

## BOOK REVIEW

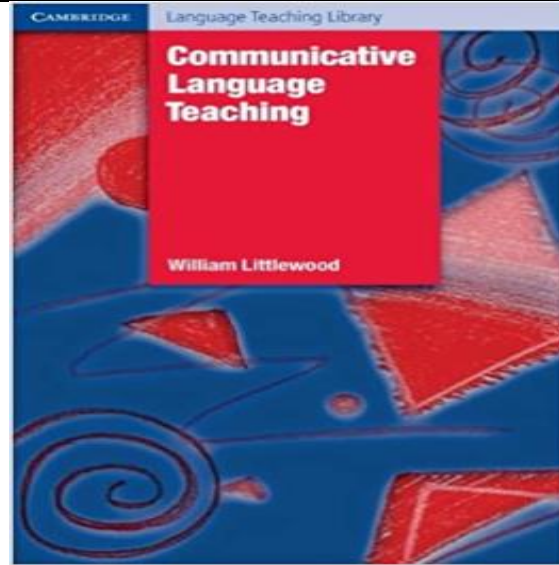
### Communicative Language Teaching: An Introduction (2010)

Author: William Littlewood  
Publisher: Cambridge University Press  
Pp. 108  
ISBN: 978-0521281546

Reviewed by

Semahat AYSU<sup>1</sup>, Tekirdağ Namık Kemal University, [saysu@nku.edu.tr](mailto:saysu@nku.edu.tr)

Şeyda SANLI<sup>2</sup>, Uşak University, [seydasanli@yahoo.com](mailto:seydasanli@yahoo.com)



Definition of ‘language’ has been changed throughout the years. Accordingly, the scope of linguistics and the ways of language teaching have also changed. The language was previously studied in a structural view. In other words, language learning referred to knowing the grammatical rules and having linguistic knowledge. However, learners were unable to use the language, namely unable to communicate. Being able to communicate requires more than mastering linguistic structures (Hymes, 1972 and Canale & Swain, 1980). For these reasons, communicative language teaching approach revealed as the product of educators who were dissatisfied with the grammar translation and audiolingual methods. In this respect, “Communicative Language Teaching”, a kind of introduction book, can be a guide for researchers, teachers, under- graduate and post graduate students.

The book, which was first published in 1981, is in its 30th edition now. It consists of 8 parts, further reading, bibliography and index. It starts with the definition of communicative ability and ends with a part titled, *A Communicative Approach*. Each chapter includes a summary part in which the chapter is revised shortly and main parts are emphasized.

The first chapter of the book, *What is Communicative Ability*, starts with a discussion of the communicative view of a language and language learning. In this chapter, two important aspects of communicative language teaching, *structural and functional views* are analyzed in a detailed way. Combination of these aforementioned aspects in a more communicative view is discussed. The author outlines four broad domains of skill which lead to communicative competence. These are: linguistic competence of learners, learners’ awareness of difference between the linguistic competence and the communicative functions that they perform, learners’ learning skills for using language to communicate meanings and learners’ awareness of the social meaning of language forms.

The second chapter, *Relating Forms to Meanings*, aims to demonstrate how acquisition of linguistic structures is related to the other components of communicative ability described in the previous chapter. The author tries to illustrate differences between functional and structural facts, also

<sup>1</sup> ORCID: 0000-0001-6431-9983

<sup>2</sup> ORCID: 0000-0002-3756-266X

Submitted: 26.04.2020

Accepted: 04.06.2020



makes the topic clear with the examples and readers can easily get themselves aware of the relation between structure and communicative functions. Furthermore, with some pre-communicative activities the link is also explained between language and social context.

In the third chapter, *Communicative Activities: Some General Considerations*, purposes and types of communicative activities and teachers' and students' roles are explained on the basis of the experienced or probable situations. The author makes a distinction between two main categories: "Functional communication activities and social interaction activities". The author emphasizes both the social meaning and the functional meaning of different language forms.

