LSP. Moreover, they would retort, devising so many different information gap exercises is not much different from the way that teachers used to churn out pattern sentences for drilling in traditional language teaching, and there is no doubt that this has now been discredited (cf. Lamendella 1979).

The more serious objections that might be raised, however, concern the question of whether we are not, in adopting the communicative approach, once again falling prey to a teaching ideology. Are we not, in escaping from the (behaviourist, grammatical) ideology, simply exchanging it for a new (perhaps somewhat friendlier, social or) sociological one? And, finally: if, as seems to be the case when one looks at the various directions within communicative language teaching, there are indeed as many opinions as there are people, sometimes even within the same form of communicative teaching, how can

syllabus designers and teachers possibly be expected to exercise a responsible pedagogic choice?

I think we should admit that the lack of coherence within the communicative approach, the absence of a simple 'method', indeed constitutes a problem, particularly for the badly trained teacher. But for the professional teacher it nevertheless presents a marvelous opportunity that calls for a great deal of initiative and skill. Whatever the theoretical qualms are that one may entertain about it, it remains an approach that stimulates the pedagogical imagination and tolerates far more idiosyncracies than a more rigorously defined method would. In a word, it signals a clear departure from the notion of a 'correct' method of language teaching, and, though it takes the focus off language, it gives us, paradoxically perhaps, a much broader vision on language than any of the approaches and methods it has displaced.

5. Psychological emphases in communicative language teaching³

In the third direction within communicative language teaching that will be discussed here, we are dealing with methods and techniques which strongly emphasize the **emotional** aspects of the teaching and learning situation. Hence the labelling of these as 'P' methods (for psychological, in contrast with those that are 'L' in emphasis). This emotional emphasis is of course part and parcel also of the so-called humanistic methods of language teaching, such as The Silent Way, Suggestopedia, as well as Counseling-Learning and Community Language Learning (for a survey, see Stevick 1980). In these, the focus is on the 'whole' learner, and the personality of the student in its fullest sense. The sometimes exotic techniques (cf. for example the almost totally silent teacher in The Silent Way) are mostly unsuitable for mass-learning settings and will therefore be left undiscussed.

What remains important in the P approaches, though, is the reaction that we find here against the mechanical elements in traditional methods. The most concrete way in which this reaction manifests itself can be found in the particular attention that is given to play and drama techniques in language

3. Where, on the video demonstration tape, this kind of communicative teaching is illustrated in the playing of (co-operative) board games, the previous direction ('mainstream' communicative teaching) is represented in various role-play exercises.

teaching today. In contrast to the relatively low entertainment value of, for example, the audio-lingual method, the element of play, when introduced into the classroom, almost automatically raises the interest value of the teaching.

Drama techniques usually include games and activities in which language plays a crucial part. There are many ideas available today for beginner to intermediate learners, with remarkably fewer for advanced students. Let us look in turn first at activities and then at games.

In the activities of which examples will be given here (adapted from Rinvolutri 1982), the emphasis is not only on creating greater **self-awareness** on the part of the learner, but also on the grammatical structures that have to be learned. Take for instance the following activity, in which learners are instructed to complete the sentences in A according to their own preferences (as in B):

A. I always
I often
I sometimes
I seldom
I very seldom
I never

[B. go to the cinema.
..... prefer tea to coffee.
.... forget someone else's name.
..... eat in the cafeteria.
..... have enough pocket money.
..... get up in time.
..... like chocolate.
..... take sleeping pills.]

The grammar which is relevant here (adverbs, simple present tense) is therefore presented in the form of a self-awareness exercise. After completing this part, each learner is asked to write down only his/her own preferences (as in B, i.e. without any indication of whether it is **seldom**, **often**, **never**, etc. so) and to exchange the slip of paper on which (s)he has written this with that of a friend. The friend must then try to guess what the other's preferences are, as follows:

A: I guess you always wear jeans...
B: Yes./Right!

or somewhat more amusing if the guess is wrong:

A: I think you very seldom get letters from him.
B: Wrong!/No. But I very seldom have enough pocket money!

After completing this, the grammatical expressions relating to different degrees of certainty can be tried out by the pairs who have exchanged information:

Can it be that you very seldom get up in time?
I have an idea that you go to the cinema very often.
Is it (really) so/true that you never give your small sister any chocolates?
I am almost certain you sometimes eat cauliflower.
I am convinced that you often get letters from him.
I presume you always wear jeans in winter?
I doubt whether you ever learn for exams!

