TOPIC 1.

1. The Evolution of Language Teaching
   1.1. The Introduction of Modern Languages in Schools
   1.2. The Grammar-Translation Method
   1.3. Individual Attempts for Reform in the Nineteenth Century
   1.4. The Reform Movement
   1.5. The Direct Method
   1.6. The Audio-Lingual Method
   1.7. The Oral/Situational Approach
   1.8. The Influence of Cognitivism

2. Contemporary Trends in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language
   2.1. The Distinction between Approach and Method
   2.2. The Silent Way
   2.3. Community Language Learning
   2.4. Suggestopedia
   2.5. Total Physical Response (TPR)
   2.6. The Natural Approach
   2.7. Contemporary Approaches

3. The Communicative Approach
   3.1. Origins
   3.2. Description of Communicative Language Teaching
   3.3. Contemporary Trends in CLT

4. CONCLUSION
5. BIBLIOGRAPHY
INTRODUCTION.

Though all roads lead to Rome, there are some of them which are shorter than others. Some of them are long and winding, and some others are hampered or weather-beaten by the pass of time. Some of them seem wide and straight, desirable, but later reveal as narrow and full of ambushes. To start a journey along them is always an adventurous task, a pilgrimage with a clear starting point but an unknown, uncertain end.

Very often, the task of learning a foreign language resembles this pilgrimage. The learner is determined to set out on a journey and wants to find the shortest, straightest one in order to master the new language. However, once on the road, choices must be made, and a method for teaching and learning may seem wide and straight, but may later reveal as narrow, or plenty of drawbacks.

The evolution of language teaching has provided a great range of solutions for this question: What road shall I take? From the security and stability of the Grammar-Translation Method to the focus on communication and language use of Communicative Language Teaching, many theories and models have been proposed. All of them have contributed some positive aspects, and all of them have presented shortcomings or have not reached their goal. However, a survey of the evolution of language teaching until the 21st century is a necessary task for any foreign language teacher, who must be aware of history in order to make his/her personal choices, to create a personal teaching style.

In order to do so, the first section of this unit sets out to explore the evolution of language teaching and its methodologies until the 1960s, when the influence of the emerging cognitive theories shifted the focus of language and language teaching theories. In the second section, a range of current trends in language teaching is presented, including experimental methods like Suggestopedia and the most recent ones, such as Computer Aided Language Learning or Content-Based Instruction. Finally, we will focus specifically on the communicative approach to language teaching, which has become the central paradigm of language teaching in our times despite, or we would rather say thanks to its broad diversity of techniques and materials.
1.- The Evolution of language Teaching

Richards and Rodgers (1986) begin his seminal book by acknowledging that changes in language teaching methods throughout history have reflected the recognition of changes in the kind of proficiency learners need, as well as changes in theories of the nature of language and of language learning. Similarly, Howatt (1984) has demonstrated that many current issues in language teaching are not particularly new. Though the need to learn a second/foreign language seems to have reached its peak in our times, bilingualism or multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception. In fact, The Common European Framework for the Teaching of Languages (CEFR) establishes Plurilingualism as the natural state of a European citizen: an individual surrounded by a plurality of languages, which he/she is able to understand and speak at different degrees. In fact, bilingualism or multilingualism is a natural state in human societies: the population of imperial Rome came from every province of the Empire; medieval England reflected the co-existence of Scandinavian, French, Latin and the different English dialects.

For centuries, Latin was the dominant language of education, commerce, religion and government in the Western World. It was natural, though, that Latin was the most widely foreign language studied. In the sixteenth century, however, French, Italian, Spanish and English gained in importance as a result of political changes in Europe, and Latin gradually became displaced as a language of spoken and written communication.

When the need of learning Latin as a means of communication diminished, the study of classical Latin and the analysis of its grammar and rhetoric became the model for foreign language study from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Children entering grammar school in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in any Western European country were initially given a rigorous introduction to Latin grammar, which was taught through rote learning of grammar rules, study of declensions and conjugations, translation and practice in writing sample sentences, sometimes with the use of parallel bilingual texts and dialogue. The knowledge of Latin came to be perceived as a rigorous, systematic education of mental abilities in order to facilitate later acquisition of knowledge of other kinds.

Though there were occasional attempts to promote alternative approaches to education, by Roger Ascham and Montaigne in the sixteenth century and Jan Comenius and John Locke in the seventeenth, Latin had been long-established as the language of culture, so the study of Latin grammar became an end in itself.

