

TEACHING AND COMMUNICATING IN THE ESP WORLD

Dana Carmen ZECHIA¹

¹ Lecturer PhD „Mircea cel Batran” Naval Academy, 1 Fulgerului St., Constanta, dana.zechia@anmb.ro

Abstract: *Teaching ESP has always been aimed at developing students' skills of professional communication in English no matter the area of their professional expertise. Literature is reviewed and analyzed in an attempt to give teachers practical advice in three areas within the field of instructional communication: classroom guidance, student learning, and self-presentation. Specifically, nonverbal immediacy and social message strategy employment are discussed as options for improving classroom management and for reinforcing student learning. Suggestions for the proper use of tests and evaluations to boost learning are also addressed. Research on teacher strategy and style are considered as operational instructional strategies. Other factors that students focus on when evaluating teachers' performance are re-evaluated and classroom applications are discussed.*

Keywords: *communication, language learning, challenges, teaching, performance evaluation.*

Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied linguistics defines the Communicative Approach or Communicative Language Teaching as 'an **approach** to foreign or second language teaching which emphasises that the goal of language learning is **communicative competence**.' According to the same dictionary, the approach which has been developed by British applied linguists as a reaction away from grammar-based approaches.

The origins of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) date back late 1960s. Until then Situational Language Teaching represented the major British Approach to teaching English as a foreign language. In Situational Language Teaching, language was taught by practising basic structures in meaningful situation-based activities. But just as the linguistic theory underlying Audiolingualism was rejected in United States in the mid-1960s, British applied linguists began to call into question the theoretical assumption underlying Situational Language teaching.

American Linguist Noam Chomsky had demonstrated that the current standard structural theories of language were incapable of accounting for the fundamental characteristics of language -the creativity and uniqueness of individual sentences. Then, British applied linguists emphasised another fundamental dimension of language that was inadequately addressed in current approaches to language teaching at that time -the functional and communicative potential of language. They saw the need to focus in language teaching on **communicative** proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures.

As the scope of Communicative Language Teaching has expanded, it was considered as an approach rather than a method, which aims to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and to develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication.

The last five decades have witnessed vast changes in our understanding of how languages are learnt, and subsequently taught. Empirical results from linguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology and sociolinguistics have better established the complex nature of language learning: it has become evident that linguistic, psychological and sociocultural factors play a key role in this process.

The process of globalization has entailed a melange of distinct cultures, races, and economies, creating a global village, a border-free environment, and proliferating political and cultural relations of similar values. In today's multinational and globalized businesses, an internationally understood language is the sinequa non component, and for many decades now English has enjoyed the status of the lingua franca, which ensures a seamless way of communicating and sending messages worldwide.

Conversation between people has an "interactional function" which can be called as the use of language to keep open the channels of communication between people and to establish a suitable rapport. Generally, in the initial stages of conversation with a stranger, speakers introduce carefully chosen topics that reflect mutual agreement. Choosing safe topics which satisfy hearer's desire to be right is called "phatic communion", and the mechanism of phatic communion include speaker's

repertoire of verbal and visual gestures, and speaker's stock of 'canned topics' and formulaic utterances.

Another aspect of communication is its ongoing organisation which can be viewed from two different perspectives: a macro perspective that reveals the differences in rhetorical organisation that reflect different discourse 'genres' or 'tasks'; and a micro perspective showing how some of the processes by which discourse is constructed out of individual utterances are reflected in speech.

Why is it so difficult to teach a foreign language? We always ask ourselves why it is so difficult to teach a foreign language. To a large extent it is because we always attempt to teach in the classroom what is normally learned outside it. The classroom is by no means a convenient place for imparting information and for developing many educational skills, but our main concern as language teachers is not to inform our students about the language but to develop their ability to use the language for a variety of communicative purposes.

When learners decide to learn English, they do not only absorb the linguistics of the language but also everything deals with English, including the culture of English. Therefore, by speaking English, a learner automatically aligns oneself with the culture of English. To speak the language well, one has to be able to think in that language, the essence of the language. Indeed, the aim of teaching learning language is that learners should have communicative competence. Or we can also say that in order to communicate in the target language, the learners should have more than just linguistic competence but also communicative competence

In order to develop the skills needed for this, especially the oral ones of understanding and speaking, we have to face with a number of obstacles, such as the size of the class, the number of hours available for teaching the language, the syllabus itself (especially examinations) and the arrangement in the classroom which rarely favors communication.

