Е.А. Карабутова

SOME ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

This article will take a look at the communicative approach to the teaching of foreign languages. The communicative approach could be said to be the product of educators and linguists who had grown felt that students were not learning enough realistic, whole language. They did not know how to communicate using appropriate social language, gestures, or expressions; in brief, they were at a loss to communicate in the culture of the language studied. Interest in and development of communicative-style teaching mushroomed in the 1970s; authentic language use and classroom exchanges where students engaged in real communication with one another became quite popular.

The communicative approach has spawned different teaching methods known under a variety of names, including ***notional-functional, teaching for proficiency, proficiency-based instruction, and communicative language teaching.***

Communicative language teaching makes use of real-life situations that necessitate communication. The teacher sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life. In this light, the communicative approach can leave students in suspense as to the outcome of a class exercise, which will vary according to their reactions and responses.

Margie S. Berns, an expert in the field of communicative language teaching, writes that "language is interaction; it is interpersonal activity and has a clear relationship with society. In this light, language study has to look at the use (function) of language in context, both its linguistic context (what is uttered before and after a given piece of discourse) and its social, or situational, context (who is speaking, what their social roles are, why they have come together to speak)" [Berns, 1984, P. 5].

Focusing on actual classroom interaction, teachers can investigate how one aspect of their teaching style affects students' opportunities for speaking the target language. They can then make changes that will allow students more practice with a wider variety of communication patterns in different classroom activities, such as student-to-student interactions during a paired role-play task and during a small-group cooperative learning activity. Communicative activities are expected to promote interaction and to provide opportunities for students to engage in talk. Nunan defines a communicative task as a "piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on meaning rather than form" [Nunan 1993, P. 59]. Teachers are likely to discover that students produce different speech patterns in response to different tasks. With the help of communicative tasks teachers evaluate learners' proficiency. Besides a better understanding of the influence of specific activities on learner discourse will likely lead teachers to use a greater variety of tasks in order to gain a more comprehensive picture of students' abilities. By analyzing students' discourse, teachers can gain insight into the effect of specific tasks on students' language production and, over time, on their language development.

Discourse analysis can be a useful analytic tool for making informed changes in instructional practices. Discourse analysis is the examination of language use by members of a speech community. It involves looking at both language form and its function and includes the study of both spoken interaction and written texts. It identifies linguistic features that characterize different genres as well as social and cultural factors that aid in our interpretation and understanding of different texts and types of talk. A discourse analysis of written texts might include a study of topic development and cohesion across the sentences, while an analysis of spoken language might focus on these aspects plus turn-taking practices, opening and closing sequences of social encounters, or narrative structure.

Creative teachers, especially those with second language learners, can also use this technique to study classroom interactions in order to focus on the learning opportunities available to students with limited English proficiency. In fact, one of the goals of second language teaching – to expose learners to different discourse patterns in different texts and interactions – allows the students themselves to study language, that is, to make them discourse analysts. So discourse analysis can be an integral part of a program of professional development for all teachers that includes classroom-based research, with the overall aim of improving teaching [Johnson, 1995]. By exploring natural language use in authentic environments, learners gain a greater appreciation and understanding of the discourse patterns associated with a given genre or speech event as well as the sociolinguistic factors that contribute to linguistic variation across settings and contexts. Students are allowed to study speech acts in a service encounter, turn-taking patterns in a conversation between friends, opening and closings of answering machine messages, or other aspects of speech events.

Riggenbach suggests a wide variety of activities that can easily be adapted to suit a range of second language learning contexts. One discourse feature that is easy to study is listener response behaviour, also known as backchannels. Backchannels are the brief verbal responses that a listener uses while another individual is talking, such as mm-hmm, ok, yeah, and oh wow. Listener response can also be non-verbal, for instance head nods. Research has identified variation among languages in the use of backchannels, which makes it an interesting feature to study [Riggenbach, 1999]. Variation has been found not only in the frequency of backchannels, but also in the type of backchannels, their placement in the ongoing talk and their interpretation by the participants [Clancy, Thompson, Suzuki, & Tao, 1996].

Reading with a purpose has a specific goal to classroom activity. In the classroom, when possible, students can be asked to read a text from a specific point of view, depending on what the text might suggest. Students can be given reasons to read that approximate their purposes in a variety of real-world situations. They can read ads for apartments to find one that fits a particular set of requirements, look through movie listings and reviews to decide whether to see a particular movie, or respond to a written invitation. The leading idea is to get something done via the language, to read a text and do something with the information [Long & Crookes, 1992]. Whole tasks involve performance of reading in conjunction with other skills: listening, speaking, or writing. So, students in a small group might read a number of texts, such as timetables, brochures, or maps, and listen to radio

weather forecasts or traffic reports in order to carry out the larger task of deciding on the best method of transportation to use on a trip. In such an activity, each student deals with one category of information, and all students are asked to communicate their information to one another to come up with the best plan for the trip.

Still other kinds of communicative tasks may be activities that would not actually occur in real-world situations. In this case, a classroom reading task might involve students drawing a picture based on a written text, reconstructing a text that has been cut up into paragraphs, or reading (in pairs) slightly different versions of the same story and discovering differences through speech alone. These tasks, while not real world, are still communicative; they are focused on understanding a text to get something done.

A task approach conveys to students the value of fluent and efficient reading, because reading for a specific purpose means reading texts in different ways at different speeds, depending on the information needed and the task to be carried out. One more advantage of tasks is that students can work with authentic texts from the start. A complex, unedited text can be made accessible by adjusting the level of difficulty of the task. It is possible to use the same text at different points during a semester, each time with a different task or purpose. In rereading the same text with a different purpose, students derive a sense of accomplishment from their progressively greater comprehension and more extended use of the definite text.

