

The Way Towards Communicative Teaching

A **method** is a way towards a goal consistent with an approach (theoretical teachings), principles (major guidelines emerging from the theoretical approach) and procedures (techniques, activities and exercises). A **technique** is a way to organize a learning procedure. An **activity** is a procedure of getting involved in learning. An **exercise** is a skill – developing procedure. In the general form a method can be shown such as: **Method -- Approach – Principles – Procedures [6]**.

The way towards communicative teaching has been a long and controversial one with advances and set backs. The **focus of attention** has gradually shifted from the **language as a systematic code** to the **language as a means of communication** with the search for an **effective method** of instruction and consideration of the **learner's personality [7]**.

Grammar translation (H. Olendorf) or Prussian method included detailed analysis of grammar rules, translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language, memorizing rules and manipulating morphology and syntax, reading and writing.

Direct method (M. Berlitz) encouraged the use of foreign language in the classroom. Classroom teaching was conducted in the target language only. The learning process was mostly based on imitation and memorization.

Oral approach or situational language teaching was based on selection and organization of the «situations». «Situations» were organized with the use of concrete things and pictures. They were used to introduce the new grammar structures.

Audio-lingual method applied the principles of structural linguistics to language teaching. Pattern practice became a basic classroom technique, Audio-lingual method was the combination of structural linguistic theory and fundamentals of behaviorism (stimulus, response, reinforcement).

The Natural approach [3] puts emphasis on the exposure to language (comprehensible input) rather than formal exercises. The following hypotheses were at the foundation of the Natural approach: **the acquisition/learning hypothesis** (only natural-like acquisition can result in mastering the language while «learning» helps getting knowledge about the language), **the monitor hypothesis** (explicit knowledge has only one function, that of monitoring correctness of the utterance), **the natural order hypothesis** (the acquisition of grammar structures proceeds in a predictable order), **the input hypothesis** (the relationship between the input and language acquisition shows that learners need comprehensible input), **the affective filter hypothesis**

(learners with high motivation, self-confidence, low anxiety generally do better in language acquisition).

Humanistic approach [9] emerged as a **reaction to the behaviorist approach** to teaching with the rigid teacher's control over the learners' behavior. The concern of humanistic tendencies was to enhance people's self-fulfillment and their role in directing their own lives.

Humanistic approach to language teaching emphasized the value of developing the learner's whole personality, the socialization of an individual in a group, creative activities with music, arts, etc. It was further developed in **community language teaching**. The method was based on counseling techniques. In lay terms, counseling is giving support to another person. This method was described as **humanistic** with self-fulfillment and secured self-esteem of the learners.

The priorities of the method were to develop learners' relationships in the group, to encourage the learners' feeling of security and belonging to a group as well as asserting their personal identity. «Learner autonomy» became a new and much discussed concept. Affective learning and learner anxiety were taken seriously as an important factor of effectiveness. Instead of the formulaic knowledge (the product of behaviorism) teachers tried to develop in learners heuristic knowledge.

Special attention was given to the issue of «**debilitating anxiety**», which unlike «facilitating anxiety» could hinder and even block the process of language acquisition. As a result of debilitating anxiety during a lesson, learners usually develop a «**defense mechanism**». Some of them withdraw from the work of the class, make a game of a task, fidget and let their attention wander or plunge into the world of fantasy. They can challenge the teacher with unacceptable behavior or passive aggression in the form of «silent protest». Some learners accuse others of their own learning problems. As expression of protest the learners join subgroups of other failure-learners.

An important issue which is tackled by the humanistic approach to teaching is the **rejection of the learners** by their teachers [4]. The rejection of this type can be hidden and show itself indirectly. These teachers prefer not to look at the learners, which they dislike (gaze of avoidance). The whole teacher's body movement is in the direction opposite to the learners they dislike. The teachers keep these learners at a greater distance and give them less verbal contact and addresses. These learners are denied teacher's supportive intervention and detailed feed-back that other learners formally enjoy. They are given a reduced teacher's waiting time.

The humanistic approach advocated «non-conflict», «non-judgment» and «empathy» in the relations of the teacher and learners. The importance of

the humanistic approach lies not just in the effectiveness of language learning but also in the development of the personality.

