

Principles of Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Instruction

Effective teaching is not about a method. It is about understanding and implementing principles of learning.

REFLECTION

What kind of methods or techniques have you experienced as a learner of (a) foreign language(s)? Which ones worked best for you, and which ones did not work at all? Why?

Introduction

The field of second or world language teaching has undergone many shifts and trends over the last few decades. Numerous methods have come and gone. We have seen the Audiolingual Method, cognitive-based approaches, the Total Physical Response (TPR), the Natural Approach, and many others (for a detailed description of these methods and approaches, see Richards and Rodgers 2001). In addition, the proficiency and standards-based¹ movements have shaped the field with their attempts to define proficiency goals and thus have provided a general sense of direction. Some believe that foreign language instruction has finally come of age (see Harper, Lively, and Williams 1998); others refer to it as the post-method area (Richards and Rodgers 2001). It is also generally believed that there is no one single best method that meets the goals and needs of all learners and programs. What has emerged from this time is a variety of

In this chapter you will learn about

- communicative language teaching.
- task-based instruction.
- characteristics of pedagogical and real-life tasks.
- principles underlying communicative language teaching methodologies.
- characteristics of good input.
- practical guidelines on how to maximize the use of the target language (TL) in the classroom.
- challenges in implementing communicative language teaching methodologies.

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communicative language teaching (CLT) methodologies. Such methodologies encompass eclectic ways of teaching that are borrowed from myriad methods. Furthermore, they are rooted not only in one but a range of theories and are motivated by research findings in second language acquisition (SLA) as well as cognitive and educational psychology. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an introduction to CLT and furthermore describe general methodological principles that function as theoretical and practical guidelines when implementing CLT methodologies.

The Shift Toward Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Instruction: A Historical Perspective

For many decades the predominant method of language instruction was the grammar-translation method. This method is rooted in the teaching of the nineteenth century and was widely used for the first half (in some parts of the world even longer) of the last century to teach modern foreign languages (Richards and Rodgers 2001). Textbooks primarily consisted of lists of vocabulary and rule explanations. By and large, students engaged in translation activities. Little oral proficiency would result from the Grammar-translation Method, and students often were expected to go abroad and immerse themselves to become a fluent speaker.

The Grammar-translation Method was not without its opponents, and the demand for oral proficiency led to several counter and parallel movements that laid the foundation for the development of new ways of teaching, as we still know them today (Richards and Rodgers 2001). One such method is the Direct Method, sometimes also referred to as the Berlitz Method as it was widely used in Berlitz schools. Some reformers of the nineteenth century (e.g., Gouin and Sauveur) believed that languages should be taught in a natural way, that is, how children learn language. As Richards and Rodgers (2001) point out, “Believers in the Natural Method argued that a foreign language could be taught without translation or the use of the learner’s native language if meaning was conveyed directly through demonstration and action” (p. 11). For this reason, they also strongly promoted the spontaneous use of language.

Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 12) describe principles of procedures underlying the Direct Method in the following way:

1. Classroom instruction was conducted exclusively in the target language.
2. Only everyday vocabulary and sentences were taught.
3. Oral communication skills were built up in carefully graded progression organized around question-answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes.
4. Grammar was taught inductively.
5. New teaching points were introduced orally.
6. Concrete vocabulary was taught through demonstrating, objects, and pictures; abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas.

7. Both speech and listening comprehension were taught.
8. Correct pronunciation and grammar were emphasized.

Despite its success in private schools, the Direct Method was met with a great deal of criticism. Strict requirements to adhere to its principles and the need for native speakers or someone with native-like fluency prevented this method from becoming widely adopted by academic institutions (see Richards and Rodgers 2001).

Hailed in its day as revolutionary in foreign language teaching, the grammar-translation method was replaced by the Audiolingual Method in the 1950s and 60s. The belief in the effectiveness of this method was so strong that traces of audiolingual-based teaching theories can still be found in teaching materials. The audiolingual method was based on the school of behaviorism in psychology and structuralism in linguistics, for which reason it also became known as the “structural” or “behaviorist” method. Because of its primary emphasis on spoken language, it is also referred to as the “Aural-oral” Method. The underlying assumption of this philosophy was that, as Rivers (1964) put it, foreign language learning is basically a mechanical process of habit formation and automatization. In practice, this meant students were presented with language patterns and dialogues, which they had to mimic and memorize. Language practice by and large consisted of repetition of language patterns and drill exercises. Drill types included substitution drills, variation drills, translation drills, and response drills. The following Swedish example illustrates a combination of a substitution and translation drill.

ILLUSTRATION 1

Substitution/transformation drill

Han har alltid HUNDEN med sig. [He always has his dog with him].

the map—the fountain pen—the ink—the paper—the car

The teacher says, “Han har alltid hunden med sig.” [He always has his dog with him].

Student chooses from a given list of English words, translates it into Swedish, and substitutes the underlined word of the example sentence.

A tenet of this method was that errors of any kind were to be avoided, so the learners were not to establish bad habits. For this reason, the native speaker teacher was considered the perfect model.

There were, however, many problems with audiolingual approaches. The teacher, who was often seen like the drillmaster, carried the responsibility of teaching and student learning like an atlas on his shoulder (Lee and VanPatten 2003). One of the most widely brought forward points of criticism toward this method is that the learners lacked engagement in meaningful language use and had only limited opportunities to

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use language creatively while interacting with their peers. As Willis (2004) points out, “This was because the emphasis was on eradication of errors and accurate production of the target forms, not on communication of meanings” (p. 4). Due to overcorrection of students’ errors by the teacher, anxiety levels were often quite high among students. The Audiolingual Method failed to have the desired effect of helping learners become competent speakers in the TL.

Several factors and influences led to the demise of the Audiolingual Method and caused a shift in language teaching methodology. This brought forth communicative language approaches and a range of alternative methods.

1. The Audiolingual Method did not live up to its promise creating speakers who were able to communicate in the target language.
2. Theories of learning moved away from behaviorist views of learning. The most influential work was the one by Chomsky, which was published in his book *Syntactic Structures* (1957). He argued that language learning involves creative processes and perceived language as rule-governed creativity. As Willis (2004) describes it, “He believed that a basic rule system that underpins all languages is innate and that, given exposure to a specific language, children will naturally create the specific rules of that language for themselves. Learning is thus seen as a process of discovery determined by internal processes rather than external influences” (pp. 4–5).
3. Works by scholars and sociolinguists such as J. Firth, M. Halliday, D. Hymes, and J. Austin led to a change in the way language was viewed. As emphasized by many practitioners, the primary purpose of language is to communicate.
4. The development of a functional-notional syllabus in the 1970s in Europe by Van Ek (1973) and Wilkins (1976) initiated a new way of how teaching materials were organized. Traditionally, syllabi had been organized around grammatical structures and vocabulary units. The functional-notional syllabus attempted to show what learners need to do with language and what meanings they need to communicate, and organized the syllabus around functions and notions. Functions are communicative speech acts such as “asking,” “requesting,” “denying,” “arguing,” “describing,” or “requesting.” Notional categories include concepts such as “time” or “location.” Notions and functions are different from topics and situations as they express more precise categories. For example, a topic may be “family,” the situation “coming for a visit and having dinner.” The function and the notion that is addressed in this unit may involve “inviting” and “time past” (e.g., past tenses, expressions like “last week,” “a few days ago”). The functional-notional syllabus laid the groundwork that ultimately led textbook writers to organize their materials in terms of communicative situations, and some also in very concrete communicative tasks.

5. A growing number of research studies in applied linguistics have provided many new insights and a deeper understanding of second language learning and SLA processes. Some of these include
 - Learners move through different stages of development (Selinker 1972).
 - Learners develop an underlying language system that develops in a sequence that does not always reflect the sequence of what was taught in a curriculum (Dulay and Burt 1973). Work by Pienemann (1989) showed that learners develop language skills according to their own internal syllabus.

Alternative approaches and methods to language teaching

While communicative language teaching methodologies kept evolving and being more clearly defined, in the 1970s and 80s a set of alternative approaches and methods emerged. Some of these include comprehension-based methods such as the Total Physical Response (TPR), the Natural Approach, the Silent Way, or Suggestopedia (for a detailed description of these methods, see Richards and Rodgers 2001). Many of these methods never became widely adapted and had only a short shelf life. This is not to say that these methods did not contribute to the field of language teaching. On the contrary, some of these methods have helped shape and continue to have an influence on the field in many ways. For example, TPR, which James Asher (1969) originally developed as a method to teach language by combining action and speech, is still widely used. Many practitioners, however, promote and use TPR as a technique to introduce some vocabulary or grammatical structures. Some principles of learning that have been promoted through these methods are integrated in the discussion below.