1.1. The Introduction of Modern Languages in Schools

When modern languages began to enter school curricula of European schools in the eighteenth century, it was natural that they were taught using the methodology and procedures used for teaching Latin. Textbooks consisted of statements of abstract grammar rules, lists of vocabulary and sentences for translation. The goal of language teaching was to enable students to read Latin, so that oral practice was inexistent. The sentences and texts used for education had no relation to the language of real communication, especially if we take into account that nobody spoke oral Latin any longer. Consequently, by the nineteenth century the approach based on the study of Latin had become the standard way of studying foreign languages in schools. A typical textbook in the mid-nineteenth century consisted of chapters or lessons organized around grammar points. Each grammar point was listed, rules on its use were explained and it was illustrated by simple sentences. In time, this method of foreign language teaching based on Latin grammar and structures came to be known as the Grammar-Translation Method.
1.2. The Grammar-Translation Method

Being the offspring of German scholarship, it is not surprising to find the names of Johan Seiden-Stücker, Karl Plötz, H. S. Ollendorf and Johann Meidinger as some of its leading intellectuals—for this reason, it was first known in the USA as the Prussian method. According to Richards and Rodgers (1986), the main characteristics of the Grammar-Translation Method (GT) were:

1. The goal of foreign language study is to learn a language in order to read its literature or to benefit from the mental discipline and intellectual development. Therefore, reading and writing are the major focus; little or no systematic attention is paid to speaking or listening.

2. Language is studied through the analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language.

3. Vocabulary selection is based on the texts analyzed, and is presented through bilingual word lists, dictionary study and memorization.

4. The sentence is the basic unit of teaching and language practice.

5. Accuracy is emphasized, because students are expected to attain high standards in translation.

6. Grammar is taught deductively, by presentation and study of grammar rules.

7. The language of instruction is the native language.

8. It is teacher-centered: the teacher is the source of authoritative knowledge and organizes the classroom and the procedures.

9. It is usually regarded as non-communicative, non-motivational.

GT dominated European and foreign language teaching from the 1840s to the 1940s, and its main features are still in use in many countries of the world today, as it is the case of China. In fact, as Richards and Rodgers indicate, it is used in situations where understanding language texts is the primary focus of foreign language study, and though the method has been discredited, it may be useful in contexts where written language is paramount. It is precisely this emphasis on written language rather than on actual communication which arouse criticism already in the nineteenth century, among which we may find the works of Marcel, Prendergast and Gouin.

1.3. Individual Attempts for Reform In The Nineteenth Century

In the course of the mid-nineteenth century, a combination of social and economic factors contributed to rising criticism on the Grammar-Translation Method. On the one hand, the extension of railroads spurred communication among European countries and created a demand for oral proficiency in foreign languages, which provoked the creation of conversation books and phrase books, but that also drew attention to the deficient way of teaching and learning foreign languages. The reform movements came from individual language teaching specialists, each with a specific method, and they had varying influence on the later evolution of language teaching. Claude Marcel (1973-1896) adopted child language learning as the model for language teaching, emphasizing the importance of meaning and proposing that reading should be the first skill to be acquired. T. Prendergast (1806-1886), also basing on child language learning, proposed the first structural syllabus, in which the most basic patterns of the language were the elements on which language teaching should be made. Finally, F. Gouin (1831-1896), the best known of them, believed that language learning was facilitated by the actual use of language to carry out communicative events. He also emphasized the need to present new language items in their context, so that their meaning is made clear. Despite the originality of these ideas, they lacked the means for wide dissemination, acceptance and implementation.
1.4. The Reform Movement

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, teachers and linguists perceived the urgent need for new approaches for language teaching. Linguists like Henry Sweet in England, Wilhelm Viëtor in Germany and Paul Passy in France, together with the contributions of the recent discoveries of the discipline of Phonetics, within the emergent field of Linguistics, advocated for a series of ideas which revolutionized language teaching:

- The goal of study is spoken language.
- There must be phonetic training to establish good pronunciation habits.
- The target language must be conversational and oral, presented by means of conversation and dialogues. Learners should hear before reading.
- Words must be presented in sentences which are contextually meaningful.
- Grammar should be taught inductively, only after the student has practiced language.
- Meanings must be established with reference to the target language in order to foment the use of L2. Therefore, translation should be avoided.

