

MELANGES PEDAGOGIQUES 1982

TOPICS IN COMMUNICATIVE METHODOLOGY : including a preliminary and selective bibliography on the communicative approach

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R E S U M E

Bien que depuis maintenant une dizaine d'années « l'approche communicative » fasse l'objet d'un intense débat théorique, bien que de nombreux matériaux et méthodes d'enseignement se réclamant de l'approche « communicative » ou « fonctionnelle » soient à présent disponibles, aucune base systématique pour le choix de méthodologies appropriées n'a encore été développée. L'auteur de cet article analyse les causes de cet état de faits, en étudiant plus particulièrement l'évolution historique et épistémologique de la « théorie des actes de parole » et celle de « l'analyse de discours ». Il propose plusieurs directions de recherches et d'applications pratiques et examine, sur un plan plus général, les implications didactiques et sociales de l'approche communicative. Il évoque également le problème de la pertinence des travaux réalisés récemment dans le domaine de la description des procédés d'inférence et des stratégies communicatives et dans celui de la sociologie de la connaissance. Il suggère que les stratégies discursives utilisées pour la négociation interactive de la signification sont fondamentalement les mêmes que les procédés d'apprentissage utilisés par l'individu lorsqu'il interprète le discours dans la langue seconde.

forthcoming). All these investigators share an interest in the description of extended texts, working "top-down", that is, from categories of communicative events down to the types of functions which characterise them and it is this trait which justifies our bundling them together under the label *discourse analysis*.

Applied linguists have been aware of this opposition, tugging them as it does in opposite directions (Widdowson, 1977). However, the only article which deals explicitly with its pedagogical and methodological results is by Daniel Coste (— and who better than one of the authors of *Un Niveau Seuil ?*). It is "Analyse de discours et pragmatique de la parole dans quelques usages d'une didactique des langues" (1979), a thoughtful and perceptive study of the situation in France, but which seems to me to be of more general validity :

Coste summarises his viewpoint as follows :

<i>Pragmatique de la parole</i>	<i>Analyse du discours</i>
oral	écrit
expression	compréhension
événement de parole	texte
perspective onomasiologique	perspective sémasiologique
paradigmatique	syntagmatique
délection, adéquation	cohésion (cohérence)
communication « usuelle »	domaines spécialisés

« Dire que la didactique a plutôt tiré l'acte de parole du côté de l'oral et le discours du côté de l'écrit, au moins pour le domaine français, ne demanderait pas un très gros effort d'illustration et je m'abstiendrai d'aligner les exemples de cette dérive. Il suffit peut-être de rappeler que quand la notion d'acte de parole s'est — très rapidement — répandue dans les milieux intéressés par l'enseignement des langues, elle a surtout été introduite à l'aide de cas (« demander (l'heure) », « demander (son chemin) », s'identifier, se présenter ») dont les réalisations étaient d'abord préparées et diversifiées à l'oral. C'est, me semble-t-il, ce qui se passe non seulement dans des textes de Wilkins et de Roulet destinés à un large public, mais aussi pour nombre des publications issues du Conseil de l'Europe et relatives notamment à la construction de niveaux-seuils.

L'échange face-à-face entre deux interlocuteurs y est largement privilégié. De plus, l'accent est généralement mis sur la production de l'acte (de l'intention de communication vers les formes linguistiques) dans une perspective onomasiologique qui ouvre un éventail de possibilités, étant entendu qu'il appartient au locuteur de choisir dans le paradigme à sa disposition, les formulations qu'il estime les plus adéquates à son propos et à la situation. L'accent, de ce fait,

se trouve porté sur l'expression plus que sur la compréhension et la visée énonciative voit ici l'acte du côté du producteur plus que du récepteur du message. Enfin, le gros des propositions pédagogiques — et singulièrement celles qui ont trait à l'élaboration de documents d'enseignement — paraissent associer la pragmatique de la parole à la communication quotidienne usuelle plus qu'à la fréquentation de « textes spécialisés ». Sur tous ces points, pour simplistes et péremptaires que soient les affirmations qui précèdent, il est probable que, globalement, le constat vaut pour les années récentes, avec bien entendu quelques contre-exemples dont certains seront évoqués plus loin.