What Is Communicative Language Teaching?

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is generally regarded as an approach to language teaching (Richards and Rodgers 2001). As such, CLT reflects a certain model or research paradigm, or a theory (Celce-Murcia 2001). It is based on the theory that the primary function of language use is communication. Its primary goal is for learners to develop communicative competence (Hymes 1971), or simply put, communicative ability. In other words, its goal is to make use of real-life situations that necessitate communication.

Defining communicative competence

Communicative competence is defined as the ability to interpret and enact appropriate social behaviors, and it requires the active involvement of the learner in the production of the target language (Canale and Swain

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1980; Celce-Murcia et al. 1995; Hymes 1972). Such a notion encompasses a wide range of abilities: the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary (**linguistic competence**); the ability to say the appropriate thing in a certain social situation (**sociolinguistic competence**); the ability to start, enter, contribute to, and end a conversation, and the ability to do this in a consistent and coherent manner (**discourse competence**); the ability to communicate effectively and repair problems caused by communication breakdowns (**strategic competence**).

As frequently misunderstood, CLT is not a method per se. That is to say, it is not a method in the sense by which content, a syllabus, and teaching routines are clearly identified (see Richards and Rodgers 2001). CLT has left its doors wide open for a great variety of methods and techniques. There is no single text or authority on it, nor any single model that is universally accepted as authoritative (Richards and Rodgers 2001). By and large, it uses materials and utilizes methods that are appropriate to a given context of learning.

CLT has spawned various movements such as proficiency-based or standard-based instruction. While the early days of CLT were concerned with finding best designs and practices, the proficiency-based movement contributed to the field of language teaching by putting forward a set of proficiency guidelines (see American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages [ACTFL] guidelines in Chapter 8, Developing Oral Communication Skills). These guidelines describe language ability and are meant to be used to measure competence in a language (Omaggio-Hadley 2001). In this sense, the proficiency-based movement focused on measuring what learners can do in functional terms. By providing evaluative descriptions, that is, by specifying what students should know and how they should be able to use language within a variety of contexts and to various degrees of accuracy at different stages, it provided a set of broadly stated goals and thus a sense of direction for curriculum designers. The standard-based movement attempted to further streamline descriptions of what students should know and be able to do after completing a particular grade level or curriculum to meet national standards in foreign language education from kindergarten to university. In this way, both movements positively influenced and strengthened the development and implementation of communicative-oriented teaching practices.

As far as theories of learning and effective strategies in teaching are concerned, CLT does not adhere to one particular theory or method. It draws its theories about learning and teaching from a wide range of areas such as cognitive science, educational psychology, and second language acquisition (SLA). In this way, it embraces and reconciles many different approaches and points of view about language learning and teaching, which allows it to meet a wide range of proficiency-oriented goals and also accommodate different learner needs and preferences. Despite the lack of universally accepted models, from early on, there has

been some degree of consensus regarding the qualities required to justify the label “CLT,” which Wesche and Skehan (2002) describe as:

- Activities that require frequent interaction among learners or with other interlocutors to exchange information and solve problems.
- Use of authentic (non-pedagogic) texts and communication activities linked to “real-world” contexts, often emphasizing links across written and spoken modes and channels.
- Approaches that are learner centered in that they take into account learners’ backgrounds, language needs, and goals and generally allow learners some creativity and role in instructional decisions (p. 208).

With no one particular method or theory that underlies their practical and theoretical foundation, CLT methodologies are best described as a set of macro-strategies (Kumaradivelu 1994) or methodological principles (Doughty and Long 2003). The following section describes such principles in more detail.

Methodological Principles of Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Instruction

Doughty and Long (2003) define methodological principles as a list of design features that can be generally regarded as being facilitative to second language acquisition. The following list, adapted from Doughty and Long (2003), serves as a guideline for implementing communicative language teaching (CLT) practices.

Principle 1: Use Tasks as an Organizational Principle

For decades traditional methods of language teaching have used grammar topics or texts (e.g., dialogues, short stories) as a basis for organizing a syllabus. With CLT methodologies this approach has changed; the development of communicative skills is placed at the forefront, while grammar is now introduced only as much as needed to support the development of these skills. This raises questions on how to organize a syllabus. Some proponents (see Breen 1987; Long 1985; Nunan 1989; Prabhu 1987) suggest using tasks as central units that form the basis of daily and long-term lesson plans. Such an approach to syllabus design has become known as **task-based instruction (TBI)**. The rationale for the employment of communicative tasks is based on contemporary theories of language learning and acquisition, which claim that language use is the driving force for language development (Long 1989; Prabhu 1987). For example, advocates of such theories (see Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun 1993) suggest that, as Norris et al. (1998) put it, “the best way to learn and teach a language is

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through social interactions. [. . . they] allow students to work toward a clear goal, share information and opinions, negotiate meaning, get the interlocutor's help in comprehending input, and receive feedback on their language production. In the process, learners not only use their interlanguage, but also modify it, which in turn promotes acquisition" (p. 31). In other words, it is not the text one reads or the grammar one studies but the tasks that are presented that provide learners a purpose to use the grammar in a meaningful context. This gives task design and its use a pivotal role in shaping the language learning process.

What are tasks? Numerous competing definitions of tasks exist. Many of these definitions focus on different aspects of what constitutes a task. Below you will find three different interpretations of the word task, each of which highlights different nuances of the term.

One of the most widely quoted definitions for task is offered by Long (1985). He refers to a task as

a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Thus examples of tasks include [. . .] filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation, borrowing a library book, taking a driving test, typing a letter, [. . .], making a hotel reservation, writing a check, finding a street destination and helping someone across the road. In other words, by "task" is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between (p. 89).

Another well-known definition is provided by Nunan (1989). He considers a task as

any classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form (p. 10).

More recently, Skehan (1998) summarizes the parameters for a task activity in the following way:

"(a) meaning is primary, (b) learners are not given other people's meanings to regurgitate, (c) there is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities, (d) task completion has a priority, and (e), the assessment of tasks are done in terms of outcome" (p. 147).

From these definitions, despite the various interpretations, several common design features can be identified. These features include: All three definitions emphasize the importance of focus on meaning. This criterion supports the notion that conveying an intended meaning is the essence of language use (see Principle 4 for further discussion). Long (1985) and Skehan's (1998) definitions emphasize the use of real-world tasks or activities that are comparable to authentic task behavior. Performing real-world tasks also necessitates the use of real language to

accomplish these tasks. Skehan (1998) further suggests that task performance often involves achieving a goal or an objective, or arriving at an outcome or an end product. Meanwhile, Nunan's (1989) definition makes specific reference to the classroom environment and points out that task performance may entail employing a single skill or a combination of several skills. His description recognizes the pedagogical needs for focusing on skills in isolation in language learning.

One of the challenges of task-based learning and instruction is that engaging students in a variety of tasks is necessary to promote acquisition. Students have many pedagogical needs which often necessitate a different approach to teaching. For example, learners need to engage in psycholinguistic and metalinguistic processes such as repeating, noticing forms, hypothesizing and conceptualizing rules, which have been found by research as being conducive to the language acquisition process. For this reason, Nunan (1993) distinguishes between two kinds of tasks: Real-world tasks and pedagogical tasks. Real-world tasks are designed to emphasize those skills that learners need to have so they can function in the real world. Such tasks normally simulate authentic task behavior, and their primary focus is often the achievement of an end product. For such reasons, these kinds of tasks normally make up the final goal of a lesson or a unit.

In contrast to real-life tasks, pedagogical tasks are intended to act as a bridge between the classroom and the real world in that they serve to prepare students for real-life language usage (see Long, 1998). Such tasks are often referred to as "preparation" or "assimilation" tasks. They are designed to promote the language acquisition process by taking into account a teacher's pedagogical goal, the learner's developmental stage and skill level, and the social contexts of the second-language learning environment. They often have an enabling character, i.e., they aid the learners in their understanding of how language works and also in the development of learning skills and strategies in general. In addition, they focus on skills in isolation and within a narrow context. Pedagogical tasks do not necessarily reflect real-world tasks. For instance, the preparation task in Appendix 3 illustrates such an example. In this assimilation task, students complete descriptions with words that are missing. The rationale for this design is that students first need to learn some basic facts. Furthermore, their attention is directed to particular vocabulary and verb forms in isolation, which they need to apply in the subsequent task.

