Facultad de Educación

Alexandra Santamaría Urbieta
Titulación Grado online de Educación
Asignatura English Methodologies and Didactic Resources



UNIT 4. THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH.

Versión	Fecha	Motivo de modificación	Elaboración	Revisión	Aprobación

GLOBAL CAMPUS
NEBRIJA

INDEX

2

1. Framework 3

2. Origins 3

3. Goals and Characteristics 4

4. Threshold level project and the Communicative Method 5

4.1 Threshold Level 5

4.2 Communicative Method 5

5. Communicative Syllabus 7

6. Roles 8

7. Materials 8

8. Procedure 8

9. Real Teaching Experiences using the Communicative Method 9

10. Practice 10

11. Contemporary Trends 11

12. The Communicative Competence 11

12.1 Focus on Tasks 14

12. 2 David Nuncan and the Task Concept 15

13. Bibliography 19

UNIT 4. THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

1. Framework

The communicative approach was born from the merge of diverse factors that converged in the 1960s. From the late 1970s to the present, we are in the fourth stage, which is marked by a reunion between linguists and teachers and, therefore, the presence of current linguistics in the methodology of teaching Second languages.

The transformation of the educational system in Europe and the development of the European common market and the Council of Europe were important changes that promoted the birth of the Communicative Approach.

In the late 1970s, the assumptions of the situational approach of the British teaching of English as a foreign language began to be questioned, and the audiolingual method went into crisis in the United States as well, due in part to Chomsky's criticisms of structuralism theory. The British linguistics Christopher Candlin (1981) and Henry Widdowson (1978) are two important figures of this moment. They:

- Emphasized the functional and communicative potential of language.
- Promoted the necessity to focus on teaching on communicative proficiency
- They applied the linguistic conceptions of Firth, Halliday and Austin.

2. Origin

The communicative approach also arose from the general dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the pedagogical tradition already consolidated, such as the excess of centrality in the figure of the teacher.

There were two important publications that helped to set the bases of the Communicative Approach:

- Alexander's series *New Concept of English* (1967).
- Wilkings proposed a functional and communicative definition of language. It was an excellent base for the creation of the communicative language syllabus based on *Notions* (concepts) and *Functions*

(purpose).

Richards and Rogers (1986) summarize this process of change that arose the Communicative approach as caused because there was a quick application of these ideas by textbook writers, a good acceptance of these ideas and, as a consequence, a quick development of curriculum.

3. Goals and Characteristics

This method is based on two basic principles:

- Goal of language: The goal of language is to develop the communicative competence, instead of the linguistic competence of Chomsky. To speak a language properly it is required the ability to use it in different registers, according to the situation.

- The four language skills must be taught in a comprehensible way.

Characteristics of the method:

- The teacher is now conceived as an intermediary and responsible for favouring the occurrence of learning as the learner is the protagonist of learning.
- The focus is shifted from teaching methodology to the learning process.
- It is the moment of textual and pragmatic linguistics on the one hand, and the communicative approach on the other (Pastor, 2004: 91).
- Some of the fundamental points shared by the different proposals are:
    - overcoming the sentence limit

- Communicative competence as object of theoretical and learning description
- The conception of language as a global and dynamic phenomenon
- Interdisciplinarity as a means of working language.

4. Threshold Level project and Communicative Method

D. Wilkins (1972) offered a functional definition of language that served as a foundation for the development of noci- functional programs such as the *Threshold Level project* and *the Communicative Method*.

4.1 The Threshold Level

Wilkins in 1972 and later in 1976, with his Notional Syllabuses, presented a change in the conception of the learning of the second language. He objected by not describing the target language according to the traditional elements of lexicon and grammar, but by notional categories (concepts) and functional categories (communicative functions, such as asking permission, expressing wishes or rejecting).

- From that conception, experts of the Council of Europe established the Threshold Level, which means the contents necessary to acquire a minimum level of communicative ability in a foreign language in a general way.

4.2 Communicative Method

- Firstly, there is no single model or single mentor. What identifies this method is:

- The conception of the communicative competence as main objective of the language teaching, by the development of the four linguistic skills.
- And experiential and learner-centred learning.

4.2.1 Characteristics:

- Richards and Rodgers (1986, quoted by Pastor, 2004) dictate the three essential principles of this approach:
    - Communication: activities involving real communication are the most appropriate for learning.
    - Tasks: meaningful activities that require the use of the second language favour learning)
    - Meaning: when the interlocutor transmits something that has a meaning for him, it helps learning.