Or consider the following dialogue:

Who are you?

Senior: Who are you?
Junior: I'm Anna.
Senior: Who **are** you, silly?
Junior: I'm Anna Combrink.
Senior: But who **are** you?
Junior: I'm a drama student.
Senior: Come on, now, tell me who you really are.
Junior: I'm from Indwe.
Senior: But who are you now?
Junior: I'm a resident of President Steyn.
Senior: But who are you **really**?
Junior: I'm me!

Students are asked to take turns in playing the role of senior and junior while attempting to give different answers to the variations of the single, repeated question. The one playing the role of the junior student must try to hold out for as many turns as possible (six are just about the limit!) before finally yielding. On the final answer ("I'm me!/a human being!") the activity stops. Again we have an example here of an activity that is concerned with self-knowledge as well as with knowledge of language structure; again the focus is not in the first instance on language, but on the whole human being.

The same is true of the game "Who is knocking?" One student is asked to go outside and knock on the door. (S)he must decide beforehand on an identity, what time of day it is and what the weather is like. Before the student leaves the class, (s)he tells a friend, who may not convey this information to the others, what identity, etc. (s)he has decided on. This friend acts as a control to confirm whether the knocking conveys the information, before the class divide into groups and start guessing by asking either the one who has knocked or his/her friend one question per round. It is surprising how often classes I have played this game with guess the correct (assumed) identity of the person knocking. Once more, as far as the grammar is concerned, we have an exercise on the expression of different degrees of certainty in the target language.

There are many other interesting ideas for games to be found in books such as Maley & Duff (1978) and Wright, Betteridge & Buckby (1979)⁴ from which the previous and following examples are taken. Let me mention a few of these.

A very enjoyable game is 'Alibis'. Learners work in pairs: they decide (without writing anything down) on a series of imaginary events which are presumed to have taken place at some specific time during the previous week when they were supposed to be in each other's company, so that each has an alibi. One member of a pair is sent outside while the class has the chance of interrogating the other. When this has been done, the former is invited in and questioned, until the alibi is cracked or appears to hold water (the latter is seldom the case!). Another guessing game is 'Predicaments'. One member of a pair of students decides on a specific predicament. The other then has the opportunity, by asking questions ("What would you have done **first** if you found yourself in this predicament? ... And then?") to try to determine what the predicament was.

One further example of a useful game is 'Pocket biography'. The teacher divides the class into groups of six or seven; to each group is given a

4. both of which have just been published in new, revised and enlarged editions.

handbag or book-bag that contains different items such as train/bus tickets, invoices, city maps as well as other documents and paraphernalia. Ideally, each bag must contain the same materials, though this is not an absolute necessity. The different groups must then try to establish the identity and movements of the person to whom the bag belongs (on the presumption that the person involved has been run over by a car, or has left the bag behind somewhere, etc.). In my own experience with this game I have found some very fascinating biographies.

My personal preference as a teacher of advanced second language learners of English is for **co-operative** board games, since these very closely approximate the kind of language used for the negotiations that are typical for most work/office environments. Here we are dealing especially with the functions of argument and persuasion that are used in the co-operative realization of a particular aim. The only problem is that, given the extreme competitiveness of Western culture, such games are relatively hard to come by.

It is, however, also possible to combine the various 'L' and 'P' emphases in communicative teaching. Some of these possibilities will be discussed in the next section.

6. The acquisition of transactional competence

To understand fully the last direction within communicative teaching to be discussed here we must first consider one of the major problems encountered in mainstream communicative teaching. As has been noted by most of the proponents of communicative teaching, one of the founding principles of this kind of language teaching is the conscious reaction one has here against teaching language as so many odd bits of (discrete) grammatical structures. The immediate problem is that language functions may also be discretely labelled, used and taught (cf. in this regard Wilkins 1976, and the taxonomy given there). The situation therefore was that in communicative teaching we had a new perspective on language, but that, at the same time and contrary to the initial intention, the teacher had very little but the old method (of teaching language in discrete bits) to fall back on. All that happened in

many cases was that the teaching of discrete parts of grammar was exchanged for the teaching of discrete functions of language.