1.5. The Direct Method

As a reaction against the Grammar-Translation Method, the Natural Method appears. It was implemented by L. Sauveur (1826-1907) in his language school in Boston in the late 1860s. Sauveur and other scholars, such as F. Franke, believed that language could be learned without translation if meaning was conveyed through demonstration and action. Similarly, grammar was to be learned inductively. The Natural Method tenets provided the basis for the Direct Method, widely used in France, Germany and in the USA (by Sauveur and Maximilian Berlitz). Here are its main features:

1. All communication in the classroom is made in the target language.
2. The linguistic goal is everyday vocabulary and sentences.
3. Oral communication is the highest priority, as well as listening skills; they are organized around question/answer exchanges between teachers and students.
4. Grammar is taught inductively.
5. Situation, contextualized teaching of vocabulary, through demonstration, objects and pictures.
6. Correctness in pronunciation and grammar are emphasized.

The Direct Method was quite successful in private language schools, but by the 1920s its use in non-commercial language schools was descending.

1.6. The Audio-Lingual Method

In the late 1920s, the teaching of foreign languages in American schools and colleges began to adopt an approach based on reading comprehension. The first application of structuralist linguistics to the teaching of English as a foreign language started at the University of Michigan, in the 1930s. The Direct Method was refused in order to turn «grammar» or the «structure» of the language as the starting point for language teaching. Systematic attention to pronunciation and oral repetition of basic structures were the main source of inspiration for the teaching of the language.

Structuralism understood language learning as the mastery of the elements of the language and the rules by which they are governed, from the phoneme, the morpheme, the word and the sentence, i.e., the basic levels of language. In this sense, oral language is paramount in structural linguistics. We learn to speak before we learn to read or write; therefore, speaking must be taught first.
The Audio-lingual method appeared in the USA in the late 1950s. Its origins may be found in Structuralism, in the studies on contrastive analysis of languages, on aural and oral procedures and on behavioral theories. For behaviorists, learning is a mechanical process of habit formation, which is created by repetition of a stimulus-answer sequence. Mother tongue processes are the pattern for learning a second language, which must be done by imitation. Therefore, within a behavioural mindset, learning consists mainly of overcoming the differences between the mother tongue and the foreign/second language. To prevent, explain and correct interference errors, behaviorism stimulates a contrastive analysis between mother tongue and foreign/second language.

A typical lesson following the audio-lingual method, according to Nunan (1991: 231), would be:

1. Introduce the new linguistic issue, clearly demonstrating its meaning, through non-verbal means.
2. Showing the target pattern using examples.
3. The whole class participates in the mimics/memorization following the model provided by the teacher.
4. Progressive substitution activity, followed by a split of the group in two, followed by individual answers.
5. Repetition of the first four steps using negative versions of the target pattern.
6. Repetition of the first four steps using interrogative versions of the target structure.
7. Check the transfer by means of non-practiced items. Ask for individual and group answers.

The nucleus of the audio-lingual method is determined by the presentation and practice stages. The typical behaviorist exercises are based on repetition (drills). This technique conveys linguistic accuracy, but its main drawback is that the learner has a passive role, by creating robot-like learners, as Dubin and Olhstain name them (1986: 48).

The structuralist theory of language and the behaviorist theory of learning are the combination that accounts for the audio-lingual method. However, in this method the problem of transcending the formal study of language into real, communicative situations is not solved. Within the classroom, audio-lingualism established language laboratory practices from the behaviorist scheme stimulus-response. Its main tenets are: no translation; new items must be learned following the sequence listening, speaking, reading, speaking; frequent repetition as an essential way for effective learning and immediate correction of errors.

1.7. The oral/situational approach

This method appeared in Britain in the 1920s, heralded by linguists such as H. Palmer and A.S. Hornby. They tried to develop a more scientific base for the oral approach in the teaching of English than that posed by the Direct Method. The result was a systematic study of the principles and procedures applicable to the selection and organization of the contents of a language course (Richards and Rodgers 1986: 31).

Grammar and vocabulary were the two aspects of methodological design that received the most attention. The reading skill was the main target of language learning in many countries; for that reason, vocabulary was one of the most important aspects of foreign language learning. These factors led to the creation of vocabulary selection principles which would have profound influence in the teaching of English as a foreign language in the following decades. Lexical frequency studies facilitated the creation of lists of essential, basic vocabulary, as Michael West's A General Service List of English Words (1953), which became a compulsory reference for the creation of teaching resources.

Regarding grammar, grammatical categories were reclassified. As indicated, Grammar-Translation was grounded on the logics of a universal common grammar for all languages. However, the British linguists classified the main grammatical structures in sets of basic structures or sentence patterns, which were later called substitution tables (Richards and Rodgers 1986: 32-3). According to these authors, the main traits of the oral approach are:
The teaching of a foreign language begins by spoken language. It is taught orally before being presented in a written form.