Même panorama rapide en ce qui concerne l'analyse de discours : sans recourir à des études multiples et à des démonstrations détaillées, il n'est sans doute pas faux de dire que c'est avant tout à propos de la lecture de « textes spécialisés » qu'il a été fait appel, en didactique française, à la notion d'analyse de discours : on s'intéresse alors surtout pour l'accès à une compréhension écrite, aux facteurs de cohésion syntagmatique et aux marques qui sémasiologiquement permettront de reconstruire du sens. »

After discussing possible reasons for this polarisation, Coste mentions some of the factors which might have brought about a reconciliation between the two approaches : the work of Benveniste, Jakobson and Ducrot in linguistics, the work of the CREDIF on reported discourse and the section on " speech acts " in *Un Niveau-Seuil*. He finds that the influence of Discourse Analysis has been much weaker than that of Speech Act Theory because :

« Tout se passe comme si on avait toujours besoin d'une « matière à enseigner », coupée en tranches dénombrables, itemisée et cataloguable. Or, de ce point de vue, le discursif est mal placé : il ne se laisse pas aussi facilement mettre en listes que le lexique ou en arbres que les structures. A l'inverse, les actes de parole ou les notions, tels que normalisés par certaines descriptions, se substituent sans peine aux contenus anciens. »

Amongst the causes of this state of affairs, he identifies tradition, but

« Les pesanteurs de la didactique n'expliquent pas tout à cet égard puisque se manifeste par ailleurs sa capacité à « récupérer » rapidement certains aspects de la pragmatique, tels ceux mobilisés par les travaux du projet « Langues vivantes » du Conseil de l'Europe. « Récupération » dans la mesure où on peut craindre que des outils comme *Un Niveau Seuil* qui font une large place à une typologie des actes et à des listes de notions soient lus, malgré les précautions prises, comme des tables de correspondance inventoriant les contenus souhaitables d'un enseignement fonctionnel-notionnel et servant ainsi, bien malgré eux (?), à favoriser une atomisation de la « matière à enseigner » et à maintenir à l'écart les aspects discursifs de toute mise en œuvre pragmatique du langage. »

This polarisation, then, is also dangerous because it reinforces the tendency to which language-teaching is very prone to isolate and privilege one aspect of language at the expense of others which may well be just as important. Partly this is because language-teachers tend to be (have to be?) enthusiasts, partly because certain pedagogical concepts such as "progression" or "unit" encourage approaches based on simplified, controllable models. Whatever the reason, it seems clear that the "Communicative Approach", as practised if not as preached, has resulted in an emphasis being placed on the teaching of functions at the expense, for example, of other features such as propositional contents, affective and interactive factors, and negotiation. It is significant that the term "Speech act" is often used both by linguists and language-teachers as if it were synonymous with "illocutionary force", rather than as a superordinate term including all those other factors which have been mentioned. Admittedly, I am being wise after the event here: our own work at the C.R.A.P.E.L. began with "pure" communicative teaching based on single acts, but we were gradually forced to take propositional content and interactive features into account. But by all means let us be wise after the event — as long as we are sure we are being wise! It is no good teaching our learners to Request Information if they are not also aware that there are strict limits on the number and topics of the Requests they can make in different situations and interactions. In a travel agency I can produce a long series of such requests: but in a train with a stranger the limit is probably as low as two or three, *unless* the stranger shows that he wishes to prolong the interaction by making his own Request. Similarly, the information I can ask for differs: I can ask the agent how much a holiday in Costa del Plonque costs — but not a stranger who is just on his way there.

WEAKNESSES INHERENT IN OUR PRESENT APPROACH

In this section, I would like to discuss certain weaknesses in most of our present communicative materials. These weaknesses have immediate consequences for both methodology and teacher-training, though it will not always be necessary to refer to them explicitly.