Sample task-based lessons. Illustrations 2 and 3 describe two different task-based lessons. The goal of the Lesson on organizing a welcome dinner (Illustration 2) is for learners to arrange a group of international students at dinner tables based on factors such as what the students' hobbies are, what languages they speak, or their age. The final goal of the lesson example in Illustration 3 is for students to set up and collect information for an address book. They are to find out the following information from three of their classmates: first name, last name, phone number or e-mail address, and why they are learning French. While both lesson models are

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organized by aiming at the achievement of a final task, they can be distinguished by what here is referred to as a “strong” or “dependent task” design. In the lesson on organizing a welcome dinner, which follows a “dependent” task design, all sub-steps are connected and situated within a contextualized framework. Students have to do something with the information they gather and also have to use this information in subsequent tasks, which lead up to a final task. The completion of all tasks involves multiple and different kinds of speech acts. For learners to achieve the final lesson goal, the successful completion of all tasks preceding the final task is required. Ultimately, performing the final target task is driven by gathering information in a communicative way during each subtask.

Illustration 3 follows a “task independent” design. The purpose of each task that leads up to the final task is to engage the learner in the development of skills that are needed to perform the final lesson task. While each task is contextualized and engages the learner in real-life speech application, they are not necessarily connected by one common theme. While communicative language use is still practiced during each task, the need for exchanging and gathering information in a communicative way to achieve the final lesson goal, however, is not the driving force.

ILLUSTRATION 2**Organizing a welcome dinner (see Appendix 3 for the entire lesson)**

- Step 1.** Students organize the group of international students around three dinner tables. For example, a student might say: “On table 1, Andrew Smith and Sandra Mogambe sit next to each other, because they both speak Spanish and collect butterflies.”
- Step 2.** Students listen to new information about the students given to them by their Spanish teachers and if necessary rearrange students at the tables.
- Step 3.** Students provide some personal information about themselves. Then they choose a student from their own group, who also wants to attend the welcome dinner, and select a table for this student.
- Step 4.** Now you are going to revise your distribution and write a brief report.
- Step 5.** A representative from each group presents their report and justifies the group decision.
- Step 6.** The groups and the teacher compare the results.

ILLUSTRATION 3**Setting up an address book**

- Step 1.** You are in a language school and the instructor is taking attendance. Students read the names of students and check who is present.

- Step 2.** Students listen to their teacher pronounce French names and share with the class French names that they are familiar with.
- Step 3.** A. Students match (associate) numbers with twelve photos that represent cultural themes. The photos are marked with some letters from the alphabet.
B. Students count from 1-12.
- Step 4.** Students listen to the result of a song contest broadcasted on TV. They complete a chart and write down the points that each country was awarded.
- Step 5.** A. Students are asked to write down the names of seven European countries. (The article and the first letter of each country name are provided.) The teacher follows up with the question: How do you spell **L'Allemagne**?
B. Students locate the names of European countries on the map.
- Step 6.** Students express their opinions about where they believe a set of photos was taken. Students work in pairs. For example, one student would ask in French: **La photo numéro deux, c'est la France?** [Photo number 2, is this France?] Her partner might respond, **Non, ce n'est pas la France, je crois que c'est la Grande-Bretagne.** [No, it is not France, I believe it is Great Britain.]
- Step 7.** Students listen to a recording of first and last names, and compare the spelling. They look for letters that are pronounced the same way, and those that are pronounced differently.
- Step 8.** Students match names of famous French celebrities with a corresponding photo and caption. Students express who they believe these people are. For example, a student might say: **La photo numéro 1, c'est Marguerite Duras?** [Photo number 1, is this Marguerite Duras?] Her partner might respond, **Non, ce n'est pas Marguerite Duras, je crois que c'est Isabelle Adjani.** [No, it is not Marguerite Duras, I believe it is Isabelle Adjani.]
- Step 9.** A. Students listen to three different dialogues in which people explain why they are learning French. They have to number the sentences (reasons) to identify who says what.
B. Students share their reason for why they are studying French.

As seen from the examples above, task-based instruction as a model of syllabus design has an emphasis on performance. Achievement is measured based on whether or to what extent learners can successfully perform the pedagogical and real-life tasks. However, it needs to be pointed out that using tasks as organizational units of daily and long-term plans is not without challenges. These challenges have to do with task choice, task difficulty and sequencing. Furthermore, depending on the complexity of target language structures, task designs often require careful adaptations as to what linguistic structures learners can actually apply. Following a task-based approach also requires careful pedagogical consideration, especially in terms of task implementation. This includes knowledge of

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when and how to integrate pedagogical tasks as lead-up and follow-up to a real-life task. The topic of designing pedagogical and real life tasks is further discussed in different chapters throughout this book.

Principle 2: Promote Learning by Doing

A task-based approach to learning implies the notion of learning by doing. This concept is not new to communicative language teaching methodologies, but it has been recognized and promoted as a fundamental principle underlying learning throughout history by many educators (e.g., see Long and Doughty 2003 for a brief overview). It is based on the theory that a hands-on approach positively enhances a learner's cognitive engagement. In addition, as Doughty and Long (2003) remind us, "new knowledge is better integrated into long-term memory, and easier retrieved, if tied to real-world events and activities" (p. 58).

In research on SLA, the "learning by doing" principle is strongly supported by an active approach to using language early on. For example, Swain (1985, 1995) suggests that learners need to actively produce language. Only in this way can they try out new rules and modify them accordingly. According to Omaggio-Hadley (2001), learners should be encouraged to express their own meaning as early as possible after productive skills have been introduced. Such opportunities should also entail a wide range of contexts in which they can carry out numerous different speech acts. This, furthermore, needs to happen under real conditions of communication so the learner's linguistic knowledge becomes automatic (Ellis 1997).

Principle 3: Input Needs to Be Rich

Considering the rich input we each experience and are exposed to while developing our native tongue, growing up speaking in our native languages means that we are exposed to a plethora of language patterns, chunks, and phrases in numerous contexts and situations over many years. Such a rich exposure to language ultimately allows us to store language in our brains that we can retrieve and access as whole chunks.

Needless to say, there is no way we can replicate this rich input in the classroom alone in order to develop native-like language skills. Nevertheless, the input provided needs to be as rich as possible. As Doughty and Long (2003) put it, rich input entails "realistic samples of discourse use surrounding native speaker and non-native speaker accomplishments of targeted tasks" (p. 61). This makes one of the most obvious necessities in teaching a foreign language that the student get to hear the language, whether from the teacher, from multimedia resources (TV, DVDs, video and audio tapes, radio, online), from other students, or any other source, and furthermore be exposed to as rich a diet of authentic language discourse as possible. In the classroom environment, this can

be achieved through the use of a wide range of materials, authentic and simplified, as well as the teacher's maximum use of the TL.

Corollary 1: Materials need to be authentic to reflect real-life situations and demands. One of the instructional practices promoted by communicative language teaching (CLT) is the extensive integration of authentic materials in the curriculum. **Authentic materials** refers to the use in teaching of texts, photographs, video selections, and other teaching resources that were not specially prepared for pedagogical purposes (Richards 2001). Examples of authentic audiovisual materials are announcements, conversations and discussions taken as extracts or as a whole from radio and television public broadcasting, real-life telephone conversations, messages left on answering machines, or voice mail. There are numerous justifications for the use of authentic materials. They contain authentic language and reflect real-world language use (Richards 2001). In other words, they expose students to real language in the kinds of contexts where it naturally occurs. Furthermore, they relate more closely to learners' needs and hence provide a link between the classroom and students' needs in the real world. The use of authentic materials also supports a more creative approach to teaching; that is, its use allows teachers to develop their full potential, designing activities and tasks that better match their teaching styles and the learning styles of their students. Last, the use of authentic materials requires the teachers to train their students in using learning strategies early on. These are essential skills that support the learning process at all levels of instruction.

Access to authentic data, such as text or audiovisual-based resources, is no longer a problem for most teachers. But in lower-level classrooms, the use of such materials faces numerous challenges. Authentic materials often contain difficult language. Usually, there is no particular text per se that ideally fits the learners' level of proficiency as a whole. For example, while one paragraph from a magazine article may be appropriate for beginning students, the next may be far too advanced and require special adaptation in task design to make it usable. In other words, to develop learning resources around authentic materials, teachers must be prepared to spend a considerable amount of time locating suitable sources for materials and developing learning tasks that accompany the materials and scaffold the learning process. Chapters 6 through 9 will address skill development and scaffolding the learning process in more detail.

As pointed out above, with the inception of CLT, language teachers have been turning to authentic materials for use in the classroom at increasingly lower levels of learner proficiency. At the same time, many published materials incorporate authentic texts and other real-world sources. Considering the advantages as well as limitations of using authentic materials, a mixture of both textbook-based and authentic materials, in particular at beginning levels, justifies practices that are pedagogically necessary and manageable.

REFLECTION

Describe one of your former teachers' uses of the **target language (TL)** and the **native language (L1)** in the classroom. How much L1 versus the TL did your teacher use? How did the teacher help you understand the TL better?

