

THE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH TO COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN  
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Pokorna L.N., associate professor, the Department of Philology  
Vasylieva O.V., lecturer, the Department of Philology  
Kherson State University, Ukraine

The article is devoted to the problem of the pedagogical approach to Communicative Language Teaching in the world and Ukrainian primary education system. Different ways of Communicative Language Teaching interpretation are analyzed, main characteristics and features of Communicative Language Teaching are shown. The special attention is paid to peculiarities of communicative teaching in primary school and developing learners' communicative competence all over the world and in Ukraine. Communicative activities as main means of communicative skills formation are shown.

**Keywords:** pedagogical approach, communicative competence, communicative teaching, primary school, communicative activities

Conference participants,  
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The call for the application of Communicative Language Teaching (hereinafter CLT) is not accidental. It comes from the educational problem which is needed to be solved: the existing unsatisfactory teaching results of the conventional approaches. CLT offers a change in primary school language education from the traditional grammar-oriented practical methods towards using communicative language activities as the core units of teaching and learning students to participate in content-focused interaction.

According to the Ukrainian Council of Education priority objects of personal and educational development of primary school are: their behaviors, motives, values, ideals, cognitive styles, and personality traits; declarative knowledge, skills and the ability to learn. Each object is leading to a particular procedural aspect of methodological education in correlation with educational, psychological, cultural and social aspects of its content.

The functionality of the methodological system elaborated in Ukraine whereby the process of education has to model a methodological study of foreign language teaching in primary school, its foundation consists of several species, where the communicative activity has the leading position, foreign language communication with young students in the classroom and extracurricular activities in a foreign language [1].

The aim of our research is to study the pedagogical approach to CLT implementation at the elementary level. Relevance of the study is identified by the need to reform the language education. One of the tasks of learning foreign languages is to develop communicative competence of primary

school children who should get perfect communication skills in different circumstances. Analysis of recent research shows that in the problem of the linguistic identity formation the considerable attention is paid in the researches of Ukrainian scientists G. Bohina, L. Varzatskoyi, M. Vashulenko, S. Karaman, B. Karasik, J. Karaulova, L. Macko, L. Palamar, M. Pentylyuk, T. Symonenko.

Formation of communicative competence of students is actually one of the major challenges in implementing the goals of language education in different countries, that is arranged in accordance with European educational standards, the Common Reference for Languages. However, communicative competence gets public importance and requires deep understanding and developing ways of implementation it into primary school practice teaching foreign languages. That is why it is important to clarify what young students should learn at the English language lessons, what task should be resolved, what principles have to be followed, to determine the conditions of formation of modern communicative oriented individual student [2, p.32].

In Audiolingualism, as a result of heavily relying on various types of tedious drilling and stimulus-response mechanisms, learners are discouraged from acquiring genuine and natural communication and would gradually fatigue and distaste in language learning. Instead, CLT, a learner-centered teaching approach [5, p.14], treats learners as creative language users and active participants, and provides them with opportunities to transact communication with others. With particular focus on using authentic language, offering a supportive learning atmosphere, selecting the topics

which take learners' individual variations into account, tolerating trials and errors as well as encouraging fluency, humanism is entirely embodied in CLT [7]

Traditional teaching methods restrict learners' language use by narrowing the focus on linguistic forms and offering insufficient exposure to the authentic language. S.Krashen [21] stresses that acquisition of language is from using language communicatively instead of through practicing discrete language items intensively. The main goal of the communicative approaches is to promote learners' communicative competence, which focuses on the learners' meaningful use of real language to communicate effectively and properly in various contexts. Through a flexible variety of CLT activities which involve real communication, learners are given chances to negotiate or interact with others to get meaning or information across [3]. It is the communicative interaction that assists learners with a great leap to be communicatively competent people.

The most obvious advantage of CLT is the fluency increase in the target language. This enables the learners to be more confident when interacting with other people and they also enjoy talking more. The approach also leads to gains in the areas of grammatical/sociolinguistic/discourse/strategic competence through communication.

CLT is recognized as a theoretical model in the language teaching today. Many applied linguists regard it as one of the most effective approaches to language teaching. Since its inception in Europe in early 1970s, CLT has served as a major source of influence on language teaching practice round the world.