The target language is the classroom language.

New linguistic issues are introduced and practices within a meaningful situation.

Vocabulary selection procedures ensure that a basic, general lexicon is learned.

Grammatical points are graded according to a simplicity principle.

Reading and writing are presented only after a sufficient lexical and grammatical level is attained.

The oral approach was the most accepted method in the 1950s. The fact that linguistic issues are introduced and practiced in situation turned into the key factor in the 1960s, and the term situational started to be used to refer to the oral approach. The Saussurian concept of parole was considered the basis of language, and structures the essence of oral abilities.

The influence of this method has been, and still is, very significant around the world. The beliefs of many English teachers still adjust to the principles of the situational approach: oral practice, grammar and sentence structures. In the mid-seventies these principles began to be questioned. As a consequence, the communicative approach was born, which would become the most relevant movement in teaching practice at multiple educational levels.

1.8. The Influence of Cognitivism

In the mid-sixties, the behaviorist theory of learning and its didactic correlative, the audio-lingual method, was sharply criticized by Noam Chomsky in his classic book Syntactic Structures (1957), who argued that structural theories of language could not account for humans’ language main property – creativity and uniqueness of individual sentences. His generative grammar theory claimed that the main characteristics of language are derived from mental innate aspects and through them, humans process experience through language. Therefore by applying a finite set of rules, an infinite range of experiences can be expressed. Learning, then, is not based on habit formation, but on rational acquisition of the finite set of rules. The human mind does not respond to stimuli mechanically, but looks for the system or structure underlying them. In this way, these rules can be applied when facing a new situation. This line of argument leads to the notion of linguistic competence.

This mentalist conception of learning opened the way to cognitivism, which considers that the learner is an active participant in the learning process. To learn and to use a rule the learner must think, i.e., use their mental capabilities to, in the first place, extract a generative rule from a mass of unsorted data and, then, analyze the situations in which this rule can be reapplied adequately.

Cognitivism, to sum up, does not constitute an approach or a method, but has exerted significant influence on later approaches and methods. According to Richard and Rodgers, the questioning of audio-lingualism by Cognitivism provoked a crisis in the USA that has not yet been solved. Its influence, together with other scientific and social factors, gave way to the rise of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which will be the focus of the third section of this unit, as well to a proliferation of language teaching methods.

1. What is plurilingualism? Is it exclusively a characteristic of contemporary society?
2. What did the first modern language textbooks look like?
3. Can you mention some of the representatives of the grammar-translation method?
4. What is the goal of grammar-translation method? How was grammar taught?
5. What were the ideas of the first reformers in the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth?
2.- Contemporary Trends in The Teaching of English as a foreign language

As a reaction to the unsatisfactory results of traditional methods in the teaching of modern languages, in the 60s and 70s appears in the USA the Language Learning Research Movement, with the aim of deepening into the nature of second/foreign language learning process. Also in the 60s and 70s, we find the appearance of the Human Relations and Individualization in the Language Class Approach, also known as the Humanistic Approach. Under this perspective, the teacher pays special attention to the human values and relationships within the classroom. The consideration of the learner as the center of the process of teaching-learning is its main feature, and it is shared by all the methods included in this approach. The learner’s effectiveness with regards what surrounds him/her is the most outstanding aspect. The hidden curriculum is especially dealt with, because it is influenced by the social and affective atmosphere in the interaction between learners and between learners and the teacher.

This interest in human relationships does not have an exclusive method. On the contrary, there are some methodologies which come under this category: The Silent Way, appearing in 1972, Community Language Learning (1976) and Suggestopedia (1978).

2.1. The distinction between Approach and Method

Prior to any description of language teaching methods in the second half of the twentieth century, a fundamental distinction must be pointed out. In 1963, the American applied linguist Edward Anthony identified three levels of conceptualization and organization regarding the theory of language and the theories concerning how languages are learned, and the derived procedures for language teaching. These three levels were approach, method and technique. Richards and Rodgers define approach as the level at which assumptions and beliefs about language and language learning are specified; method is the level at which theory is put into practice and at which choices are made about the particular skills, content and the order in which it must be taught. Finally, technique is the level at which classroom procedures are described.

