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## AN ASSESSMENT OF THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN SECONDARY EDUCATION IN ALGERIA ( 1981 - 1991 )

MAGISTER THESIS

IN

APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND T. E. F. L.

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To my son, Djalal



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A. BAICHE



## A B S T R A C T

This study is prompted by my own experience as a teacher who worked both within the structural and the communicative frameworks in the teaching of English in secondary education in Algeria.

In broad terms, the present study has been carried out for two functions : first it is an attempt to contribute in an accessible form to the understanding of some of the theoretical bases that lie behind the communicative approach and its implementation in classroom practice. Second, it is an assessment in the sense that it also brings out some difficulties (or misunderstandings) of communicative language teaching.

Chapter 1 is a brief account of the English course in secondary education in Algeria since the 1970s. Two phases are dealt with in this chapter. The first one (1971-1981) presents a concise survey of the structural approach prevailing then. In this sense it can be regarded as an introduction to the second phase (1981-1991), stating the reasons for the adoption of the communicative approach.

Chapter 2 covers some range of theory that underlies the communicative approach and its implications for teaching and testing.

Chapter 3 relates the communicative theory discussed in Chapter 2 to its implementation in classroom practice. For this purpose, a teaching unit from New Lines has been selected for evaluation.

Chapter 4 goes back to theory. It covers some aspects of the current debate on communicative teaching. This makes it somehow shorter than the other chapters. It refers back to what is relevant/irrelevant in the communicative enterprise. For this purpose, a set of arguments put forward by field specialists is included.

Finally, the section on 'Perspectives' proposes some changes that have to be considered at many levels, and which I feel are both desirable and necessary. The issues raised certainly need improvement but as they stand, my hope is that they will have at least some impact on the English course in secondary education.



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## ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTATIONAL CONVENTIONS

- C.E.M : College d'Enseignement Moyen  
E.F : Ecole Fondamentale  
EFL : English as a Foreign Language  
ELT : English Language Teaching  
ELT Journal : English Language Teaching Journal  
ESP : English for Specific Purposes  
IPN : Institut Pédagogique National  
FLT : Foreign Language Teaching  
IRAL : International Review of Applied Linguistics  
L<sub>1</sub> : Native Language / Mother Tongue  
L<sub>2</sub> : Foreign Language  
P.E.S : Professeur d'Enseignement Secondaire  
TEFL : Teaching English as a Foreign Language  
TGG : Transformational Generative Grammar

Others :

- \* 1 A.S.: In the text, this stands for "1<sup>ère</sup> Année Secondaire"  
\* In the quotes, and unless stated otherwise, the underlining renders my own emphasis.



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## INTRODUCTION

0.1. Background to the Field of Inquiry

0.2. Context of the Problem

0.3. Scope of the Study

Notes

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

### 0.1. Background to the Field of Inquiry

The decade 1971-1981 devoted to the structural approach to the teaching of English in secondary education in Algeria resulted in unsatisfactory achievements in English. This was clearly diagnosed as years passed by. The main dissatisfaction with such an approach lied in the students' <sup>(1)</sup> inability to use English in communication situations. Although there were many other reasons for such a deficiency, namely, the teaching materials, the method and the quality of the teacher himself, the discontent was by and large put on the approach adopted. In the case of the structural approach the major blame was that it relied on the teaching about the language (i.e., usage) and rarely the use of language. In other words, the teaching-learning aimed at the acquisition of a knowledge of language forms rather than their functions.

The blame led to the verdict (usually when a method fails it is wrong) that the wrong 'thing' was the approach itself.



It is against this situation that the communicative approach has been adopted in secondary education in the early eighties. This approach concentrates more on language use than language forms. The shift of emphasis from form to use aims at developing the learners' ability to communicate in the foreign language. In other words, with the communicative approach, the students are given more opportunities to use language as it is used in everyday communication. They learn to use language for communicative purposes. Language forms are not taught/learned in isolation but as part and parcel of the communication process.

In brief, communicative methodology aims at practical results with the learners, that is, developing their communicative competence rather than a general knowledge of grammar. Obviously, communicative competence cannot be achieved by simply adopting the communicative approach. There are surely many other factors that have to be taken into consideration. These are investigated and developed throughout this study.

## 0.2. Context of the Problem

The communication difficulties that students at the pre-university level used to encounter after five (5) years of structural learning in secondary education was considered to be the most outstanding reason for the choice of the communicative approach as a supplant<sup>(2)</sup> to the former.

Obviously, no approach to language teaching can ever supersede another one permanently. The central concern of

this study is then not motivated by the dissatisfaction with the structural approach as such. It is an assessment of the English teaching-learning situation within the communicative approach in its first decade (1981-1991) in secondary education in Algeria.

### 0.3. Scope of the Study

The results of this study are expected to have an impact on English teaching-learning in this part of the world.

First, the teaching materials : the textbook as '... the most efficient and most accessible device of all ...' (Brumfit, 1985 : 6) should be well-planned, improved and clearly designed. It may include, for instance stimulating authentic<sup>(3)</sup> texts, motivating topics and activities, contextualized dialogues, short stories, etc., all in an attractive design (i.e., clear lay-out and colour as a study aid).

Second, in order to avoid mixture, a well-defined and separate syllabus should be designed for each section (the literary and the scientific).

Third, there should be a coordination between university teacher trainers and their counterparts in secondary education. The latter, inspectors of English and experienced and qualified teachers should, for this purpose, participate in the elaboration of the TEFL course of the English departments in Algerian Universities. This participation will undoubtedly provide a precise and detailed description of the English course in secondary education; a clear statement of the goals, and finally it will contribute to the sort of training that should be imparted to the future graduates. such a training course will undoubtedly help the latter to be more familiar with the current approach used in secondary education and eventually lead to an effective methodology for better levels of achievement with pupils.

## N O T E S

1. The terms students, pupils and learners are used interchangeably throughout the text. They basically refer to learners in secondary education.

2. I am aware that it is difficult at this stage to decide whether to use the term 'supplant' or 'substitute'. In fact, the whole problem of formulation remains the object of this study. As an example, at least three (3) years after the adoption of the communicative approach in secondary education in 1981, structural teaching was still throwing its weight into the scale. In an article entitled 'From Structural to Functional' in secondary education in Algeria, Ahsan ur Rehman (1989 : 29) observes : " We have had to pass through transitional periods and situations in which the same teacher has had to teach in two different ways ...". And most interestingly when he adds : "Since the introduction of English in the 1960's a structural syllabus has been used to teach English." (Ibid). This explains why teachers of English in secondary education in Algeria were somewhat moving slowly from structurally to functionally (see note 10 to Chapter 1) based courses .

3. Authentic material is at present quite controversial. It is used here to refer to 'bits from life' (Pearse, 1983) and not to 'texts designed for native speakers' (Harmer, 1983). On this issue, see also Swan and Schleppegrell under 4.2, and Maley under 4.4 .



## CHAPTER ONE

## BACKGROUND : ENGLISH IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

1.1. 1971 - 1981 : Surveying the Structural Approach  
in Secondary Education

- 1.1.1. Describing the Structural Approach
- 1.1.2. Influence of Linguistics on Language Teaching
- 1.1.3. The English Syllabus
- 1.1.4. The Textbook
- 1.1.5. Emphasis on Accuracy

1.2. 1981 - 1991 : The Communicative Approach in Secondary  
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- 1.2.1. New Orientation
- 1.2.2. Shift of Emphasis
- 1.2.3. Discredit of the Structural Approach
- 1.2.4. Broad Comparison of the Two Phases
- 1.2.5. Communicative Approach Adopted

Notes to Chapter One

## CHAPTER ONE

## BACKGROUND : ENGLISH IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

As a preliminary to presenting the communicative approach in theory and in practice as the current approach in secondary education, it seems essential to give a brief description of the English course that prevailed during the last two decades as a framework to explain and situate the problem in its context.

This chapter, then, deals with the different approaches that English teaching has gone through in secondary education in Algeria since the 1970s. We may, for practical reasons, distinguish two phases for the present study : 1971-1981 and 1981-1991. These two distinct decades represent respectively the structural approach (see 1.1) and the communicative approach (see 1.2 and Chapter 2) in language teaching in Algeria.

Part one (1.1 : 1971 - 1981) is a survey of the structural approach in secondary education, tracing briefly the major linguistic influences on language teaching, syllabus design and teaching materials.

Part two (1.2) refers to recent trends in language teaching (in this case the communicative approach). It also

outlines the communication difficulties that students encounter in a structurally based course, and the reasons that motivated the decision makers to adopt the communicative approach in secondary education in Algeria.

### 1.1. 1971 - 1981 : Surveying the Structural Approach in Secondary Education

#### 1.1.1. Describing the Structural Approach

The structural approach can be described as a language course based on units that are defined in grammatical terms. The syllabus (see 1.1.3) and the selected textbook (see 1.1.4), Alexander's (1967) Practice and Progress were selected according to the structural approach, and mainly loaded with grammatical structures.

During the 1970s, the teaching-learning was more about language usage than language use. The teacher concentrated on the knowledge of grammar and the drilling of grammatical structures. In this context, Littlewood (1981 : 1) notes that 'The structural view of language concentrates on the grammatical system, describing ways in which linguistic items can be combined.' The assumption behind this was to develop a knowledge of the English system in the learners. Such a focus on grammar, it was claimed, would install solid foundations that could lead the learners to language use. However, knowing the grammatical mechanisms of a language does not necessarily mean speaking or developing performance in that

language. Again, Littlewood says that '... it is not sufficient on its [the structural view] own to account for how language is used as a means of communication' (ibid). This view is influenced by a linguistic theory affecting language from the communicative point of view (see 1.1.2). In the next section, we shall return to the structural view and its impact as a source discipline on how languages should be taught and learnt.

#### 1.1.2. Influence of Structural Linguistics on Language Teaching

The term 'structural linguistics' is used today in different ways. This is not the place to review them all. However, for the purpose of this study, it may be said that the two most widely expressed views are :

a) A general view : this view designates all the various language theories (American and European) etc. which, using what is called discovery procedures, attempted to explain language from a systematic and structural point of view. In other words, "An attempt was made to translate linguistic 'discovery procedures' into didactic procedures, which resulted in for instance practising, with pattern drills, sentence patterns which could be varied paradigmatically or syntagmatically." (Van Els et al., 1984 : 153).



b) A restricted view : this view has been put forward by Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) and its followers. It applies to the various theories and conceptions of grammar which do not make use of transformational rules and other devices. This kind of 'structural linguistics' is viewed by TGG as 'taxonomic', i.e., primarily interested in segmentation and classification.

In this study, it is the general view which will rather be mentioned and adopted for the purpose of discussion. In fact, TGG has, in a sense, developed independently from foreign language teaching (FLT) practice, and has also been cautious about indicating applications of TG in FLT, according to Van Els et al., (1984 : 133). They further add :

the impact of TG on FLT has been less direct than that of traditional linguistics and structuralism.

(Van Els et al., 1984 : 134)

Next in line, in their presentation of Hymes's communicative competence (see 2.2) Brumfit and Johnson say the following :

Linguistics -in Chomsky as in Bloomfield- is by and large the study of language structure. Perhaps this is why transformational grammar, so revolutionary in linguistics, has had such little effect on language teaching. After all, the most it can offer is alternative strategies for teaching grammar - new ways of teaching the same thing.

(in Brumfit and Johnson, 1979 : 3)

Language teaching was then directly influenced by structuralism since the 1950s. In this connection, Stern (1983 : 168) says that '... the influence of structuralism on

language pedagogy was pervasive and powerful and can be clearly identified in teaching materials, teaching methods, language tests, and in the writings of language teaching methodologists ...' (see 1.1.3, 1.1.4, 1.1.5 and 2.4). The predominant view at that time, based on the work of Bloomfield in the 1930s and 1940s in linguistics, was primarily concerned with the teaching of forms as noted again by Brumfit and Johnson :

(...) the language teacher's emphasis over the past few decades runs parallel to a similar emphasis within linguistics (or more precisely, American linguistics) during the same period. The parallel is not hard to demonstrate. The proclaimed characteristic feature of Bloomfieldian and neo-Bloomfieldian American Structuralism was its careful concern to restrict itself to the study of form, and the classification of the forms of a language, without reference to the categories of meaning.

(in Brumfit and Johnson, 1979 : 2)

Later in 'Pedagogic considerations' of this view, Wilkins also notes that "... the aim of learning is seen as mastery of the formal arrangements of a language." (1972 : 19)

The study of grammar was then considered the safest way to understand and use a language. Such a view was based on the structural linguist's assumption that learning a language involves internalizing its grammatical system through understanding of grammar, pattern practice, drills, etc. This view remained unchallenged for more than a generation and "... throughout the 1970s, linguists have found themselves increasingly concerned with the context of linguistic patterning." in the words of Brumfit (1985 : 19).

Their claim was that learners could effectively use the language if they mastered the mechanisms of the language rules.

### 1.1.3. The English Syllabus

The term syllabus is used here to refer to what is known in secondary education as "Programmes d'Anglais". It is a syllabus designed by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Ministère des Enseignements Primaire et Secondaire) issued in 1971-1972. This syllabus is selected and graded in terms of grammatical items and includes :

- A. ARTICLES
- B. NOUNS
- C. ADJECTIVES
- D. PRONOUNS
- E. VERBS
- F. SENTENCE PATTERNS
- G. ADVERBS
- H. PREPOSITIONS - PARTICLES - COORDINATORS

(in Directives et Conseils Pédagogiques, 1971-1972 : 7)

For the sake of brevity, only two forms (A (articles) and B (nouns) from the list above) have been selected here. Their usage and examples are given in Table 1 below. All other forms (i.e., C, D, E, F, G, and H) appear under the same format in the syllabus, and need not be reprinted here.

Table 1

Form	Usage	Examples
<b>A - ARTICLES</b>		
<b>I.- INDEFINITE</b>	1. A - An used in expression - of price - of speed - of frequency 2. Distinction between a - an and one 3. A used before words beginning with the sound /j/	Ten dinars a dozen Ten shillings a dozen sixty miles an hour Four times a day A chair is no good; you need a ladder.(chair is the wrong thing) One chair is not enough (you need more than one.) A university A uniform A European country
<b>II. - DEFINITE</b>	1. THE used before names of - rivers - seas - deserts - mountain 2. THE omitted before : - President - King - Queen Note : We say "King Hassan THE second"; "Queen Elizabeth THE second." 3. THE omitted before street names	The Thames The Mediterranean Sea The Sahara The Aures President Boumediene President Bourguiba King Hassan II Queen Elizabeth II Didouche Mourad Street Oxford Street Port Said Square
<b>B. - NOUNS</b>		
<b>I. - COMPOUNDS</b>	1. Noun - noun 2. Present participle and noun	A bus-driver A washing machine
<b>II.- POSSESSIVE FORM with</b>	1. Expression of time 2. Expression of price	An hour's walk Today's paper A month's trip A dinar's worth of olives

A sample from the 1971-1972 English syllabus in secondary education in Algeria.

Source: Directives et conseils pédagogiques (1971-1972 : 8-9).



The assumption behind this structurally graded syllabus was the knowledge of the above grammatical items, and often in greater details than those of Table 1.

In practice, the lessons were teacher-centred (i.e., the teacher presents and controls everything, grammar, drills, errors, etc.). A great deal of classwork was concerned with teaching rather than learning : grammatical explanations, drills, repetitions were the pedagogic focus in class as stated in the syllabus.

Usage comes before analysis ... It is more important for the teacher to give several examples than to state the rule.

(in Directives et Conseils Pédagogiques , 1971-1972 : 4)

With regard to the above quotes, the primary goal of such a syllabus was to develop a knowledge of linguistic rules ('usage', 'several examples'). The teacher then, insisted upon the mastery of a grammatical item before moving to the next one and so on till the end of the programme.

The way of presenting grammar (no statement of the rule, no analysis), that is, not deductively but inductively is in fact noted in the syllabus : " The effort that the pupils have to make to induce the pattern is basic to the language learning process." (Ibid.). This reflects the shift that took place in the early seventies in secondary education from the grammar-translation method to the direct method<sup>(1)</sup>. In this context, Rivers describes grammar within the direct method as follows :

Grammar was not taught explicitly as in the grammar-translation class but was learned largely through practice. Students were encouraged to draw their own structural generalizations from what they had been learning by an inductive process.

(Rivers, 1968 : 19)

Yet, any teaching-learning that is based either on deductive or inductive grammar is incomplete because a knowledge of grammar alone does not lead to effective language use (see 2.2). Another major weakness of such an approach lies in the fact that there is no guarantee that the students will ever remember the studied structures because they are taught in isolation. Scott's illustrative words of this situation run as follows :

The kind of activity that goes on inside a classroom where the structural approach is being used is confined to the appraisal of utterances on structural criteria and in isolation from each other. Students learn question forms. They learn to negate statements, they learn imperatives and they learn conditionals. They learn how phrasal verbs behave. They learn passives, subordinate clauses, deletion, cleft sentences, and so on.

(in Johnson and Morrow, 1981 : 70)

Moreover, students often develop a mastery of grammatical forms but remain unable to use these forms appropriately to perform communicative acts as Scott goes on saying (see also 1.2.3) :

But what question a cleft sentence is an appropriate answer to, or how to make the right choice of form to express appropriately a given function in a given situation is not touched upon.

(Ibid)



This failure may be viewed in part as attributable to the choice of the prescribed textbook (see 1.1.4) of the seventies in secondary education.

#### 1.1.4. The Textbook

The contents of the textbook deal mainly with the study of grammar. A set of grammatical structures is selected and graded from easy to difficult so that the learner develops a mastery of the linguistic system. In fact, Practice and Progress includes a succession of structures that resemble those of the syllabus in the previous section (see 1.1.3). The contents, for example, indicate the following order :

1. A Private Conversation - Word Order in Simple Statements.
2. Breakfast or Lunch ? - The Present Continuous and Simple.
3. Please Send Me a Card - The Simple Past.
4. An Exciting Trip - The Present Perfect Simple<sup>(2)</sup> etc.