Under such conditions it is difficult to provide effective oral practice, especially in large classes. It is then important to have a clear understanding and a firm grasp of the wide range of techniques and procedures through which oral ability can be developed. These techniques and procedures are a way of accommodating language learning to the unfavorable environment of the classroom.

What then is the role of a language teacher in the classroom? In the first place, like any other teacher, it is to create the best conditions for learning. In a sense the teacher is a means to an end: an instrument to see that learning takes place. But in addition to this general function there are specific roles to be played by the teacher at different stages of the learning process: presentation (when something new is introduced to be learned), practice (when learners are allowed to work under the teacher's direction) and production (when students are given opportunities to work on their own). This is considered from a conventional standpoint first of all.

For the presentation stage the main task is to serve as a kind of information. The teacher knows the language, selects the material to be learned and presents it in such a way that the meaning of the new language is as clear and memorable as possible. The students listen and try to understand. Although they are saying very little at this stage, except when invited to join in, they are by no means passive. At this point of the

lesson the teacher is the centre of the lesson. This role is very attractive for the teachers and there is a danger of spending too much time presenting so that the students do not get enough time to practice the language themselves.

Communicative language teaching (CLT) refers to both processes and goals in classroom learning. The central theoretical concept in communicative language teaching is “communicative competence,” a term introduced into discussions of language use and second or foreign language learning in the early 1970s (Habermas 1970; Hymes 1971; Jakobovits 1970; Savignon 1971). Competence is defined in terms of the *expression*, *interpretation*, and *negotiation* of meaning and looks to both psycholinguistic and sociocultural perspectives in second language acquisition research to account for its development. Identification of learners' communicative needs provides a basis for the curriculum design.

Furthermore, these results have also shown that communication is a pivotal point in language learning and that the degree of success achieved in this process depends much on how meaning is negotiated in communication. This concept of language learning explains the emergence of Communicative Approaches to L2 teaching over the last decades, whose pedagogical goal is to develop learners' communicative competence, i.e., the ability to use the linguistic system in an effective and appropriate way. However, the implementation of a communicative methodology is not an easy task. In fact, it represents a challenge to language practitioners since it requires an understanding of the complex and integrated nature of the theoretical concept *communicative competence*,

Using language appropriately involves the social rules for speaking in a community. It means understanding the influence of social factors on speech behavior. Some sociolinguists give illustration for a different aspect of the many and varied types of knowledge which people in different

communities acquire when they learn to use language appropriately in their own community so that the knowledge which underlies people's ability to use language appropriately is known as their sociolinguistic competence. It can be identified in classroom when the English learners are in the teaching and learning process in which the English teacher uses the target language as the daily communication. For the ease, through English communication, the English learners are automatically attached to English culture in use.

Socio-cultural competence also involves knowing how to use language for different functions, such as getting things done in different contexts. Learning a foreign language, particularly English language in the classroom, often seems at first to be matter of learning the vocabulary and grammar from a book, and struggling to copy the pronunciation in class from a teacher. But, the concept of socio-cultural competence makes it clear that much more is involved than control of the linguistics structures.

The example of English as an international or global language is instructive. Such wide adoption of one language in both international and intranational contexts is unprecedented. English users today include those who live in countries where English is a primary language, those who live in countries where English is an auxiliary, intranational language of communication and those who use primarily English in international contexts.

If the ESP community hopes to grow, it is vital that the community as a whole understands what ESP actually represents, and can accept the various roles that ESP teachers need to adopt to ensure its success. Unfortunately, ESP teachers often feel isolated both from professionals in their students' specializations and their colleagues in other institutions. They also have difficulty in getting or exchanging information in the field. We can conclude, therefore, that the necessary ESP network should be provided.

Bibliography

- [1] Barna, L.M. *Intercultural communication*: International Thompson Publishing, 1992.
- [2] Dudley-Evans, T. & J. St John. 2007. *Developments in English for Specific Purposes. A Multi-Disciplinary Approach*, Cambridge University Press.
- [3] Driver Janine, *You Say More Than You Think*, Random House Inc., New York, 2010
- [4] Guirdham, Maureen, *Communicating across cultures at work*, Palgrave
- [5] Hutchinson, T., and Waters, A. (1987) *English for Specific Purposes: a Learning –centered Approach*, Cambridge: CUP.
- [6] Littlewood, William, *Communicative Language Teaching*, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press
- [7] Wood T., Julia, *Interpersonal Communication, Everyday Encounters*, Cengage Learning