



HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
National and Kapodistrian  
University of Athens

# Applied Linguistics to Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

Unit 8: Recent Developments in Language Teaching  
Pedagogy

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# Main issues of this unit

- The main principles of the communicative approach (background, goals, differences with the audiolingual method, structure of the lesson, principles of communicative activities, criticisms).
- The main principles of task based language teaching (background, task, underlying principles, the task based lesson).
- The main principles of the intercultural approach.



# The communicative approach

The communicative approach started to develop as a distinct teaching approach in the mid 70's as a result of:

- developments in the field of language theory (functionalism),
- research into the concept of communicative competence,
- growing dissatisfaction with the audiolingual method.



# Main problems of the audiolingual method (1/2)

- Drills and constant repetition of grammatical patterns was boring and demotivating.
- Although students were able to form grammatically correct sentences (e.g. John is having his breakfast) they were unable to transfer this knowledge to talk about themselves in a real life setting.



# Main problems of the audiolingual method (2/2)

- The audiolingual approach assumed that there was a one to one relation between form and meaning. It did not present students with the different uses/functions that different grammatical forms perform.
- Skills were taught in isolation in a strict sequence
- The language taught was the same for all students regardless of age, learning needs, motivation, interests etc.



# Aims of the communicative approach (1/2)

- To train students to use language forms appropriately in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes.
- By exposing students to language in use and by providing them with opportunities to use the language in real life contexts, students will effectively develop their knowledge and skill in using the language.



# Aims of the communicative approach (2/2)

- Students should develop the ability to distinguish between the forms they have mastered and the communicative functions they perform, they must develop the skills and strategies for using language to communicate meanings as effectively as possible in concrete situations; they must also be aware of the social meanings of language forms and how to use language appropriately.



# Combining accuracy, fluency and appropriacy (1/2)

- **Present:** The aim is to help students understand new forms (their structure and meaning). New language is presented in context. The focus is on accuracy.
- **Practice:** Students are given opportunities to use the language they have been learning more freely. The aim of this stage is to help students absorb the language they have been introduced to thoroughly and to ensure that they understand it.





# Combining accuracy, fluency and appropriacy (2/2)

- **Produce:** Students use their knowledge of language to express themselves freely in unpredictable linguistic contexts. The focus here is for students to get their message across appropriately and effectively.



# Principles of communicative activities (1/4)

## **Non-communicative activities**

- No communicative desire.
- No communicative purpose.
- Form not content.
- One language item only.
- Teacher intervention.
- Materials control.

## **Communicative activities**

- A desire to communicate.
- A communicative purpose.
- Content not form.
- Variety of language.
- No teacher intervention.
- No materials control.



# Principles of communicative activities

## (2/4)

- The goal of language teaching is to develop students' communicative competence. Concentration on use and appropriacy rather than on language form.
- A tendency to favour fluency-focused activities rather than simply accuracy-focused activities.



# Principles of communicative activities (3/4)

- CLT concentrates on the development of all four skills. Activities must be designed to integrate skills.
- Language practice is not limited to sentences
- The notion of error is no longer restricted to incorrect grammar or choice of vocabulary; being communicative means being accurate and sociolinguistically appropriate.



# Principles of communicative activities

## (4/4)

- There is a focus on meaningful interaction between learners (pair and group work activities).
- Activities that involve real communication and are meaningful to learners promote learning.
- If we want to develop students' fluency in the language and teach real everyday communication:
  - activities must relate to students' real-life needs.
  - the content and language of the activity must be authentic.



# Critique of the communicative approach (1/4)

- Not effective in bringing learners to the levels of proficiency that many require for effective language use. Too much focus on communication could lead students to successful (i.e. getting the meaning across) but inaccurate language use. If this language use goes uncorrected, then it may become fossilized preventing learners from further development of complex language use.



# Critique of the communicative approach (2/4)

- The focus of the communicative approach was on students real life needs i.e. the focus was on utilitarian needs. The communicative approach did not pay attention to the creative and aesthetic uses of the language.



# Critique of the communicative approach (3/4)

- Overemphasis on appropriacy in many materials became distorted. Implied in the materials was the belief that the English language learners should conform to the norms and conventions of the target language. It is one thing to know these conventions and rules and another to follow them. The potential for their cultures to have an impact on English and for learners to develop their own separate identities within it was neglected.





# Critique of the communicative approach (4/4)

- Although the communicative approach has a clear and well developed theory of language underlying it ( language as communication which is socially and culturally determined), there is no such clear and well developed theory of language learning underlying it.



# Task based teaching and the communicative approach (1/2)

- Task based language teaching (TBLT) is not a completely different approach from the communicative approach nor has it replaced the communicative approach. It is rather the child of the communicative approach a continuation or extension of it.
- It represents an increased emphasis on the process of learning and a concern for students to focus on form as well as meaning.



# Task based teaching and the communicative approach (2/2)

- Another difference between the two approaches is that although within a communicative syllabus, we identify the needs of the language learners first and then we select the functions, forms and skills that would cater for those needs, in TBL we select the tasks that students would need to perform and design a syllabus around those tasks.



# Main principles of task based teaching (1/2)

- Learners learn what is meaningful to them (providing tasks that are related to students needs and interests. This in turn will increase their motivation for completing the task).
- Learners learn in ways that are meaningful to them. Each learner brings to the learning process a set of personal attributes, preferred ways of learning and learning strategies (providing a variety of tasks which allow for different learning styles and individual preferences and personalities).



# Main principles of task based teaching (2/2)

- Learning takes place in a social context and through interaction with other people. Using language is essentially a social activity and interaction in the target language is an integral part of the learning process (providing tasks that stimulate meaningful interaction between students and between the students and the teacher).