(i) First, there is the fact, which has already been referred to, that publications of the Threshold-Level type are not really materials; they are lists, repertoires. They are source-documents, for reference, and contain no methodological instructions. Nonetheless, it has to be recognised that they have often been used as materials — this is a travesty of the authors' intentions, although the proliferation of "levels" (Threshold, Waystage) can only aggravate the misunderstanding. Attempts to "repair the damage" such as Roulet's "mode d'emploi" for *Un Niveau Seuil* are as much a symptom as a cure.

(ii) A second objection to the "Threshold Approach", indeed to all approaches based on Speech Act Theory, is that they are atomistic : by "teaching" separate "acts" such as "inviting" not only do we make things more artificial not less, but we also fail to give the learner any glimpse of the highly systematic nature of language functions. Mitchell (1980), speaking of the communicative movement has said that it has

"offered the teacher communicative syllabuses without first specifying for him in a systematic, comprehensive and explanatory fashion what overall body of linguistic knowledge we now consider it appropriate for him to teach. The "notional syllabus" which is the only reference material relating to communicative language teaching that is currently available to the teacher, is presumably intended as a checklist whose purpose should be no more than to provide a rough and ready reminder to the teacher of some of the items he might include in his teaching, *it being assumed that the teacher will already possess an understanding of how the various artificially discrete items it contains are interrelated within an overall system, i.e. the grammar of the language.*" (my italics).

Mitchell is making two points here : the first is that a speech act taxonomy is like a Thesaurus, it *presupposes* the knowledge it contains. It assumes that the user will be able to recognise why an item has been categorised in a particular way ("faintly polite refusal"). They are descriptions of the native speaker's competence. But this does not mean by any means that all native speakers can use them (intuition being notoriously unreliable where discourse is concerned, not all native speakers being literate, teachers, etc.). For the non-native speaker/teacher the problem is obviously all the more acute. This brings us up against two of the most crucial, practical problems :

- Does the communicative approach imply the use of native speakers (only) in the classroom ?
- Is the linguistic model for a communicative approach necessarily that of the native speaker ?

The importance of these problems and their implications can hardly be exaggerated (eg. employers here in France now often refuse to employ non-native teachers "for communicative reasons") but nor can they be dealt with in the time and space available here.

It is essential to recognise, however, that works such as *Threshold Level* are neither exhaustive nor objective. They are the result of selections and choices, and the criteria on which they are based include *social* criteria. Underlying such works is a model of the language learner/user. In most cases, it seems to me, this is a middle-aged, slightly old-fashioned professional man. To what extent this model corresponds to the reality of the individual learner is a moot point : but it cannot be suitable for *all* learners.

Mitchell's second point is that speech act descriptions and taxonomies are *paradigmatic*. It is this point which justifies his claim that most grammatical descriptions of "functions" and "acts" are in fact grammars of notions. *Such grammars are therefore semantic rather than sociolinguistic*: they lack the *inter-active syntagmatic, social* dimensions of discourse. How do we link speech acts? What are the categories and operations for inferencing and interpretation (notions, functions, presuppositions, implications). How do we, that is, go from what is said to what is meant?

There can be little doubt that the notions of *strategy* and *procedural rule* (cf. p. 16 below) will be central to discussion of the communicative approach during the next few years. These notions provide an epistemological bridge between the theory of knowing and the theory of action, essential in any worthwhile account of interaction. Moreover, an actor-based model of communicative behaviour would seem to be a pre-requisite of any learner-centered approach to language acquisition. The concept of strategy brings a rich inheritance of insights with it from its uses in games theory, mathematics and psychology. As some indication of the central position it now occupies it is worth noting that it is widely used in psycholinguistics, including work on child language acquisition and caretaker talk (Clark and Clark, 1977), interlanguage studies including foreigner-talk (Tarone, 1980; Faerch and Kaspar, 1980), discourse processing and interpretive strategies (Widdowson, 1980: an unpublished report for the Council of Europe) and learning strategies (Holec, 1981). It is obviously quite impossible to foresee all the implications of this work for communicative methodology but several important general points can be made:

1. It may well prove to be the case that psycholinguistic strategies *are* communicative strategies *are* learning strategies (they are all different aspects of the negotiation of meaning, see below). This would be a considerable argument in favour of the communicative approach in general, but might be taken as indicating a far less cognitive methodology than is often used at present (Faerch and Kasper, 1980).
2. The problems related to the identification of "discrete units" for teaching purposes (discussed above in the quotation from D. Coste) are seriously aggravated.
3. A considerable amount of contrastive work will have to be done at discourse level to identify cross-cultural differences in communicative strategies. There is no point in teaching what is universal, but at present we simply do not know where the differences are. Topics which need to be studied include realisations and sequences of speech acts, modalisation, negotiating and inferencing procedures. In the meantime authentic documents will remain a valuable tool for sensitisation to these problems. (Bates, 1976; Blum-Kulka, 1981; Kramsch, 1981; Larsen-Freeman, 1980; Sinclair, 1980).

(iii) A further criticism of Threshold-level type materials and repertoires is that they concentrate almost exclusively on the verbal aspects of communication. No indications are given as regards facial expression, gesture, kinesics, proxemics, etc. Such features can be shown to be intrinsic to the meaning of face-to-face interaction (Riley, 1976) but even their importance pales before that of the various vocal prosodies, above all, intonation and key :

« Rien n'a été prévu pour la prosodie, bien que le rôle de l'*intonation* soit particulièrement évident dans la réalisation des actes de parole. »

(Coste et al., *Un Niveau Seuil*, 1976)

Given that intonation and key also play major roles in the structuration of discourse and in the transmission of information, the development of teaching and learning techniques to deal with this problem would seem to be a major pedagogical priority. Such a task would be daunting in the extreme were it not for the fact that there is already a clear and relatively simple description of the discursive role of intonation in English : *Discourse intonation and language teaching* by Brazil, Coulthard and Johns (1980). The difference between their model and " grammatical " descriptions of intonation is much the same as that between a functional description and a syntactic description of the verbal component.

Specific techniques for the teaching/learning of these features will therefore have to be developed : in very general terms, they will deal with the transmission and expression of a) information and b) attitudes. It is not difficult to develop such techniques, but in both cases the problem of a metalanguage remains acute, for teachers and learners alike.

WHAT TYPE OF RESEARCH ?

Let us return briefly to the topic which started us off on this ramble through the undergrowth of modern language teaching, namely the gap between theory and practise as far as methodology is concerned. Most notice able of all is the absence of descriptions of experiments and courses, in which teachers and researchers try to extrapolate from aspects of the learning situations of particular learners to general methodological principles — though this is a gap which the *Mélanges Pédagogiques* does try to fill. Far too often, though, the reverse is true, with theoretical linguistic models being imposed on a particular learning situation — " Linguistics applied " — rather than being one source amongst many to contribute to the understanding of the specific characteristics of that situation — " Applied Linguistics ".

This largely explains the C.R.A.P.E.L.'s preference for an "action based" approach to research in pedagogics, that is, one which takes as its starting-point the problems of a particular group of learners. The research is the total of the attempts to understand and solve those problems : in other words, the research project *is* the teaching/learning programme (— or at least some aspect of it). Other consequences of this approach are, first, that there can be no "pure" research — the researchers themselves must be in direct contact with learners ; secondly, every time a teacher steps into a classroom he or she is in a position to do research.

This does not mean that research into communicative methodology should merely be a repertoire of various so-called "communicative activities" a sort of cookery book full of recipes. It does mean, though, that such a project should start by actually looking at such activities and then using them as the basis for generalisations. Notice that we say "generalisations" *not* "abstractions" here. Developing a theoretical sociolinguistic model for the requirements of a communicative methodology could be regarded as abstract : but trying to extrapolate principles from observation and investigation of courses, activities and materials is generalisation, to which the only alternative is a completely ad hoc approach.

In practical terms, the establishment of a repertoire of communicative activities — who is doing what, when and how ? — should be followed by an evaluative study : what do these activities have in common ? What works best ? Why ?

THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH AND AUTHENTIC DOCUMENTS

It is not difficult to show that authentic documents are an essential concomitant of any communicative approach : our very ignorance of the communicative and rhetorical structures of many types of written and spoken discourse obliges us to turn to the "real thing" simply to fulfill the basic requirement of accuracy.

Our main reason for using authentic documents is to expose learners to examples of language *use* (cf. Widdowson, 1978). Didactic documents, whether written or oral, are often highly inaccurate imitations of use (though they may be accurate and useful as regards other aspects such as grammar and vocabulary). Intuition is notoriously unreliable at discourse level ; moreover, the process of idealisation which inevitably occurs in didactic texts means that many important communicative and discursive markers (eg. for oral discourse, changes in rhythm and tempo ; key ; intonation ; voice quality and qualifiers ; pauses ; hesitation phenomena ; false starts, etc.) are excluded or distorted. Most didactic materials are "spoken prose", the structure of which has little in common with interactive, spontaneous, oral discourse (for example). The so-called "performance features" which they omit are a source of difficulty for learners, mostly in terms of discrimination and decoding ; but one does not learn to handle

difficulties by working on documents which deliberately leave them out because they are difficult! Paradoxically, it is these same features which can be most useful to learners at the level of discourse comprehension.

We need to develop techniques for helping learners to discover and practice their *interpretive strategies*. This will involve teachers in the collection, stocking and copying of authentic documents, which, for practical reasons, implies a further development of group work, more resource centres and the establishment of descriptive grids (lists of criteria for cataloguing) for selection and retrieval purposes. And all this in turn implies the development of medium-specific methodologies (eg. What can we do with video that we cannot do with sound-only recordings). The implications for teacher-training, in terms of technical skills to be acquired, shift of role (from sole model and source to librarian and guide) and linguistic competence are considerable.

Yet we have still not touched on what are probably the two most important pedagogical implications of all in the use of authentic documents. The first is the fact that their choice and use favours the development of individual learning strategies, as opposed to group-teaching strategies. Their richness, plus the fact that they do not in themselves impose any particular approach or technique, leaves the individual free (if he is adequately prepared) to carry out the learning process of observation — hypothesis — confirmation on any aspect of the language which he may choose. This is also one reason why authentic documents should be used by beginners of all kinds, but especially by beginners with "specialised" needs: by encouraging them to call on their outside knowledge, they are enabled to develop a wider range of interpretive strategies than simple discrimination or "comprehension" exercises can do.

One further point is that authentic documents make it possible to meet learners' needs accurately and economically: by choosing documents of the type he encounters or will encounter in his area of interest, the learner is able to concentrate on their lexical, grammatical, functional and discursive characteristics, without wasting time on irrelevant problems (or even on lower priorities). The technician who needs to be able to read the operating instructions for new equipment, or the research worker who wishes to attend a congress and follow lectures in his specialisation are both able to concentrate on doing just that: this also brings out the point that the use of authentic documents accentuates the importance of the differences between the language skills — there is little point in trying to learn to read technical instruction by listening to the BBC news.

There are numerous other reasons for using authentic documents all of which are relevant to both communicative methodology and to teacher-training, although not all to the same degree. Above all, there is the point that they are motivating: by narrowing the gap between the real-life situation and the learning situation (whether for a school child or an adult professional) in terms of both the language and of the learner's interests they stimulate attention and activity.

If the documents are carefully chosen to correspond to the learner's needs, they will, by definition, form an accurate and exhaustive syllabus. There is also less pressure on teacher and learner to regard them as normative, each document being treated more as an example of underlying rules which you have to get the feel of rather than learn by heart or imitate.

THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH AND LEARNER AUTONOMY

There is always a danger of " evaluation " as we have just used it being understood as a search for the best, the right answer : in this case, *the* communicative methodology. Already there is considerable vying amongst the proponents of different language-teaching methods as to which is the most " communicative ". But this is a contradiction in terms : which is the word communicative is to remain valid in this context, it must retain its historical meaning of " related to the expression of intention, being able to do what one wants in a second language ". In other words, it must have an essentially personal, individual basis.

