

LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR COMMUNICATION PURPOSES

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Abstract

The purpose of learning a foreign language is to achieve communication. Effective communication is achieved when we have a correct use of language. Acquisition of a foreign language is achieved when we have a good knowledge of communicative skills, their use for certain purposes and at the right time. There is a growing need to acquire a foreign language for communication purposes. Our students need language acquisition to be able to live, work and survive in a multicultural and multilingual environment. This demand arising from the globalization of the economy necessitates the learning and acquisition of language for communication purposes in school benches. This is achieved only by ensuring teacher-student and student-student interaction, creating student-centered learning and using authentic language in the classroom. Acquisition of language skills and treatment of practical problems that arise during this process are the subject of this paper. Language acquisition is not simply a process that depends on the teacher and his methods. It is a very complex process, where the main role is played by the student with his features, learning strategies, learning environment and culture, his attitude towards school in general and foreign language in particular

Key words: *language, strategies, communication, teaching and learning.*

Introduction

Language teaching method for communication purposes

It is important to understand how it developed, how it evolved and why this method is used. Who are the linguists and teachers who inspired, developed and advanced it? What does it mean to learn a language in communication and why is it important to communicate in the foreign language being studied? All people living in a cultural society try to learn to communicate in a foreign language in their own way. They use different methods and techniques to achieve this goal. The reason why different students choose different methods to acquire a foreign language is quite clear: Students need to learn the foreign language as efficiently as possible. Which method is best can be deduced from the experience of students and foreign language teachers. The method that is being used more in the last decade is the language teaching method for communication purposes. Learning a language for communication purposes has been called by many linguists an achievement rather than a method. This method emphasizes interaction which is the purpose and means of learning a language. Otherwise this method is called "Communicative achievement of a foreign language", or simply "Communicative achievement"¹.

Richards classifies achievements in teaching practice in the last 50 years according to these three phases: Phase 1: Traditional methods (until 1960), Phase 2: Classical communication methods (1970 to 1990) and Phase 3: Language learning method for communication purposes (from the late 1990s to the present²). The history of this method dates back to 1960 in Great Britain as a replacement for the previous structuralist method called: "*Learning situational language*"³, which was partly a response to Chomsky's critique of the structural theories of language and partly based on the theories of functionalist linguists John Firth, M.A.K Halliday, but also of American sociolinguists like Dell

¹ Wilkins, D (1976). Notional Syllabus, Oxford University Press

² Richards, J. C. (2006), Communicative Language Teaching Today. Cambridge University Press p.6

³ Larsen- Freeman, D. (2000). Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching , p 121-122

Hymes, John Gumperz and William Labov, as well as the writings of philosophers John Austin and John Searle on acts of speech.

In 1960 there was much discussion by foreign language teachers about how English was taught and the use of language in communication by students. From the observations it was seen that the students were able to articulate the sentence correctly in the lesson, but would the same thing happen in real life? Some teachers noted that the ability to communicate required more than mastery of language structures. Students may know the rules of language use, but are unable to use the language⁴. So communication required students to acquire certain language functions within a social context. In other words, the ability to communicate requires more than a language competence, so communication skills are required, which means knowing when and how to say something to someone. Linguists' observations shifted from the structural view of language to a communicative achievement. Linguists and teachers noticed that students were not happy, they were not learning the real language. They did not know how to communicate, what language to use in a social context, what gestures, expressions, so in short they were losing the ability to communicate in the language they were studying⁵. An impetus for the development of this method came as a result of changes in education in many European countries. With the internal developments of the countries, the need arose to teach adults to adapt to European languages, an organization for cultural and educational cooperation between languages. Various conferences on foreign language teaching were sponsored by the European Council. The need to articulate and develop methods of learning foreign languages was identified as a top priority.

This method is a product of the work of teachers and linguists dissatisfied with previous methods such as audio-lingual, grammar, direct method, etc. According to traditional methods, grammar training was the foundation of language acquisition, grammar occupied the main place and was taught deductively, i.e. through rules. All four language skills were introduced after grammar rules were strengthened and learned and the emphasis was on accuracy rather than fluency. Students were discouraged from speaking for fear of making grammatical errors. Linguists realized the need to focus on learning the language of communication. The first to give language the definition of communication was Wilkins. He described two types of meanings: the category of notion (concepts such as time, sequence, quantity, place, and frequency) and the categories of communicative functions (requests, denials, offers, and complaints). He extended his idea to the book *"The Syllabus of Notions"*⁶. *"Without methods, without books, without grammar rules, without punishments and tears, I learned Latin as well as my teachers"*⁷.