# Task based language teaching and task (1/2)

- The task is the basic unit of a lesson or of a syllabus in general. A task based syllabus is based on a process of learning i.e. how individuals learn a language rather than a pre-selection of language items to be taught. The syllabus consists of a series of tasks that are related to students needs and interests and that challenge both linguistically and cognitively.



# Task based language teaching and task (2/2)

- By carrying out these tasks learners are engaged in meaningful interaction in the TL thereby acquiring the language, they will employ a range of cognitive and social processes to makes sense of them and complete them.
- The tasks will also arouse a range of feelings and emotions on the part of the learners which will affect the ways in which try make sense of and carry out the activities.



# Task and activity

## **Activity:**

“look at the pictures, write four sentences and describe them to your partner” (not a task because it is not motivating and meaningful, it does not have a specific objective nor a clear outcome).

## **Task:**

show the picture briefly and then conceal it and ask students to write four things that are true about the picture and 4 things that are false. In pairs, each student tells his partner the sentences and the partner has to decide which ones are true and which are false.





# The Task-Based Learning Framework

# Pre-task phase

## The teacher:

- introduces and defines the topic,
- uses activities to help students recall/learn useful words and phrases,
- ensures students understand task instructions,
- may play a recording of others doing the same or a similar task.

## The students:

- note down useful words and phrases from the pre-task activities and/or the recording,
- may spend a few minutes preparing for the task individually.



# Task cycle (1/3)

## Task.

The students:

- do the task in pairs/small groups. It may be based on a reading/listening text.

The teacher:

- acts as monitor and encourages students.



# Task cycle (2/3)

## Planning.

The students:

- prepare to report to the class how they did the task and what they discovered/decided
- rehearse what they will say or draft a written version for the class to read.

The teacher:

- ensures the purpose of the report is clear
- acts as language adviser
- helps students rehearse oral reports or organize written ones.



# Task cycle (3/3)

## **Report.**

The students:

- present their spoken reports to the class, or circulate/display their written reports.

The teacher:

- acts as chairperson, selecting who will speak next, or ensuring all students read most of the written reports,
- may give brief feedback on content and form,
- may play a recording of others doing the same or a similar task.



# Language focus (1/2)

## Analysis.

The students:

- do consciousness-raising activities to identify and process specific language features from the task text and/or transcript,
- may ask about other features they have noticed.

The teacher:

- reviews each analysis activity with the class
- brings other useful words, phrases and patterns to students' attention.
- may pick up on language items from the report stage.



# Language focus (2/2)

## Practice.

The teacher:

- conducts practice activities after analysis activities where necessary, to build confidence.

The students:

- practice words, phrases and patterns from the analysis activities.
- practice other features occurring in the task text or report stage.
- enter useful language items in their language notebooks.



# The EU and language teaching policies and practices in Europe



# The EU and language teaching policies and practices in Europe (1/4)

- The establishment and gradual expansion of the EU has made communication between European countries an essential need.
- Plurilingualism (the ability to function and communicate in languages other than your own) is conducive to the effective functioning of the EU on an economic, political and social level.



# The EU and language teaching policies and practices in Europe (2/4)

- With more than 25 member states and at least 50 languages, the EU recognizes that linguistic and cultural diversity must be preserved – we cannot build a European identity without assuring its citizens that their mother tongue will not form part of it.
- The EU is against the adoption of a leading European language as a lingua franca and supports and protects plurilingualism.



# The EU and language teaching policies and practices in Europe (3/4)

- The monolingual individual has little chance of survival and of functioning as a European citizen in such a plurilingual structure.
- One of the main aims of the EU (and other cultural organisations) is to promote language education policies that will enable Europeans to become plurilingual.



# The EU and language teaching policies and practices in Europe (4/4)

- The aim is for all European citizens to learn at least three European languages.
- This does not entail achieving mastery in these languages according to a native speaker model.



# Interlinguistic competence

- Competence which allows speakers to use languages they are acquiring as contact languages so as to increase the quality and quantity of communication with speakers of other languages (i.e. being able to use a language in reference to certain fields or for certain needs).



# Culture and language

- Language cannot be disconnected from culture. It is through language that we express our culture, our values, our beliefs. Language is connected with our identity as individuals and as members of a community.
- The development of interlinguistic competence is inextricably linked with intercultural competence.



# “Teaching” culture in the past (1/2)

- Language teaching was seen as separate from the teaching of culture.
- Focus was on teaching the language and then some time was dedicated to providing cultural information on the target language.



# “Teaching” culture in the past (2/2)

- It was assumed that if language learners know how things are done in the target culture, they will be able to say the right things at the right moment in ways that are appropriate to that culture (aim was to accommodate to the L1, speakers of the target language).





# Intercultural competence (1/3)

- The traditional approach to culture teaching does not prepare learners to use international languages like English as a contact language with linguistically diverse groups of people from different cultures.
- They must develop sensitivity that goes beyond mere familiarisation with the target language group's culture.



# Intercultural competence (2/3)

- Learners must develop:
  - tolerance and respect for cultural diversity,
  - awareness that people from different cultures have different ways of thinking and behaving and
  - understanding that cultural differences in communication must be negotiated.



# Intercultural competence (3/3)

- In order to achieve this, learners must:
  - become aware of their own cultural identity and how it differs from others and
  - become able to explain cultural differences when communicating.
- Interlinguistic and intercultural competence will lead to the goal of plurilingualism.



End of Unit

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Notes

# Note on History of Published Version

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