Richards and Rodgers depart from this description, but extend it in order to account for all the elements concerning a particular way of conceiving language teaching. They propose the following model:

According to Richards and Rodgers, approach «refers to theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching» (16). Design is «the level of method analysis in which we consider (a) what the objectives of the method are; (b) how language content is selected and organized within the method—the syllabus; (c) the types of learning tasks and teaching activities the method advocates; (d) the roles of learners; (e) the roles of teachers; (f) the role of instructional materials.» (20) Finally, procedure involves the actual techniques, practices and behaviors present in teaching a language according to a particular method, that is to say, how the tasks and activities are integrated into lessons and used as the basis for learning and teaching. (26)

Therefore, any account of the different language teaching methods originated from the central decades of the 20th century must give a cursory glimpse to all these elements.
2.2. The Silent Way

This method was developed by Caleb Gattegno, who also developed the Community Language Learning method. It is student-centered and gives special attention on the learner’s psychology during the learning process. The teacher uses silence as an approximate tool, in the sense of introducing each situation in the simplest form possible, while constantly taking into account the comprehension, the situations and the contents.

According to Richards and Rodgers (1986: 99), the hypothesis on learning implied in this method are: (a) Learning is facilitated when the learner discovers or creates actively, instead of repeating or remembering; (b) Learning is facilitated by physical objects, which act as mediating ones; (c) Learning is facilitated by problem-solving, involving the item to be learned. Regarding grammar and lexicon, this method follows a syllabus designed with structuralist criteria. Nevertheless, the underlying principles aim at taking the maximum advantage of the learner’s mental activity. The main innovation lies in the arrangement of activities inside the classroom, as the teacher tries to speak just 1/10 of the session’s total time. Communication with learners is carried out by means of non-verbal language –gestures, mimics, visual aids and, specially, the Cuisenaire Rods (colored wooden sticks of different colors and shapes). On the other hand, the teacher leads the activity and tries to achieve the highest degree of intervention by the learner. Richards and Rodgers (1986: 99-111) summarize the main principles of this method in the following process: the learner is responsible for formulating hypotheses, test them, and discover autonomously the rules of the language.

2.3. Community Language Learning

Based on psychotherapeutical research on language handicap, this method is grounded on the theories of the American Charles Curran. It focuses on the affective needs of the learner, which are paramount in order to make the foreign language learning process possible. Language is understood as a social process, in contrast to the classical concept of language as communication. In other words, the classical definition of communication as sender-message-receiver becomes insufficient, but it does not account for the receiver’s reaction.

According to Curran (1982), Community Language Learning (CLL) aims at both cognitive and affective learning, and refers to an individual’s total experience, that is to say, to whole-person learning. After that process, the learner must become a state of autonomy in his own learning. In order to achieve that objective, the psychological requirements for success are represented by the acronym SARD: (S) security – the student must feel safe to achieve success; (A) attention and aggression, because interest and participation are necessary to learn. Aggression refers to the child’s instinct to show that he has learned something; (R) retention and reflection, to integrate the new items in the conceptual structure of the learner, who then evaluates what he/she has learned and the state of the learning process; (D) discrimination, in the sense of classifying the new items and relating them to previously known ones so that significant learning is made and actual communication outside the classroom is achieved.

Some of the aspects which have been criticized are the adequacy of the psychological base for the language learner, and the orientation and special training that the teacher must receive in order to be capable to carry out this methodology. Other debated points have been the absence of a syllabus definition, as CLL poses excessively ambiguous objectives and unable to be realistically assessed. However, according to Nunan (1991), CLL is a student-centered method and focuses on the human side of learning a language, and not only in its linguistic dimensions.
2.4. Suggestopedia

Developed by the Bulgarian psychiatrist Georgi Lozanov, it has been labeled a revolution in language teaching. According to Lozanov, the human mind can reach unsuspected memory levels if learning takes place in the right conditions, which includes the decoration, furniture, and arrangement of the classroom, the use of music and the behavior of the teacher. Based on yoga and Soviet psychology, this method tries to exploit the hidden potential of the human mind, by means of getting the learner into a state of deep relaxation, close to hypnosis, by using yoga, rhythmic breathing and readings, in synchrony with some background music. (Nunan 1991). Lozanov did not articulate any theory of language, but affirmed that Suggestopedia tries to attain advanced conversational proficiency through the mastery of lists of words in pairs, and suggests that it is the student himself who must fix his own objectives. The capacity for memorization is not isolated within the human mind, but the result of an intense, positive stimulation of personality. However, the main target of language teaching is not memorization, but comprehension, as well as the ability to problem-solving in a creative way.