One regularly cited dimension, which is attributed to teaching for communication purposes is the focus on the learner. Common to all variants of this method is the fact that the theory of language learning starts from a model of language teaching and its use. This model outlines a guiding system for materials, behavior, and the role of teacher and student in activities and techniques to be used in the classroom.

The importance of using the language teaching method for communication purposes

Communicative achievement in language learning starts from the definition of language as communication. There are several different definitions in terms of the term language in relation to communication, mainly by the linguists who developed this method. Before making a presentation, we will look at the definitions of these two concepts. In the Longman English Dictionary, the word language is defined as: *"A system of communication through written or spoken words, which is used by people in different countries."*⁸ While the word communication is defined: *"The process by which people exchange information or express their thoughts and feelings"*. Similarly, in the Oxford Dictionary, the word language is defined as: *"A system of sounds and words used by people to express their thoughts and feelings"*⁹.

⁴Widdowson H.G.(1978). Teaching language as communication Oxford University Press

⁵ Larsen, F, Diane.(2000).Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching. O U Press.p.130

⁶ Wilkins, David (1976). Notional Syllabus, Oxford University Press.

⁷Savignon, S.(1983).Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice Reading, p. 47

⁸Longman,(2006) :Dictionary of Contemporary English language, p 902.Pearson education Limited,

⁹ Oxford,(1995). Advanced Learner's Dictionary, p.662,857

In the dictionary of the Albanian language, the word language is defined: “*A special system of sounds, words, shapes and rules for the formation of words and their connection in sentences, which is the basic and most important tool that serves people to mold and to express thoughts and to get along with each other in society*”¹⁰.

While communication in the English dictionary is defined: “Exchange information or conversations with other people using words, signs, writing”¹¹. If we look at the definition of the word communication the explanation is: a) communicate b) enter into a relationship with someone; exchange opinions; I get along well with someone. So as seen there are some definitions for language and communication, where it turns out that language is used as a means of communication and the very concept of communication is related to the ability to speak easily with others. Richards¹² and Rodgers point out that this method begins with language theory as a means of communication, and its purpose is to develop the ability to communicate or the ability to communicate. Communication skills include knowing what is being said, how to say it in accordance with the situation, the participant and his goals. Richards¹³ in his study on the method of teaching language for communication purposes explains that communicative ability is the ability to use language for meaningful communication. He further explains that it includes several aspects of language knowledge:

- Knowing how to use language for different purposes.
- Knowing how to use language depending on the situation and the participant (e.g. knowing when formal and informal language is used in lectures, or using appropriate language to express oneself in writing, or when speaking orally).
- Knowing how to say and understand different types of text (e.g. stories, reports, interviews, conversations).
- Knowing how to continue communication, regardless of whether language skills are not sufficient (e.g. using different communication strategies).

If we refer to the “*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*”¹⁴ for this concept the term communicative competence is used as well as the term communicative competence and for the purpose of the latter term will be used in this study. In the communication methods of foreign languages that are used today in our country, the emphasis is placed on the acts of communication and the connection with the functions of the language. Communication acts performed through language generally fulfill functions that represent the intentions of the interlocutor or the author, for example: advice, description, warning, etc. Another perspective on language is provided by Noam Chomsky, who criticized Skinner's behaviorist theory of language and language learning¹⁵. His point of view of language is seen from a structural point of view. Chomsky argued that the structural theory of language was insufficient to explain the characteristic principles of language as creativity and individual production of sentences used by man. His view of language and its acquisition shifted linguists' view from structural to semantic features. Thus slowly passed to the development of communicative achievement in learning a foreign language. However Chomsky's focus on language was on the interpretation of sentences. He characterized language ability with the ability to grammatically correct sentences. A different view from Chomsky gives Hymes, who reacted to this linguistic view, saying that the purpose of learning a language is to achieve what he calls the term communicative competence, which refers to the use of language in a social context. . Communication involves negotiating meaning between the speaker and the listener, the author and the reader¹⁶. Hymes's theory of communicative ability defines what a language user needs to know in order to be able to communicate in a community where language is used for communication.