The humanistic approach facilitates **the self-fulfillment of learners**. Self-fulfilled people have a healthier psyche and are more capable of a creative non-stereotyped behavior. This helps them to identify easily with the group. They demonstrate a more accurate perception of reality and accept it without unnecessary conflicts. They focus more on cognitive problems and less on themselves. These learners possess the capacity for peak experiences (through love, music, art, nature, etc.) and a greater aptitude for empathy with other people. They are able to see things other than in black and white. Self-fulfillment of learners is achieved through learner-centered teaching by using interactive tasks in pairs and small groups, creating a supportive environment and building confidence in learners.

Intensification tendency

Total Physical Response (TPR) is the combination in the **teaching** method of speech and action. The method combined verbal **rehearsal** with motor activities [1].

The Silent Way was based on the premise that the teacher should be silent as much as possible in the classroom, while the learners will produce more language. A typical feature of the Silent Way is the use of color charts and rods as memorable images and signals to help in verbal responses. The proposition underlying this method of instruction was that learning is facilitated if the learners discover or create even with minimal language skills rather than rehearse and remember.

Suggestopedy [8] aimed at optimizing learning by music and rhythm, authoritative teacher's behavior and «infantalisation» of learners, physical and psychological relaxation. The focus was on the memorization processes, which according to the authors, was 25 times faster than in conventional learning.

Another example of exploiting resources of the human psyche in teaching languages is **neuro-linguistic programming (NLP)**. NLP is shaping one's inner world through reevaluating one's experience and using the power of the word. It aims at opening up one's inner resources as a way towards **accelerated learning**.

Communicative language teaching [5] is based on a number of typical features of the communication process. Language learning is understood as **learning to communicate through communication**. The emphasis is put on the **meaningful and motivated use of language** by the people who communicate in **order to achieve** a certain goal.

Language for learning is derived from **communicative experience in a**

variety of real world situations. Fluency is put over accuracy. Interactive learning is encouraged as the way towards acquiring communication skills.

The learners are taught «**negotiating the meaning**» (working towards better understanding each other), and «**using communication strategies**» (e.g. circumlocution).

Communicative teaching is a way of teaching a language through communication. The way towards the communicative teaching method can be traced this way:

1) Method – Grammar translation – Audio-lingual method – Natural approach – Communicative activities;

2) Subject – Language forms – Language patterns – Whole language – Human discourse;

3) Learning – Language analysis – Memorization – Exposure to the input – Communicative experience.

Any method can be described as «**result-oriented**» or «**process-oriented**» with some teaching methods occupying an intermediate position. A **result-oriented method** advocates the idea of a final goal with the emphasis on its quickest achievement and on equal results being achieved by all the learners. A **process-oriented** method focuses on the teaching/ learning procedure with the individual pace of learning and the final results varying according to individual learner differences.

Form-focused methods concentrate teachers' and learners' attention on the grammar forms of the target language. **Form-defocused methods** focus on speech patterns rather than on grammar structures.

The communicative approach is used differently in different teaching **cultures**. «Teaching culture» is the collective teaching experience, beliefs and practices, which are typical of a certain community or society. Communicative approach is not universally relevant for different teaching cultures. The learners can question the effectiveness of a lesson during which they practice communication but do not learn anything concrete. «What have we learned during this lesson of incessant talk?» is a typical question asked by the learners in Asian communities.

In Japan languages are taught in the typically teacher-fronted and teacher-centered classrooms. A typical lesson consists of the teachers checking the learners' sentence by sentence translations of a text. Chinese students can be unwilling to ask questions during a communicative lesson because they do not want to interrupt other students or the teacher, it is better to ask after the lesson, etc.

A lesson of English in Russia often includes homework check up, pres-

entation of the new material and reinforcement of the new material. The teacher, who signals when a particular learner is invited to speak, will regulate learners' participation in the lesson.

That's why we can come to the conclusion that **Communicative method** can be subdivided into 3 components: **Approach** (to language, to teaching, to learning), **Material design** (selection, presentation, organization), **Procedure** (techniques, activities, exercises).

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