A partial solution was soon discovered: functions could be taught as parts of interactions between participants at talk. So, apart from acknowledging the functional nature of language, a dimension of interaction could also be recognized. This was entirely in keeping with the original intentions of those who initially supported the idea of communicative language teaching. Lingual interaction presupposes that the participants have (more or less durable) roles in their talk, and the assumption of a specific role (of tourist, official, waiter, etc.) by the student was in any case already part of the instructional process in the mainstream of communicative teaching. Moreover, the acknowledgment of an interactional dimension brings with it not only the recognition of (subjective) roles, but also gives more insight into (objective) lingual units that are larger than the sentence. In short, we have here a recognition that language functions do not occur in isolation, but in interaction pairs or sequences. In this way the speech act of 'apologizing' may be taken up into the larger unit of an apology/accept or apology/reject adjacency pair, or an offer may be followed by an act of acceptance or refusal in an offer/accept (refuse) pair, a question by an answer, and so forth.

The remaining problem for the learner of a second or foreign language, however, is that there are various kinds of apology/accept (reject) adjacent utterances. How does the learner know when to say "Oops!" instead of "Sorry!" or "I'm terribly sorry"? How does the learner know when the more elaborate apology is appropriate, and not a milder form? This conscious decision that language users have to take is made much easier when one considers that the function of apologies is to remedy the social **debt** incurred in human social interaction.

In cases where apologies are offered as remedies for social debts, the debtor must, in a moment of reflection, decide what kind of apology (from mild to elaborate) is the **strategically** correct choice to repay the debt incurred. If

the inappropriate apology is chosen, it misses its original goal, and the debtor may appear to be grossly impolite. The following diagram represents this problem and its possible successful solution:

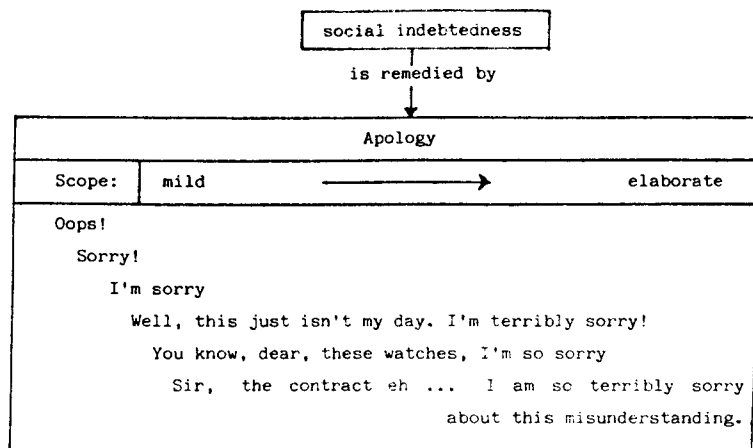


Figure 1

In such cases one has, in other words, apart from recognizing a communicative (interactional) dimension to language, added another: the transactional. This is prevalent particularly in the work of Di Pietro in language teaching (for a survey of work that is otherwise difficult to come by, cf. Roberts, to appear). The successful acquisition of **transactional competence** by the non-native speaker of a language entails the ability not only to use language functions correctly, but to know also that there are **strategic** considerations and criteria which apply to determine the appropriate grammatical realizations of those functions. By adding a strategic cutting edge to language use, we have therefore acknowledged, in the teaching of second or foreign languages, that language is not merely used, but that it is used with specific aims in mind in our interaction with other people.

Although we still need much research on the socio-cultural and socio-emotional determinants of lingual strategies before we may actually be able to teach transactional competence, these insights have, nonetheless, brought about a measure of reevaluation of roles and role-play exercises in

communicative teaching. We know, for example, that the student of a second or foreign language must learn how to take the strategically correct decision in making, accepting or refusing an offer. If this is not learnt, the lingual transaction may be unsuccessful. Thus a student will have to learn (see Figure 2) that in certain languages a hesitant acceptance could be interpreted, according to the specific socio-cultural norms operative in those languages, as refusal; or, conversely, that a hesitant refusal should, for reasons of politeness, rather be interpreted as acceptance:

Speaker	First pair part	Speaker	Second pair part
A:	Offer	B:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accept <ul style="list-style-type: none"> firm ... hesitant ... Refuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hesitant ... firm

↑ Politeness

Figure 2

A Bengali girl may, for example, for socio-cultural reasons firmly refuse the offer of a cup of tea (at least twice), since in her culture it would be impolite for her to appear to be accepting too eagerly. Imagine the difficulties of such a young lady in a British situation: not only must she learn to speak the foreign language, but she must also learn to make the strategically correct choices in her interaction with mother-tongue speakers. Those teachers who have taught immigrants will have many similar tales to relate of the woes and mishaps of their students (perhaps involving events much more crucial than a cup of tea) in their lingual transactions with speakers of the target language.