(Alexander, 1967 : iii-iv)

The material that supports these structures is a compilation of sentences that mainly focus on a special item to illustrate such and such usage, and which Lenon sees as :  
 " ... a contrived reading passage in which the structure is repeated ad nauseam." (1988 : 3). A focus on the simple past can be seen, for instance, in the following excerpt from a reading passage in Practice and Progress (the items are underlined by myself for the purpose of explanation. Further



examples are given in Appendix B).

Postcards always spoil my holidays. Last summer, I went to Italy. I visited museums and sat in public gardens. A friendly waiter taught me a few words in Italian. Then he lent me a book. I read a few lines, but I did not understand a word. Everyday I thought about postcards. My holidays passed quickly, but I did not send any cards to my friends (...).

(Alexander, 1967 : 17)

In a note about Practice and Progress, Widdowson says that:

Mention should be made, for example, of the materials written by L.G. Alexander under the general heading of *New Concept English* (Longman), which are referred to on the cover as 'integrated courses'. The integration, however, is applied to linguistic skills rather than to communicative abilities (...)

(Widdowson, 1978 : 163)

Taylor, on the other hand, considers such types of textbook as "... narrow-minded in their approach, badly graded, boring to the children, remote from their interests, irrelevant to their needs, with insufficient opportunities for speech-work and active participation in the lesson, ..."

(1971 : 156).

As for the organization of Practice and Progress, it is stolid and presents the different sections of a reading passage in isolation from each other. The same model is kept throughout its four (4) Units including : 'a reading passage', 'comprehension précis', 'composition', 'key structures' and 'special difficulties'<sup>(3)</sup>. In this connection, Widdowson qualifies such an organization as "... an adherence to segregation rather than integration: 'divide and rule'. "<sup>(4)</sup> (1978 : 144), and says that "... language

teaching courses commonly consist of units in which 'comprehension', 'grammar', and 'composition' appear as separate sections ..." (Ibid). Besides, one frequently finds that comprehension questions and exercises that are related to the different stages of a reading passage directly focus a grammatical point, and, therefore, leave no opportunity for the learners to attempt conversation and express themselves in their own words. As an illustration, a set of question-types - of which an example is quoted below, follows each text to emphasize the grammatical point being studied (see passage above).

Where did he spend his holidays last summer ?

What did he think about everyday ?

Did he send any cards to his friends or not ?

How many cards did he buy on the last day ? ...

(Alexander, 1967 : 17)

According to Taylor, such an organization (i.e., a reading passage, comprehension précis, grammatical structures, etc.) "... may have been tolerable when education aimed at producing an élite minority, but is out of date and out of touch today when English is being learned in many countries by increasing numbers of 'ordinary' children, who may well be taught by very ordinary teachers." (1971 : 156). He goes on to say that pupils in secondary schools "... need lesson material that is meaningful, interesting, alive, and personal, ..." (ibid).

Indeed, the new tendency in textbook design presents language in a variety of imaginative ways to avoid boredom.



Recent textbooks (see 1.2.3.) include, among other things, a range of activities that cover all language skills (i.e., via oral work, pair and group work, stories, games, puzzles, songs, etc.) providing opportunities to use language for a real purpose. A further discussion of these and other aspects of materials construction is developed elsewhere (see section 2.3.2).

#### 1.1.5. Emphasis on Accuracy

Both the syllabus and the textbook were limited to the teaching of forms and never their functions (see 1.1.3 and 1.1.4). On the one hand, the teachers never stopped teaching: from grammatical explanations to drilling patterns and lexis with no opportunities for the student to express himself in English. On the other hand, the student had to make a great effort to understand the logic of grammar (with a further difficulty of interference from  $L_1$ ). In other words, "... the foreign student must learn the grammar of English in the sense that the sentences he produces must conform to English patterns in the accepted model." (Bright and Mc Gregor, 1970: 236). In classroom practice, such a learning had no relation to the student's communication needs. (see sections 1.2.2 and 3.3 for further details on this).

As has already been pointed out (see 1.1.2), language was viewed as a set of structures to be learnt and internalized. Parallel to this view, the teaching aimed at getting the learner to make correct linguistic sentences and

responses. The teacher's emphasis in the classroom was then on the mastery of linguistic factors leading the learner to develop a 'linguistic competence' (see 2.2 and 3.4) that enables him to produce and understand speech. Yet, a current research teaches us to handle this concept with caution. In fact, Newmeyer (1988) cites cases of children whose syntax is completely fluent but remain unable to use language communicatively. This issue has given rise to much controversy between Swan who considers that "... the structurally competent but communicatively incompetent student ..." (1985 : 7) is in need to be taught enough vocabulary and not 'rules of use' or 'rules of communication' and 'appropriacy' (see 4.2) as advocated by other linguists (see Hymes in 2.2, Wilkins in 1.2.4, Widdowson in 4.2 and 4.3).

This intense demand for accuracy forced the learner to seek correctness in speech<sup>(5)</sup> rather than spontaneous use of the target language. In classroom practice, he was controlled and guided (i.e., teacher-centred methodology, see 1.1.3) towards a strict observance of the conventions of the language system as clearly stated in Brumfit and Johnson : "We reward structural correctness and chastise structural inaccuracy." (1979 : 1). Though correctness is considered as essential in the learner's use of language, this conformity with the conventions is not an obstruct for communication. Indeed, "Nobody believes that the native speaker achieves his correctness by a conscious application of grammatical rules learnt as such." (Bright and Mc Gregor, 1970 : 236). The ability to communicate in a language is then, not a matter of

learning its grammar. In any case, it is unlikely that anyone learns a language for its grammatical rules but for the purpose of communication in that language. It is this tendency that the next section is concerned with.

## 1.2. 1981 - 1991 : The Communicative Approach in Secondary Education

### 1.2.1. New Orientation

Recent development in the field of English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching rejects grammar as the basis of language learning. What is rejected is the classroom atmosphere which involves lengthy grammatical and lexical explanations that leave only very little speaking for the learner (see also note 1 to this chapter) .

Indeed, trends in EFL are dynamic. What was fashion in the past becomes old and changes over time. The new procedure puts forward the idea of "... learning *how to mean* in a wide range of social settings." (Bell, 1981 : 151). Brumfit and Johnson are also in favour of this view and state their reaction in the following terms :

It is a reaction against the view of language as a set of structures; it is a reaction towards a view of language as communication, a view in which meaning and the uses to which language is put play a central part.

(in Brumfit and Johnson, 1979 : 3)

What is aimed at now is to develop a facility in oral expression in the learner because his needs change over the

years. In the past, students were taught English for a literary purpose as a key to the culture of the country. Now that the use of English is prominent in international communication, the spoken language has consequently become the most desired aim of language teaching-learning. Obviously, any change in needs involves a different approach and therefore a suitable methodology in the teaching-learning process. We shall return to this point in section 2.3.3 . Now it is the shift of emphasis on learning how to mean and communicate that we turn to.

#### 1.2.2. Shift of Emphasis

Apparently, the results of the structural approach were mainly unsatisfactory at the level of communication. Present day objectives seek the learner's communicative competence (see 2.2). However, this aim was not achieved by a teaching based on the learning of the linguistic system. At its best, such an approach produced students that had certain kinds of information about the language. They could, for example, describe a grammatical rule, make simple as well as complex sentences or even write an acceptable paragraph, but unable to carry on a simple conversation in English. Indeed, one does not communicate by merely composing certain sentences according to a rote learning of grammatical patterns. This failure in communication is partly due to the intense formal English teaching of which Widdowson (1972 : 15) says :



The problem is that students, ... who have received several years of formal English teaching, frequently remain deficient in the ability to actually use the language, and to understand its use, in normal communication, whether in the spoken or written mode.

Communication is then brought into focus as a reaction to the structural teaching which has left the learners lacking communicative capacity. In other words, there is a shift of emphasis from form to function because learning a language is more than a knowledge of lexis and grammar. Language is a functional system by means of which people communicate meanings. This view taking into account the communicative properties of language had its origin with the linguists of the Prague School<sup>(6)</sup>. Among their contributions in syntactic analysis was what they called 'communicative dynamism' and 'functional sentence perspective'. Quoted at length below, Daneš, a Prague School scholar, distinguishes three levels within syntax :

1. Level of the grammatical structure of sentence
2. Level of the semantic structure of sentence
3. Level of the organization of utterance

(Daneš, 1964 : 225)

In the act of communication, only level (3) can explain how levels (1) and (2) function and interact. In one of his well-known articles, Daneš explains how acts of communication can be performed :



The conditions of the act of communication are determined by the general character and regularities of the linear materialization and linear perception of utterance on the one hand, and on the other by the extra-linguistic content of the message, by the context and situation and by the attitude of the speaker towards the message and towards the addressee (sic).

(Daneš, 1964 : 227)

In other words, the relations between grammatical patterns and semantic structures must be dynamic (when taken separately, these are abstract and static), and it is this dynamism of the utterance which represents the functional sentence perspective.

By way of summary, this shift in emphasis means that language teaching must go beyond the teaching of grammar. The learner must be aware that language has a function in society and must, therefore, learn how to put his grammatical knowledge to perform acts of communication. In one word, what is useful for the student is learning the use of language in social interaction. This trend is backed up by the communicative view of language, and it is further developed in Chapter 2 (see 2.1)

### 1.2.3. Discredit of the Structural Approach

A powerful reason that discredited the structural approach to foreign language teaching was that the learners had tremendous difficulty in transferring their knowledge about the language into real<sup>(7)</sup> language use. This was partly due to the heavy stress upon the 'doctrinaire' teaching of

grammar. The result was that the students failed to put into use what had been practised at the level of usage. In this respect, Allen and Widdowson cite how language teachers and applied linguists express their dissatisfaction in as far as:

(...) the 'structural' approach to foreign language teaching, which focuses attention on the formal properties of the language being learned and lays stress on the importance of manipulating sentence patterns, does not satisfactorily provide for the learning of communicative competence (...)

(in Allen and Corder, 1975 : 89-90)

At another level, teachers and inspectors of English were not satisfied with the students' results achieved in class, and in their finals at secondary level. Figures indicate that out of a total of 8759 candidates for the 'Baccalauréat June 1980' in the Western part of Algeria, 7529 or 85.95 % of students scored less than ten (10/20) out of twenty in English ( in Link 1980 : 25). More details of these statistics are given in Table 2 below :

Table 2

SECTION	MARK OUT OF TWENTY				TOTAL NUMBER OF CANDIDATES
	00 to 04.50	05 to 07.50	08 to 09.50	10 and above	
LETTRES	1050 37.68%	820 29.43%	389 13.96%	527 18.91%	2786
SCIENCES "A"	779 37.29%	880 42.12%	245 11.72%	185 08.85%	2089
SCIENCES "B"	922 30.65%	1324 44.01%	460 15.29%	302 10.03%	3008
MATHS. "A"	14 11.29%	41 33.06%	27 21.77%	42 33.87%	124
MATHS "B"	70 12.65%	201 36.34%	134 24.23%	148 26.76%	553
MATHS. "T"	05 06.75%	27 36.48%	18 24.32%	24 32.43%	74
TECH. ECO.	59 47.20%	60 48.00%	04 03.20%	02 01.60%	125
GRAND TOTAL	2899 33.09%	3353 38.28%	127 14.57%	1230 14.04%	8759

Baccalauréat June 1980 : Distribution of grades for English papers  
in the Western part of Algeria.

Source : (Link N° 1, 1980 : 25)

Now, the purpose of this section is, however, not to discredit totally the structural approach. In passing, one can mention that since the approach aims at the learner's correctness, such an aim is indeed a matter of effective communication (on this issue, Widdowson's attitude is different, see next section) and we would unquestionably agree with Close in saying that :

'Correctness' should be seen primarily as a matter of *effective communication*, i.e., a process through which the hearer (or reader) understands precisely what the speaker (or writer) intends to convey.

(in Widdowson, 1971 : 126)

However, this idea of 'correctness' is quite controversial. The teaching-learning of grammar is now approached differently. This issue is further developed in Chapter 3 under section 3.5.2.2 .

Now, as this section heading indicates, to cite some of the weaknesses of the structural approach, we shall briefly return to two important components of this approach, namely : the syllabus and the textbook.

a) The syllabus : in addition to the previous characteristics of the syllabus (see 1.1.3), the dissatisfaction lies partly with its content. The latter followed the linguistic view that was drawn from structuralism. In brief, such a view regarded language as set of structures to be learnt and internalized. The kind of language teaching then predominant, aimed at getting the



learners to make correct sentences and responses. But the problem was that :

Explicit grammar in the classroom would only lead to a knowledge about the language, not an ability to make correct sentences automatically.

(Prabhu, 1987 : 12)

and even "... grammatically correct sentences could still be socially inappropriate ..." for the simple reason that "... social appropriacy did not seem a particularly pressing objective for second language learners in a formal educational setting." (Prabhu 1987 : 13). This concept of social appropriacy is also discussed elsewhere in this study (see 2.3.2).

b) The textbook : though the teacher was advised not to have a slavish attitude towards the textbook, the latter was the most used device by the teacher and the student alike. The problem was then the textbook itself. Practice and Progress, is in fact not designed according to ideas of communication (see Widdowson in 1.1.4). The material included does not involve topics of students' interest. The texts (reading passages), for instance, are not related to the learner's everyday life so that he can participate in the comprehension of these. They are mainly an illustration of grammatical structures that have to be practised in the remaining sections, that is, in 'Key Structures', 'Exercises' and 'Special Difficulties' (see Appendix B). Comprehension questions, on the other hand, do not promote any thinking since answers are drawn from the texts (see 1.1.4). Finally, objectives are not stated: the textbook is designed according



to a structural gradation that aims at covering a given number of grammatical items in a certain period of time.

Moreover, the same textbook was used for two (2) years for the literary sections and three (3) for the scientific ones as the teaching hours devoted to the English course for both sections were respectively limited to four (4) and three (3) per week. Thus, to say the least, the textbook becomes boring for the students after one year.

Last, but not least, a textbook must include authentic and fully contextualised material that appeals to the student's world (i.e., appropriate choice of topics). As it is often stressed in language teaching pedagogy that 'a picture is worth a thousand words', illustrations are then a valuable device (visual aid) in the teaching-learning process. For this purpose a textbook must first of all be of attractive design and include a variety of pictures, humorous cartoons, maps, diagrams, etc. These must be clearly and beautifully drawn in conjunction with the material for help in the explanation (and comprehension) of different points of a given text. Interviews, short newspaper reports, puzzles, games, songs, jokes and a host of other things are particularly necessary to 'shackle off routine' and create an enjoyable atmosphere that sustains motivation of today's young teenagers. These, simply do not exist in Practice and Progress.

#### 1.2.4. Broad Comparison of the Two Phases

The teaching-learning of English in secondary education was mostly concerned with the surface structure accuracy and form during the first phase (1971-1981). The language that students rehearsed in the classroom was generally limited to a mechanistic drilling of grammatical structures and lexis that never went beyond the school environment. In other words, this sort of language learning was not related to language use in social interaction. The important point to note here was the difficulty that pupils met to bridge the gap between the stage of skill getting (grammar, lexis, drills, etc.) and skill producing or real life communication (conveying ideas).

The result was that learners did not develop a spontaneous use of English from a structural-oriented course. As an example of this weakness, one may cite that of students who wanted to register for a degree (licence) in English in the departments of English at Algerian universities but their oral performance was below average at the pre-selection test<sup>(8)</sup>.

On the other hand, the ability to communicate in the target language is what the communicative approach aims at achieving with the learners. This has led to a shift of emphasis in language teaching: from the preoccupation with linguistic forms to communicative functions of language (see Canale and Swain in 2.1 and Littlewood in 2.3.2). This is done right from the beginning in order to train the learners

to effectively communicate their intentions, attitudes, emotions, etc. The grammatical structures are not excluded or neglected but with no primary focus. In terms of foreign language learning, as is observed in Wilkins (1976 : 11), "... the learner has to learn rules of communication as well as rules of grammar."<sup>(9)</sup> Grammar is then dealt with only as part of the semantic organization of language that helps in the performance of 'acts of communication' (see Danes in 1.2.2). In other words, it is used to express the functions of language (see Canale and Swain in 2.1). In fact, teaching pupils to recognize language functions (also referred to as 'illocutionary acts' or 'speech acts', see 2.3.2), and learn how these functions convey ideas is of primary importance in the communicative process.

In summary, language learning is not limited to a knowledge of its structures, sounds or words, but it is learning to communicate. Widdowson stresses this by saying that :

Both kinds of knowledge are essential if the user of the language is to enter into effective communication with his fellows.

(in Allen and Corder, 1974 : 202)

Priority to communication is undoubtedly the paramount reason which makes the communicative approach more promising and helpful for the learners who want to reach communicative competence (see 2.2) in the target language. Achieving such an aim with the learners is also the cogent reason for the adoption of the communicative approach in secondary education in Algeria.

### 1.2.5 Communicative Approach Adopted

The most outstanding reason for the adoption of the communicative approach was the realization of the students' inability to communicate in English after five (5) years of structural instruction. In this respect, Widdowson makes the following observation: "The structurally ordered course concentrates attention on linguistic competence as such but does not effectively indicate how this competence can be drawn upon as a communicative resource." (1984 : 238). Another no less important reason was due to the desire for change that could hopefully lead to a better achievement in English with the learners. This reason was very much influenced by the applied linguists' writings on the advantages (see also 4.4) of such an approach as is the case in Wilkins's ideas, quoted below :

The advantage of the notional syllabus is that it takes the communicative facts of language into account from the beginning without losing sight of grammatical and situational factors. It is potentially superior to the grammatical syllabus because it will produce a communicative competence and because its evident concern with the use of language will sustain motivation of the learner<sup>(10)</sup>.

(Wilkins, 1976 : 19)

Allen and Widdowson (1979) also consider the oral inductive methods (see also 1.1.3) as no longer adequate in foreign language learning because students want to use English as a tool in their specialist studies. They believe



that students' difficulties in communication arise much more from their unfamiliarity with English use than a knowledge of its system. Consequently, they see the need for a new approach that gives priority to the communicative properties of language, that is, one in which the learner develops an awareness of the ways in which the language system is used in the performance of acts of communication. They also consider such an approach of better advantage for the learner over a course which simply provides further practice in the composition of sentences. This different orientation in the teaching-learning process... 'represents an attempt to move from an almost exclusive concern with grammatical forms to at least an equal concern with rhetorical functions.' (in Brumfit and Johnson, 1979 : 124).