- The syllabus will depend on the contents, subjects or functions that interest to the students
- The figure of the teacher must be motivating and contribute to the improvement of the learning process.
- A variety of types of activities that involve the significant use of the language and the need for communication are required.
- Overcoming the sentence limit, emphasis is placed on conversation, text comprehension and production of various textual typologies
- The use of the mother tongue in certain contexts is accepted.
- Currently the communicative approach and the current linguistics agree in understanding the language like something non-abstract or "a scientific object". They are worried about the use that the speakers make of their language and the relation between language and context.
- It is, therefore, an approach that pays special attention to how to organize, sequence and perform the activities of the second language class.
- It is a student-centred teaching. Therefore, the Focus on Tasks gave importance to pragmatics in Second Language Teaching (Díaz and Hernández 1993).

4.2.3 Important figures

The linguists who represent these new currents of investigation and who have a great influence in the teaching of languages are Michael Halliday; J. Austin and J. Searle; H. P Grice; Henry Widdowson; M. P. Breen and C. N Candlin; Dell Hymes; And Merril Swain, Lyle Bachman and Michael Canale.

- Halliday in the 70s is the representative of the functional approach of the study of language but he goes beyond a typology of functions and tries to explain how the linguistic structure of a language has been

characterized by use.

- J. Austin and J. Searle from the field of the philosophy of language, they develop the theory of the acts of speech.
- H. P Grice, develops his theory of conversational maxims, essential in the analysis of the conversation.
- Henry Widdowsom emphasizes the implications of discourse analysis in the teaching of foreign languages and insists in the late 1970s on the interactionist orientation of the communicative approach.
- Breen and Candlin, in turn, created the theoretical basis of the approach by tasks.
- Hymes, finally, elaborates the concept of communicative competence (1972), later developed by Swain, Bachman and Canale.

5. Communicative syllabus

The objective of the Communicative syllabus will reflect the need of the learner. It must include:

- Structures
- Functions
- Notions
- Themes
- Tasks
- Situations
- Cultural / Experimental aspects

6. Roles

It is important to know which is the role of the *teacher* and the *learner*.

- Learner is:
    - the centre of the learning process.
    - It is an active participant and a negotiator.
- Teacher is:
    - the facilitator
    - a participant in the learning-teaching group.
    - It is also the counsellor
    - It is the group process manager.

7. Materials

Materials must engage learners in communication. They must engage both participation and regard the tasks and functions planned.

Richards and Rogers classify materials into three categories:

- Text-based materials.
- Task-based materials. They are the activities centered on communication.
- Real materials.

8. Procedure

The procedure is divided into three steps:

- 1st: Pre-Communicative activities:

They are activities to promote motivation in the learning activity. It is needed to choose situations close to the learner's reality. Some examples are:

  - Drill activities.

- 2nd: Communicative activities: Examples of communicative activities are:
  - dialogues about student's personal experiences
  - the study of one of the communicative expression in a dialogue
  - sharing information
  - to identify pictures.

- 3rd: Social Interaction activities: they are activities of oral productions. For example:
  - dialogues
  - role-playing activities

9. Real teaching experiences using the Communicative Approach

Watch these videos

a) Game and dialogue: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SB_hr8IY4Z8

On this video we can watch how kids perform an oral game with the teacher.

b) Role play: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3AUiMik7sY

On this video, students have to perform a situation of ordering food at a restaurant. Two students are the costumers and the third is a waitress.

c) Role – play: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bu3KHC1DRFM

On this video, students have a character and they have to perform the trial of Iñaki Urgangarin.

d) Dialogues: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELAJ6zgqh9M

On this video we can watch different dialogues of real situation.

10. Practice

Design a game to practice communication:

Title: Grade: Contents: Procedure:

Write a role-play to practice communication:

Title:
Grade:
Contents:

Procedure:

Lines:

Write a dialogue to practice communication:

Title:
Grade:
Contents:

Procedure:

Lines:

11. Contemporary Trends

Savignon (2006) said that language not only defines a community (identity and social behaviour). It also defines the form and uses of language.

At present, assessment in the communicative activities has gained importance.

12. Communicative Competence

- The communicative competence came from a whole ethnological and philosophical tradition of the study of the language in use and it had a great impact on the teaching of languages and involved a change of programs, teaching styles, process evaluation, teacher training and material development.

Canale and Swain developed the idea of communicative competence, a design taken as the basis for objectives in the curricular design and as a guide for teaching methodology.

This communicative competence consists of 5 sub competences: grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, strategic and sociocultural.