¹⁰ Fjalor i Shqipërisë të Sotme Sh.B. Toena Tiranë, fq 443

¹¹ Dictionary of Contemporary English Language.(2006) :Pearson education Limited, UK. p. 307

¹² Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T.(2001). Approaches and methods in language teaching (2nd ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.

¹³ Richards, Jack. C. (2000) Communicative Language Teaching Today p. 3

¹⁴ Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2006).p 18

¹⁵ Savignon, S. J.(1987). Communicative language teaching Theory into practice, 26(4), 235-242

¹⁶ Hymes,D(1972).OnCommunicativecompetence.fq.281cituar.Pride.Holmes(eds),Sociolinguistics,p,269 - 293,Harmondsworth: Penguin. 'Communicative Competence'

According to Hymes, a person who acquires the ability to communicate acquires at the same time knowledge and ability to use the language taking into account:

- Up to what extent something is formally possible.
- Up to what extent is something changeable and ready to use?
- Up to what extent is something appropriate (appropriate, beautiful, successful) in relation to the context in which it is used and valued.
- Up to what extent something is currently in use¹⁷.

So language learning for communication purposes aims to apply the theoretical perspective of communicative achievement, making communicative competence the goal of learning a language and making foreign language learning deeply communicative. This method also aims to take learning beyond grammatical ability, to a point where students are able to not only understand a language, but use it in a personal dialogue, i.e. use it to achieve a goal. This is known as communication skills. Encouraging speaking ability, language learning for communication purposes brings language to a higher level: A language used for personal use is more time-consuming than a language taught strictly through grammatical explanations and exercises of translation. So this method puts the emphasis on communication and real life situations. This method is extremely important for language learning because it has a number of important principles for training students in communication such as:

- Students learn the language using it to communicate.
- Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities.
- Fluency is an important dimension of communication.
- Communication involves the integration of different language skills.

Another principle of this method is that the student is placed at the center of the learning process. The role of the teacher in the lessons where this method is applied is very different from the role he has when using different traditional methods. In classes where traditional methods are used, the teacher is in charge of controlling and controlling learning, while in language acquisition for communication purposes the teacher allows students to take control of their own learning.

The teacher gives the tasks and instructions for solving them and the students are involved in the lesson more than in traditional classes, encouraging students to participate more actively in learning increases their responsibility in using language. While language learning traditionally places more emphasis on grammatical rules, language learning for communication purposes emphasizes real-life situations and contextual communication. Grammar continues to be important for this method, but it is in the function of message communication. It is clear that one may know the grammar rules very well, but may not be able to use language for meaningful communication¹⁸.

In the lessons, where the language learning method is used for communication purposes, students practice real life situations, which can be of various kinds such as: a visit to the doctor, going to the supermarket, research or giving instructions, giving clarifications. The student aims and tries to communicate his needs and thoughts without worrying too much about using a very grammatically correct language. As described in the Foreign Language Curriculum that is implemented in our country, the emphasis is placed on the use of the method, where the student is placed at the center of the learning process, which should enable him to develop fluency in a foreign language, through practice, authentic, appropriate for the age, interests and level of language experience¹⁹. The purpose of learning a language today is to develop communicative ability, which is also found in learning a mother tongue and is described in order to achieve the two main objectives which are:

- To develop communication skills, which realize the act of communication through listening, speaking, reading and writing.

¹⁷ Hymes, D (1972). On Communicative competence. In: P. Hymes (ed.), *Sociolinguistics*, p. 269 - 293, Harmondsworth: Penguin. 'Communicative Competence'

¹⁸ Richards, J.C. (2006). *Communicative language teaching today* New York: CU Press. p. 3

¹⁹ National Curriculum of Modern Languages (2000) .Ministry of Education and Science.p.16

- To instill and systematize certain knowledge about the Albanian language which includes its language system and its standard norm, of which the student should be aware.

So, as we see it, regardless of the language being studied, the goals are the same: developing communication skills and communication skills.