Corollary 2: The teacher needs to maximize the use of the target language. Another way to create rich input in the language classroom is by using the target language (TL) as a means of instruction. The exclusive or nearly exclusive use of the TL has been justified under what has come to be called a “maximum exposure” hypothesis—that is, learners need as much exposure as possible to the TL because the greater the amount of input, the greater the gains in the new language (Cummins and Swain 1986). The exclusive use of the TL by teachers in the foreign language has also become a strong principle advocated by teaching methodologies, notably in communicative approaches to language teaching (Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie 2002).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

There are a number of reasons you should use the target language (TL) in the classroom. Take the questionnaire in Appendix 1.1, *Using the Target Language and L1*. Which reasons do you agree or disagree with? Draw a conclusion on how to use the TL and English in the classroom.

Using the TL as the primary means of communication, however, has not been an issue without controversies. As teachers' practices reveal (see Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie 2002), many teachers feel drawn in different directions regarding when and how much English should be used in the classroom. For example, Polio and Duff (1994) report that many teachers prefer to use English mainly to explain grammar, to manage the class, to indicate a stance of empathy or solidarity toward students, to translate unknown vocabulary items, and to help students when they have problems understanding.

Likewise, students' reactions to the teacher's use of the target language and English show a mixture of preferences. By and large, many students prefer the instructor to make extensive use of the TL. As Brandl and Bauer (2002) have shown, in particular, in those beginning language

classrooms where teachers tend to use English more than the TL, students ask for an increase in the teacher's use of the TL. On the contrary, in those classes where teachers exclusively used the TL, many students expressed preference for some occasional use of English, in particular when providing directions or confirming the students' understanding.

There are numerous benefits to the extensive use of the TL. Nevertheless, the input that is provided—such as information or concepts teachers present in the TL—must be comprehensible to the students, otherwise no learning can occur (see Principle 4 on comprehensible input). A teacher's goal needs to be to find the right balance between the use of the TL and English, which makes sure students understand and at the same time maximizes the use of the TL.

To deal with resistance and some potential frustrations by students to this instructional practice of an extensive use of the TL, the following guidelines provide some strategies.

1. *Do not constantly switch back and forth between the TL and the students' L1.* Use the TL in longer chunks as much as possible. Although some purists suggest that the use of the TL and students' native language must be kept distinctively separated, switching between different languages is a common language phenomenon that occurs in any normal social interaction between speakers who share knowledge of the same languages. This language behavior is known as **code switching**. As such, code switching must be seen as a vital communication strategy. Students should not be discouraged from using code switching if they do not know how to say something in the TL and if it keeps the communication afloat. Nevertheless, code switching is different from language behavior where a teacher begins a sentence in one language and ends it in another—or constantly switches back and forth between languages due to either lack of proficiency skills or laziness.

2. *Set a good example for the students.* Do not expect students to use the TL if you cannot use it consistently yourself.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

What challenges might you encounter when making extensive use of the target language (TL) in the classroom? What will your students' reactions be? Can you think of any other suggestions for helping your students deal with the teacher's extensive use of the TL?

3. *Provide clear guidelines.* You need to let your students know when it is appropriate to use English in the classroom and for what purposes. Set aside specific times during each class for the use of English. For example, students most frequently request English for task instructions, brief explanations of grammar, or confirmation checks. Adhere to these guidelines as much as possible.

4. *Discuss the rationale for using the TL in the classroom early in the term.* Let students know why it is important to use the TL extensively in the classroom. For communicative purposes, it is critical for students to realize they do not need to understand every single word at all times.

Principle 4: Input Needs to Be Meaningful, Comprehensible, and Elaborated

A fundamental prerequisite for learning to occur is that the information we process must be meaningful. This means the information being presented must be clearly relatable to existing knowledge that the learner already possesses. This existing knowledge must be organized in such a way that the new information is easily assimilated, or “attached,” to the learner’s cognitive structure (Ausubel 1968). The necessity of meaningfulness is not in particular new to CLT. Throughout the history of language teaching, there have always been advocates of a focus on meaning as opposed to form alone, and of developing learner ability to actually use language for communication. Meaningfulness, however, has emerged as a primary principle of CLT—and as a counter-reaction to audiolingual teaching, which was criticized for repetitive drills that did not require the processing of language so the content made sense or was meaningful to learner.

In addition to being meaningful, input should adhere to several general characteristics that make it potentially useful to the learner. As Lee and VanPatten (1995a) suggest, “the language that the learner is listening to (or reading, if we are talking about written language) must contain some message to which the learner is supposed to attend” (p. 38).

In language learning, input cannot be meaningful unless it is comprehensible. This means, as Lee and VanPatten (1995a) put it, “The learner must be able to understand most of what the speaker (or writer) is saying if acquisition is to happen. [. . .], the learner must be able to figure out what the speaker is saying if he is to attach meaning to the speech stream coming at him” (p. 38). The authors further describe the importance of this hypothesis in the following way:

Acquisition consists in large part of the building up of form-meaning connections in the learner’s head. For example, the learner of French hears the word *chien* in various contexts and eventually attaches it to a particular meaning: a four-legged canine. As another example, a learner of Italian might hear *-ato* in various contexts and eventually attach it to a particular meaning: a past-time reference. Features of language, be they grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, or something else, can only make their way into the learner’s mental representation of the language system if they have been linked to some kind of real-world meaning. If the input is incomprehensible or if it is not meaning-bearing, then these form-meaning connections just don’t happen. (p. 38)

As pointed out previously, ways of creating rich input in the classroom environment are either through extensive use of the TL or through a wide range of authentic or linguistically rich resources. On the downside, creating this environment involves numerous pedagogical challenges, particularly in regard to making such input accessible—that is, meaningful and comprehensible to the learners. These challenges can be met by means of numerous input strategies, or by what Doughty and Long (2003) refer to as **elaborating input**. Elaboration in this context has several meanings. On the one hand, it is the myriad ways native speakers modify discourse, that is, the way they use language to make it comprehensible to the non-native speaker (Doughty and Long 2003). Such strategies include

- confirmation checks (e.g., “You mean . . . ; What you are saying is . . .”)
- comprehension checks, (e.g., “Is this correct? What you are saying is . . .”)
- the teacher’s accessibility to students’ questions
- providing nonlinguistic input through body language (e.g., modeling, gestures, visuals)
- modified language use through
 - a. repetition
 - b. slower speech rate
 - c. enhanced enunciation
 - d. simplifying language (e.g., high-frequency vocabulary, less slang, fewer idioms, shorter sentences)
 - e. use of cognates
 - f. limited use of English

Research supports such strategies and has pointed out numerous benefits. For example, Hatch (1983) examined simplified input in terms of five general categories: (1) rate of speech, (2) vocabulary, (3) syntax, (4) discourse, and (5) speech setting. As a result, she suggests that such speech modifications potentially aid with the comprehension process. This is presumably the case because clear enunciation, repetition, and slower speech rate make language acoustically more salient and provide a greater chance for the learners to perceive language structures and process form-meaning connections. Likewise, simplified syntax or modifications of input further reduce the burden on process and increase the chance that the learner will hear certain forms and structures (Lee and VanPatten 1995a). In another study, Brandl and Bauer (2002) investigated beginning language students’ preferences of teacher’s use of input strategies. They report that students in particular find confirmation checks, use of body language, visual representations, repetitions, slower speech rate, and occasional use of English helpful with their comprehension of the input.

On the other hand, elaborating input can be further enhanced through a thoughtful plan of how input is presented. This requires mindful attention to task design by taking into account task choice and difficulty, learner processing skills, and scaffolding strategies. This topic will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Principle 5: Promote Cooperative and Collaborative Learning

In general education, **cooperative** or **collaborative learning** has long been recognized as a strong facilitator of learning (e.g., see Kagan 1989). In such an approach, classrooms are organized so that students work together in small cooperative teams, such as groups or pairs, to complete activities. In second language learning environments, students work cooperatively on a language-learning task or collaboratively by achieving the goal through communicative use of the target language. Particularly in the latter case, if the learning tasks are designed to require active and true communicative interaction among students in the target language, they have numerous benefits on attainment (for a detailed list and discussion, see Chapter 8, *Developing Oral Communication Skills*). Key to learning in these situations is what takes place during the interaction between the learners and the teacher, and among the learners.

While interaction normally involves both input and learner production, learners cannot simply listen to input. Rather, they must be active conversational participants who interact and negotiate the type of input they receive. Speakers also make changes in their language as they interact or “negotiate meaning” with each other. They do so to avoid conversational trouble or when trouble occurs. In this way, the interaction functions like a catalyst that promotes language acquisition. This claim has become widely known as Long’s “Interaction Hypothesis” (1983).