The communicative approach, that is, has to be learner-centered, by definition, since it aims at taking into account the individual's personal and social identity. As a simple example of this, consider the learner who is working on " participating in a group discussion : taking the floor ". Right from the start, we can see that this can only be dealt with adequately if the learner himself is involved in the process in the most detailed way. A timid person's needs and wants are not the same as a voluble one's in this context. Or what about the person who wants actually to delay joining in until he has heard other people's opinions. Or the person who knows he will want to take the floor frequently but wishes to do it as politely as possible... or who doesn't give tuppence about being polite, as long as he can have his say ? And we have hardly touched on the choices he will want to make between different exponents of the same act to reflect his attitudes to different interlocutors — formal, colloquial, friendly, etc. — which will in turn reflect his own perception of his status and role in a given situation. It is clearly impossible for the teacher to be able to answer these questions on behalf of a single learner, let alone a group. The only solution is to help the learner make these choices him or herself, that is, to increase his degree of autonomy. (Holec, 1981). And this applies not only to a choice of model, as in our example, but also to the definition of needs and objectives (Richterich and Chancerel, 1978 ; Altman and James, 1981) to self-assessment (Oskarsson, 1978, and to study techniques and choice of materials (Abé et al., 1978 ; Duda, 1976 ; Gremmo, 1978).

It is interesting to note that although autonomy has always been an important plank in the Council of Europe's platform (cf. Kuhn, 1970) it has had far more difficulty making its way in the world than Communicative Competence has. This

is almost certainly because it involves profound changes in the teacher's and learner's roles (Allwright, 1977 ; Holec, 1979), changes which many teachers and institutions have felt unable to accept. Yet it seems highly probable that the failure to develop a communicative methodology is due precisely to this rejection of the idea of autonomy, which is in fact essential to it. Communicative competence is something which can only be learnt, not taught, and learning is something which can only be done *by* learners, not *to* or *for* them. Our methodology must, therefore, if it is to be truly communicative, include an autonomous dimension, that is, it must include learning-to-learn activities, with the teacher's role being to create favourable learning conditions for individuals rather than to control groups so that they can be subjected to an incessant flow of uniform modelling behaviour.

A NOTE ON THE INTEGRATION OF LINGUISTIC AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN LANGUAGE PROGRAMMES

This is really a " syllabus " issue rather than a methodological one, but it has such immediate methodological repercussions that it must at least be referred to. It concerns the relationships within a given language programme between the " linguistic " component (i.e. that part of the course devoted to the acquisition of pronunciation, lexis and grammar) and the " communicative " component. Just as traditional courses have been 100 % " linguistic ", it is perfectly possible to have courses which are 100 % " communicative ". There is plenty of evidence to show that learners who follow " linguistic " courses do not acquire the rules of the use of the language (" ... without which the rules of grammar are useless "). On the other hand, we do not know whether a learner who follows a " communicative " course will simultaneously acquire the rules of morpho-syntax. This is not a question that can be decided by straightforward experiments, using control groups, etc. since we could never know how an individual would have progressed if he had followed the other type of course — and learning is essentially a question of the individual's behaviour.

Yet there is a great deal of interesting and enthusiastic work going on, usually in non-scholastic situations, where a communicative methodology is applied to the very hilt. Unfortunately, very little evidence in the way of formal evaluation or self-assessment is available to help with the examination of the claims being made by such institutions. Partly, this is because the idea of evaluation, being equated with tests and exams, is often regarded as somehow incompatible with a communicative " ideology ".

Returning to the problem of the " balance " between the " linguistic " and " communicative " components in a course, it has to be recognised that the main objection to a mixed approach is the problem of *progression*. In simple terms, if teaching functions means ignoring structures, then our very first function might

involve a structure which does not occur until the last lesson. There have been a number of attempts on the part of materials writers to "diagram" themselves out of this problem, producing spirals and double helices and all manner of pathways and strategies aiming at a single, unified progression for functions and structures : but, so far at least, the problem has remained intractable — (though this is one area where new linguistics descriptions may be of direct relevance to a pedagogical problem, cf. p. 5).