In the early eighties then, teachers of English were asked to drop out syllabuses and textbooks that were used for a decade (1971-1981) to adopt newer instruments. An Algerian textbook, New Lines<sup>(11)</sup>, designed according to different functions of language (describing, instructing, narrating, etc. see 3.5) was introduced along with a new syllabus (see 2.3.1) graded in the same way.

As was mentioned earlier, the 'new' tendency is that language should be learned in a meaningful social context with no stronger emphasis on the formal properties of language. On this basis, the aim of language teaching should direct the learners from the foundations to use the target language as a means of communication.



In the light of this, Chapter 2 is devoted to some theoretical bases of the communicative approach and their implications for foreign language teaching-learning.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. "Traditional methods which use, among other techniques, translation and systematic grammatical analysis leave the pupils little time to practise the spoken language and do not lead to a sufficient consolidation of the language items learnt." (Directives et Conseils Pédagogiques, 1971-1972 : 3)
2. For further details, see Appendix A.
3. An example of a passage from 'Unit 2' is given in Appendix B (Alexander, 1967 : 89).
4. This note carries number 2 in Widdowson's text. It includes critical remarks on Practice and Progress (see Widdowson, 1978 : 163 in this section). "It is also worth noting that although the courses are represented as integrated ones, the learning tasks are defined in a way which suggests that the skills are still thought of as quite separate kinds of activity." (Widdowson, 1978 : 164).
5. A more appropriate way of saying it would be 'correctness in sentences' as in general the student's speech was limited to isolated sentences (and utterances) that were in conformity with the learnt models (for further details, see Bright and Mc Gregor, 1970 : 236-270).
6. For further details on this, see Lyons 1981 : 224-228.
7. A useful distinction is to be made here between 'real' and 'realistic' uses of languages. "Real English is when you use language to say something. Realistic English is when you say something to use language." (Pearse, 1983 : 20).
8. Before 1980, many students failed the oral test without which they could not register in the English departments at Algerian universities. In my view, these communicative difficulties in front of interviewers are due to the

students' inability to put to use their knowledge of the language system (see also 1.2.3).

9. See Swan's (1985) attitude towards 'rules of communication' or 'rules of use' under 1.1.5 and 4.2 .

10. The term 'notional' is another label for 'communicative' and 'functional'(see 2.1 for more detail).

11. When New Lines is mentioned on its own, it refers to the 'Pupil's book'. When reference is made to the 'Teacher's book', it will always be specified in the text.

CHAPTER TWO

THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN THEORY

2.1. Communicative View of Language

2.2. Communicative Competence

2.3. Implications for Teaching

2.3.1. Syllabus Design

2.3.2. Materials Construction

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2.4.1. Discrete-point Tests

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Notes to Chapter Two



## CHAPTER TWO

## THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN THEORY

## 2.1. Communicative View of Language

Applied Linguistics research on the communicative approach to language teaching and other associated labels such as 'functional/notional' (Canale and Swain, 1980) has dominated the EFL literature since the mid-seventies. "The approach is often referred to in literature as 'communicative', 'functional', 'notional', or 'functional-notional' (see e.g. Wilkins 1975, 1976a. Peck 1976, Shaw 1977, Munby 1978, Alexander 1979)". (Van Els et al., 1984 : 182). In this context, Munby, quoting Wilkins, makes the following observation: "Wilkins (1972) advocated a semantic or notional approach to the specification of language to be taught, which ensures the consideration of the communicative value of such content. He later called this a communicative approach." (1978 : 25). This point is further illustrated in Savignon (1987 : 21) in the following terms : "With a better understanding of language as communication has come a variety of curricular and methodological innovations referred to collectively as communicative language teaching.". This is

indicative of the terminological diversification (as shown above) which refers to the same thing. One can easily see then that specialists differ in their choice (of terminology) but they ultimately aim at the same objective, i.e., : developing communicative competence in the learner (see 2.2).

Now what does this communicative view of language entail? First how do leading experts consider such an approach?

For Brumfit (1986 : 3) :

This approach has tended to concentrate language teaching on the rules we need for using the language in social situations rather than grammatical rules that we need to produce correct sentences.

In the words of Canale and Swain (1980 : 2) :

A communicative (or functional / notional) approach on the other hand is organized on the basis of communicative functions (e.g. apologizing, describing, inviting, promising) that a given learner or group of learners needs to know and emphasizes the ways in which particular grammatical forms may be used to express these functions appropriately.

While in his introduction to Communicative Language Teaching, Littlewood (1981 : 1) describes it as a course that:

(...) pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language combining these into a more fully communicative view.

A similar view is expressed by Breen and Candlin (1980 : 89):

At a time when there is a recognized need in language teaching to give adequate attention to language use as well as language form, various 'notional-functional' or so-called 'communicative approaches' to language teaching are being advocated.

Assuming then that learning a foreign language primarily means the ability to use it, the communicative approach gives priority to speaking (i.e., using the language) among the four conventional language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). It is based on a "... continuous process of communication and negotiation in the target language..." (Dubin and Olshtain, 1986 : 38).

On the other hand, the approach is learning-centred. This implies that the teaching-learning process is not limited to the mastery of language systems (structures, lexis, sounds, etc.) in a "...passive student situation where the student receives instruction and applies it as directed." (Rivers, 1968 : 12). On the contrary, real social language uses are brought into focus and the learner is conducted towards what he can do with language actively according to his needs.

The communicative view of language also proposes that the learner should be taught to express himself and understand others without a heavy stress on grammar. Obviously different grammatical structures help in the process of effective communication. It is even argued that the latter cannot be attained without a strict observance of language conventions of which the language system is composed (see Close in 1.2.3). However, with the communicative

approach, the teacher is expected to be flexible towards students' mistakes, that is, his intervention about students' accuracy while taking part in communicative activities should not be an obstacle to their performance.

Finally, there is much to be said about this issue "(Germain 1981) is an annotated bibliography of over 100 titles which appeared between 1975 and 1980, and yet it does not claim to be exhaustive." (Van Els et al., 1984 : 274). But in general EFL Literature bears out that the communicative theory emphasizes language as communication. The central concern of the communicative approach is leading the learner to use the foreign language or more precisely to develop in him what is known as communicative competence.

## 2.2. Communicative Competence

The concept of communicative competence has been the object of a considerable debate by many linguists ever since it was first proposed by Hymes (1966, 1968). In the 25th Anniversary (Special Issue) of the English Teaching Forum, Savignon (1987), among others, reports the following :

Coined by a sociolinguist (Hymes 1971) to include knowledge of sociolinguistic rules, or the appropriateness of an utterance, in addition to knowledge of grammar rules, the term *communicative competence* has come to be used in language-teaching contexts to refer to the ability to negotiate meaning, to successfully combine a knowledge of linguistic and sociolinguistic rules in communicative interactions (...).

(Savignon, 1987 : 16)



In fact, teachers and linguists alike have come to the conclusion that knowing a language is not restricted to the development of linguistic competence (see 1.1.5 and 3.4) but being able to use it appropriately in social interactions. On this matter, Hymes (1972) considers linguistic competence ('tacit knowledge of language structure') as insufficient (see 3.4) if one does not know how to use the rules of language appropriately in social situations, and stresses this by saying that "There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless." (1972 : 278). In other words, it is fundamental for the learner to develop language use that is appropriate to different contexts (see also 2.3.2). Obviously this does not mean that the rules of use are to be taught prior to the rules of grammar nor are the former 'late grafting' (Hymes). Both are essential (see also Wilkins under 1.2.4) in learning appropriate language use and should, therefore, occupy a position in the teaching-learning where the teacher, for example, involves students in using English forms purposefully and for genuine communication. Indeed, "Competency for use is part of the same developmental matrix as competence for grammar." (Hymes, 1972 : 179).

In this connection, Cunningsworth's (1983) article about the meaning of learning a language is for its major part devoted to Hymes's rules of use. Put simply as he says, it is the ability of the individual speaker to perceive social situations of his world, select appropriate style and match language to context. For example, the ability of a

learner to differentiate between ways of greeting people (i.e., formal language use with familiar people and informal language use with unfamiliar people). In other words, the rules of use are 'context-dependent'.

Canale and Swain (1980 : 6) also use "... the 'term communicative competence' to refer to the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence, or knowledge of the rules of grammar, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the rules of language use.". In addition to this, Canale and Swain (1980) propose a third component in their theoretical framework for communicative competence: 'strategic competence' (see also Maley in 4.4), defined as follows :

This component will be made up of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence. Such strategies will be of two main types: those that relate primarily to grammatical competence (e.g. how to paraphrase grammatical forms that one has not mastered or cannot recall momentarily) and those that relate more to sociolinguistic competence (e.g. various role-playing strategies, how to address strangers when unsure of their social status).

(Canale and Swain, 1980 : 30-31)

In this context, Tarone (1983 : 65) defines communication strategies as "... a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared. (Meaning structures here would include both linguistic

structures and sociolinguistic rule structures)". She lists such strategies under categories of 'paraphrase' (i.e., approximation, word coinage and circumlocution) and 'borrowing' (i.e., Literal translation, language switch, appeal for assistance and mime) to which the learner may turn to in order to bridge the gap between him and his interlocutor in real communication situations, or he may use 'avoidance' (i.e., topic avoidance, message abandonment) "Where the gap is perceived as unbridgeable." (Tarone, 1983 : 62-65).

Now that the English course in secondary education aims at developing communicative competence (stated in Pedagogical Instructions and in New Lines, see 3.4), this implies that the two sorts of knowledge (the rules of grammar and the rules of use) are to be combined in the learning process. The learner has to be guided from the beginning to use English actively in real life situations, or develop what is known as 'communication skills', that is, "... emphasis is put from the beginning on getting one's meaning across, and not on the grammaticalness and appropriateness of one's utterances." (Canale and Swain, 1980 : 10).

However, two points may be made in connection with communicative competence. First, an inevitable question arises as to whether or not communicative competence is attained with students in secondary education. As this question is directly related to classroom practice (English having no communication function in Algeria), a tentative answer will be given in the next Chapter (see 3.5).

Second, applied to communicative language teaching, communicative competence implies that there are some features to be taken into account in the elaboration of a communicatively oriented course. These features are dealt with in the remaining sections of this chapter.

### 2.3. Implications for Teaching

#### 2.3.1. Syllabus Design

This section is not concerned with the diversities of views on 'syllabus' / 'Curriculum' or the relationship between syllabus as a separate entity from curriculum. In fact, both terms are used in many senses today by different schools of applied linguistics (Lancaster School, London School, Toronto School)<sup>(1)</sup>. Altogether, these constitute a range beyond the scope of this study. However, we may take as a point of departure the term syllabus as presented in a 'terminological comment' by Stern (1984 : 5) :

It is associated, above all, with the widespread British institution of the external examination. Every such examination has its 'syllabus', that is a statement of the subject matter, topics, or areas to be covered by the course leading to the particular examination. Students and teachers consult the syllabus in preparation for an examination, and very often the teaching of a course will be strictly guided by the syllabus in question. In North America, the terms 'course of study', 'curriculum' or 'program' often cover more or less the same ground.



Now, whatever meaning is assigned to the term syllabus, it remains the first document of major importance that teachers consider to see what is to be taught and learned, and to a lesser degree<sup>(2)</sup> to students as concerns the programme they have to study during a period of time. To quote Dubin and Olshtain (1986 : 27), the syllabus is :

(...) the vehicle through which policy makers convey information to teachers, textbook writers, examination committees, and learners concerning the program.

Another notable aspect of syllabus design is the variety of types of syllabuses (e.g. grammatical, situational, notional functional, rhetorical, phonological, topic, etc.)<sup>(3)</sup>. This is not the place to review them all here. However, a brief overview of two major syllabuses (see grammatical and situational syllabuses below) may serve the purposes of this study, that is, to elicit the scope of syllabus within the communicative approach.

First, the decision about what to include in a syllabus depends on factors that primarily take into account the learners themselves (i.e., their age, level, educational back-ground, needs, etc.), and the aims of the course or the institution in so far as what the latter expect the learners to achieve. Thus, course planners of a grammatical syllabus "... accept the view that language is a grammatical system and that learning a language consists of learning that system." (Bell, 1981 : 53). Those involved in planning a situational syllabus "... would assume that language consists of patterns of social use ... and that language learning

implies becoming proficient in using the language in social situations."<sup>(4)</sup>. (Bell, 1981 : 54)

Within the communicative approach, syllabus design is approached differently. This difference lies mainly in the emphasis that is put on 'the communicative value of content' (see Munby in 2.1). In this context, that is, 'the scope of a communicative Syllabus'<sup>(5)</sup>, Dubin and Olshtain observe that "... the communicative approach is not a system which replaces older ones, but rather alters and expands the components of the existing ones in terms of language content, course products, and learning processes." (1986 : 88).

Wilkins (1976) as one of the forerunners in this field (see 2.1) considers the notional syllabus (i.e., a syllabus designed according to the notional or communicative approach, see Munby in 2.1) to be in contrast with the grammatical and the situational syllabus<sup>(6)</sup>, "... because it [the notional syllabus] takes the desired communicative capacity as the starting point." (1976 : 18). As a starting point, then, Wilkins's emphasis is on content, and explains that speakers of a language are neither asked how (grammar)<sup>(7)</sup> they express themselves nor when and where (situation) but what (content) they communicate in language. On this matter, he concludes by advocating the necessity "... to organize language teaching in terms of the content rather than the form of the language." (Wilkins, 1976 : 18).

As concerns the organization of the syllabus, Candlin (1984) distinguishes between broadly (i.e., detailed analysis of the subject-matter content) and narrowly (i.e., restricted

to mere collection of items of content from the subject-matter) defined syllabuses. The English syllabus in secondary education in Algeria is of the second type, that is, narrowly defined and restricted to a collection of functions (see Table 3 below) that are randomly selected and so to speak

Table 3

Opérations et Objectifs Scientifiques		SOMMAIRE	DETAILLE	VolumeHoraire
Function and sub-function	Topic area	Exponents (language forms)	Grammatical Features	
Describing Expressing likes and dislikes.	a person	he/she has dark brown eyes he/she is twenty years old the boy in blue jeans she loves reading	Present tense (statements) negatives interrogatives He/she/+is/has + stem + s I am / have + completion. gerund after specific verbs use of attributive adjectives long black hair. Derivatives: suffix 'ful' 'noun + ful : thoughtful' verb+ful: 'helpful'	06 H.
Describing Expressing likes and dislikes	a person	I am average height My father is a bus driver My house has a small garden I prefer writing in English	Present tense (statements) I am/have + completion he/she is/has + completion we are/have + Completion Gerund after specific verbs	04 H.
Describing	People's regular activities	He lives in a hall of He generally wakes up at 7 o'clock.  Then he gets himself ready	-he+stem + s + completion use of frequency adverbs: generally, sometimes, rarely, never -Use of sequencers: first then, after, finally. QQ forms: what time do you get up ..... ?	05 H.
Describing	a place	There is a small island. there are camping sites It is located on the	There is.../there are... it is.../ it has ... adjuncts of place: next to,	06 H. .../...

A Sample from the English Syllabus for 1 A.S (1981-1982 : 6).

Source : Programmes Anglais (1981-1982 : 6).



sequenced to facilitate learning (randomly because linguists assert that grammatical items can be best selected according to their degree of complexity compared to a selection of language functions).

Now, whether or not learners actually benefit from a functionally organized syllabus and have more opportunities to develop communication skills will be examined in practice in Chapter 3. In this respect, it may suffice for the time being to cite Canale and Swain (1980 : 32) whose view is that:

(...) a functionally based communicative approach - in particular one in which units are organized and labelled with reference to communicative functions - is more likely to have positive consequences for learner motivation than is a grammatical based communicative approach.

In fact, there is no doubt that motivation is the basis for any learning. When students are motivated they have good reasons to learn a language. They feel that learning is for them not for the teacher. On this matter, Littlewood rightly points out that "... most learners' prior conception of language is as a means of communication rather than a structural system. Their learning is more likely to make sense to them if it can build on this conception rather than contradict it." (1981 : 17).

For this purpose, and as indicated above, in a communicatively oriented syllabus, the most important component is language content. Dubin and Olshtain (1986) provide a further detailed explanation of what the content

area<sup>(8)</sup> is concerned with, particularly for students who study English as a part of the school curriculum. They suggest that the language content dimension should derive from a thematic approach and expand to include notional and functional meaning, structures, lexis, tasks, and workouts (i.e., 'language learning and language using activities') in a communicative syllabus where language skills are practised in an integrated manner within the selected themes and topics. The purpose of this is to make the learners "... involved in interesting themes and exciting tasks while learning and using the language within the classroom situation." (Dubin and Olshtain, 1986 : 103).

Such a learning is now commonly known as student-centred approach (see 2.1) in contrast with teacher-centred mentioned earlier in 1.1.3 . In other words, the students' willingness to develop their potential (i.e., participate in classroom work, expand their ideas, initiate conversation, etc.) increases, and therefore conduce them towards a real use of the target language.

In summary, a syllabus that is designed along the communicative approach lays more emphasis on language use. It is, then, more associated with communication. It provides students with more opportunities to develop their communicative abilities (see also 4.4). Among the features that contribute to the achievement of these communicative abilities comes 'materials construction' of which Brumfit (1985 : 152) says the following :

'Materials construction', insofar as it embodies the specific realization of principles of syllabus design, must come next in the hierarchy (...).

### 2.3.2. Materials Construction

A communicative approach to materials construction should first of all be consistent with the requirements of such an approach, namely, communicative language uses of the foreign language.

As mentioned in the first two sections (2.1 and 2.2) of this chapter, the assumption behind the communicative approach is that both the structural and the communicative properties of language are taken into account for the achievement of communicative competence as the ultimate goal of language learning. In this context, and as concerns materials construction, Dubin and Olshtain (1986 : 122) suggest that :

When communicative competence has been determined as a curriculum goal, writers look for ways to include the sociocultural component of language content, or so-called rules of appropriateness in the materials they create.

Rules of appropriateness or rules of use as put by Hymes (1972, see 2.2) can be acquired just as rules of grammar. Hymes exemplifies this by saying that children acquire different ways in which sentences are used appropriately in the social life of their community.