It's important to mention, recent reading research points to the benefits of working with texts for the purpose of drawing students' attention to formal features of written language as well [Long & Crookes, 1992]. A communicative or task approach can and should be combined with analysis of text structure and linguistic features of text; however, most specialists concur that teachers should focus on textual messages first. If an individual student cannot perform a task successfully due to misreading of a text, the student will need to reread problematic segments and attend more closely to the text structure. If many students in a class experience difficulty with certain syntactical structures or forms of text organization, the teacher may choose to conduct a reading lesson that targets those areas.

Students should be led from considerations of content to those of form in a natural manner. In the domain of rhetoric, for example, students can be asked to identify the discourse features of the text that contribute to its persuasiveness. They can focus on pragmatic issues of register and audience and examine the lexical networks that connect text segments and the use of syntax to establish topic and theme. Textual analysis of this sort is a different kind of activity from reading to perform a communicative task. Both uses of text are beneficial, but it is necessary for teachers and students to distinguish between them. It is also important that a text can be apprehended first in terms of meaning and reader response.

In advanced-level courses, such as film studies or special topics in literature, the real-world uses of text are less evident; rather, the focus is on academic tasks. In most academic tasks, such as presenting a report or writing a paper, reading plays a significant role.

In discussions of the concept of critical literacy, reading and interpretation have been defined by a variety of researchers as being able to talk about a text, which in turn means being able to participate in a "conversation of readers" [Graff,

1992]. In his view, literacy is both a social and cognitive process. So Graff situates reading within the larger communicative context of academic discourse and emphasizes the primacy of context over text. He argues that reading a literary text in order to support or counter a particular critical argument can engage students who otherwise would not know what to think or say about what they are reading. Thus, in literature courses, an important sense of purpose can be created by asking students to read from a particular angle or with a particular argument in mind.

Literacy tasks for upper-level coursework should afford diverse opportunities for interaction among students: In a discussion of academic discourse and collaborative learning, Bruffee [1984] argues for "engaging students in conversation among themselves at as many points in both the writing and the reading process as possible", in brief, for pedagogical practice that acknowledges and reflects the social and inter-textual nature of literacy and knowledge. This means less emphasis on reading as a solitary activity and more on reading and talking with others.

The value of pre-reading work for both comprehension and interest does not diminish at the advanced level. In literature courses, for instance, writing and discussion can serve equally well as an entry into a whole text or text segment. Pre-reading discussion focuses on a critical argument or controversy surrounding interpretation of a text.

As preparation for reading authentic foreign language texts on a cultural topic, students can engage in peer reading and debate. In this activity, the teacher provides students with a topic for debate formulated in terms of a specific question. Each student writes a short position statement on the topic, making an argument that may or may not represent their view. Communicating in groups, students read through and discuss all statements, culling what they believe to be the best arguments for and against each side of the debate, comparing their results.

Moreover, discussion or writing tasks can elicit students' personal views or previous readings on a topic or their expectations with respect to text content or point of view. Writing is a particularly effective form of pre-reading activity that prompts readers to reflect on what they are about to read. Writing activities foster the development of a sense of authorship, which in turn helps make students more critical readers. An effective way to promote active response to text is through assignment of reading journals. In these, students write entries prior to each reading assignment. In addition to writing their reactions to text passages already read, they are encouraged to write prospectively, anticipating story line or character development and formulating questions about what they are about to read. Journal entries form the basis for discussion or for other, more developed writing tasks.

At all levels of foreign language teaching, providing students a reason to pick up a text also gives them a way to read it. In elementary and intermediate classes, whole real-world tasks that offer other kinds of communicative purpose convey to students the value of reading for message. In advanced-level courses, the principle of reading with a purpose means rethinking the conventional "read and discuss" approach to literary and cultural texts. It means that some of the classroom discussion that has traditionally taken place after reading would be better placed before, so students have *something to read for*. Surely reading with a perspective or reading to decide for or against a particular interpretation not only creates interest in the text but also provides students with something interesting to say after

reading. At all levels of foreign language coursework, purposeful reading can enhance interest and recall on the part of students, provides a useful organizing principle for the coordination of reading instruction across the curriculum.

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В.В. Карнаухова

ЛИНГВОКУЛЬТУРОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ ПОДХОД К ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОМУ ТЕКСТУ КАК К КУЛЬТУРНОМУ ОБЪЕКТУ

В настоящее время комплексный и интегрированный подход к рассмотрению лингвистических вопросов с учетом национальной специфики языка наиболее продуктивно осуществляется в контексте этнопсихолингвистики и лингвокультурологии. На стыке таких фундаментальных наук, как культурология, лингвистика, этнография, психолингвистика, лингвокультурология, язык рассматривается как универсальная форма концептуализации мира, транслятор и аккумулятор культурной информации. Совокупность культурных знаний, которые зафиксированы в языковой форме, образуют «языковую картину мира», реконструкция и воссоздание которой на основе комплексного (лингвистического, культурологического, семиотического) анализа языка в межкультурной перспективе составляет одну из важнейших задач современной лингвистической семантики (работы Ю.Д. Апресяна, Н.Д. Арутюновой, А. Вежбицкой).

Особого внимания с точки зрения линвокульторологии, объединяющей лингвистический и экстралингвистический аспект, заслуживает чтение художественных текстов, так как литературные произведения, являясь фактом национальной культуры, помимо заключенного в них идейно-художественного содержания непременно отражают особенности конкретной национальной культуры, психологию и дух нации. Контактируя с чужой