A large body of research supports this hypothesis. A recent **meta-analysis**² that investigated the empirical link between task-based interaction and acquisition showed positive evidence for those tasks in particular that push learner output, that is, tasks that require communicative exchange of information and the production of the target language features during learner-to-learner interaction.

While the ability to develop a new language is fostered between and among learners, the social interaction between the teacher, as the expert, and the student, as the novice, which has been the focus of traditional instruction, is of equal importance and should not be ignored. The importance of this kind of social interaction is well described by the works of social psychologist Vygotsky (1978). Through the assistance of the teacher and the social interaction, the learner is led to reach a potential that exceeds his current level of development. In communicative language classrooms, however, as soon as students are able to perform

speech acts or language tasks on their own—that is, without a teacher’s assistance—the focus shifts from teacher-led to student-centered language application.

Principle 6: Focus on Form

One of the debates about grammar teaching centered on the issue of whether to make grammar explicit or whether to have the learners figure out the rules themselves. In this context, *explicit* means that the rules become salient or are laid out to the learner at one point during the course of instruction. Although not everybody agrees (see Krashen 1981), research provides ample evidence for the benefits of making grammar rules explicit to adult language learners (for a review of studies, see Norris and Ortega 2000). Within explicit ways of teaching grammar, Long (1991) conceived a further distinction between what he calls “focus on form” and “focus on formS.” A **focus on formS** approach represents a fairly traditional approach to teaching grammar where “students spend much of their time in isolated linguistic structures in a sequence predetermined externally and imposed on them by a syllabus designer or textbook writer . . .,” while meaning is often ignored (Doughty and Long 2003, p. 64). In contrast, a **focus on form** approach to explicit grammar teaching emphasizes a form-meaning connection and teaches grammar within contexts and through communicative tasks (see communicative language teaching principles above).³ Doughty and Long (2003) point out that overwhelming empirical evidence exists in favor of a focus-on-form approach, hence they proclaim it a fundamental methodological principle in support of CLT and task-based language instruction. (For a statistical meta-analysis of some 60 studies comparing focus on form with other types of instruction, see Norris and Ortega 2000).

Chapter 4, Grammar and Language Learning, discusses some of the controversies on grammar teaching in more detail. It also provides an overview of techniques ranging from self-instructional, discovery, teacher-guided, or teacher-student co-constructed approaches to making rules explicit.

Principle 7: Provide Error Corrective Feedback

In a general sense, feedback can be categorized in two different ways: **positive feedback** that confirms the correctness of a student’s response. Teachers demonstrate this behavior by agreeing, praising, or showing understanding. Or, **negative feedback**, generally known as error correction (see Chaudron 1988), which has a corrective function on a student’s faulty language behavior. As learners produce language, such evaluative feedback can be useful in facilitating the progression of their skills

toward more precise and coherent language use. Both types are vital during a learner's interlanguage development since they allow the learner to either accept, reject, or modify a hypothesis about correct language use.

The study of feedback in learning situations has a long history. In language learning, many research studies have documented that teachers believe in the effectiveness of feedback and that students ask for it, believe in the benefits of receiving it, and learn from it. Yet the degree to which information provided through feedback aids a learner's progress is not always clear. Such a claim can be illustrated by what teachers frequently experience; namely, that their students, after receiving feedback, often keep making the same mistakes—or even when they get it right initially, many still fall back into their previous and faulty language behavior. “Acquisition is a process that is not usually instantaneous” (Doughty and Williams 1998, p. 208). Achieving positive effects with error corrective feedback involves a long-term process that depends on corrective strategies and most of all on individual learner factors.

For example, in a classroom study of the effectiveness of various feedback techniques, Lyster and Ranta (1997) found that **recasts**—that is, when a teacher repeats a student's faulty language production, but in a correct way—were the most widespread response to learner error. Yet recasts were in fact the least effective in eliciting learners to immediately revise their output. Instead, direct error corrective strategies that involved the teacher's help—such as providing metalinguistic clues or clarification requests—were the most effective in stimulating learner-generated repairs (for a more detailed discussion, see Chapter 5, Feedback and Error Correction in Language Learning).

As suggested by Lyster and Ranta's study, the value of negative feedback lies in drawing learner attention to some problematic aspect of their interlanguage. In other words, many learners may require help in “noticing” (Schmidt 1990, 2001) their mistakes. Another factor that may also play a crucial role concerns the timing of that feedback. “Where corrective recasts are concerned, the information must be provided as-yet-little-understood cognitive processing window [. . .] such that learners can make some sort of comparison between the information provided in the feedback and their own preceding utterance” (Doughty and Long 2003, p. 14).

While the type of error corrective strategy may make a difference, **learner readiness** may be the most decisive factor in predicting success in the acquisition process. Readiness implies that the learners are able to make a “comparison between their internal representation of a rule and the information about the rule in the input [i.e., feedback] they encounter” (Chaudron 1988, p. 134). Simply put, if a learner makes a mistake and has no clue that he made a mistake, nor does he know what he did wrong, in other words there was no hypothesis that he was testing either, then any kind of error corrective feedback may simply be ineffective as the learner is not ready yet (see Brandl 1995).

In general, there is little doubt about the role of feedback as a facilitator to learning, despite many challenges in delivering it effectively. The

provision of “error corrective” and “positive” feedback as a fundamental principle permeates all areas of instruction and constitutes a necessity in support of the learning process.

Principle 8: Recognize and Respect Affective Factors of Learning

Over the years, consistent relationships have been demonstrated between language attitudes, motivation, performance anxiety, and achievement in second language learning (Gardner 1985; Gardner and McIntyre 1993; Horwitz and Young 1991). Needless to say, all teachers eventually experience how learners feel about the target language or how their attitudes toward it impact their motivation and subsequently their success. As Gardner and McIntyre (1993) put it, a learner who is motivated “wants to achieve a particular goal, devotes considerable effort to achieve this goal, and experiences in the activities associated with achieving this goal” (p. 2).

One characteristic of language learning that has received a great deal of attention over the past years is the role of anxiety during the learning process. In particular, with active language performance as a major goal of CLT, anxiety has been noticed as a trait with many individual learners. Anxiety manifests itself in many ways such as self-belittling, feelings of apprehension, stress, nervousness, and even bodily responses such as faster heartbeat. Numerous studies have corroborated what Krashen contended in his Affective Filter hypothesis, which states: “Language learning must take place in an environment where learners are ‘off the defensive’ and the affective filter (anxiety) is low in order for the input to be noticed and gain access to the learners’ thinking” (Krashen 1982, p. 127).

There is a clear negative relationship between anxiety and learning success. Anxiety as a personal trait must be recognized and kept at a minimal level for learning to be maximized. Anxiety and its impact on learner performance are discussed in more detail in later chapters.

Challenges in Communicative Language Teaching

CLT or a task-based approach is not a panacea to language teaching. There are numerous challenges to making communicative language teaching happen. These issues have to do with the choice of content, context, specific skill areas (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, etc.), and particular learning tasks that determine a curriculum.

These choices are tightly linked to questions about what it means to “know” a language, to be proficient in a language, and what communicative abilities entail. While the literature on language teaching has attempted to provide answers to such questions, there are no universally accepted standards. The proficiency and standards movements have

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attempted to provide some guidelines, but they often remain broad in learner performance descriptions (see Appendix 8.3, ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines). This ultimately makes assessment of individual learners' communicative ability challenging, and it essentially leaves judgment of learner progress up to the teachers.

Communicative abilities cannot be simply categorized as speaking, listening, reading, or writing skills, as it was done in a traditional four-skills approach. For example, when two people talk to each other, the process normally involves speaking and listening skills as well as active communicative strategies such as asking for clarification and adjusting language to make each other understood. The endeavor to teach languages in a way that encompasses all skills, based on an interactive view of language behavior, has posed many challenges on how to go about integrating the four skills effectively in a daily and long-term curriculum.

The teaching of proficiency and communicative-based skills raises the question not only about content but also about the choice of learning tasks or best teaching practices. CLT does not promote one standardized method or curriculum, but is eclectic in its approach. Being eclectic means it promotes the best or most effective techniques or methodologies. At the same time, the choice of techniques and learning tasks is not an arbitrary decision, but is firmly grounded in principles of learning as they are motivated by research in second language acquisition (SLA) and educational psychology. Learning what constitutes effective ways of learning and teaching initially requires intensive training and in the long run staying in touch with current SLA research findings.