According to Larsen²⁰ the language we use is a tool for classroom communication, not just the object of study and the greatest contribution of this method is that everything that is done is aimed at achieving communication. She explains that recognizing forms and meanings is part of communicative ability. Another aspect is the recognition of functions in which language is used. Understanding is paramount. There are a range of communication activities (games, role play, simulations, problem solving and tasks), which provide students with an opportunity to practice their communication skills in different contexts and taking on different roles. In the process of using these communicative activities, students avoid using their mother tongue. Another typical feature of language learning for communication purposes is that it places emphasis on both the functional and structural features of language, combining them into a more complete communicative view of language²¹. Teachers create opportunities for students to use the language learned in a meaningful way. In doing so, they help their students strengthen their communication skills.

This method emphasizes the social and situational context of communication, which means that the language spoken, the words we choose, should be tailored to the circumstances, the type of communication. According to Larsen²² the student must take into account the social situation in which the communication takes place, in order to convey to the interlocutor what he will express. She further illustrates it with such an example:

The speaker can ask permission using May, *May I have a piece of fruit?* However, if the speaker knows that the listener is in the same social status, or the situation is informal, he or she will use the Can form to ask permission: “*Can I have a piece of fruit?*” but also in other languages. As an example, we can take the use of the Albanian language to see what is meant by the use of language in a social context and the role of words. Ilo Stefanllari²³ in the text “*A Course in English Lexicology*” emphasizes that words being linguistic units serve people to communicate, therefore the word has a communicative function. Within the linguistic system, the word or lexicon exists as a system and unit in all its forms and variants.

Xhevat Lloshi²⁴ in the text “*Stylistics and Pragmatics of the Albanian Language*” explains that language serves to communicate. Language also serves a variety of expressive and social functions. When communication takes place in the circumstances of formal, formal, public social relations, the combination of linguistic and extra linguistic factors brings about an organization that is different from oral discourse. According to him, linguistic behavior changes according to social relations at the moment of conversation (i.e. when we communicate through speech) or by the audience to whom we address in writing by selecting the language register.

Likewise, Gjovalin Shkurtaj²⁵ in the text “*Ethnography of Speech*” explains that the ethnography of speech goes according to the questions: “*Who speaks, with whom, where, when, for what and what language?*” In every act of communication, in certain social communities, there have been and are norms of certain behaviors, on the basis of which every act of speaking is performed”. This means that if the above is not done, then a gap is created between the speaker and the interlocutor.

Even Barns²⁶ in her view of language explains that it is an internal, personal activity, which expresses the language-society relationship. In this perspective, the study of language should focus on the use and function of language in a social or situational linguistic context. The importance of using this method can be concluded with Richards, who points out the basic principles of this method:

- Communication is the focus of language learning.

²⁰ Larsen, Freeman, Diane. (2000). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching* Oxford University press. p.130

²¹ Littlewoods, W. T. 1981. *Communicative language teaching: An introduction*. C U Press p.1

²² Larsen, Freeman, Diane. (2000). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching* .O.U.press.p.131

²³ Stefanllari, Ilo. (2011). *A Course in English Lexicology* .Sh.B.Geer p 22-25

²⁴ Lloshi. Xh. (20010) *Stylistics of the Albanian Language and Pragmatics* SHBLU (2nd ed.). Pp.154-287

²⁵ Shkurtaj. Gj. (2004) *Ethnography of speaking* Albanian SHBLU p.40

²⁶ Barns .M.S.(1984). *Functional approaches to language and language teaching* p. 3-21.

- Experiment with language to test what the learner knows
- Tolerance of students' mistakes gives fluency in speech and self-confidence

Conclusion

This paper presented an overview of foreign language teaching methods at different stages of their development starting from last century. Richards gives the evolution of methods from traditional methods to the 1960s, the transition to classical communication methods from 1970 to 1990 and to the language teaching method for communication purposes from the late 1990s to Nowadays. We further focused on the importance of using this method, where the goal is to achieve communication, where language is learned for communication purposes.

We conclude that language study should focus on the use and function of language in a social or situational linguistic context. We saw that theories that study language acquisition treat it as a complex process based on the environment that is driven by the environment and develops in communication. We glanced on the various theories and hypotheses according to which language is learned and acquired through interaction and communication.

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