A direct implication of this for materials construction is the selection of language that is suitable for a given social situation. In Practice, each unit of a functionally organized textbook should incorporate appropriate material to the selected function. For example, "The language we use to ask for, give or refuse permission depends on whom we are talking to, and how well we know this person." (New Lines, 1981-1982 : 206). Therefore, students should be directed in their use of language so as to make the difference between formal and informal uses of language. However, an observation should be made at this point. In theory, the above quotes from New Lines seem to hold. In practice, however, formal / informal uses of language are presented under the form of a table where different grammatical forms are given in isolation. A priori, any learning that occurs in isolation is doomed to failure (for more detail see 3.5.1 and 3.5.2.2).

Another suggestion for developing materials within a communicative framework is proposed by Littlewood (1981:80) :

Each teaching unit is based on a range of communicative functions (e.g. 'Offering, asking permission, giving reasons'). Each function is represented by a range of linguistic forms, chosen on the grounds of their communicative usefulness and social appropriacy rather than for their structural make-up.

These communicative functions are reminiscent of what Austin (1962) calls "illocutionary acts" or speech acts (warnings, invitations, demands, requests, apologies, etc.). However, what should be noted here is that :



a - speech acts may differ in function even when they are grammatically identical. E.g. 'The door is open' (Widdowson, 1984 : 223).

b - speech acts may differ in grammatical structure even though they are functionally equivalent.

and  
'(1) This morning he got up late  
(2) He got up late this morning'

(Lyons, 1981 : 226)

The question which raises next is : can students identify the function intended and the purpose for which it is used ?

Consider the example in (a) : 'The door is open'. An utterance of this type has indeed 'a number of different illocutionary acts' as Widdowson (1984 : 223) explains :

*Invitation*            The door is open. Come on in.

*Dismissal*             The door is open. Clear off and  
never darken it again.

*Request for action*    The door is open. Close it please."

Depending then on the context in which they occur, utterances can be used to accomplish different intentions. Widdowson (1984) further explains that utterances are 'propositional and illocutionary'. In other words, an utterance can be used to transmit a 'propositional meaning' (i.e., structural and lexical meaning) and/or an 'illocutionary intent' (i.e., concerned "... with what is being done rather than with what

is being said." (Widdowson, 1984 : 222-223). For this purpose, it is essential for the learner to be aware of such a distinction to effectively use the language he is learning. The teacher's task "... is to make the learner realize that the foreign language operates by means of the same communicative principles as his own." (Widdowson, 1984 : 224). Lyons's examples in (b) would also be uttered in different contexts. This difference, he says, is "... determined by the communicative setting of the utterance" (Lyons, 1981 : 227).

The second problem is : the foreign language learner in Algeria may not grasp and apprehend 'social stratification' (i.e., "... hierarchical ordering of groups within a society." Trudgill (1974 : 35)) and reality in the sense that society is stratified into different classes and where different language forms are used accordingly (i.e., formal / informal uses of language). Viewed in this light, the Algerian learner may fail to develop situational and contextual variables of language and, therefore, he would be unable to match appropriate language to social situations. In a country like Algeria, and especially in the field of education (for political reasons) social reality has always been presented as linear and homogeneous though students themselves come from various social strata. The non-existence of social classes and class-struggle was for a long period a governmental credo. In this context, an academic, Kheladi Mokhtar (1991) in an interesting article under the section on 'Polémique' ('Controversy Column') and concerning the

educational system which has actually been the object of all sorts of controversies<sup>(9)</sup> says the following :

En effet, le choix du socialisme, permet de décréter qu'il n'y a pas de classes sociales en Algérie, par conséquent, les choix culturels adoptés par les gouvernants ne peuvent être que ceux qui conviennent à tous.

which we would roughly translate as :

In fact, the choice of socialism allows to declare that there are no social classes in Algeria. Therefore, the rulers' cultural policies can only be those suitable for all.

This is perhaps one reason why the concept of 'social appropriacy' and related phenomena were difficult to express and put into practice in the construction of materials in Algeria. At least they were watered down and extended too much (i.e., they lost their pedagogical value).

To conclude, one may say that all propositions centre around appropriateness. But how can rules of appropriateness be incorporated in syllabus design (the latter being the teacher's guide) and in textbooks? Linguists believe that the native speaker is credited with his intuition to recognize if, for instance, a sentence, an utterance or an expression is appropriate to its context. The non-native (e.g. the Algerian teacher of English) on the other hand, relies on the provisions of sociolinguistic research as regards rules of appropriateness. These are recommended by Dubin and Olshtain (1986 : 23) in the following terms.

(...) textbooks and materials concerned with sociocultural matter need to depend on the output of sociolinguistic research as their primary source.

However, there is a common agreement among many linguists that research in this field is still 'premature' (Wilkins 1976; Canale and Swain 1980; Dubin and Olshtain 1986).

Now, with respect to this lack of research in sociolinguistics and its relationship with language use, it is to teaching methodology (see section below) that the teacher turns to seek advice.

### 2.3.3. Teaching Methodology

Methodology is crucial in language teaching. Communicative teaching methodology in particular, aims at achieving practical results with the learners rather than a mere knowledge about the language. "The learner is now concerned with using language, not English usages." Scott, (1981 : 71). This is one of the requirements proposed in the present work. With a suitable methodology, the teacher will not struggle to find effective ways and techniques to carry out his task. In other words, when he knows how to deal with different functions and communicative activities, and most importantly how to cope with a variety of learners, learning can be enjoyable and successful. Scott (1981) adds that with the communicative approach, the teacher is supposed to provide the conditions (i.e., by means of practice and training for language use) for communication to take place. One cannot,



however, speak of one good methodology. There have always been conflicting views as concerns the best way(s) to teach a foreign language.

Each approach puts emphasis on what it is based on. Proponents of the structural approach, for example, emphasize the teaching of grammatical structures, arguing that it is the only way that can lead learners to the mastery of a language (see 2.3.1). Communicative methodologists, on the other hand, have de-emphasized the teaching of grammar in favour of language use. However, this new trend has not developed in the same way as the various communicative (or functional) language courses. Morrow notes that :

(...) research workers and course writers have focussed their attention on the content of the language programme rather than the ways in which this content should be taught. Notional syllabuses are widely debated and discussed; communicative methodology is still largely unexplored.

(in Johnson and Morrow, 1981 : 59)

There are of course no particular techniques of the communicative approach as it is for the moment "less well documented " as Brown and Yule (1983 : 1) put it. However, such an approach requires more emphasis on certain techniques which are congruent with its objectives : Language use.

For this purpose, course writers should demonstrate an awareness of some of the strategies that an instrument (i.e., methodology) of this type requires. For instance, introducing and reintroducing material (known in technical terms as 'cyclical technique'; Wilkins 1976, see also 3.5) -in

realistic and real (see note 2 to Chapter 4) ways, making use of appropriate and creative activities relevant to the learners' needs of everyday life.

As far as teachers are concerned, they should create opportunities for learners to develop an adventurous spirit in the use of the foreign language in trying to convey their meanings to others and understand them. They should select and graduate activities so that communication is developed early in the learners. Establishing a warm understanding with students is also of paramount importance. In fact, if students are encouraged to express themselves in simple and straightforward ways under the guidance of teachers who intervene only when the learners hesitate, then real interaction becomes possible. If, on the contrary, students are not given opportunities to try out what they have been learning, or they are stopped whenever they make a mistake, then a growing inhibition and hesitancy may lead them to lose the power of developing spontaneous speaking. In this context, "Certain features of communication output" are sketched out by Harmer as follows :

Instead of a concentration on accuracy, the focus will be on the success of the communication. The teacher's attitude to error and mistake will therefore be completely different. If, for example, he stops students every time they make a mistake and points this out, then he will be destroying the communication that he is supposed to be encouraging. Students will find it frustrating and demotivating if the teacher's reaction to their ability to communicate *ideas* is focused solely on their ability to get the *grammar* right. This does not mean, of course, that teachers should not be interested in accuracy. But it does imply that there are stages when communicative efficiency (which can occur despite inaccuracy) must be the focus in the classroom.

(Harmer, 1983 : 37)

Discourse is now another component of teaching methodology. Teachers (at least those who believe in communicative language teaching)<sup>(10)</sup>, no longer think of language in terms of isolated sentences. Widdowson (1978 : 52) puts it this way:

Language use has to do with propositions and the acts they are used to perform. But these do not occur in isolation : they combine to form discourse.

In fact, as the aim of language teaching is now communication, linguists insist on the importance of the semantic relationships between sentences and their syntax. In other words, on the way forms are used in communication. For this reason, English teaching-learning is no longer concerned with getting skills which have no immediate utility or learned in isolation. Taking discourse into account is then essential because it is speech that is primarily used to express social relations and personal attitudes to maintain relationships

between people. Again, Widdowson (1984 : 101), puts it in the following terms :

Discourse is the process whereby language users negotiate a 'reciprocity of perspectives' for the conveyance of information and intention. To do this, they draw on a knowledge of language and the conventions associated with its use in social context.

On a smaller scale - the classroom - it is possible for students (with the teacher's help, that is, having different roles, for example, as those proposed in Harmer (1983 : 201): "... *assessor, organiser, prompter, participant and resource.*") to treat, for instance, sentences, grammatical forms and so forth, not simply as abstract linguistic forms but as communicative stretches of connected discourse that "... cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which those forms are designed to serve in human affairs." (Brown and Yule, 1983 : 1).

In such a way, the study of language will not be taught in vacuum providing the student only with a dormant stock of isolated sentences. It is also the teacher's responsibility to prepare and vary for his students real communicative activities that have some relevance to their everyday life. Finally, he should make them aware that their new language is an instrument of communication just like their native language. Obviously, the teacher can be at the level of his task if he has had, among other subjects during his graduate studies, an adequate teacher training course. In fact,



teacher training is another basic feature of the communicative approach.

#### 2.3.4. Teacher Training

With respect to teacher-training, and as noted in the outset of this study, there should be a coordination between teacher trainers (or teachers in charge of 'Applied Linguistics' and 'TEFL') in the English departments at Algerian universities and inspectors of English in secondary education.

Such a coordination is very desirable, indeed essential, for fourth year university students (prospective teachers of English, also referred to here as student-teachers) to be aware of the specific situation of the teaching-learning of English in secondary education in Algeria.

As noted earlier, the priority of the communicative approach is concerned with language use. Thus, adopting a course that is based on such an approach implies directly that teacher-training should be adjusted to the requirements of language use.

Now, before dealing with these requirements, one should mention that, in theory, a training course must - in addition to imparting generalities about language teaching-learning to student-teachers - be in part related to the present day needs of a given country (in the case of Algeria, teachers that are familiar with some theory and practice of

communicative teaching). In other words, in the Algerian context, one possible way is to provide student-teachers with fairly sufficient information, interalia, about the theoretical bases of the current approach (i.e., the communicative approach, at present) and its implementation (practical training) in secondary education. On this matter, Brumfit (1980 : 52) suggests the following :

A course for the training of teachers must avoid the dangers of being over-general or over-specific, and the best way of doing this is to link the course to a general principle which is realizable all the time in specific situations.

Unfortunately, and after a decade of its adoption in secondary education, few student-teachers have little theoretical knowledge about the communicative approach<sup>(11)</sup> and its practical aspects (very few student-teachers indeed opt for practical training in secondary schools)<sup>(12)</sup>. A direct consequence of this is that student-teachers realize, later on, their inadequate preparation when in-service (i.e., as practising teachers, see also 3.2).

It is, then, essential for student-teachers to be aware of language theory and practice (generally dealt with in 'Applied Linguistics'; 'Psycholinguistics'; 'General Pedagogy'; 'TEFL', etc.) and its application in the teaching-learning process. In this connection, Widdowson (1984 : 208) suggests :

The purpose of training, (...) is to establish close formulaic links between areas of theory and practice, between system and schema, so that problems can be accounted for by the application of formulae with minimum adjustment.

He further explains that "... in actual practice, of course, training programmes, no matter how tightly constrained [i.e., 'formulae which fix system-schema'], will have to allow for *some* flexibility in the application of formulae, *some* provision for occasions when negotiation is needed to arrive at some solution." (Widdowson, 1984 : 209). His final remark that "Language teaching is bound up with issues in general pedagogy." (p. 211) highlights the necessity of the latter and other basic requirements in a training course.

Another important consideration in teacher-training when language use has the dominant emphasis in a course is communicative competence (see 2.2). For this purpose, student-teachers need to be highly competent in the foreign language they will be teaching, that is, they not only need a good knowledge of forms but also how these can be appropriately used in social situations. Communicative competence develops the teacher's role into what Morrow describes as "... an activating role as the instigator of situations which allow students to develop communicative skills." (Quoted in Canale and Swain, 1980 : 33). In other words, the teacher (prospective and practising teachers) is expected to be able to use the teaching material (syllabus, textbooks and other selected resources, see 3.5) as a source for developing communication skills in the learner right from the start. It is also suggested that a training course should present the student-teachers how to approach specific problems which might arise in the teaching of communication. Students, in fact, might encounter communicative problems (see 1.2.4) but well-prepared teachers feel more secure in conducting their students to develop communication strategies (for example, via paraphrase, role-playing, circumlocution, appeal for assistance, etc. see Canale and Swain; Tarone in 2.2). In this way, students learn to make full use of their knowledge to adapt to new situations. Brumfit (1980 : 118) summarizes these situations by saying that :



We need to emphasize the ability of the student to use his limited amount of language for as wide a range of purposes as possible : fluency practice will help him to do this.

#### 2.4. Implications for Testing

In the literature on testing one finds diverse types of tests. However, as this chapter is not particularly concerned with testing, the purpose of this section is not to give detailed information on the matter. It is, therefore, restricted to two (2) types of tests on which there is a common agreement among linguists as to their particular relevance to communicative teaching and ultimately to communicative competence.

These, are discrete-point tests (or form based tests) and integrative tests (or use based tests) as suggested by Canale and Swain (1980). It is evident that these two types are not the only tests that match communicative language teaching. Contrarily, the list is by no means exhaustive as communicative testing is relatively new and needs further exploration. Morrow (1979 : 143) puts it this way :

There exists a considerable imbalance between the resources available to language teachers (at least in E.F.L.) in terms of teaching materials, and those available in terms of testing and evaluation instruments.

As indicated above, language tests are not only various but set for different purposes as well.



### 2.4.1. Discrete-Point Tests

Discrete-point tests (i.e., testing a single grammatical point at a time) are structure-oriented and aim at a particular target. The exercise below from Practice and Progress is an example of such a type of tests.

Choose the correct verbs in the following sentences:

1. Everybody (believe)(believes) he will win.
2. I heard a noise and went downstairs. I found that everything (were)(was) in order.
3. Everyone (try)(tries) to earn more and work less.

(Alexander, 1967 : 28)

There is no doubt that an exercise of the above type is objective and more reliable as concerns the learner's ability to recognize a single correct structure. The assumption behind such an evaluation is to determine whether the learner is capable of distinguishing (indeed his mastery) between separate elements of the language system. These elements (or knowledge of grammar as a component of communicative competence, see 2.2 and 3.4), it is claimed, contribute to the acquisition of communicative competence in so far as "... discrete-point items may be more suitable for assessing communicative competence." (Canale and Swain, 1980 : 35).

However, the objection that can be raised at this point is that such a type of testing tends to focus attention only on the learner's knowledge about the language. This linguistic knowledge does not necessarily mean acquiring communicative competence. In fact, it is common conviction that learning about the language, and especially understanding or producing grammatical structures in isolation (see 1.2.3, 2.2.3, 3.5.2.2, 3.5.2.4) does not lead to an effective use of language.

Tests of the discrete-point type are then, as a teaching device, restricted to a narrow traditional testing that measures the learner's mastery of linguistic forms and checks where such and such deficiency lies. Moreover, if discrete items are easy to administer and score (Oller 1976, Canale and Swain 1980), their preparation according to Oller is 'extremely difficult' and may present different interpretations (i.e., an examinee can see more than one correct answer). More recently, Williams (1990 : 59) quotes Oller who severely criticizes such test formats when he says: "Oddly, multiple-choice tests are the only widely used educational devices deliberately conceived to confuse learners.". This point of view is also shared by Harmer (1983 : 166) who says: "... that the choice [multiple choice] actually causes more confusion than it helps students to understand."

#### 2.4.2. Integrative Tests

On the other hand, the advocates of the communicative approach remark that people know more about their language use than its structures as Wilkins (1976 : 11) notes :

People who speak the same language share not so much a grammatical competence as a communicative competence.

In other words, language is first of all a means of communication. This implies that knowing a language involves both a knowledge of its formal system and its associated conventions of use that help people to express themselves appropriately in social situations.

In the light of the argumentation above, integrative testing does not focus on specific items of grammar. It aims at an overall evaluation of integrated skills together. Such a type of testing includes, for instance, oral performance, interviews, different cloze procedures, essay writing, story telling, and the like. "The literature on communicative testing contains more information about testing productive skills than about testing receptive skills." (Van Els et al., 1984 : 331).



As in communicative language teaching (i.e., combining grammatical and communicative factors for the sake of communication), integrative testing is also based on the relationship between separate linguistic forms and their appropriate use in social contexts. In other words, integrative tests are related to contexts of communication and thus correlate with communicative language teaching while waiting for more elaborate communicative testing techniques. Van Els et al. (1984 : 331) consider the latter 'in its infancy' for at the moment "There are as yet no clear results of empirical research into communicative testing."

As a testing device, integrative testing is by and large complementary to teaching. While different tests of the above types (interviews, cloze procedures, etc.) are administered, they undoubtedly complete teaching and help teachers to spotlight the learner's areas of difficulty. In doing so, teachers will know where to offer specific treatment and provide remedial work for their learners.

Last, but not least, integrative testing can be considered as instructional since it goes in parallel with teaching. "Or another way of putting the same point is that teaching itself is a testing procedure as much as it is an instructional procedure per se." (Oller, 1987 : 45).

## NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. For further details, see H.H. Stern in C.J. Brumfit (ed.), 1984a: 5-12.
2. It is generally admitted that students who take English as part of the school curriculum do not bother to see what programme they have to study. The textbook is the only reference for them in English learning. This opinion is also that of most teachers (see 3.4) .
3. For a detailed discussion of this point see D.A. Wilkins (1976), R.T. Bell (1981), Chapter 3, C.J. Brumfit (1984), Chapter 6.
4. The author says that a true situational syllabus does not exist as it is practically impossible "... to predict the situations in which the learner will find himself ..." Bell, 1981 : 54).
5. Widdowson says that "... there is no such thing as a communicative syllabus : there can only be a methodology that stimulates communicative learning."  
  
(in Brumfit (ed.), 1984a : 26).
6. As a criticism to these two syllabuses, Wilkins (1976 : 18) argues : "... both leave the learner short of adequate communicative capacity."
7. Harmer (1983 : 12) illustrates this as follows :  
"If you ask the average Englishman about his knowledge of grammar he will say that he doesn't know any. What is meant by this, of course, is that he cannot tell you what the rules of grammar are, or rather, how English works grammatically."
8. The content dimension is fully developed in Dubin and Olshtain (1986), particularly in Chapter 6.
9. In this regard, see also Chastain in 3.3.

10. In his introduction to General English Syllabus Design, Brumfit (1984a) says that due to factors such as ignorance, rapid application of ideas from E.S.P. theory and misunderstanding of the implications of the innovations in course design, "... several national educational systems have 'gone communicative' or 'gone functional-notional', and then retreated after a brief trial period to whatever they had before." (p. 1).

11. The communicative approach is not a component as such in the 'TEFL' course. In fact, university teacher trainers are very controversial on what this course should include. Therefore, due to a lack of an unified programme, they are given full scope as to the contents of such a course.

12. Practical training is not systematic for two reasons :

a) student-teachers have the choice between 'teaching practice' (stage) in some cooperative secondary schools, or writing a project on language teaching.

b) Practical training is not officially established with secondary education.

## CHAPTER THREE

## THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN PRACTICE

- 3.1. Introduction
- 3.2. General Principles in Language Teaching Practice
- 3.3. Students' Needs
- 3.4. Aims and Objectives
- 3.5. New Lines : Unit Evaluation
  - 3.5.1. Form and Function
  - 3.5.2. Aspects of Language
    - 3.5.2.1. Phonology
    - 3.5.2.2. Grammar
    - 3.5.2.3. Vocabulary
    - 3.5.2.4. Discourse
  - 3.5.3. Appropriateness
  - 3.5.4. Varieties
  - 3.5.5. Language Skills

Notes to Chapter Three



## CHAPTER THREE

## THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN PRACTICE

"(...) good teaching practice is based on good theoretical understanding. *There is indeed nothing so practical as a good theory.*"

Wardhaugh, (quoted in Stern, 1983: 1)

## 3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the question at issue is : how does the communicative approach function in practice ?

It is an attempt to explore what communicative teaching implies in terms of classroom practice in its general sense (i.e., from students' needs to aims and objectives, teaching materials and methodology).

As has been emphasized in Chapter 2 , the central concern of such an approach is to lead the learners to appropriate language use or effective communication in the target language. On the assumption that in order to develop a practical skill, it must be practised, the most important thing at this level is that the teacher should be able to teach his students how to communicate successfully in English. Communication is then, not to be equated with knowledge about the language but the real use of it. To put

this in practice, the teacher should be aware of a number of factors (see 3.2) that are of paramount importance in the implementation of a communicatively-oriented course.

The purpose of this chapter is then, to relate the communicative theory discussed in Chapter 2 to classroom practice. Now, before dealing with the latter as such, it seems sensible to give an overview of the factors that represent a consensus among field specialists.

### 3.2. General Principles in Language Teaching Practice

#### Chastain

In "Part two : Practice", reserved particularly to meeting student needs in the classroom and treatment of the four major skills, Chastain (1976) says that once the teachers have a sufficient theoretical background (see 2.3.4) of an approach to the teaching-learning process, they can direct their attention toward the classroom. In order to do their job well they should have a knowledge of :

- subject matter
- methodology, and
- curriculum.

In addition to these, "... the teacher's tasks fall into three major categories :

- (1) establishing objectives,
- (2) preparing learning activities geared toward the attainment of the aforementioned objectives, and

(3) evaluating the outcome of task 2 to determine whether the objectives of task 1 were indeed obtained."

(Chastain, 1976 : 239)

### Breen and Candlin

Breen and Candlin (1980) share the above points and stress the importance of purpose, methodology and evaluation in the achievement of communicative language teaching in the following terms :

A communicative curriculum will place language within the framework of this relationship between some specified purposes, the methodology which will assess the appropriateness of the initial purposes and the effectiveness of the methodology.

(Breen and Candlin, 1980 : 89)

### Yalden

Further evidence of the previous models can be found in Yalden's (1986) project for the planning and implementation of language programme design. Figure 1 below, according to her, "... allows the syllabus designer great freedom to respond to changing or newly perceived needs in learners." (Yalden, 1986 : 25).

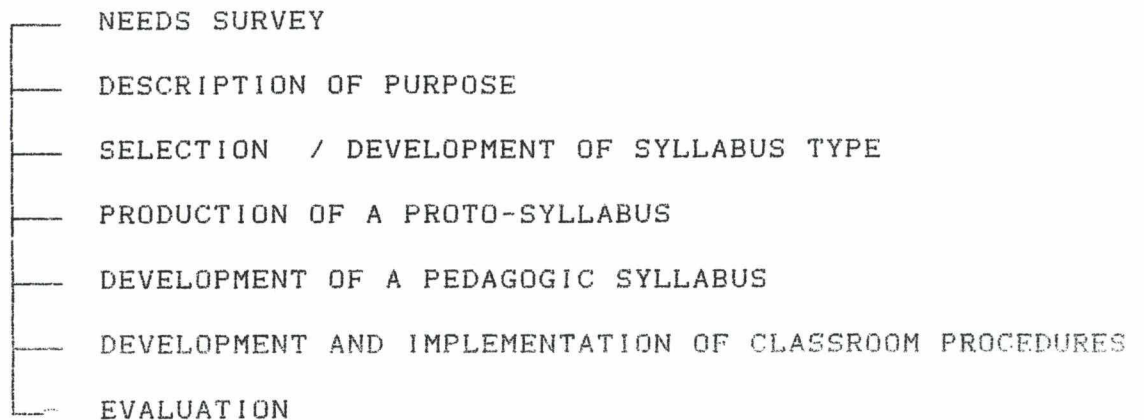


Figure 1

*Stages in Language programme development*

(Yalden, 1986 : 26)

**Rivers**

More recently, in an interview with Jane Arnold (1991), Rivers stresses her view on methodology, aims and objectives in the following terms :

To consider methodologies as learner-external would be a mistake. The emphasis that I have been taking is that it is extremely important to decide first of all the goals and objectives of the students (...). Then, having decided where we are going, we decide what we are going to teach in order to get where we want to go. So then you move from purposes to curriculum, course design, content of courses. Once you've decided those things, you start working on what techniques will help us to achieve the goals of the students through the kind of material and course design that we have in mind.

(Quoted in Arnold, 1991 : 5)

In the light of this, we shall consider in the subsequent sections of this chapter how the factors above (i.e., needs, aims and objectives) appear in official



documents and make some comments on course content and related principles in the evaluation of a course with special reference to a teaching unit from New Lines.

### 3.3. Students' Needs

Though students' needs in secondary education are not clearly stated by the Ministry of Education, mention is made in the overall objectives (Objectifs Généraux, see 3.4) of the 1981 English Syllabus that the teaching-learning of English will help students to develop language skills that are necessary for academic and professional purposes.

Thus, the arguments for the introduction of the communicative approach in secondary education (see 1.2.5) are primarily intended to equip students with tools that increase their communicative ability (i.e., needs for communicative skills). This interest in matters of needs, for example, is clearly stipulated by Munby who accords primary importance to the needs factor to the extent that :

(...) the specification of communication requirement or needs is prior to the selection of speech functions or communicative acts to be taught.

(Munby, 1978 : 24)

In fact, it is only when needs are determined that speech acts are selected and incorporated in syllabuses and textbooks (see 3.2).

However, by way of clarification, a few points need to be made. First, there is no conformity between the students' needs, at present, translated in the development of

communicative competence in the learner (see 3.4) on the one hand, and on the other hand the overhanging threat of the final examination requirements (Baccalauréat) based on an evaluation of the written skills only. All other tests and examinations are also based on 'writing'. In numbers, there are eighteen (18) compulsory tests spread over the three (3) years of secondary education as follows :

- 3 'Devoirs Surveillés' (tests) each year
- 3 'Compositions' (examinations) each year

In addition to these, extra-activities that students have to prepare are assigned in 'writing' too.

Second, this sort of situation is also the teacher's responsibility. In fact, most teachers cannot forget for a while that their students are tested to show their writing ability. Therefore, whatever activity they enterprise with their students, there is always some 'writing'. Although the new Pedagogical Instructions (see 2.2 and 3.4) insist on the development of students' communicative competence, emphasis on 'writing' seems to be an everlasting preoccupation of the teachers. Consequently, this particular skill becomes involuntarily or because of inadequate teacher training - the most emphasized skill <sup>(1)</sup> in this intermediate phase.

Third, because needs are not clearly specified, the teaching of English does not emphasize some basic requirements either for further studies (Licence d'Anglais) or for vocational purposes. In his daily task, the teacher relies too much on the textbooks for lesson preparation (i.e., on New Lines or Midlines or Think It Over,

respectively for the first, second and third year at higher secondary level).

Viewed in this light, if educational authorities take into account the needs factor, the latter must coincide with the students' desire and choice as concerns foreign language teaching. Unfortunately in Algeria, beginners, that is pupils in lower secondary level (traditionally C.E.M., now E.F.) have always been arbitrarily oriented<sup>(2)</sup>. This point is confirmed by an Algerian Inspector of English, Bourouina (1980 : 6) who says the following :

(...) the haphazard distribution of the pupils in English, Spanish or German classes is an unfortunate practice which impedes their interest in foreign-language learning and results in the multiplication of mixed-ability classes.

In fact, the schools (in other words, the educational system) impose programmes that sometimes have no personal meaning for students. In a description of 'problems in education', Chastain (1976 : 32) remarks :

The schools have been caught in the middle of opposing pressures pulling and pushing them in different directions. Some critics accuse them of being authoritarian, inhumane, irrelevant and unresponsive to student needs.

At present, there is no choice in foreign language learning in lower secondary level. All pupils take English though "... there are different types of learners and vary in their motivations." (Brumfit 1985 : 15). There is no alternative for pupils who wish to study Spanish or German (if given choice) for personal reasons which, in a way, take a social dimension as noted in Van Els et al. (1984 : 162) :

(...) it is evident that social needs cannot be separated from personal needs: social needs are always reducible to personal needs of (a number of) members of a social group, which means that in fact all needs are personal.

In summary, one can speak about learners' needs only if the governmental educational policy changes for a clearly defined policy towards foreign language learning (for instance, investigating foreign language needs for the setting up of a foreign language policy)<sup>(3)</sup>.

Only when everyone knows what is expected from learners to achieve (a point raised within the scope of this study), can educational authorities have the freedom to decide on an appropriate programme for the learner. Naturally, this must be done with the help of inspectors of English and experienced teachers (in the absence of textbook writers, for the moment). It ultimately leads, after needs analysis, to what materials (speech acts, topics, language use situations, suitable language forms, etc.) are relevant to students needs and related to their interests.

#### 3.4. Aims and Objectives

For the sake of clarity, a distinction is to be made between overall objectives<sup>(4)</sup> (also referred to as aims) and 'lesson' or 'unit' objectives.

Overall objectives refer to what is expected from the teacher to achieve with his students in the study of English during an academic cycle or a given period of time (see Appendix C). Lesson and unit objectives refer to what is



achieved in a classroom session, and to a large extent, to what the teacher aims at in the teaching of a given unit from the textbook (reference being made here to New Lines, composed of 'units').

It is therefore important for the teacher to know about aims and objectives of the course to 'get where he wants to go' (see Rivers in 3.2). However, the first major lack of harmony between the various official documents is over the degree of specificity of overall objectives at three(3) levels: instructions in the English Syllabus are not in harmony with those in New Lines and in Pedagogical Instructions.

First, overall objectives in the English Syllabus (1981 : 1) state the following:

(...) notre enseignement se propose d'asseoir et de développer une compétence linguistique.

which we would roughly translate as :

(...) our teaching is set out for the purpose of developing a linguistic competence.

Second, " the aims of New Lines is to develop your communicative competence."

( New Lines, 1981-1982 : 3).

Third, Pedagogical Instructions (1984 : 3) emphasize two things:

a - "A syllabus has pre-eminence over the prescribed textbooks, or any other supporting materials."

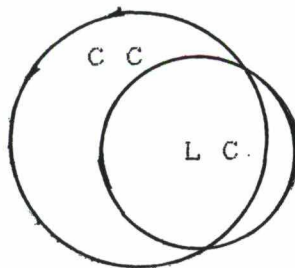
b- "The ultimate objective of language learning is communicative competence."



From the standpoint of logic, it is obvious that if the teacher takes the overall objectives into account as stated in the English Syllabus (qualified as pre-eminent over textbooks and other teaching materials) he will find himself confronted with two different aims: Linguistic competence, on the one hand (see the English Syllabus above) and communicative competence on the other hand (see New lines and Pedagogical Instructions above). This difference of aims is highlighted by Maley (1986 : 87) when he writes :

In recent years there has been much discussion and debate about communicative approaches to syllabus design, materials writing and classroom activity. Such approaches are aimed at developing the 'communicative as opposed to purely 'linguistic' competence of learners.

The two aims are then distinct. In fact, communicative competence refers to the relationship between 'grammatical competence', 'sociolinguistic competence' and 'strategic competence' (for more details, see Canale and Swain, 1980, and also section 2.2). In other words, linguistic competence is a strand of communicative competence. The relationship between linguistic competence and communicative competence is shown more clearly in Allwright's (1979 : 168) diagram below:



CC = Communicative Competence

LC = Linguistic Competence

As shown on the diagram, Allwright explains that linguistic competence is part of communicative competence. If the aim of a teaching course is linguistic competence<sup>(5)</sup>, a large area of communicative competence will be untouched. If it is communicative competence that is set as an aim it will cater for all but a small part of linguistic competence.

Returning to the observation made earlier about the lack of harmony between the official documents, it is, however, worthy to note that all teachers will tell you that the aim (at present) of the English course in secondary education is communicative competence. The reasons for this are :

a - As all teachers rely on the prescribed textbook (New Lines) for their teaching, the aim 'communicative competence' is clearly stated in the introductory note to the teacher (and student).

b - Regional seminars of English are organized by different Inspectorates of English for new teachers once or twice a year. These seminars are based on FLT methodology in theory and in practice. In theory, teachers are presented with lectures on the current approach (in this case the communicative approach). In practice, experienced teachers organize demonstration classes of different phases of a teaching unit from New Lines and other textbooks (i.e., Midlines or Think It Over).

c - In general, there is only one copy of the English Syllabus in the director's office of a secondary school. This explains why the observation made above goes unnoticed.

### 3.5. New Lines : Unit Evaluation

Yet teachers probably will have to rely on the most efficient and most accessible device of all, the textbook.

(Brumfit 1985 : 6)

The recall of the above passage quoted at the outset of this study is to indicate the paramount place that the textbook occupies in the teaching-learning process. In addition to the textbook, other resources are suggested in Pedagogical Instructions (1984 : 2) :

Teachers are urged to expose their pupils to different types of prose : narrative, expository, prescriptive, argumentative, etc. as well as non prose : time-tables, charts, diagrams, from a variety of sources.

However, as mentioned in the previous section, all teachers rely on New Lines for two major reasons :

a - The availability of New Lines (Pupil's book and Teacher's book) each academic year.

b - The textbook includes ready-for-use teaching material that covers largely a year's course (given the time devoted to the English course, see details below and also 1.2.3)

Now the question is whether New Lines meets students' needs (i.e., develops their communicative competence). "New Lines is built around a set of basic function-uses of the language such as describing, narrating, instructing,



planning, etc." (New Lines, Teacher's book, 1981-1982 : 4). It is divided into eighteen (18) units, three (03) of which are devoted to revision (Units 6, 10 and 18) for the purpose of consolidation. The selected functions are presented in separate units (see model in Table 3 on page 50) that bear specific language content and learning activities ready for use.

To approach the above question, we shall consider, as an example, the language content and learning activities that are presented in 'Unit 16' labelled : "Expressing Permission, Expressing Probability", reproduced (pp. 202 ff) in New Lines.

First, there are nine (9) section headings per unit. Sometimes two section headings are condensed together or do not appear in a unit (i.e., a unit varies between six (6) and nine (9) section headings according to whether or not it contains all the sections shown below).

- 1- Listening comprehension
- 2- Reading comprehension
- 3- Consolidation
- 4- Word-building
- 5- More practice
- 6- Communication
- 7- Composition
- 8- Summarizing
- 9- Reading for leisure

In the evaluation of language content of a course, Cunningsworth (1984) sets up five principles :

- 1- Form and function
- 2- Aspects of language form
- 3- Appropriateness
- 4- Varieties
- 5- Language skills.

In the light of the principles given above, 'Unit 16' has been selected for its content (formal and informal use of English) to illustrate what was said earlier (see 2.3.2) about the difficulty of 'social appropriacy' in the use of English for the Algerian learner.

The aim of 'Unit 16' is twofold :

- "ask for permission, grant permission, refuse permission (formally and informally).
- "say how probable an event is." (New Lines, Teacher's book : 1981-1982 : 305).

The first observation to which one can point at is the incorporation of two (2) functions that have nothing in common in this Unit. This observation is in fact noted in New Lines (Teacher's book) in the form of a Nota Bene (N.B.) on page 305, but it is more a confusion than a point of clarification.

First, two unrelated functions are compressed in one unit (Permission / Probability). Second, there is a sending back to 'Unit 15' for the purpose of contrasting two other sub-functions (i.e., probability with possibility). Third, other functions from 'Unit 17' (Obligation / Certainty) are to be contrasted with those in Units 15 and 16. In summary,

six (06) functions are introduced in three units. Schematically they can be presented as follows :

Unit 15 :	Expressing Ability	}
	Expressing Possibility	
Unit 16 :	Expressing Permission	
	Expressing Probability	
Unit 17 :	Expressing Obligation	
	Expressing Certainty	

(The square brackets render the linking of these 'contrasting functions' in the teaching.)