As a last point, the quality of CLT also often depends on the quality of teaching materials. Unfortunately, only in the most commonly taught languages—such as English, Spanish, French, and German—does an abundance of materials exist to support the development of communicative language abilities over a wide range of skills.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an introduction to communicative language teaching (CLT) and to describe methodological principles that facilitate the language learning process. CLT furthermore takes a pragmatic or performance-based approach to learning. Its goal is to promote the development of real-life language skills by engaging the learner in contextualized, meaningful, and communicative-oriented learning tasks. CLT methodologies embrace an eclectic approach to teaching, which means they borrow teaching practices from a wide array of methods that have been found effective and that are in accordance with principles of learning as suggested by research findings in research in SLA and cognitive psychology. Its open-ended or principle-based approach allows for a great deal of flexibility, which makes it adaptable to many individual programmatic and learner needs and goals. Such an approach further supports the

notion that no second language teaching method can be the single best one. It recognizes the wide range of factors—such as learner ability and motivation, teacher effectiveness and methodology—that contribute to success in foreign language learning. Last, it leaves the door open to redefine and adapt new teaching practices, as research findings evolve in the future.

Checking chapter objectives

Do I know how to . . .

- define communicative and task-based language teaching?
- describe different characteristics of pedagogical and real-life tasks?
- describe principles underlying communicative language teaching methodologies?
- identify characteristics of good input?
- maximize the use of the TL in the classroom?
- deal with challenges in implementing communicative language teaching methodologies?

Explorations

TASK 1: DISCUSSION

Discuss the following questions. In a communicative-based language class,

- how is a lesson structured?
- what promotes learning?
- what is the role of input and resources?
- what is the role of grammar?
- what is the role of feedback?
- what is the atmosphere like?

TASK 2: LESSON ANALYSIS

All of the following lessons have been claimed to follow communicative language teaching methodologies. Read through the different lesson descriptions and identify principles of CLT in action in each of these lessons. Which lessons are most in alignment with CLT?

Lesson 1

What's her name?

1. Listen and read: Students listen to a taped recording and read a dialogue between two men talking about finding a suitable milkman to deliver milk. They talk about two possible assistants, a boy and a girl. The dialogue is tightly structured around giving personal information

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- in reply to *Wh-* questions: What's her name? Where does she live? The listening activity lasts around three minutes.
2. Answer: Students listen to the conversation again and complete a chart about the girl and the boy. They listen for name, age, address, hobbies, and description.
 3. Listen and repeat: Students listen to the question format on the tape and repeat what they hear: What's her name? What's his name?
 4. Write and speak: Students are directed to look at the dialogue in Activity 1 and find all the questions. They need to write the questions in their notebooks. Then they practice asking each other the questions and giving the appropriate reply for the boy and the girl in the textbook.
 5. Write and speak: Students copy a chart similar to that in Activity 2. They fill in the chart with information about themselves first; then they interview a partner and fill in his/her information.
 6. Listen: Students listen to a new conversation about a film producer looking for a boy and a girl to act in a new movie. The producer has a conversation (similar to that in Activity 1) to find out information about two possible candidates. Students listen only and complete a personal information form.
 7. Write: Students are given a cloze passage about the girl the producer in Activity 6 above was enquiring about. Then they write a similar paragraph about the boy.

Source: Flowerdew and Miller (2005), 103–104.

Lesson 2***Who has the coolest room?***

1. Warm up. The instructor points at object(s) in the classroom and students name it or them.
2. Writing: Doing an inventory. Students individually make a list of the objects that they have in their room. They compare their list with another student asking their partner whether they have the same things in their rooms. Students mark off those items they have in common, and they write down those they do not have in common.
3. Guided control: Finding misplaced objects. Students switch partners and do an information gap activity in pairs. Each student has a different picture of a room containing many objects. They ask each other about the location of a variety of objects they are looking for and then mark them on their picture.
4. Communicative exchange: Describing and finding out what each other's room looks like. Students describe their rooms to each other. They draw a picture of each other's rooms.
5. Extension and task: Students identify who has the coolest room. Students report to the class on what their partner's room looks like.

The instructor asks the rest of the class which room they like best. Students in addition have to provide the rationale for their decision.

Lesson 3

The topic of this Indonesian class was to introduce colors and learn expressions such as “How much does it cost?” and “It costs. . . .” While showing the students the colors in Indonesian, the instructor took the opportunity to introduce expressions of preference, such as “What is your favorite color?” She had a stack of cards made of different-colored paper, with the Indonesian word written on the back of each one. There were two cards of each color. Each student had to pick his or her favorite color from the stack. Then the students had to ask each other what their favorite colors were. This activity involved listening, reading, and speaking, since the students first had to listen to the instructor for cues on how to ask and answer the question, then had to read their color from their card, and finally had a short conversation about their favorite color.

The instructor then moved to the main part of her lesson, which centered on buying things at a store. She introduced the basic vocabulary by first posing the question, “How much is the . . . ,” and then answering it. She handed out copies of a real-world Indonesian advertisement for sunglasses, contact lenses, and hearing aids. These products enabled the students to use the expressions with vocabulary that consisted entirely of words borrowed from English (sunglass, *lensa kontak*). The purpose of the pairs of colored cards from the first activity now became clear, because the students had to pair up according to their favorite color and then practice asking each other how much each of the products from the advertisement cost.

For the last part of the class, the instructor introduced a guest as the “mystery celebrity” and told the students to imagine that they were journalists who wanted to find out personal information about him. They had to ask the guest speaker questions in English, but could use only the questions they would also be able to ask in Indonesian. The guest speaker answered in English, and the journalists took notes on his answers. When they were done, each student had to volunteer at least one piece of information about the guest speaker—in Indonesian.

Lesson 4

In this elementary-level Czech language class, the topic revolved around a long list of vocabulary, most of it related to basic concepts such as people and places and a few adjectives and verbs. The class period began with a small quiz over the previous week’s vocabulary, and then the instructor began the new lesson. She went down a list of new vocabulary terms in the book, saying each word. The students would then repeat the word after her. After a page of this vocabulary, the teacher had her students go on to a text in the book. They went around the room, each

student reading a sentence of the text aloud, with the teacher correcting any errors. Then they went around the room again, each student translating one sentence into English.

TASK 3: TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS

Analyze the chapter of a textbook. Make a list of all the learning tasks, identifying the kinds of skills in which the learners get engaged. Categorize the tasks as non-communicative learning, pre-communicative language practice, communicative language practice, structured communication, and authentic communication. In which skills do most of the learners get engaged? Draw a conclusion about the communicative nature and focus of the textbook.

TASK 4: DISCUSSION

Figure 1-1 contains a list of useful strategies that help you to create comprehensible input in the language classroom. Which of these strategies do you believe are more important for beginning-level learners than for learners who had two to three years of classroom exposure?

TASK 5: PART A. VIDEO ANALYSIS OF INPUT STRATEGIES

In the following microteaching performance (see video), the instructor introduces the Spanish past-tense form *imperfecto*. Which of the strategies listed in Figure 1-2 does the instructor use in her presentation?

Interactive strategies

1. confirmation checks/pauses
2. accessible for questions

Use of the target language

1. modeling/body language
2. examples
3. visual representation
4. repetition
5. clear enunciation
6. lower speech rate
7. rephrasing
8. use of simplified language

Use of English

1. use of English for directions
2. use of English for explanations
3. use of English for confirmations

FIGURE 1-1 List of input strategies
(Source: Brandl and Bauer (2002);
original materials.)

| Use of language | Visual input (linguistic) | Visual input (nonlinguistic) | Interactive strategies |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaks slowly • pauses frequently • enunciates clearly • uses repetitions • uses simplified syntax (S-V-O) • uses short sentences • uses examples • uses high frequency vocabulary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writes words on the board or overhead | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • models actions • uses gestures • uses pictures/props | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • checks students' comprehension directly (e.g., Do you understand <i>x</i>?) • clarifies student's comprehension indirectly (e.g., What did he want? . . . a book? . . . a pen? . . . a pencil?) |

FIGURE 1-2 List of strategies

Using the list in Figure 1-2, check off all the strategies that you can identify.

NOTE!

If you do not have the video available, work with the transcript in Figure 1-3.

If you are not familiar with Spanish, it may be more difficult to identify all the strategies used in Figure 1-3. In that case, make use of the translation of the teacher's script. Furthermore, place yourself in a student's position and focus on those strategies that helped you understand the instructor's presentation.

Ok clase, buenos días clase. Ustedes ya saben que estudiamos el verbo de pasado que se llama "pretérito." Hoy, vamos a estudiar el verbo pasado que se llama "imperfecto." Y se llama . . . El verbo pretérito ocurrió sola una vez. Como cuando yo deajo caer muñeco, no más. [*drops the doll on the table*] No se mueve más. Una sola vez al pasado. Cuando yo hablo del imperfecto, el imperfecto es un verbo que ocurre repetidamente, como un yo-yo. Arriba, abajo, arriba, abajo. [*plays with the yo-yo*] Es un verbo que tiene movimiento, que no parada existir.