In the fourth chapter, *Functional communication activities*, the author categorizes functional activities considering main uses of language: *Using language to share information* and *using language to process information*. Throughout the chapter, various activities are presented in order to illustrate interaction both in the controlled and less controlled environment. The first type of activity is *sharing information with restricted cooperation*, in which learners must interact with each other according to strict rules determined by the teacher. Another type of activity mentioned here is *sharing information with unrestricted cooperation*. In both activities, the goal of communication is to share factual information. The next type of functional communication activity is *Sharing and processing information*. In this activity, learners must not only share information, they must also discuss or evaluate the information in order to solve a problem. The last one is *processing information*, which is formed when there is a need to share information. In these activities, learners will gradually become more creative with the language they have acquired. The author also focuses on some limitations of the functional activities due to the fact that some of them cannot be used outside the classroom.

Chapter 5, *Social Interaction Activities*, firstly reviews the differences between the functional activities and social interaction activities. The author points out that social interaction activities with their functional meanings make the learners closer to situation where they have to communicate outside the classroom. This chapter offers four approaches to make the classroom a social context for foreign language use. They are listed as follows: "using the foreign language for classroom management, using the foreign language as a teaching medium, conversation or discussion sessions and basing dialogues and role plays on school experience". After the summary of these approaches, the importance of different forms of interaction such as simulation and role-playing is emphasized since language learners have to deal with possible problems or different situations socially and functionally outside the classroom. This chapter also provides techniques for simulation and role-playing. They are listed from control to creativity: "performing memorised dialogues, contextualised drills, cued dialogues, role playing and improvisation". Finally, it offers some considerations for teachers who create social interaction opportunities in language classroom.

In Chapter 6, *Listening Activities*, the author claims that foreign language learners are generally in the receiver position during face-to-face communication and while understanding messages from various sources such as radio or television. He puts emphasis on the importance of using listening activities with a purpose in order to develop learners' listening skills. These activities for listening with a specific purpose are called as "*Performing physical tasks, Transferring information, Reformulating and evaluating information*" and they are discussed in detail. Moreover, he argues that learners listen in order to receive functional meanings but they should develop their awareness of how they use language forms and behave in a social context.

The seventh chapter, *Choosing What to Teach*, focuses on the course content. The author stresses that the communicative approach does not underestimate the structure of the language since the learner has to know about the structural system of a language to communicate. He suggests that language forms which widen learners' communicative knowledge should be taught first. Apart from teaching language structures, he also states that different aspects of language use can be taught for communicative purposes and these are listed as follows: (i) functional-structural organisation, (ii) functional organisation, (iii) notional organisation and (iv) topic based organisation. He suggests using several organisations in one course rather than using only one organisation in order to connect

language teaching with learners' communicative goals. Finally, he notes that using a published checklist such as "the Council of Europe's Threshold Level" would be useful for teachers while assessing learners' communicative needs for situations, language activities, functions, topics, general notions and language forms.

In the last chapter, *A Communicative Approach*, the author summarizes the differences between "pre-communicative activities" and "communicative learning activities" used throughout the book. He classifies pre-communicative activities as structural activities and quasi-communicative activities, which aim to produce acceptable language, and communicative activities as functional communication activities and social interaction activities, which aim to convey message. He also notes that this relationship between the types of activities is relevant to methodology rather than their sequence in a classroom. Subsequently, the importance of feedback is emphasized in communicative approach. It is also stated that the role of teachers with this approach has been changed. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), teachers in communicative classrooms talk less and listen more. They are active facilitators of their students' learning. Teachers set up the exercise and move step back and sometimes observe acting as a referee or moderator. During the activities, they act as advisers, answering students' questions. They might make note of their errors to be worked on at later time during more accuracy-based activities.

Finally, it is known that the principle of the communicative approach is to develop communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) or communicative ability. Therefore, language learners should develop their grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). As this book presents plenty of activities in order to provide real communication with which students might confront outside the classroom, it is a remarkable material for particularly novice English language teachers and they make use of the great store of activities in a practical way.

## REFERENCES

Hymes, D. H. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. Pride and J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics: Selected Readings* (pp. 269-293). Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Canale, M. and Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 1-4.

Richards, J.C. and Rodgers, T.S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