In the use of almost every function of the language there are strategic decisions to be taken, also among mother-tongue speakers. Another good example we have of these choices is the politeness scale (Figure 3) in the giving of (spoken or written) instructions:

Functions	Tone
Commands and instructions (realized by imperatives, etc.)	brusque
	severe
	neutral
	impatient
	familiar
	inviting
Requests	
Advice	
Suggestions	

Politeness
↓

Figure 3

Research has shown that there are some complex issues involved here: the more direct the request (even when given in a neutral tone of voice), the bigger the chances are that the hearer may interpret it as being impolite. On the other hand, more indirect instructions (as in advice or suggestions), although more polite, are at the same time less effective. The lingual strategy whereby the appropriate one is selected is therefore always important: else the instruction/request fails, or (especially when addressed to superiors) is remembered accurately! The transactional norm that speakers of any language must learn to handle is that the costs and benefits of politeness and effectiveness must be balanced in using the language (Kemper & Thissen 1981).

Let us look at an example of a possible exercise in the teaching of transactional competence (Weideman 1985: 20) that employs what I call the **think: mutter and utter** technique:

Could I see you for a minute?

Peter Smith wants to speak to his employer about his long-promised pay-rise. What they think (in brackets (....)) and what they say when they meet each other in the passage are sometimes quite different:

Peter: (I wonder if I shouldn't ask to see him now?) Excuse me, could I see you for a minute, please?
 Mr Jones: (Oh no! It's Smith. He's bound to ask about his pay-rise; I must try to put him off - I'm simply too busy now) Well, ... eh ... y..e..s, OK, but I only have a few minutes to spare. I ... eh ..
 Peter: (He knows I'm going to ask him about my pay; perhaps it will be better not to press him now) Perhaps it would be best to see you later then ...
 Mr Jones: (Phew! What a relief!) Sure/All right/Fine.
 Peter: (Better get back to the office now) Thanks.
 Mr Jones: 'Bye.

Try this dialogue with a friend, then script another three dialogues in which Peter Smith, instead of thinking 'perhaps it will be better not to press him now' and backing off,

- (a) tries either
 - (i) successfully or
 - (ii) unsuccessfully to arrange for another time
 or
- (b) decides to press ahead

Include in the scripts what the two characters are thinking, then practise the dialogues together.

Students are instructed here to mutter the thoughts (in brackets) and utter the words actually spoken. Their mutterings help to show up the strategic considerations, their utterings the actual realizations of these choices.

In this direction in communicative language teaching the ongoing process of verbal negotiation, as in the playing of co-operative board games, is again of the utmost importance, because the aim is to teach the student how to employ language for the sake of handling situations and to accomplish goals.

A further important advantage of this kind of communicative teaching (or the strategic-interaction method, as it is sometimes referred to) is that the learner is given the time (sometimes only a moment or so, as in lingual transactions occurring outside the confines of the classroom) to consider what course of action to take. There are various possibilities of exercises where learners are allowed first to practise and rehearse - as many of us do in real life when we stand still for a moment and think of what we should say before entering a room or an office. Planning and exercise normally bring about a more relaxed learner. Another advantage is that the teaching of literature can more easily be integrated in this kind of teaching, by, for example, allowing students to dramatise episodes in books they have read after devising strategic paths different from those given in the original text.

A serious (possibly temporary) drawback in teaching strategic lingual interaction is the scarcity of materials available at present for beginner to intermediate students. With a little ingenuity, however, the teacher can, in the simplest of lingual episodes (even in those with the minimum of an information gap, such as the beginnings of telephone conversations) modify existing language exercises so that, in addition to an information gap, normal communication is also **short-circuited**. Compare the following exercise of the beginning of a telephone conversation between a boy and a girl (translated from van Jaarsveld & Weideman 1985):

(Telephone rings)
Brian: Hello?
Annette: Hullo, Brian!
Brian: I .. eh ... hello ..?
Annette: You forget quite quickly! It's me, Annette!
Brian: Sorry, Annette. For a moment I did not recognize your voice ...