Given the condensation of two many functions in successive units, there is inadequacy in the way all these functions are presented. 'Unit 16' could be, for instance, preceded in earlier units of New Lines by functions that introduce in simple language forms formal and informal uses of English (e.g. in functions like : greetings and introducing people, polite questions, asking for help etc.) to familiarize students with this type of language. Then, in subsequent units reproduce in more complex language forms either the same functions or others (these can either be related to the first ones or contrasted with them) in cyclical technique as suggested in Wilkins (1976 : 59) :

(...) a notional syllabus seems to lend itself particularly well to a cyclic rather than linear approach.

He further adds :

(...) in a notional syllabus the ordering is a matter of the relationship between the different cycles.

He also explains :

The learner is thus recycled through units with similar denominations but with greater rhetorical range.

By directing a spotlight on the criteria of 'cycle' and 'relationship' is purposefully to indicate that in fact, when a learner is presented the same function more than once throughout the textbook, he is led to revise (and at the same time browse in his book) what he has learnt before. By doing so, the learner becomes an active participant in the learning process.

### 3.5.1. Form and Function

Apart from this condensation of functions, the question which must now be considered is whether the functions in 'Unit 16' are presented in a social context of use or under form-focused activities. "Put another way, is language presented as a closed grammatical system or is it presented as a communicative system in a context of use and so as an integral part of the pattern of social behaviour?" (Cunningsworth 1984 : 15).

In a straightforward answer to this question, one can note that equal emphasis is given to language forms and functions in the sections dealing with 'Listening Comprehension' and 'Reading Comprehension' (New Lines, 1981-1982 : 203-205). However, it is not the case with 'Consolidation' on page 206 where the students are supposed to have more practice of what they have learnt in the preceding sections (i.e., Listening



and Reading). In this section, language forms are presented in isolation (though some were introduced in 'Reading Comprehension'). The blame here is that the consolidation phase could be more beneficial to students in their practice if language forms were again presented in real language use (i.e., in social context).

"The phonological system of the language is acquired by listening, and oral communication is impossible without a listening skill that is much more highly developed than the speaking skill. Listening skills serve as the basis for the development of speaking." (Chastain, 1976 : 278). In the light of this quotation, 'Listening Comprehension' in 'Unit 16' is introduced under the form of a dialogue where Rachid (the main character in New Lines) asks his landlady for permission to organize a party for his friends in her house (see Appendix D). It is a common agreement among practising teachers that dialogues as pedagogical devices can provide a valuable practice in the use of language when contextualized and suitable for students for whom they are intended. Dialogues on the other hand, are designed to be practised, dramatized (role-playing) and to some extent learnt. For this purpose, they must be well presented<sup>(6)</sup> as students in general like to act out dialogues, and other activities that appeal to them, in and out of the classroom (see Maley in 4.4). By so doing, students develop an unconscious preparation of natural conversation and ultimately a command of English.

However, some observations need to be made about the dialogue (or Listening Comprehension) reproduced on page 203 in New Lines. The dialogue incorporates different functions ('Ability', 'Permission', 'Certainty' and 'Probability', see Appendix D). As students were not introduced to these functions in previous units (i.e., not cyclical), they may grasp the general meaning of the dialogue (depending on the teacher's presentation) but hardly recognize the functions 'Expressing Permission and Probability' as these two functions are introduced along with others (see above). In other words, the functions in this section are new and their presentation is time-consuming and require an effort from the student to differentiate between a number of functions that could be introduced, as mentioned earlier (see 3.5), gradually and cyclically throughout the textbook.

In summary, combining different functions in one unit or in successive units could be useful if the learner were introduced and reintroduced cyclically (see Wilkins above) learning materials that can be related or compared.

On the other hand, provided language forms are gradually introduced with language functions, this would entail a clarification of how grammatical points and language functions operate in language. In this context, Cunningsworth notes that "What needs to be looked at is not much whether the material is wholly structural or wholly functional, but how the relationships, often very complex ones, between form and function are handled and put over to the learner." (1984 : 16). In this way, the learner is made aware that

neither language forms nor functions have existence in isolation.

### 3.5.2. Aspects of Language Form

These aspects refer to phonology, grammar, vocabulary and discourse (Cunningsworth 1984).

#### 3.5.2.1. Phonology

With respect to phonology, neither 'Unit 16' nor any other unit in New Lines deals with this aspect. However, there is a table of "English Phonetics Symbols" (see Appendix E). It includes 'Vowels', 'Diphthongs' and 'Consonants' "As used by D. Jones in English Pronouncing Dictionary and the International Phonetic Alphabet" (New Lines, 1981-1982 : 225).

What is surprising here is that the table appears on the last page (255) of 'Unit 18'. A unit that is rarely dealt with for two reasons :

a - The limited teaching hours do not generally permit to cover more than twelve (12) units in New Lines at the very most for the literary sections and even less for the scientific ones. (7)

b - 'Unit 18' ('Revise and Relax') being reserved for revision is hardly ever covered.

In this connection, Cunningsworth remarks that in general courses "... phonology is often at best taught incidentally and in random order." (1984 : 17). In New Lines, it is not even taught 'incidentally' or 'at random'<sup>(8)</sup>, but this state of affairs is not alone particular to New Lines only. Cunningsworth (1984) adds that it is a difficult task (indeed quite impossible) to incorporate well graded and coherent levels (i.e., phonology, grammar and language functions) simultaneously in a course.

However, in opposition to the choice of place given to phonology (i.e., the last page of the last unit), phonetic symbols should appear, instead, in the introductory units and preferably in active use of the language (i.e., not in isolation) "... so that the learners do get a systematic familiarisation with the elements of phonology." (Cunningsworth, 1984 : 17). This suggestion is also shared by Rivers (1968 : 119) who puts it as follows:

For students beginning a foreign language at senior high school level, or even later, the introductory lessons may include some direct instruction in the differences between the phonological systems of the native language and the foreign language. This may be in ten-minute stretches at the beginning of successive lessons, as long as such theoretical instruction is always accompanied by the learning of some authentic language material.



in the use of sentences for the creation of discourse." (Widdowson, 1978 : 22).

In the light of this, parts of 'Unit 16' take discourse into account. Students, for example, are shown how to deal with units of language in social context mainly in 'listening comprehension', 'Reading comprehension', 'Communicative activities'. However, the presentation of the different forms of "The language we use to ask for, give or refuse permission ...." and that of 'Expressing Probability' (New Lines, 1981-1982 : 206-207) is essentially structural (see Table 4).

### 3.5.3. Appropriateness

As mentioned earlier (see 2.2 and 2.3.2), it is not sufficient to have a knowledge of grammar rules or linguistic competence as explained in Allwright in 3.4. What is crucially important is how a speaker (or the learner in the present case) can use his competence in association with appropriate language in a given situation. In fact, Hymes (1972, see 2.2) remarks that there are rules of use that complete the rules of grammar, and are therefore, essential in the learning of appropriate language use.

With respect to 'Unit 16', the choice of language is appropriate except for the sections 'Consolidation' and 'Expressing Probability' where different grammatical structures are introduced in isolation or in isolated sentences (see 3.5.2.2). Besides, an observation should be made about the setting of the learning situations in 'Unit

16'. Most of these situations, and particularly the most important ones that constitute 'input' have a foreign setting. In other words, receptive skills (Listening and Reading) which in Harmer's terms promote language acquisition in the sense that "While students are involved in reading and listening training, (...) they will be subconsciously acquiring 'new' language that appears in the text." (1983 : 35), are presented in an English setting (e.g. Mrs. Robinson, A New Flat in Manchester, Mr. Hill, Dr. Bent, etc.). Students may not identify with these characters as the latter do not really represent an immediate interest for them. They participate to these activities simply because they are there in the textbook and they must study them<sup>(10)</sup>. A direct implication of this lies at the level of 'output' or what is known as productive skills (Speaking and Writing) : students will find it difficult to use what they have learnt (input of foreign setting) in their oral and written production of English. In this connection, the writing phase (composition)<sup>(11)</sup> in 'Unit 16' has not been chosen carefully<sup>(12)</sup>. First, the 'output' is letter writing whereas the 'input' has been practised under conversational exchanges. Second, students are asked to write on a model (i.e., letter writing) on which they have not been exercised in the unit or in some of its related components. Basically, students are more likely to write better compositions on what they have practised.



### 3.5.4. Varieties

The purpose of this section is limited to the kind of English that is taught in the classroom, and not to the varieties of English, a theme which is beyond the scope of this study. In fact, "... there are many dialects of English, both geographical dialects and class dialects, but the kind of English presented in coursebooks is usually either standard, middle-class educated, southern British English or standard, middle-class, educated, American English." (Cunningsworth, 1984 : 18).

English in 'Unit 16' as in all units of New Lines is standard as it is stated in the introductory note to students: "... the material in this course has been written and selected to bring you into contact with the everyday English used today in England, either in conversation between people who do not know each other well, or in the press, in literary and scientific works, etc." (New Lines, 1981-1982: 3)

Different registers are also respected throughout New Lines. Students are in fact taught different kinds of styles and registers according to the requirements of a given function. Thus, the language used in 'Unit 16' as described above is not that of 'Unit 12' where the description of a process needs a different register (i.e., words like : soaking, bleaching, tanning, dying, shaping, etc.) and suitable language forms (i.e., use of the passive and sequencers). Now and then, students are presented some forms of non-standard English as in cartoons, limericks or songs.

### 3.5.5. Language Skills

As concerns language skills that the material teaches, Harmer (1983 : 16) summarizes the four conversational skills that native speakers possess in the following way :

Table 5

SKILL	MEDIUM	SPEECH	WRITTEN WORDS
RECEPTIVE		Listening and understanding	Reading and understanding
PRODUCTIVE		Speaking	Writing

Language skills

In the light of this, 'Unit 16' is presented according to the above conventional breakdown and so are all teaching units in New Lines. The four main language skills are taught in separate sections of a given unit (see 3.5), and in many sections skills are integrated (e.g. listening and speaking or communication, reading and writing) to make the learner aware that language use involves many skills at the same time. This principle is stated in the introductory note to the teacher where it is said that "The different aspects of listening, speaking, reading and writing both as individual skills and integrated ones, form the backbone of this course (New Lines, Teacher's book, 1981-1982 : 6).



In Pedagogical Instructions as in New Lines, the teacher's attention is drawn towards emphasis on productive skills. Students, for instance, are not just supposed to listen to the input (e.g. listening comprehension) but in the preliminary discussion or warming up, the teacher introduces the subject and to some extent sets two or three questions (or even one) to make the students listen, follow and prepare answer(s) for the purpose of taking part in discussion about the input.

However, this practice is very demanding on the part of the teacher (listening comprehension is a tiresome task) because of the number of classes (in general, a teacher of English has 6 to 7 classes of 50 pupils and over, and up to 10 classes in technical schools). Besides, the teaching hours of English are, in general, scheduled for students when they have finished studying what is known as 'Matières Essentielles' (major subjects) and for many other reasons which are too obvious to need stating.

Back to the question set at the beginning of this section (see 3.5), it is obvious that we cannot rely solely on the evaluation of a single teaching unit, namely 'Unit 16', to conclude whether students can or cannot attain communicative competence. If we take 'Unit 16' as an illustration of language in context that is supposed to train the students to develop communicative competence as seen under 2.2, it follows from what has been said in the present evaluation that the learners are much more faced with a presentation of language forms (as shown in Table 4 above).

These forms are in fact part of communicative competence (see 3.4) and they are necessary in the achievement of a good command of English that is expected to last. However, if the conversational potential of the learners is not developed through language use by constant exposure to a variety of language in social context (i.e., not in isolation), the 'bare bones' as Appel says (see 3.5.2.2) will remain without 'flesh'.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. In order to reduce the emphasis on 'writing', this question has been brought for discussion between teachers, inspectors of English and educational authorities in regional and national seminars for several years. Proposals for 'Oral Exams' in English to give an impetus to oral communication in the classroom have not been accepted so far. Organizational difficulties for such exams seem to be the most hampering reasons.

2. In my interviews with various Heads of Middle Schools, such orientation was the result of staff meeting decisions. Pupils were not consulted except for very few whose parents intervened to choose English for them. This orientation was arbitrary in the sense that the only criterion that was taken into account was that of creating an equilibrium between the foreign languages that were taught in a given Middle School (i.e., between English, Spanish and German).

3. The status of either French as a language having a social function in Algeria or any other foreign language has been lessened to the advantage of Arabic for political reasons. The assumption behind this is to serve Arabic to become of widespread use and the dominant language in Algeria ("La langue nationale dont la récupération est entendue comme un processus de 'généralisation de son utilisation', est le vecteur principal sur lequel portent tous les efforts de la personnalité nationale..." (Safir, 1985 : 225)). This kind of situation, and particularly that of foreign languages (i.e., not used in everyday communication) in the country has resulted in a policy that has generally limited FLT to a mere subject taught within the framework of the whole school curriculum.

Now, in 1991, an ambitious FLT project is undertaken by the Ministry of National Education for the introduction of

English by 1993 as a choice with French in primary education. This scheme is beyond the scope of this study, but as far as I am concerned, and, I suppose many field specialists would agree that if the linguistic environment in Algeria is favourable for the learning of French, it is not the case for English. This scheme, indeed, requires a full study of the situation and a deep needs analysis for such an enterprise.

4. The term 'overall objectives' is used here instead of 'aims' so as to be in harmony with the French term 'Objectifs Généraux' as put in the English Syllabus (1981).

5. A word of caution is appropriate at this point. Strevens (1980) says that the term 'Linguistic Competence' popularized by Chomsky to include the speaker's ability to distinguish between grammatical and ungrammatical sentences and also the rules that determine appropriate use of language in living situations. However, it is "... the discussion of communicative competence [which] has publicized and encouraged attempts to systematize exactly what it is to use a language effectively." (Strevens, 1980 : 113).

6. There is something frustrating about the dialogue on page 203 (New Lines). Written in very tiny handwriting, the dialogue has to be put under microscope to decipher for students and teachers alike. I feel that clarity is particularly important at the level of the graphic element in textbooks to encourage students to continue learning outside the classroom.

7. In fact, a recent note from the Inspectorate of English, Ministry of National Education (1990-1991) limits the number of teaching units to be covered within a year's course in New Lines as follows :

- Literary Sections : 12 units instead of 18.
- Scientific Sections: 10 units instead of 18.

8. As a teacher in secondary education, I have personally used New Lines since 1981 and never have I reached page 255. In other words, I have never dealt with the table of 'English Phonetics Symbols' and neither has any other colleague I asked in the same High School (Cheikh El Bachir El Ibrahimy, Ain-Témouchent). I am sure that if these phonetic symbols



appeared rather earlier in the introductory units of New Lines they would have attracted the students' attention and would have not gone unnoticed. (On this issue, see Rivers, 1968 : 119 in this section). On the contrary, the phonetic symbols are introduced from the beginning in Think It Over and pronunciation (backed up by phonetic transcription) is present throughout the textbook units. However, we believe it is a little late to familiarize students with a correct pronunciation at this stage (i.e., in 'Terminale' classes). First, it is time consuming to get rid of bad pronunciation habits accumulated in the previous years. Second, because of the preparation of the 'Finals', teachers and students alike feel it more important to go over the contents of Think It Over than to spend any time on the oral production of English through revising the phonetics of it.

9. This quotation is part of note 4 in Chapter 1. It is in marked contrast to Alexander who says " Learning words irrespective of their function can be a waste of time ..." (Widdowson, 1978 : 164).

10. Students 'have to' study this unit or any other in New Lines since English is part of the whole secondary education curriculum (see also Note 3 in this chapter).

#### 11. A Sample Composition

"Your friend has given you the address of an English Landlady who puts up foreign students as paying guests during the Summer vacation. You write a letter to her enquiring about the house rules : (front door-key; visitors; hot water; telephone; television; food; cooking for yourself; etc.)."

(New Lines, 1981-1982 : 211)

12. In our school, all teachers of English (10) think unanimously that 'Composition' (as above) has not been chosen with care. Everyone has repeatedly experienced the difficulty that students face when they reach the 'output' (i.e., the written production).

CHAPTER FOUR

VALIDITY FACTORS OF THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

- 4.1. Validity Objections to the Communicative View
- 4.2. Swan's Attitude
- 4.3. Widdowson's Reaction
- 4.4. Viability of the Communicative Approach

Notes to Chapter Four

## CHAPTER FOUR

## VALIDITY FACTORS OF THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

## 4.1. Validity Objections to the Communicative View

Like its predecessors, the communicative approach to language teaching has also been subject to criticism. In this connection and in two articles entitled "A critical look at the communicative approach" (1) and (2), Swan (1985) argues that there is a serious confusion behind the theoretical framework of the communicative approach. On the one hand, he has reservations as to the teaching of 'use', 'meaning', 'skills' and 'strategies', and on the other hand he criticizes the practical side (i.e., the idea of 'semantic syllabus', 'authenticity' and 'methodology') of the approach.

At variance, in his article "Against a dogma : a reply to Michael.Swan", Widdowson (1985) strongly rejects Swan's interpretation of the ideas that make up the communicative approach. Widdowson (1985 : 158) believes that Swan's papers bear "... arguments [that] are in themselves contradictory." He further explains that "... these papers are 'critical' only in the sense of being captious: they are not evaluative.

Nevertheless, they do indicate areas of misunderstanding and misconception, and as such warrant a reply." (Ibid).

We propose for the sake of clarity, a brief review of Swan's (1985) arguments in the above cited articles and Widdowson's (1985) reaction to them.

#### 4.2. Swan's Attitude

" There is nothing so creative as a good dogma." (Swan, 1985 : 2). This is how Swan starts his first article. Although he does not deny the virtues of the communicative approach (i.e., improvements in both syllabus and course design, 'relevant and motivating activities', language of social interaction, and methodology.), he strongly turns on to state that "A dogma is a dogma, and in this respect the 'communicative revolution' is little different from its predecessors in the language teaching field." (Ibid).