OK class, good morning class. You already know that we studied the past-tense verb form that is called the preterite. Today, we are going to study the past-tense verb form called "imperfective." The preterite verb occurs only once. Like when I let the doll fall . . . no more. [drops the doll on the table] It doesn't move any more. It only happens once. When I speak of the imperfective, it's a verb that occurs repetitively, like a yo-yo. Up, down, up, down. [plays with the yo-yo] It's a verb that has movement, that doesn't cease to exist.

FIGURE 1-3 Transcript of a Spanish Microteaching Presentation

TASK 6: PART B. VIDEO ANALYSIS OF INPUT STRATEGIES

How would you continue this lesson? What input strategies would you make use of next? Briefly outline how you would continue this lesson.

When you are finished, watch the second part of the video excerpt to see how the teacher continues her mini-lesson. What strategies did she further use to make herself understood? Compare the teacher's script with your own and discuss the results with your class.

NOTE!

If you do not have the video available, see the transcript in Appendix 1.2.

TASK 7: ANALYSIS

Evaluate how comprehensible the language in each of the following contexts would be to first-year learners of the language you (will) teach. Why does the language differ so much from one context to the next?

- a. a TV commercial for laundry detergent
- b. a comic strip
- c. a cooking demonstration
- d. a diary entry
- e. the beginning of a fairy tale
- f. an interview about your life on campus

Source: Lee and VanPatten (1995b), p. 24.

TASK 8: EXPLORING YOUR BELIEFS

Find out whether your classmates agree or disagree with the statements below. Choose three to four issues and discuss them with at least three to four different students in class. Make sure to provide a rationale for your answers.

| STATEMENT | I agree | I disagree | I agree with reservations. |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|------------|----------------------------|
| 1. People have learned languages for centuries, so the methods we use do not really matter. | | | |
| 2. The most important thing is to let students experiment with the language (spoken and written). They learn the language by using it and need to be given many opportunities to do so. | | | |
| 3. Students learn best when they are first presented with a clear explanation of grammar rules. Then, they can apply the rules and use them freely. | | | |
| 3. Class time should mostly be spent focusing on language structures. Meaning can be added later on, once students can express themselves. | | | |
| 4. Drilling language patterns does not guarantee that the students will internalize them and produce them on their own outside the framework of the exercise. | | | |
| 5. Accuracy develops naturally. We should not worry too much about students producing perfect structures right away. It is best for teachers not to overcorrect. | | | |
| 6. Teacher input needs to be rich but comprehensible if learning is to take place. | | | |
| 7. Language is best learned interactively, in a social environment. In an ideal class, students work together a lot. | | | |
| 8. Student motivation does not matter. They will learn regardless of their motivation. | | | |

Source: Hedwige Meyer, University of Washington

Application

TASK 9: MAXIMIZING STUDENT INTERACTION

The goal of this foreign language lesson is for students to talk about and compare the lifestyles of male and female adolescents. The setting is an American classroom. In a traditional classroom, the teacher might ask questions such as: What do young American women and men like to do in their free time? What are their hobbies? What are common activities? Which ones are less common? In communicative language teaching, the

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teacher would maximize the communicative use of language by creating multiple opportunities for students to interact with each other.

Design a lesson outline that consists of different steps. Project yourself into the classroom, and demonstrate how you would enact each step to create maximum interactions among students.

NOTE!

Step 1 below is a possible way of getting started, but feel free to change it.

| Steps | Task description and teaching routine |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | In pairs (preferably pairs consist of male and female students only), students make a list of activities that describe the lifestyles of young men or women. |
| 2 | |
| 3 | |
| 4 | |
| 5 | |

TASK 10: ELABORATING A TEXT

Review the following conversation between two adults. Then modify the second person's (the friend's) speech, so that a beginning learner could more easily understand it.

PARENT: I'm pretty fed up with my job these days. I mean, I can't believe that the company thinks we will take a cut in pay and not say anything. I mean, it's just—I don't know.

FRIEND: But it's like that everywhere! Last week I read in *Newsweek*—at least I think it was *Newsweek*. We get both *Newsweek* and *Time*—but anyway I read where IBM is cutting another 500 jobs this next week. I bet those people wouldn't mind a cut in pay just to keep food on the table.

PARENT: Come on! It's not that easy and you know it . . .

Source: Lee and VanPatten (1995b), p. 24.

TASK 11: TRYING OUT INPUT STRATEGIES

Spontaneously describe the picture story of the lion and the mouse (see Appendix 1.4) in the target language (TL) to your partner or the whole class. Make use of as many input strategies as possible to help your partner understand the story.

NOTE!

This activity works best if a true immersion experience can be created in the classroom. If possible, have the story told in a language that is unknown to most class participants.

With the whole class, discuss how well you accomplished your goal. As the “input provider,” were you capable of making yourself understood? What means did you make use of? As the listener, were you able to understand your partner’s story? What challenges did you both encounter? How can you deal with such challenges in the language classroom?

APPENDIX 1.1

Using the Target Language and Native Language

There are a number of reasons you should use the target language in the classroom. Test yourself! Check off those items that you consider most appropriate:

- I don't speak my students' native language, or I don't feel confident speaking my students' native language because I make many mistakes.
- I teach multinational students.
- The students should be prepared for real communicative situations in the target language.
- Students should learn to make themselves understood by making use of the limited vocabulary and grammatical structures they know.
- Students should learn to work with monolingual dictionaries.
- In the foreign language classroom, the primary mode of articulation [i.e., the target language] should not be changed to improve the students' pronunciation.
- I want to create an environment in which students pay attention when I speak the target language. They should not be waiting for a translation.

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- The students should learn how to comprehend texts globally and not always translate word by word.
- The students should learn how to think and speak in the target language as much as possible.
- It is difficult to find the correct answer from all the entries listed in a bilingual dictionary.

If you checked off most of the items above, you principally are in favor of using the target language as much as possible in the classroom.

Reasons for occasional use of the students' native language are:

- when there is the risk of miscomprehension.
- when the expenditure of time required to give an explanation in the target language cannot be justified by the results.
- when the exclusive use of the target language interferes with interpersonal communication.
- to explain difficult cultural concepts.⁴

Source: Weigmann (1992), 22–23. Translated here by Klaus Brandl.

APPENDIX 1.2

Transcript of the Microteaching Lesson Introducing the *Preterito* (second half)

Entonces, *gustar* es un verbo que habla. *Gustar*. Es el infinitivo del verbo “me gusta.” En el pasado, en el imperfecto, el verbo “gustar” era “gustaba.” Cuando todo me gustaba siempre, repetidamente, siempre gustaba—gustaba. Es el imperfecto del verbo *gustar*. *Gustaba*.

[referring to the items on the overhead screen]

Por ejemplo, aquí. Cuando yo era niña, cuando yo era pequeña, me gustaba trepar los árboles, subir bien alto. Trepar los árboles. Digan por favor—trepar los árboles. Cuando yo era niña, me gustaba tirar piedras. Tirar piedras. Tirar. Me gustaba. Siempre. Yo era así siempre, un verbo repetido. . . . Me gustaba romper vítreos. Romper. Romper vítreos. Me gustaba.

Then, *gustar* (to be pleasing; to like) is a verb that we say. It is the infinitive form of the verb *me gusta* (it is pleasing to me; I like). In the past tense, in the imperfective, the verb *gustar* is *gustaba*. When I liked everything all the time, repeatedly, always, “gustaba”—it’s the imperfective of the verb *gustar*. *Gustaba* (I liked).

[referring to the items on the overhead screen]

For example, here. When I was a little girl, when I was small, I liked to climb trees, to get up to a good height. To climb trees. Say it, please: *trepar los árboles*. When I was a little girl, I liked to throw stones. . . . throw. Liked. Always. I did it always, a repetitive verb. . . .

APPENDIX 1.3

The Dinner Game

32 TAREA

Gente con gente + 2

◆ Conocer (*meet*) a un grupo de estudiantes internacionales y organizarlos para una cena de bienvenida (*welcome dinner*).

NOTAS
1002-17

◆ **PREPARACIÓN** ◆

La clase se divide en grupos. Ustedes están (*you are*) en un curso de verano (*summer*) en la "Escuela de Español Golfo de México". Estos estudiantes también están en la escuela. Son estudiantes de todo el mundo. ¿Conocen a sus compañeros/as de escuela? Completen estas descripciones con las palabras que faltan (*are missing*).