What is involved in CLT? There are considerable debates as to appropriate ways of defining CLT, and no single model of CLT is universally accepted as authoritative. Yet, according to Richards and Rodgers (2001), CLT starts with a theory of language as means of communication, and its goal is to develop learners' communicative competence. Despite being a simplistic account of CLT, this idea of communicative competence is considered to be the main conception of CLT. Communicative competence including the knowledge what to say and how to say is appropriately based on the situation, the participants, and their roles and intentions. Traditional grammatical and vocabulary syllabuses, teaching methods did not include information of this kind. It was assumed that this kind of knowledge would be picked up informally. In fact, CLT is not a monolithic and uniform approach to language teaching (Ellis, 2003).

In accordance with a classification proposed by G.Howatt (1984), CLT consists of a weak and a strong version. The weak version is based on the assumption that the components of communicative competence can be identified, and thus systematically taught (Ellis, 2003). From this perspective, CLT can be thought to be an interventional and analytical approach to language teaching, which means that CLT does not display a fundamental difference from the earlier traditional approaches. This weak version of CLT highlights the significance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching (Howatt, 1984).

On the contrary, a strong version of CLT is based on the claim that "language is acquired through communication" (G.Howatt, 1984, p. 279). In other words, learners do not go through a learning experience where they acquire the structural properties of a language and then learn to use this structural system in the communication process. As a matter of fact, they discover the system itself as they learn how to communicate in a language. This version proposes that teachers provide learners with ample opportunities to familiarize themselves with how language is used in actual acts of communication. As G.Howatt (1984) states it, the strong ver-

sion of CLT entails "using English to learn it"[6].

Other authors in this field of investigation have defined and characterized CLT in various ways (J.Littlewood, 1981; S.Savignon, 1991 R. Richards). According to D.Larsen-Freeman (1986), the most obvious attribute of CLT is that "almost everything that is done is done with a communicative intent"[3, p.58]. In CLT, the content has prime importance, which is achieved through interaction between reader and writer, and through negotiation between speaker and listener. There is a variety of communicative activities (e.g. games, role plays, simulations, and problem-solving tasks), offering learners an opportunity to practice their communication skills meaningfully in different contexts and by taking different roles. In the process of utilizing these kinds of performance activities, learners avoid using their native language and teachers occasionally, if ever, correct students' mistakes.

Each teacher of primary school develops his/her own way of teaching, he/she uses a personal pedagogical experience. This is often defined as the way how teachers work with their pupils. According to the S. Savignon, there are different kinds of pedagogical approaches: learning by listening, discovery learning, learning by doing, learning through discussion and debate, blended learning [9, p.105].

A lot of pedagogies can be distinguished, but many teachers use some elements of all these approaches. They can create their own pedagogical approach with their own important elements. The blended learning approach is reflected in Communicative Language Teaching. It has become the main stream in contemporary methodology for the language teaching [8].

In the twentieth century National Doctrine of Education in Ukraine provides the personal development of students, in particular, their intellectual, moral character and physical improvement. Modern society requires independent, active citizens, able to communicate effectively in the implementation of social problems. These priorities underpin the reform of primary school, the main objective is preparing a competent person, able to find the right solutions for specific trainings, life. According to the principle of national teacher education in Ukraine theoretical basis for the development of the Concept of me-

thodical competence of teachers of foreign language teachers of school up the concept of teacher education [1999], the concept of university teacher education [A.Hluzman, 2001], the concept of foreign language teacher training [S. Nikolaev, 1995], the concept of higher vocational teacher of foreign language education [E. Passov, 1998], reflective approach [M. Wallace, 1995] and constructivist approaches (cognitive and humanistic theory) [H.Lefransua, 2003]. Professionally oriented focus of foreign language primary school teacher is the system of his attitude to himself as the subject of professional and foreign language activities and small pupils as speech partner, the system of motivation and interest to work and aggregate of personal traits [L.Mikhailov, 1996].

Within the competence-based approach to language teaching the most significant contribution was done by prominent psycholinguists (S. Vygotsky, I.Zymnya, A. Leontiev). They developed the theory of speech activity that is seen as one of many types of human activity and is defined as «an active, purposeful, process of reception and transmission of verbal messages in the interaction between people» [2, p.26].