Swan (1985 : 11) argues that "... the 'communicative' theory of meaning and use, in so far as it makes sense, is largely irrelevant in foreign language teaching." since "... most language items are multi-purpose tokens which take on their precise value from the context they are used in ." (Swan, 1985 : 4). He adds that "Neither Wilkins nor Widdowson makes it clear what form such rules ['rules of communication' or 'rules of use'] might take ..." (Ibid). In other words, it is difficult to teach 'rules of communication' (see 1.2.4) as they cannot be codified (this is particularly a problem for a non-native speaker of English, see 2.2).



Swan (1985) admits that the communicative approach has had an impact on the learning of the language of social interaction. In fact, he says "... that there are situations in which only certain ways of expressing oneself are appropriate." (p. 6). However, "'Appropriacy' is not a new dimension of meaning." (pp. 6-7). In practice, Swan (1985:7) explains that there are items whose use is 'marked for appropriacy' such as the imperative, slang, taboo expressions that learners need to know how to use appropriately. But most items of the language are "... unmarked for social or situational appropriacy ..." (Ibid).

As for skills and strategies, Swan (1985 : 8 - 11) continues to say that there is no need to teach any kind of strategy (i.e., predicting, negotiation of meaning, guessing, transferability<sup>(1)</sup> of communication skills from L<sub>1</sub> to L<sub>2</sub>, etc.) for the simple reason that students have been doing this all their life in L<sub>1</sub>.

In article (2), Swan (1985 : 77) strongly reacts against the claim that "... the secret of successful language teaching lies in incorporating meaning properly into syllabuses.". It is not a novelty according to Swan who says that traditional courses did not completely neglect meaning except in 'mechanical drilling'. He supports such courses and firmly states that "... it is quite false to represent older courses as concentrating throughout on form at the expense of meaning, or as failing to teach people to 'do things with language'." (Ibid). Swan adds that 'Semantico-grammatical categories' (reference being made here to Wilkins, 1976) are

taken into consideration in traditional courses since 'Structures have meanings.' He also observes that "... semantic syllabuses tend to list only items that are specifically related to the functions or notions included in the syllabus." (1985 : 79). But general lexical items as well as grammatical points whose 'meaning' is not 'easily identifiable' (word order, for example) "... tend to get left out of notional syllabuses, though they may be of great importance for the correct learning of the language." (ibid) (see 3.5.2.2). These points lead him to conclude for the need "... to integrate eight or so syllabuses (functional, notional, situational, topic, phonological, lexical, structural, skills) into a sensible teaching programme." (Swan, 1985 : 80).

As concerns methodology, Swan (1985 : 82) admits that with the communicative approach there have been improvements in this field. He notes : "Language work, we are told, should involve genuine exchanges, and classroom discourse should correspond as closely as possible to real-life use of language." (ibid). He also seems to share this point of view when he says : "Of course one can hardly quarrel with the suggestion that classroom language should be as lifelike as possible." (ibid). Nevertheless, Swan (and perhaps Widdowson (see 4.3) is right in finding contradictions in Swan's articles) qualifies 'real-life use of language' as 'real-life fallacy' and says that "... the classroom is not the outside world, and learning language is not the same as using language. A certain amount of artificiality is inseparable

from the process of isolating and focusing on language items for study,..."<sup>(2)</sup> (Ibid). Swan (1985 : 83) finally concludes this section saying that "... it should be clear that effective learning can involve various kinds of 'distancing' from the real-life behaviour that is its goal. We do not therefore need to feel that there is anything wrong if, among of our battery of teaching activities, we include some (repetition, rote learning, translation, structural drilling) which seem to have no immediate 'communicative' value.". Further mention of this point (i.e., real-life language use) is made subsequently.

In fact, the question of authentic material against 'scripted material' (i.e., 'specially written teaching texts'), Swan (1985) agrees that the use of the former is certainly an opportunity to provide "... students [with] a taste of 'real' language in use..." (p. 85). However, he also claims that "There is nothing wrong in itself with creating special texts for specific purposes, and illustrating language use is a purpose like any other." (i.e., simplifying language for children, 'adapting scientific articles for laymen', etc.) (Swan, 1985 : 84).

What is being suggested is that "Scripted material is useful for presenting specific language items economically and effectively." (Swan, 1985 : 85). In other words, the input (i.e., what students hear or read in the presentation of a lesson) is controlled: only the needed grammatical structures and vocabulary are presented for the purpose of a given lesson. However, in this connection and in a recent



article on English for specific purposes, Schleppegrell notes that "... ESP courses do not use artificial tasks that teach arbitrary vocabulary and drill grammatical structures out of context." (1991 : 18). She adds that it is basically important - by means of needs assessment - "... to collect samples of authentic texts, spoken and written, that are used by the students in their jobs or professions." (1991 : 19). (see also Maley in 4.4).

#### 4.3. Widdowson's Reaction

In his reply, Widdowson (1985 : 158) considers that Swan's (1985) ideas on the communicative approach (i.e., 'as a manifesto for revolutionary change') have never been stated in this way by the advocates of this approach." Swan represents them as such in order to make a better attack." (Ibid). On the contrary, Widdowson says that the ideas put forward by the communicative approach are intended "... to act *against* the dogmatism of doctrine whether new or old, revolutionary or reactionary." (Ibid). Then quoting himself from earlier writings - as he says - 'to correct' Swan's "... false impression of doctrinaire assertion..." (Ibid), Widdowson (1978 : x) clarifies :

This book [Teaching English as Communication] is not in any way intended as a propaganda for a new 'communicative' orthodoxy in language teaching. It is, on the contrary, an appeal for critical investigation into the basis of a belief and its practical implications.





From another source, he adds:

Above all we must deny ourselves the comfort of dogma which deals in the delusion of simple answers.

(Widdowson, 1979 : 262)

In this connection, Widdowson (1985) explains that in creating a dogma that is 'unjustly attributed' to the communicative approach, Swan "... is led into contradiction by committing precisely the same error ..." (p. 159). In other words, Swan has created a dogma of his own, that is, "... a reassertion of the traditional view that what learners need to be taught is grammar, lexis, and collection of idiomatic phrases..." (3).

Widdowson goes on to raise many questions that are a matter of contradiction in Swan's ideas. Thus, he surprisingly remarks that on the one hand Swan criticizes the teaching of use, appropriacy, strategies and negotiation of meaning (see 4.2), and on the other hand he approves of the teaching of notions and functions. Widdowson wonders why the latter should "... be necessary if the function of an utterance (use) can always be inferred by a common-sense association of sentence meaning (usage) and situation..." (1985 : 159).

Again Widdowson (1985 : 160) quoting Swan's approval of the 'communicative approach as having 'many virtues', and particularly as an approach that is "... given credit for 'enormous improvements in our methodology.'" (see 4.1 and 4.2), he raises a series of questions such as the following :

What exactly are these improvements? On what principles are they based? And how have they come about, if they are based on ideas that are apparently so defective in theory and irrelevant in practice?

(Ibid)

Widdowson concludes on this issue qualifying "Unreasoned approval of the 'communicative approach' is no better than unreasoned condemnation". (Ibid).

Finally, Widdowson (1985:161) says that Swan's discussion of authentic material and 'the classroom replication of reality' on the one hand, and the importance of grammar and lexis on the other, have long been recognized as essential communicative resources. However what is questionable is "... the proposal for a *separate* treatment of the formal and functional aspects of language which Swan ... puts forward..." (Ibid) (on this issue, see 3.5.2.2).

#### 4.4 Viability of the Communicative Approach

What certainly works in favour of the communicative approach is that language is first of all learned for the purpose of communication. Language being defined in this way, communicative language teaching is closely related to the concepts of communication skills and appropriacy (see 2.2, 4.2, and 4.3) in the sense that it aims at developing in the learner the ability to use the target language. A use that is often aimed at but hardly reached efficiently. Of course, this does not mean that going communicatively in language teaching guarantees such an aim. However, what is being

suggested is that the communicative approach is more promising compared with traditional methods and approaches (i.e., grammar-translation method, structural approach, etc.) that were primarily concerned with the learning of the linguistic code, grammar rules, translation, habit formation, analysis, mechanical drilling, etc. at the expense of communication.

In this connection, Maley characterizes traditional methods as follows:

- (1) focus very strongly on the language as language (not as use); 'explication de texte' is a prime example of this, where the text is removed from its total context of meaning and examined as an object for analysis;
- (2) as a corollary, emphasize the memorization of vocabulary and the internalization of rules (many of which do not bear scrutiny!) at the expense of appropriacy and use;
- (3) restrict the quantity and variety of language to which students are exposed;
- (4) offer very few opportunities for real communication among students;
- (5) rely very heavily on strong teacher control, and apportion a major part of the total talking time to the teacher.

(Maley, 1986 : 89-90).

Whereas he sees 'the main advantages of the communicative approaches' as follows:

- (1) they are more likely to produce the four kinds of competence outlined in my second paragraph [grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence] <sup>(4)</sup> than more purely language centred-approaches;

- (2) they are more immediately relevant since they offer the learner the opportunity of *using* the language for his own purposes earlier than do other approaches;
- (3) to this extent they are more motivating, and students are likely to put more effort into them;
- (4) they are less wasteful of time and effort than approaches which attempt to teach the *whole* language system, since they teach only what is relevant and necessary;
- (5) in the long term they equip the learners with the appropriate skills for tackling the language in the real world, since the approach is based on a close approximation to such uses.

(Maley, 1986 : 90).

Obviously learning for communication or language use implies that learners should be - for this purpose, presented appropriate teaching materials. Earlier mention was made about the latter (see 2.3.2) to fulfil the requirements of the learning for communication. Thus, according to Maley (1986 : 89) "The teaching materials will need to reflect the wide range of uses of the language. Almost inevitably there will be a preponderance of authentic over simplified materials." (see also Schleppegrell in 4.2).

When materials are suitable for communicative language teaching, it remains the role of the teachers to be well prepared for such a task (to avoid teaching the way they were taught) <sup>(5)</sup>. Moreover, because of changing objectives in the teaching of a foreign language, the teacher "... must be continually aware of such changes if his teaching is to be appropriate to the generation of students before him." (Rivers, 1968 : 8).



Maley, on the other hand, puts it this way :

Teachers' roles will change. They can no longer be regarded as possessing sacrosanct knowledge, which they dispense in daily doses to their docile flock. Instead they will need to set up tasks and activities in which the learners play the major overt role. It is then their job to monitor these activities and to modify and adjust them as time goes by.

(Maley, 1986 : 90)

Another important feature of communicative language teaching is students-centredness (see 2.1 and 2.3.1). The students are expected to have the central part in the different stages of a lesson. Their presence in the classroom is not confined to a repetition of a number of utterances in the target language. Maley describes the learners' roles in the following terms :

They will no longer find it is enough to follow the lesson passively, but will need to involve themselves as real people in the activities they are asked to undertake both inside and outside the classroom.

(Ibid)

He also notes that "The techniques applied to these materials [teaching materials above] will be *task-oriented* rather than exercise-centred." In other words, students are for example set listening or reading activities that need some thinking and discussion "... before formulating decisions or solutions in spoken or written form." (Ibid), (i.e., skills are integrated rather than isolated), (see also 3.5.5).

A final point of which Maley says: "The classroom procedures adopted will favour *interaction* among students." (Ibid) concerns 'the layout of the classroom' (straight rows, he says, do not favour communication), emphasis on pair work and group work.

Bearing in mind the previous advantages and features of the communicative approach, one cannot but argue for an approach (and indeed any approach) that has a close relationship with real everyday life (i.e., language use, real setting, negotiation of meaning, strategies, etc.). Even Swan's criticism (see 4.2) of the communicative approach recognizes its 'many virtues' in spite of the difficulty of their realization more particularly that of 'rules of use'. The difficulty that such rules cannot be codified (therefore not to be taught) according to Swan, does not seem to be a problem for Xiaoju among others. She simply puts it this way: "... learning the use of language has to be achieved through use itself, that is, by communication." (Xiaoju, 1984 : 5). In fact, it is generally acknowledged that when students are given the opportunity to communicate in the target language their motivation increases (see 2.3.1). They 'are likely to put more effort' (see Maley above) in their attempt to immediately use what they learn (i.e., using the language) since 'Their learning is more likely to make sense to them ...' (see Littlewood in 2.3.1). It remains then, the

teacher's role to use adequate techniques to successfully carry out communicative tasks with his students. Again, Xiaoju observes "... the communicative teacher's role is neither to give lectures nor to supply correct answers." (1984 : 10).

## NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. Cunningsworth (1983), argues that there are speech acts which are 'untransferable' between  $L_1$  and  $L_2$ . "Just as sentences can rarely be translated in a literal word-for-word fashion from one language to another, so it appears that not all speech acts are directly transferable between two languages without a change of form that goes beyond literal translation." (1983 : 10).

2. Though there are items that have to be learnt before the student can use language, Pearse (1983 : 22) says that one of the teacher's tasks is to bridge the gap between the classroom and the street. He further explains that "... the object of language learning is to use the language out of the classroom, (...). Sooner or later successful students will have to make the transfer from the protection of the classroom to the bustle of the street. The teacher should be aware of the realistic/real distinction, and even in the classroom the students should use as much real English as possible." (Ibid).

3. The teaching of 'idiomatic phrases' is controversial. Harmer says that "Although teaching phrases may have some value, students will not be given an ability to create new language as they are with grammatical items." (1983 : 23).

4. We would like to remind the reader that we have already given some clarification on these terms under section 2.2 in the present work.

5. Rivers observes that "Frequently such teachers [those whose teaching techniques are 'diverse and imitative'] teach as they were taught, and techniques appropriate in another era are perpetuated. From time to time, such teachers add a few techniques which they have seen demonstrated or of which they have read, but their approach to their lessons remains fundamentally unchanged." (1968 : 8).



## C O N C L U S I O N

This study has shown the many reasons that have led to the adoption of the communicative approach in secondary education. The overriding impression is that from the point of view of communication, there should be no regret for the structural approach which almost neglected communication skills. One cannot call answers to comprehension questions, drills or doing many exercises and their correction as communication. The result was that students did not develop a spontaneous use of English. The practice nowadays is different, students learn to communicate in the foreign language. Indeed, my experience and observation of many classrooms show the students' readiness to talk in English whereas with the structural teaching, students were afraid to initiate or take part in conversation, afraid to be corrected and laughed at. This intense demand for accuracy dismayed the learners, and communication as such never took place.

This study has also emphasized that recent development in the field of EFL rejects the classroom atmosphere which involves lengthy grammatical and lexical explanations at the expense of communicative activities. What is aimed at now is developing the learners' communicative competence. Students learn English in order to be able to use it in social interaction.

However, this would be too much to hope for if the teachers are unaware of the theoretical persuasions behind the communicative approach. Similarly, what the concept of communicative competence involves and the features it promotes are equally important. Features such as syllabus design, materials construction, teaching methodology, teacher training and testing should constitute the teachers' major concern if they are to find their way to successful teaching.

In teaching practice, the teachers should be aware of a number of factors that are essential in the implementation of a communicatively oriented course. In particular, they should be knowledgeable of the students' needs, the aims and objectives of the English course. These, will direct them from the start to know where they want to go, and to select the techniques that help them to achieve their objectives (see Rivers, under 3.2). Some general principles for evaluating EFL teaching materials are incorporated, their importance for practising teachers - and most significantly for prospective teachers - is unquestionable for a better selection of learning activities and language content that continuously keep sustaining the learners' motivation.

Finally, what makes communicative language teaching stand its ground is that language is primarily learnt for the purpose of communication. It is for this very reason that the communicative approach viability is certain.

Last, but not least, I am aware that certain sections of the present research work need elaboration (as the ones on materials construction, teacher training, and testing) while

other sections should have been included (such as classroom observations of teaching, users' judgements, students' learning abilities, etc.) for a more balanced work. In any case, this study does not pretend to be conclusive. Quite the reverse! It is intended to stimulate further investigation that may help to improve the teaching-learning of English in Algeria.

The perspectives as outlined in the text, point at least to two directions. The first direction is that any success of the communicative approach relies heavily on the quality of the teacher's training, his role in the classroom, his self-improvement, together with well designed teaching materials. The second direction should be nurtured and developed in an 'environmental atmosphere', that is, a governmental assistance under various forms such as funds to motivate and develop research in the field of teaching in general, promotions, incentives and the like. Most of all would be a close coordination and link between University and Secondary Institutions for a more integrated educational system in the country. The learner would certainly benefit from such a framework.

## P E R S P E C T I V E S

The adoption of the communicative approach in secondary education in Algeria was primarily to improve the students' communication output. This can be achieved if teachers 'play the game', that is, not 'going communicative' and teach the way they were themselves taught in another area as Rivers (1968) puts it (see note 5 to Chapter 4). Language teachers should admit that methodology is constantly changing. They should not strongly stick to established attitudes and practices. On the contrary, they should draw on insights from recent innovations in methodology and try to adopt (and adapt) newer instruments and make them profitable to their learners. Obviously enough, language teaching is dynamic and runs parallel to changing needs of the people, the country and the world.

In other words, communicative language teaching is not a mere change of labels (e.g. from structural to functional). In the case of secondary education in Algeria, teachers should be persuaded and be ready to respond to some of the requirements of the communicative approach (see Chapter 2) if they want to achieve some success with their students. In this connection, Laraba's statement of some defects in the teaching of English in Algerian universities corroborates our



earlier observations (see 2.3.4 and note 10 to Chapter 2) on this issue :

Another defect is concerned with the professional training of the teachers. There are some 6000 teachers of English, including about 500 in the universities, and I suspect that many of them are unqualified or partly qualified. Indeed our qualifying system is so easygoing that any university graduate, however dull, can become a qualified teacher so long as he/she obtains during his/her undergraduate years a certain number of modules, coupled with very brief practice in teaching<sup>(1)</sup>.

(Laraba, 1988 : 80)

In fact, students' qualification leaves much to be desired. As the great majority of the English department graduates go into teaching profession, they primarily need adequate preparation in the teaching-learning of English. A direct implication of this is a reconsideration of the English university curriculum that prepares teachers for secondary education. It is most unfortunate to note a lack of beneficial coordination between the secondary and the tertiary institutions which are in a way complementary. The former in the provision of potential students who wish to go into teaching and other professions, the latter as an institution where departments of education and training should be there for students wishing to go into teaching. It is obvious enough that when students choose their career, particularly at this level, the chances of success are guaranteed because they know from the beginning what they aim at.