Another possibility, less elegant, is to have separate progressions for the linguistic and communicative components (cf. Holec, 1974). Although superficially more complex, such a course structure has several advantages : it is far easier to plan and teach, for a start ; it accepts the linguistic facts of life as we know them ; it is compatible with what little we know about the actual acquisition process ; it does not postpone use until the end of the course ; it facilitates the introduction of authentic materials ; and if it is crossed with a course structure sentence, say, a unit of linguistic description) and an utterance is precisely that develop the skills at different paces as well.

A final possibility is an end-to-end arrangement : first, the learner would master grammar and vocabulary, then, after several years, he would tackle functions. Not only does this have a depressingly familiar ring, but it is totally unsuitable for those learners who need to start using their second language *today*.

THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE : THE NEGOTIATION OF MEANING

The basic function of discourse is the distribution of knowledge. Knowledge is distributed by means of a number of semantico-logical and pragmatic operations which govern the *negotiation of meaning*. It is this process which allows us to use the language system "on an instance", that is, with the meanings which are specific to a particular context of situation (Riley, 1981).

These considerations are absolutely fundamental to the communicative approach : for example, the distinction between a grammatical structure (a sentence, say, a unit of linguistic description) and a utterance is precisely that the utterance (a unit of use on an instance) occurs in a situation. The function of the utterance is negotiated between the participants on the basis of their interpretation and knowledge of the situation. Other aspects which have to be similarly negotiated are deixis, role and the nature of the speech event. The aim of participants in a discourse is to exchange knowledge in such a way as to make the individual perceptions of these features coincide. Any discourse, that

is, involves a dialectic process between the subjective realities of the individual participants, on the one hand, and between their subjective realities and the objective reality of the language on the other i.e. between the " worlds " of the participants and their universe of discourse. (Schutz, 1962; Berger and Luckman, 1960.)

Clearly, there can be enormous variations in the degree of knowledge which participants in an interaction already share. This will depend on

- (i) Whether they share the same language
- (ii) Whether they share the same knowledge of the situation
- (iii) Whether they share the same rules for transmitting that knowledge, for negotiating the meaning of (i) in (ii).

At one extreme we have twins, say, or an old married couple who seem almost telepathic because they share so much knowledge that very little negotiation is needed. At the other extreme, we have two complete foreigners, meeting for the very first time who do not speak a word of one another's languages and whose societies differ totally. And between the two there is an almost infinite number of variations — complicated by the fact that it is quite possible to share everything at one level and nothing at another.

What we are discussing, then, are three sets of socio-cultural rules : linguistic, situational and procedural (cf. Faerch and Kasper, 1980). All three are essential to communication, but language teaching in the past has tended to concentrate exclusively on (i). A " communicative " approach is one that aims to cover (ii) and (iii) as well. In the light of this discussion, two conclusions can be drawn which apply to communicative methodology in general.

First, with respect to (ii), we need to find teaching/learning techniques for the *perception of situation* (events, role, etc.). To understand a cricket match we need to know (and therefore perceive) the underlying set of rules on which it is based. The example is caricatural, but in fact the same argument applies to a million and one ordinary, everyday (from whose point of view, though?) situations : the Frenchman who enters an English baker's shop with a hearty " Good morning, ladies and gentlemen " has got his *situation* wrong. So had a Russian " with perfect English " who had trouble distinguishing between the TV commercials and the actual programmes. And just what calls an apology in English and thanks in Swedish? The most immediate implication is the importance of " civilisation ", in the sense of Landskonde, the nitty-gritty of everyday life — and we are back to authentic documents : methodologically, though, how are we to handle it?

The classic approach is that of presentation (cognitively, or by setting a problem), sensitisation (working on a corpus of authentic documents) practice (learner-constructed dialogues, etc.) and acquisition (" use " in simulations, etc.).

Perhaps the work being done at present on Personal Construct Theory (by the Centre for Human Learning at Brunel University in particular), will be of use here, by providing tools for the investigation of learners' cognitive categories.

