

Reaction Paper: Communicative Approach

by Maria Jose Verdugo Vilches

In the paper “Applying Communicative Teaching Method in English-teaching Classroom”, by Hongzhi Hu and Jianpin Wu (2005), it is introduced the Communicative Approach, a new model of second language teaching. The authors explain the division of the type of activities which has been made for applying this approach. The first kind is called Pre-communicative, and this one aims to prepare students by making them practice every skill by itself, explaining grammatical rules –Structural activities- and later, relating these knowledge to real language –Quasi-communicative activities. On the other hand, Communicative activities aim to make students use what they have learnt –Functional communication activities- and also creating social contexts where they are forced to use the Second Language – Social interaction activities-. Furthermore, they explain the importance of using what is called “Authentic Materials” within ESL classes, for making students get interested on learning. Finally, it is exposed the advantages and requirements of making learner work in groups.

The first point I would like to comment is the division into several steps suggested by Littlewood, in Hu and Wu (2005). He proposed two classifications, and two sub-classifications per each one of the first ones, for the activities made by the teachers in charge of the ESL class. In my opinion, practicing every skill separately is the best option since, during the class, they will be able to focus only on one skill for the activities and will not get confused by trying to accomplish all the abilities at once. Furthermore, when practicing one, it will be necessarily to use the others, so students will be practicing all of them indirectly. For instance, the teacher gives instructions in English to students, so they will be practicing listening; later, when asking for doubts, they will practice speaking. On the other hand, when it comes to teaching grammatical structures, I think teachers should not go too deeply explaining rules or principles of the language due to it could bewilder learners. The Functional communicative activities described by the authors, to my way of thinking, are accomplishable only if both parts of the teaching process are willing to

participate, with this I mean to say that it is necessary that students truly want to learn and to participate in the activities proposed by the teacher, and they could also propose new ones that call their attention.

On the second place, the point that most caught my attention was what the authors mention about the way teachers should choose the material for their classes. By experience, most may say that one of the main issues that affects any learning process –whether it is about language, mathematics, history or any other subject– is the lack of interest from students. I think that students are not interested on classes because the topics chosen by teachers are not related to the student's likes, the culture or to the moment of life they are living. By a definition made by Peacock, cited by Hu and Wu (2005), authentic materials are those *that have been produced to fulfill some social purpose in the language community. (p. 36)* as it is said in the text, it is necessary that teachers start leaving aside the textbook with those pre-established activities and to create activities with new material containing information about what is happening in the “real world” and what might be of interest of the students, focusing on their age and the moment they are living. If they are exposed to real communication during the learning process, they will *improve their confidence in a real situation*. And I think this should be the most important objective in every class and for all teachers: the student should feel that she/he has the skills and is able to survive in everyday situations when they finish the process.

Finally, the advantages mentioned on the paper about group work are all related. Sometimes there are some students who prefer working on their own; nevertheless, in my view, students should learn how to collaborate and how to work with their classmates since, when they finish school or university, they will have to face the real world and real jobs. This means that they will have to face new people and colleagues whom they will have to trust. The same way, those who do not usually take seriously their responsibilities, will be forced to be responsible and to start using and trusting their abilities and knowledge.

To sum up, in my personal opinion, I think that the first change must be done by the teacher. Teachers should stop using mainly the textbook and maybe use it as a guide for developing new activities that will call the students' attention. Moreover, I think that the communicative approach should be start being used by every school, and those institutions which focus on teaching foreign languages, since going step by step might be the best choice for learners who do not feel completely confident.

Reference

Hu, H. Z., & Wu, J. P. (2005). Applying Communicative Teaching Method in English-teaching Classroom. *Sino-US English Teaching*. pp. 35-38.