1. SANDRA MOGAMBE
ES _____ DE BIOLOGÍA.
TIENE 17 _____.
HABLA ESPAÑOL.
ES _____ GUINEA ECUATORIAL.
COLECCIONA MARIPOSAS.

2. MARK SELLIGSON
ES _____ DE ARTE.
_____ 45 AÑOS.
_____ ESPAÑOL Y ALEMÁN.
MUY _____ AL FÚTBOL.

3. SILVIA OLIVEIRA
_____ 23 AÑOS.
_____ PROFESORA DE PORTUGUÉS.
_____ PORTUGUÉS E INGLÉS.
ES SOLTERA.

4. ANDREW SMITH
PROFESOR _____ GIMNASIA.
_____ 50 AÑOS.
_____ SEPARADO.
HABLA ESPAÑOL E INGLÉS.
_____ MARIPOSAS.

5. KEIKO TANAKA
_____ 20 AÑOS.
_____ JAPONÉS Y UN POCO
DE ESPAÑOL.
_____ CASADA.

6. AKIRA TANAKA
_____ PINTOR.
TIENE 22 _____.
HABLA JAPONÉS Y UN _____
DE ESPAÑOL.

7. SAMUEL SOHAMY
_____ ISRAELÍ.
_____ ESTUDIANTE.
TIENE 18 AÑOS.
_____ HEBREO Y UN _____
DE INGLÉS.

8. LANA SOHAMY
_____ ISRAELÍ.
_____ ESTUDIANTE.
TIENE 20 AÑOS.
_____ HEBREO, INGLÉS Y UN POCO
DE JAPONÉS.
MUY _____ AL FÚTBOL.

9. JENNY DONALDSON
ES _____ ESTADOS UNIDOS.
_____ PIANISTA.
TIENE 20 AÑOS.
_____ SOLTERA.
_____ INGLÉS.

10. NICOLE TOMBA
_____ ESTADOUNIDENSE.
_____ INFORMÁTICA.
TIENE 26 _____.
_____ SOLTERA.
HABLA INGLÉS Y ESPAÑOL.

11. MISHA GÁLVEZ
_____ FUNCIONARIA.
_____ 33 AÑOS.
_____ CASADA.
SÓLO _____ TAGALO Y UN POCO
DE ESPAÑOL.
MUY AFICIONADA AL FÚTBOL.

12. ALI AL-HALEB
EXPERTO EN COMPUTADORAS.
_____ SOLTERO.
TIENE 30 AÑOS.
_____ ÁRABE, INGLÉS Y ESPAÑOL.

13. MARK DORFMAN
_____ ARQUITECTO.
_____ SOLTERO.
TIENE 47 AÑOS.
_____ ALEMÁN E INGLÉS.
_____ AFICIONADO A LA
_____ CLÁSICA Y AL PIANO.

TASK

Meet a group of international students and organize them for a welcome dinner party.

Preparation

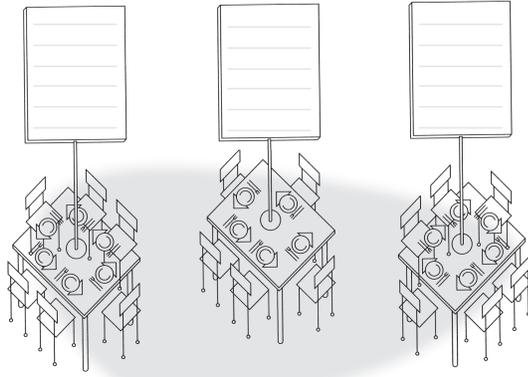
The class is to divide into groups. You are participating in a summer course in a Spanish language school, "Golfo de México." These students are also in the school. They are students from around the whole world. Have you met your classmates? Complete the descriptions with the words that are missing.

- 1. SANDRA MOGAMBE**
She is a biology student.
She is 17 years old.
She is from Equatorial Guinea.
She collects butterflies.
- 2. MARK SELLIGSON**
He is an art student.
He is 45 years old.
He studies Spanish and German.
He is very good at soccer.
- 3. SILVIA OLIVEIRA**
She is 23 years old.
She is a Portuguese teacher.
She speaks Portuguese and English.
She is single.

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TAREA 33

Paso 1: La distribución de los estudiantes en la cena de bienvenida. Organicen a los estudiantes en las tres mesas para cenar. Es importante tener en cuenta (*keep in mind*) la información que ustedes saben (*you know*) sobre estas personas.



Step 1: The distribution of the students at the welcome dinner. Organize the students around three tables for the dinner. It is important to keep in mind the information you know about these people.

LES SERÁ ÚTIL
 En la mesa 1: Manuel, Celia...
 Manuel al lado de Celia porque...
 Manuel y Celia tienen { la misma edad, el mismo hobby, los mismos intereses.
 Los dos estudian español.
 Manuel habla francés y Celia también.

A **Paso 2:** Escuchen (*listen to*) ahora a estos profesores de español. Hablan de los nuevos estudiantes y ofrecen mucha información nueva. ¿Necesitan cambiar (*do you need to change*) las mesas?

Step 2: Now listen to the following Spanish teachers. They talk about the new students and offer a great deal of new information. Do you need to change the tables?

Paso 3: Un/a estudiante de su grupo también asiste (*attends*) a la cena de bienvenida. ¿Dónde va a sentarse? Elijan (*choose*) al/a la estudiante, completen la ficha con sus datos y seleccionen la mesa.

EDAD:
Tengo _____ años.

ESTADO CIVIL:
Soy soltero/a.
 casado/a.
 viudo/a.
 divorciado/a.

CARÁCTER:
Soy muy _____
Soy bastante _____
Soy un poco _____
No soy nada _____

IDIOMAS:
Hablo _____

AFICIONES:

AGE
I am ... years old

CHARACTER
I am very...
I am fairly...
I am a little...
I am not all...

CIVIL STATUS
I am single
I am married
I am widowed
I am divorced

LANGUAGES
I speak _____

WHAT I LIKE.

W **Paso 4:** Ahora van a revisar su distribución y escribir un pequeño informe (*report*).

Paso 5: Un/a representante del grupo presenta a la clase el informe y justifica las decisiones del grupo.

Paso 6: Los grupos y el/la profesor/a comparan sus resultados.

Step 3: A student from your group also attends the welcome dinner. Where is s/he going to sit down? Choose the student, complete the card with their information and select the table.

Step 4: Now you are going to revise your distribution and write a brief report.

Step 5: A representative from your group presents your report and justifies your group decision.

Step 6: The groups and the teacher compare the results.

APPENDIX 1.4

The lion and the mouse



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Endnotes

1 *Standards* is a discipline-specific document that was triggered by the national reform effort initiated at the 1989 Education Summit in Charlottesville, Virginia. Essentially, this document constitutes content standards that define what students should know and be able to do in foreign language instruction in a K–12 sequence. Given that states and school districts have their own specific goals and define their own curricula, the *Standards* provide a description of a set of common goals. In this sense, the standards document is a political document, delineating the goals of the profession and setting a direction for the field of foreign language learning in the United States.

The standards are not a curriculum guide. As LeLoup and Ponterio (1998) emphasize, “They are not meant to dictate local curricula or even assessment Nor are the standards tied to any particular instructional method.” The standards articulate in a fairly generic way essential skills and knowledge students need in order to achieve language proficiency as lifelong learners.

The standards are organized around five main goals. These are as follows:

COMMUNICATION
Communicate in Languages Other than English

Standard 1.1: Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

Standard 1.2: Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

Standard 1.3: Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

CULTURES

Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures

Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

CONNECTIONS

Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information

Standard 3.1: Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

Standard 3.2: Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are available only through the foreign language and its cultures.

COMPARISONS

Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture

Standard 4.1: Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.

Standard 4.2: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

COMMUNITIES

Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home and Around the World

Standard 5.1: Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.

Standard 5.2: Students show evidence of becoming lifelong learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

The standards document is promoted at the K–12 level. As such, any teacher or trainer of secondary school teachers needs to be informed about this document and understand its benefit and value. To this author's knowledge, the document is not used at the higher educational level. More information about the standards can be found at the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)

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website at <http://www.actfl.org/> or the Center for Applied Linguistics at <http://www.cal.org/>.

2 A meta-analytic study synthesizes the findings of a body of experimental research studies based on the effect size of each study, and consequently draws a conclusion of the research question in focus. Keck et al.'s study (2006) includes 14 studies on task-based interaction that were published between 1980 and 2003.

3 For a detailed discussion of other psycholinguistic characteristics that distinguish a *focus-on-forms* versus a *focus-on-form* approach, see Doughty and Williams 1998.

4 This item is not part of the original source as listed in Weigmann's text.