Students must learn here how to apologize/devise excuses for not recognizing the caller's voice (as one secretary recently claimed upon not recognizing mine: "Sorry! My earring was in the way"!). After doing this, there are further possibilities to explore: what do we do when we come up face to face with a person, and cannot remember his/her name? How do we explain our actions to the caller when we have to answer the telephone at a friend's home, and the caller does not recognize our voice? How does one apologize, in writing, for forgetting a distant friend's birthday?

One last disadvantage of the strategic-interaction method that should be mentioned is the somewhat unrealistic roles that proponents of this teaching technique sometimes require learners to adopt. The simplest solution to this problem is avoidance: with so much realistic language exercises available today, language teachers simply do not have to require of their learners to play the role of a dead miner's wife so as to express their grief in a foreign language. There are enough other, more important and realistic roles available for them to have to learn to adopt.

The matter of realism in communicative language teaching brings me to the point of discussing, finally, some (personal) requirements for communicative language teaching.

7. Requirements for a communicative approach to language teaching

There are, as we have noted above, numerous new techniques that the language teacher will have to learn before we can be said to have mastered the art of communicative language teaching in mass-learning settings. While many teachers are at present still learning these new techniques, there are, in my opinion, certain things we can at the same time learn from each of the four directions in communicative language teaching discussed above.

The first requirement, taken from the first direction in communicative teaching discussed in this article, is that of **realism**. Language teaching must be related as closely as possible to real language use, as well as to the present and prospective needs of the student. Language in the classroom must always have at least a spark of authenticity and actuality, because it must be aimed at a goal that lies outside the classroom. Language teaching which exists only for the sake of language teaching is an idol that must eventually perish since, like all idols, it feeds upon itself.

A second criterion I would like to mention is the following: in a general communicative language course, in other words in one which has not been designed to cater only for specific needs and purposes, no language medium or skill should, without good reason, receive preferred treatment over any other. Reading is just as important as writing, speaking or listening in our lingual communication with others, and **vice versa**. Indeed, there is a rather widespread misconception among teachers today that the communicative approach

is merely some kind of perfected 'oral approach'. It is not, and the reason why it is not is that communication occurs also in media other than the spoken medium. It is understandable that teachers, after trying for decades to 'get the students to speak' the language, would easily misunderstand the point of the approach in this respect. But just as all those years of trying to get our students to speak have not necessarily been in vain, it is equally true that all the centuries of intensive study of the written word, as well as the literate state of modern First World culture and the enormous amount of time spent on writing, listening and reading skills in foreign and second language teaching, should now be summarily dismissed as inappropriate.

Third: we have, in communicative teaching, at long last and with what seems to be an enormous amount of persuasion and argumentative energy, achieved in language teaching a **broader perspective on language** and its various uses than we have ever had. As linguists, applied linguists and language teachers we must not let this opportunity slip through our fingers by reverting to the old ways. There is a tremendous responsibility here that language teachers will have to shoulder. If they are unsuccessful, my own feeling is that we shall have allowed an opportunity to pass for developing language teaching in a meaningful way.

There is little doubt that the communicative approach is still, in a substantial sense, the future direction of language teaching. What direction will the approach itself take in the future? In my opinion, we shall have to look in this regard to some form in which the different directions in communicative teaching, specifically the 'L' and 'P' emphases, can be combined. Such a synthesis cannot be achieved on the theoretical level, since the 'P' approaches represent a direction in Western thought (existentialism) that is the exact opposite of the ideals of the other. In the practices of the language classroom, however, matters look somewhat different. Here, distilled to the essentials, the practical wisdom of the 'L' approach, namely that language is more than form, and the truth emphasized by the 'P' approaches (that language learning must be accompanied by as little fear, anxiety and stress as possible), may both be accommodated in language teaching. Perhaps, too, the classroom is the crucible in which the future of communicative teaching will be decided; in the hands of the competent, imaginative and skilful teacher, as always, lies the future of language teaching.

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