One of the most effective means for formation communicative competence in primary school children have Ukrainian language textbooks, they were created according to the requirements of the new State Standard of primary education and basic educational programs. The structure, content and methodological apparatus of textbooks implement student-centered approach to learning key features of textbooks (informational, developmental, educational, motivational), correspond to innovations in methodology, needs of children, their desire for knowledge, communication, various productive activities. The Ukrainian language teachers still see the main purpose of learning in the assimilation of theoretical knowledge and their language skills. However, these skills are the foundation for the development of language skills. It should be mentioned that the concept of English textbooks for primary school includes consideration of competence, individually oriented, communicative, active, social and cultural approaches to communicatively competent student [4].

The State Standard of primary edu-

cation adopted by the Cabinet Council on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April, 2011, is created according to the purpose of primary school, based on cognitive abilities and needs of pupils of primary school, determines the content of primary education, it is based on the principles of individually oriented and competency approaches and leads to a clear definition of a component of mastering the content of primary education.

All over the world and in Ukraine particularly the basic feature of modern language education in primary school as a process is to raise the status of pupils in the classroom and in real communication, motivation to learn languages and cultures, their awareness of own responsibility for the results of this process.

Thus, the analysis of the scientific and methodical literature and related studies of the pedagogical approach to the CLT and formation of the primary school children's communicative competence shows that the mentioned problem is relevant for contemporary Pedagogy. Building a learning process in elementary classrooms should promote active, dynamic formation of linguistic identity, the types of learning activities that are carried out in line with the communicative, linguistic, cultural aspects, provide socialization of students. This approach to school language teaching accepts students in the classroom not as a passive listener and performer of written exercises from the textbook, but as an active interlocutor, speaker, commentator, dialogue and polylogue member.

CLT initiated in the 1960s in both UK and the USA, and has prospered since the 1970s. Its development derives from general dissatisfaction with the linguistic theories – the British Situational Approach and the American Audiolingual Approach, both of which focus much more on the mechanistic aspects of language learning and language teaching through pattern drills, rote memorization and repetitive practice [8, p.32]. CLT has marked a drastic shift from the traditional language teaching approaches which lay stress on the language usage of linguistic structures and forms to the communicative view on language teaching which focuses on meaningful language use in social contexts. Communicative Language Teaching therefore opens up a wider perspective on language teaching

and learning, that is why it has become so demanded.

There are different Interpretations of Communicative Competence. CLT is an approach in English teaching aiming at developing learners'. D.Hymes' [2, p.81] says "communicative competence possess both knowledge and ability for language use in diverse settings in their daily communication". That is to say, a communicatively competent language user is capable of using the most appropriate linguistic forms to convey her/his intended thoughts or meanings effectively in the target language.

S.Savignon claims that the theoretical foundations of CLT have incorporated a wide range of insights from linguistics, philosophy, psychology, sociology educational research in language use, and thus have broadened extra dimensions to traditional methodologies [7]. Also, R.Richards and R. Rodgers, S. Krashen comment that the principles of CLT reflect a communicative view on the theory of the nature of language, theory of language acquisition and theory of language teaching. In addition, as it differs from other teaching methods which specifically set a clear syllabus model for practice, the asset of CLT is that there is much room and freedom for practitioners to interpret, adapt and apply in a relatively flexible way as long as it helps promote learners' acquisition of the target language [6], [10].

One major disadvantage might be that it is difficult for the teacher alone to check the language use of every student, especially in a big class. The students are allowed to make mistakes but they need to be corrected – preferably not in the middle of a conversation - by the teacher in order to improve and so as not to make the same mistake again and again.

Another point concerning the teacher might be that it depends on the teacher how motivating or boring the lesson will be. The teacher needs to prepare the material at home and make it as motivating and creative as possible so that the students find the tasks meaningful and motivating, and are eager to communicate with each other.

Thus, nowadays the mentioned pedagogical approach to CLT has become a term for curriculum design, method of development and practice implementation of

Communicative Language Teaching worldwide and in Ukraine. It is suggested that teachers of primary school make good use of the advantages of CLT to create rather comfortable communicative activities, supportive and learner-centered learning environment beneficial to equip students with much exposure to the target language use.

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