Again, Laraba (1988 : 81) makes the following observation :

Besides the content of the licence degree in English is not closely associated with language teaching. I see no reason why the prospective graduate teacher of English should not commit himself to his profession from the time he enters the university as in the education and training of doctors and dentists.

In this respect, one notes 'en passant' (perhaps with dissatisfaction) that the university English curriculum is in its great proportion (content) loaded with literature (British, American and African) and civilization (British, American and African) at the expense of other fields of study (i.e., Applied linguistics, language pedagogy, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, TEFL and English language teaching in general)<sup>(2)</sup>. However, it should be stressed that this does not mean to lessen (or de-emphasize) the importance of the teaching of literature and civilization. On the contrary, there are good reasons for the teaching of these, and particularly literature whereby students directly learn how language is used in different social settings. Nevertheless, the contents of literature and civilization syllabuses have to be re-examined in the light of modern life requirements. This corroborates Tavakol's (1988 : 133) revealing description of the civilization content / syllabus:

The existing syllabus of Civilization courses is ill-planned, unnecessary and boring for the students. They mostly include old historical narratives. They rather fall under the category of "History" courses, presented in an old fashion history teaching, and covering topics that even the English speaking

students themselves do not learn and do not have interest to learn. It is not really important and necessary for an Algerian student of English to know about minor events that happened in England of Eighteenth century, for example. The English themselves do not study these things today - they are simply outmoded and irrelevant, and waste of time and energy of the students and the teachers both.

As for literature and civilization, Hassaine (1988 : 141) considers that :

Most literary works reproduce social settings that our students are not even aware of. That is why our teaching of civilization should be geared toward the exploration of the background.

He further adds that " For this very reason, innumerable sessions are devoted to the writer's ideas and very little to his style." And concludes in the following terms :

Indeed that the teaching of history (social and economic history) should, ideally, precede, or, at least, be coupled and given simultaneously with the study of set books, stressing the interdependence between literature and society, writer and background.

(ibid)

In summary, 'teacher training' is undoubtedly at the heart of the problem. It should constitute a section on its own in the university English curriculum. For this purpose, measures to carry out improvements in this field are vital for a reasonable training of prospective teachers. Such an enterprise requires teacher trainers to coordinate their 'course contents' (see note 10 to Chapter 2) at tertiary level, and also with the Inspectorate of English and teachers in charge of practical training of prospective teachers in



secondary education. On the other hand, in order to avoid frustrating experience in the classroom, prospective teachers (more particularly those who have not had any practical training in secondary schools) of English should be directed, helped and backed up by more experienced teachers and the school administration from the start. This undertaking is necessary as there are special difficulties that newly recruited teachers cannot predict and these may turn to their disadvantage and demotivate them. Reference is particularly made here to over-large classes and the diverse problems that teachers face in dealing sometimes with fifty (50) or more teens (not always humble, to say the least). It happens that beginning teachers are often - with few exceptions though - at a loss in overcrowded and noisy classes. In fact, in order to amuse the 'crowd' and have the upper hand, it is a common practice among students to behave (or rather misbehave!) in such a way that unexpectedly leads the new recruit (i.e., the prospective teacher) to fall a prey.

The problem of discipline often impedes the teaching-learning process and leaves no room for a good progression of classes. Communicative activities in pairs and groups become almost impossible and this is why many teachers resort to traditional teaching again. A better approach to solve this problem would ultimately be a division of English classes into 'lessons' and 'practicals',<sup>(3)</sup> (i.e., a similar division to what is known in the teaching of French as 'travaux dirigés'). This division is advantageous at two levels. First, the teacher gets to know his students easily and can



therefore have a close control over them. Second, lessons may be reserved to language input and practicals to communication output where each individual student can have the opportunity to take part in communicative activities.

Teachers' professional improvements is another important point which deserves undivided attention. In order not to sink into monotony, teachers need to develop their theoretical knowledge and practical aspects of English language teaching in general. Surely, these constitute a valuable source from which teachers can draw on various ideas, hints and cues for their daily task. This knowledge will also help them to handle teaching materials with ease and confidence. In other words, unless the teachers are well equipped in the discipline they will not be successful in their profession. For this purpose, they need to go beyond the textbook and the dictionary (The mostly used devices by teachers in secondary education). In this context, poor excuses are often put forward concerning the lack of reference books, language teaching journals and magazines. On the contrary, some of these are available in Algeria such as: English Teaching Forum (by subscription), ELT Journal, ELT Documents and others (at the ESP Centres in Oran, Algiers and Constantine), and a good range of reference books in the Institutes of Foreign Languages. The problem then rather lies in the lack of interest and goodwill (see also Laraba's first quotes above). Serving teachers in secondary education have learnt to content themselves with their 'licence' no matter whether or not they were adequately prepared for the job.

Thus, in order to develop their knowledge of ELT and benefit from new (not necessarily new as such) teaching ideas, procedures, techniques, and suggestions (i.e., finding ways to vary teaching materials), etc., the teachers should :

- make of 'team teaching' a reality. This helps them to exchange and gain ideas, teaching materials, tests and other activities that make lessons enjoyable (e.g. songs, games, puzzles, jokes, etc.)
- subscribe to ELT journals and magazines.
- meet regularly to talk about ELT innovations, methodology, share professional experiences, etc.
- organize local meetings and invite colleagues for talks (preparing talks is a way to improve one's knowledge of ELT).
- join the 'Algerian Association of Teachers of English' (to be officialized, hopefully).
- ideally have contacts with other international organization of teachers.

The list above is by no means exhaustive as there are many other ways of improving one's knowledge of ELT. What is, however, agreed on is that such a knowledge will keep the teacher dynamic, perpetually in search of professional

improvement. Besides, the end product of the above recommendations is that each teacher can develop (and increase) his personal bibliography. The latter is absolutely necessary for any teacher.

## N O T E S

1. This is also a valid observation for teacher trainers. The latter need to have a thorough knowledge (in theory and in practice) of the English teaching-learning in secondary education so as to impart efficient training to their student teachers at pre-service stage.

2. This unbalanced decision about priorities is also observed in the preparation of "Agrégation" (a newly introduced (1991-1992) competitive examination for P.E.S.). From the standpoint of logic, that is, since teachers of English in secondary education in Algeria are EFL teachers, we believe that 'Applied linguistics' and TEFL' and related fields of study should have been given more importance or at least equal treatment as literature and civilization (the total 'coefficient' for the latter is 10 whereas that of 'Applied Linguistics' and 'Language Pedagogy' is 9).

3. When I had a chance to do so, I always advocated, as much as some other teachers did, this division many years ago. Now, it has become a reality. 'Practicals' were officially introduced in the teaching of English in September, 1991. Teachers welcomed them to the extent that they gave an impetus to communication as such.



A P P E N D I C E S

## A P P E N D I X    A

A prototype of a unit (i.e., a Content Unit) in Practice and Progress (pp. iii-iv). One can clearly see the typical structural setting of the structures to be learnt/taught.

## Pre-Unit Test

## Unit ONE : Instructions to the Student

- 1 A Private Conversation - Word Order in Simple Statements.
- 2 Breakfast or Lunch ? - The Present : Continuous and Simple
- 3 Please Send Me a Card - The Simple Past
- 4 An Exciting Trip - The Present Perfect Simple
- 5 No Wrong Numbers - The Simple Past and the Present  
Perfect Simple
- 6 Percy Buttons - The Indefinite and Definite Articles
- 7 Too Late - The Past Continuous
- 8 The Best and the Worst - The Comparison of Adjectives
- 9 A Cord Welcome - Prepositions of Time
- 10 Not for Jazz - The Passive
- 11 One Good Turn - Review of Tenses  
Deserves Another
- 12 Goodbye and Good Luck - The Simple Future
- 13 The Greenwood Boys - The Future Continuous
- 14 Do You Speak English ? - The Past Perfect Simple
- 15 Good News - Indirect Statements
- 16 A Polite Request - Type 1 Conditional Statements
- 17 Always Young - Must and Have to

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 18 He Often Does This | - Have (Possession/Ordinary Verb)                         |
| 19 Sold Out           | - Can and May   |
| 20 One Man in a Boat  | - The Gerund after Prepositions                           |
| 21 Mad or Not ?       | - The Passive (Auxiliary Verbs)                           |
| 22 A Glass Envelope   | - Verbs followed by Prepositions :<br>Of, From, In and On |
| 23 A New House        | - Review of Tenses and Auxiliary Verbs                    |
| 24 It Could be Worse  | - Special Difficulties : Review                           |

## A P P E N D I X B

A reading passage from 'Unit 2' in Practice and Progress (pp. 89-90).

## 34 Quick Work

Ted Robinson has been worried all the week. Last Tuesday he received a letter from the local police. In the letter he was asked to call at the station. Ted wondered why he was wanted by the police. but he went to the station yesterday and now he is not worried any more. At the station, he was told by a smiling policeman that his bicycle has been found. Five days ago, the policeman told him, the bicycle was picked up in a small village four hundred miles away. It is now being sent to him by train. Ted was most surprised when he heard the news. He was amused too. because he never expected the bicycle to be found. It was stolen twenty years ago when Ted was a boy of fifteen !

## Comprehension and Précis

Answer these questions in not more than 55 words.

1. Was Ted Robinson worried or not ?
2. Whom had he received a letter from ?
3. Where did he go yesterday ?
4. Is he worried anymore or not ?
5. What have the police found ?
6. Was Ted surprised or not ? (not only ...but...as well)
7. When was his bicycle stolen ?
8. How old was he then ?



### Composition

Rewrite these sentences using the correct verb and joining words  
 The man was (not only) (neither) tired (nor) (but) hungry (as well) (either). (However) (Therefore) all the hotels in the town (existed) (were) full, (but) (so) he went to the police station. The police (put) (gave) him a meal (and) (but) a bed for the night.

### Letter-writing

In the address we usually write 'St.' for 'Street'; 'Rd.' for 'Road'; 'Sq.' for 'Square'; 'Ave.' for 'Avenue'; 'Pl.' for 'Place'. We write words like 'Lane' and 'Drive' in full.

### Exercise

Write these words in the way shown above :

Place, Avenue, Street, Road, Square.

### Key Structures

He was asked to call at the station.

Do you remember these sentences ? (KS<sub>31</sub>)

Prisoners of war built this bridge in 1942. (Who)

This bridge was built (by prisoners of war) in 1942. (What)

Now study these sentences :

They asked me to make a speech. (Who)

I was asked to make a speech. (Who)

You will notice that the form of the verb depends on the person or thing we mention first. We mention the most important person or thing first.

*Instead of saying :*

They are sending *him* abroad.

The police were questioning  
*the man*.

He told *me* to wait for him.

They have found *your wallet*.

He never expected them to  
find *the bicycle*.

*We can say :*

*He is being sent abroad.*

*The man was being ques-*  
*tioned (by the police).*

*I was told to wait for him.*

*Your wallet has been found.*

He never expected *the*  
*bicycle* to be found.

### *Exercises*

A. Answer these questions on the passage. Write a complete sentence in answer to each question :

1. Who has been worried all the week ?
2. What was Ted asked to do ?
3. What did Ted wonder ?
4. What was Ted told at the station ?
5. Where was Ted's bicycle picked up ?
6. Where is the bicycle being sent ?
7. What did Ted feel when he heard the news ?
8. Why was Ted amused ?
9. How long ago was the bicycle stolen ?

B. Change the form of the phrases in italics. Do not refer to the passage until you finish the exercise :

1. *Something has worried Ted* all the week.
2. In the letter *they asked him* to call at the station.
3. Ted wondered why the *police wanted him*.

4. At the station, a smiling policeman told him that they had found his bicycle.
5. They picked up the bicycle in a small village.
6. They are sending it to his home by train.
7. This amused him because he never expected them to find the bicycle. Someone stole it twenty years ago.

### Special Difficulties

Read these sentences. Each sentence contains the verb *call*. The verb has a different meaning in each sentence :

He was asked to *call* at the station. (ll. 3-4)

He *called out* to me but I did not hear him.

I *called on* George yesterday. (I paid him a short visit.)

She'll *call you up* tomorrow. (She will telephone you.)

It began to rain so we *called off* the match. (We cancelled it.)

### Exercise

Supply the missing words in the following sentences :

1. I called you .... five times yesterday. Were you out ?
2. It's too late to go to the pictures. Why don't you call the whole thing .... ?
3. We called .... to him but he could not hear us.
4. I called ... the post-office on my way to work..

## A P P E N D I X C

Source : Programmes Anglais (Mai 1981 : 1-2)

1) OBJECTIFS - GENERAUX

(...) L'Anglais étant perçu comme outil de communication, notre enseignement se propose d'asseoir et de développer une compétence linguistique qui permette de réaliser des objectifs de comportement dans les quatre aptitudes linguistiques fondamentales ("language skills"), à savoir :

- Compréhension orale
- Expression orale
- Compréhension écrite
- Expression écrite

La maîtrise de ces "skills" implique la compréhension de discours authentiques et la production spontanée d'actes de langue corrects et pertinents, dans le cadre du programme et en fonction des objectifs des différentes filières. Le programme comprend :

a - Des objectifs scolaires

- Préparer dans les bonnes conditions, les élèves aux examens scolaires.
- Les doter d'une base pour entamer des études supérieures en anglais (Licence d'anglais).

b - Des objectifs socio-professionnels

Leur permettre de tirer profit des différents documents en anglais (littéraires, économiques, techniques, scientifiques...) qu'ils seraient appelés à consulter dans leurs recherches universitaires ou dans leur vie professionnelle.  
Leur permettre, après un renforcement linguistique de courte durée, de suivre avec profit un stage de formation en anglais dans un secteur économique.



2)

OBJECTIFS PAR NIVEAU D'ENSEIGNEMENT2-1 Première année secondaire

L'année de 1 A.S. doit être considérée de manière générale comme celle de l'homogénéisation et de la consolidation des connaissances linguistiques acquises dans le cycle antérieur. L'étude de l'anglais doit permettre à l'élève à l'issue de la première année secondaire de :

Pouvoir comprendre un message oral et un document écrit simple (texte, coupure de presse, etc ...) des documents didactiques divers (cartes-plans avec légende diagrammes, bandes dessinées, placard publicitaires, formulaires, et en faire le résumé, le commenter et au besoin formuler un point de vue dans un langage simple.

Pouvoir exprimer oralement ou par écrit le maximum d'actes de langue. A ce stade il sera accordé la même importance aux aptitudes réceptives et productives.

Cette recherche de la maîtrise des aptitudes réceptives (receptive skills) (compréhension orale et écrite) et des aptitudes productives (productive skills) - (expression orale et écrite) s'appuiera sur l'enseignement d'une grammaire de communication intimement liée à la fonction linguistique étudiée et sur l'acquisition constante et progressive. L'élève doit être en mesure de lire des graded readers de 1500 mots.

Enfin la distinction entre filières scientifique, technique et littéraire se fera symboliquement en 1 A.S. grâce à l'étude en anglais de faits scientifiques et techniques simples déjà vus, permettant à l'élève d'acquérir un vocabulaire courant spécifique à chaque filière.

## A P P E N D I X D

'Unit 16' : Listening Comprehension / Dialogue.

Source : New Lines (1981-1982 : 203).

Rachid has recently moved to a new flat in Manchester. He is planning to give a house-warming party. He asks his landlady Mrs Robinson who lives on the ground-floor for permission :

Rachid : Excuse me Mrs Robinson

Mrs Robinson : Yes Rachid, Can I help you ?

Rachid : Do you mind if I invite my friends for a party next Saturday evening here ?

Mrs Robinson : We usually don't allow parties here but for you, I'll make an exception. You can invite your friends.

Rachid : May I use the large kitchen to cook a couscous for my friends please ?

Mrs Robinson : Yes, certainly. In fact, we're likely to be away next week-end, so you won't disturb us at all.

Rachid : That's very kind of you, Mrs Robinson. I'm quite certain that my friends won't be too noisy. Goodbye.

Mrs Robinson : Goodbye.

N.B. : This is not the original format of the dialogue (see note 6 in Chapter 3). It has been rewritten under this form for the sake of clarity.

## APPENDIX E

Source : New Lines (1981-1982 : 255)

## ENGLISH PHONETICS SYMBOLS\* (Reminder)

Vowels	Diphthongs	Diphthongs +
[i:] eat	[ia] dear	[eia] player
[i ] it	[ei] day	[aia] fire
[e ] bed	[ai] night	[auə] our
[æ ] bad	[au] house	[ɔiə] employer
[a:] car	[ɔu] go	
[ɔ ] dog	[ɔi] boy	
[ɔ:] door	[ɔa] cold	
[u ] book	[ua] poor	
[u:] school	[εa] there	
[ʌ ] but		
[ə ] letter		
[ə:] girl		

## CONSONANTS

They can be formed :

1. With the lips only: [p] = pen; [b] = but; [m] = man; [w] = we
2. With the lips and the teeth : [f] = if; [v] = very
3. With the tip of the tongue against the upper teeth :  
 [t] = take; [d] = did; [n] = no; [l] = lip; [r] = read;  
 [s] = see ; [z] = zoo; [ʃ] = shut; [ʒ] pleasure

\* As used by D. Jones in <<English Pronouncing Dictionary>> and the International Phonetic Alphabet.

4. With the tip of the tongue between the lower and the upper teeth :

[θ] = think; [ð] = the

5. With the tongue slightly raised towards the front of the palate

[j] = yes, eye

6. With the tongue slightly raised towards the back of the palate

[k] = keep; [g] = go; [ŋ] = sing (nasalized)

7. In the glottis

[h] = hot, perhaps

8. With the combination of the 2 sounds : t + ʃ --> [tʃ] = child  
rich; d + ʒ --> [dʒ] = jam, change.



B I B L I O G R A P H Y

## B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Note : The following bibliography includes General Theoretical References as well as Textbooks, Official Documents, and Pedagogical Publications. It is divided into two (2) sections :

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- B - Textbooks, Official Documents, and Pedagogical Publications.

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