Turning to (iii) *Procedural Rules*, — which include *strategies* i.e. those procedures used for dealing with what the actor perceives as a problem (Faerch and Kasper, 1981) — we find that we are back on familiar ground, since these rules will include those governing the sequencing of acts (in the fullest sense, including the sequential organisation of propositional content as well as the attribution and organisation of illocutionary values).

From the technical point of view, the study of such procedures is enormously complex, involving as they do all the problems related to inferencing or implicature (and we are back now to Searle, Grice and Gordon and Lakoff). From the point of view of language teaching, though, it is completely unrealistic to wait for the philosophers and linguists to provide us with a final, polished model on which to base our methodology. What we need to do is develop techniques and activities which involve the genuine negotiation of meaning, and to do this we do not need to solve all the technical problems provided we stick to the same kind of pragmatic operations.

Some of the characteristics of these operations and their methodological implications, are beginning to become clearer to us (Johnson, 1982 ; Moirand, 1982). In bald terms, they are

- (i) An *element of doubt* as to the development and outcome of the discourse and the transaction.
- (ii) A *teleological point* : the discourse must be task and purpose based.
- (iii) An *exchange of information* must take place during the discourse and transaction.

In a very real sense, these characteristics can be said to define *all* discourse, as opposed to text : it is also interesting to note that they can apply just as easily to interactive discourse (i.e. discourse which is the collaborative construct of two or more participants) as to monologue or other discourse. This gives us a glimpse, then, of our reasons for feeling intuitively that many of the games, role-plays, simulations, problem-solving activities which we have been using so far do in fact serve a useful purpose. But just as clearly, our investigation needs to be continued, since there are also games, role-plays, etc. which do *not* satisfy these criteria. The impatience of practitioners with what they often regard as theoretical hair-splitting must not be allowed to blind us, or them, to this basic fact. Some activities are better than others. For some people. It is our responsibility and in our interests to find out how and why, to discover the principles of communicative methodology.

Moreover, unless we do so the whole of the communicative approach will remain open to an extremely telling objection, namely, that its practitioners like it because it suits *them*, because they have a whale of a time acting, creating, expressing, performing in front of their captive audiences. The communicative approach, runs this line of argument, is just an outlet for the frustrated talents and exhibitions of teachers, actors *manqués* for whom the drama techniques, songs, etc. become primarily vehicles for their own ego-trips. They sparkle, they shine, they entertain, they demonstrate their histrionic talents, their perceptiveness — but do their learners learn? Again, this is often done in ways which are all the more intensely authoritarian and directive because unavowed: most alarming of all is the alliance of this approach, in incompetent hands, with techniques and activities borrowed from a wide spectrum of other fields (social psychology, psycho-analysis, encounter groups, Zen, TM, Total Physical Response, Suggestopaedia, The Silent Way), where the possibilities for manipulation are as common as they are dangerous.

A PRELIMINARY AND SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY ON THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

C O N T E N T S

I. — BIBLIOGRAPHIES ON THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

II. — THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

- a) The philosophy of language
- b) Pragmatics
- c) Speech act theory
- d) Discourse analysis
- e) Sociolinguistics (ethnomethodology, social interaction)
- f) Psycholinguistics

III. — LANGUAGE DIDACTICS

- a) The acquisition of communicative competence
- b) The language of the classroom
- c) The communicative approach to language teaching and learning
- d) Communicative strategies (interpretive strategies, the negotiation of meaning ; sociology of knowledge).

SECTION I

Bibliographies on the communicative approach

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BRUMFIT and JOHNSON (1979)

JOHNSON (1982)

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MUNBY (1978)

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SINCLAIR (1980)

SECTION II

The Theoretical Background

- a) The philosophy of language
- b) Pragmatics
- c) Speech Act Theory
- d) Discourse Analysis
- e) Sociolinguistics

- a) The Philosophy of language

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SECTION III

Language didactics

- a) The acquisition of communicative competence
 - b) The language of the classroom
 - c) The communicative approach
 - d) The negotiation of meaning (interlanguage, strategies)
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