These four categories have been adapted for teaching purposes. Thus, **Real Decreto 1006/1991** of 14th June, which establishes the teaching requirements for Primary Education nation-wide, sees **communicative competence** as comprising five sub competences:

1) Grammar Competence.

The ability to put into practice the system of grammar rules by which a language operates.

2) Sociolinguistic Competence.

The ability to produce appropriate utterances in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on contextual factors such as status of participants, purpose of the interaction....

3) Sociocultural Competence.

This is understood to be the knowledge of the social and cultural context in which the language is used.

4) Discourse Competence.

The ability to produce unified written or spoken discourse that shows coherence and cohesion in different types of texts.

5) Strategic Competence.

The ability to use verbal and non-verbal strategies to compensate for breakdowns in communication, or to improve the effectiveness of communication, as for example, the use of paraphrase, tone of voices or gestures.

On the other hand, Canale defined **Discourse Competence** as the aspect of communicative competence which describes the ability to produce unified written or spoken discourse that shows coherence and cohesion and which conforms to the norms of different genres.

12.1 Focus on Tasks

12.1.1 Origin and definition

The most booming apprenticeship today is the one through projects, developed by Dewey and Kilpatrick (Porokect Method, 1981) in the early twentieth century. It arises from the 80's as a result of the evolution and consolidation of communicative methods.

In the words of Giovanni et al. (1996, quoted by Pastor, 2004: 161-162): if the communicative teaching of the first proposals was a teaching for the communication, the teaching of the approach by tasks is a teaching through the communication (...) therefore it is included in "procedural methods", which (...) are based on the negotiation processes and decision making of the students themselves.

12.2 David Nunan and the Task concept

David Nunan is one of the greatest representatives and advocates of this approach.

By *task* Nunan (1989) defines that it is a part of the class work that makes students understand, manipulate, produce and communicate in the target language focusing more on meaning than on form. (Pastor, 2004: 162).

The task was understood as the instrumental process that leads to a concrete result, as a unit of work in the classroom (Estaire and Zanón 1994).

The task approach was consolidated in the 1990s. It should be distinguished from Project Work, which is project learning, which would go beyond the task-based approach. A project would be a set of tasks sequenced with a concrete purpose (Legutke and Thomas, 1991, quoted by Pastor, 2004: 164). In addition, broader educational objectives such as motivation or cooperation and negotiation during the process are pursued (Pastor, 2004).

Characteristics of a Task:

- A task encompasses a series of activities that are the previous steps to reach the objective, which is a global activity that is executed cooperatively between the different apprentices.
- Through these activities the different aspects of the language are predicted:
    - Lexicon
    - pronunciation
    - grammatical structures
    - notions and functions
    - type of text
    - pragmatic and cultural component.

- The contents and results will vary and will be open depending on the characteristics of the trainees.
- Every task has:
    - a goal: that students learn
    - a structure that encompasses the product (observable results of activity) and sources (materials), a subject or field (depending on the interests of the students and may include more than one);
    - the activities
    - the content
    - And the agents who perform the task.

- Procedure of a Task:

Each task, in turn, is developed in three phases:

- 1st: a first approach, which decides the theme and the organization of work
- 2nd: A second one of preparation, where the practice of the work is realized
- 3rd: a third one of execution, that is where the product is elaborated properly.

- Example of real teaching experience of Tasked-based learning

➢ Watch this video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lg_PRBUsin0

On this video we can watch a Task-based learning. The purpose is to engage communication. The procedure is:

- 1st: Pre-Task: they play a memory game to learn the vocabulary.
- 2nd: Pre –Task: They practice dialogues and answer comprehension questions.
- 3td: Practice: They play a jumbled game in groups. Learners have to create correct sentences.
- 4th: Practice: Learners have to create dialogues.
- 5th: Role-play: Learners perform a role-play of physio-therapists.

- Practice

Design task to practice communication:

Title:
Grade:
Contents:

Procedure:

1. Pre-Task

2. Practice activities:

- Summarize

Watch these videos:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPXgnNY8TUw

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6h8ulAT_98

13. BIBLIOGRPAHY

- Hymes, D. H. (1972). *On Communicative Competence.* In J. B Pride and J. Holmes (eds) Sociolinguistics. Selected readings (pp. 269-293). Harmondsworth: Penguin.

- Krashen, S. (1981). Second language acquisition and second language learning. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

- Pastor, S. (2004). Aprendizaje de segundas lenguas. Lingüística aplicada a la enseñanza de idiomas. Alicante: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Alicante.

- Richards, J. C. and Rogers, T. S. (1999). Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching. A description and analysis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.