A typical Suggestopedia course lasts thirty days and consists of the units of study. During four hours a day, six days a week, the focus of each unit revolves around a dialogue, accompanied by a vocabulary list and a grammatical commentary (Richards and Rodgers, 1986: 147). The method includes imitation, question and answer and role play, but especially listening activities. Unfortunately, the method can only be successful if the learners feel that they can learn by using it. In that case, the learner will feel a kind of placebo feeling. Therefore, the teacher must persuade his students that Suggestopedia is a scientific method. This point has obviously been harshly criticized.

2.5. Total Physical Response (TPR)

TPR was developed by James Asher in 1977, at San Jose State University, California, and owes most of its founding principles in the findings on mother tongue acquisition, especially regarding the understandable input that a child must receive, or the immediacy of his language needs. Also remarkable is its link with the trace theory, which sustains that the more often a memory connection is traced, the stronger the memory association is and the more like it is recalled.

Asher believes that a second language learning process in an adult is similar to the acquisition of a native language by a child. Before producing verbal response, a child replies physically to commands or orders given. Therefore, the main objective of TPR is to achieve a beginner’s level of oral skills. The adult, as the child, should begin the learning process through physical action, and reach productive action only after a sufficient level has been attained.

Regarding the syllabus, it follows a structuralist point of view as to the presentation of grammar. The theory of language underlying has some behavioural reminiscences, but shares the humanist concerns about the role of affective factors. A gaming atmosphere reduces stress on students and facilitates learning (Nunan 1991: 244 and 297). The learner is primarily a listener and performer, whereas the teacher plays an active and direct role, by deciding what to teach and who should present it. There is no basic text, but materials and realia play an increasing role in later stages. Asher himself recommended its use in combination with other methods, as its effectiveness for teaching language that is really useful for the learner has been much questioned.

2.6. The Natural Approach

At a time when accuracy primed over fluency, Krashen and Tracy Terrell – a Spanish Language teacher who aimed at getting her students to communicate efficiently - presented a new approach which was labeled the Natural Approach.

Taking Krashen’s second language acquisition theories (published in 1981 and 1982) as its starting point, together with the pedagogical experiences of Terrell, the formulation of the method was set in The Natural Approach (1983). This method has received special attention in the last decade.
Oposiciones Secundaria – Especialidad Inglés

Krashen’s five hypotheses are the basis for this method:

a) The **Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis**, which maintains that language is acquired through an unconscious process, by means of comprehension and language use in significant communication. Learning is a conscious process which turns into the explicit knowledge of language forms and the ability to put this knowledge into words. Learning does not lead to acquisition per se.

b) The **Monitor Hypothesis** argues that conscious learning monitors the process, controlling and correcting the linguistic production of the learnt system.

c) The **Natural Order Hypothesis**, which establishes that grammatical structures are acquired in a predictable order. Learners make similar mistakes during the acquisition of a language, independently from the speaker’s mother tongue.

d) The **Input Hypothesis**, which has been the most commonly accepted one among scholars and language teachers, holds that information is better understood when it is close to the learner’s real level, but that the best conditions are given when the information is a bit over the current knowledge of the learner (\(i+1=\) current level of learner + 1 learning level).

e) The **Affective Filter Hypothesis**. According to this hypothesis, affective variables, such as the attitude or motivation, or personality factors like anxiety or self-confidence, among others, may facilitate or hamper the psycholinguistic process by which linguistic data are stored in the human memory. An absence of motivation, a poor self-esteem or anxiety may activate this filter, or block the process of integration of new information. When there is a negative affective disposition, language acquisition is lesser or inexistent.

The Natural Approach is mainly designed for elementary and intermediate learners because the main objectives lead to the development of basic skills for personal communication, both oral and written. The syllabus presents the linguistic structures in an order of increasing complexity. The usefulness of the natural approach seems to have been widely recognized, even though its theoretical bases have been criticized by Widdowson (1990: 19-27) and others.

2.7. Contemporary Approaches

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of new methods have been proposed, although its immediacy makes it impossible to ascertain the influence that they will have on language teaching.

The affective dimension

As hinted in the previous pages, the confluence of the methods belonging to the humanistic approach has contributed to a new trend which focuses on the affective dimension of learning. Certain classroom techniques may have a determining influence in the personal growth of both teachers and students. These humanistic or affective techniques recognize and appreciate both the intellectual side of the individual and the affective component. Activities based on a humanistic approach try to stimulate self-esteem, to help the learner identify his strong points, to gain a higher level of self-knowledge and to develop closer and more satisfactory relationships.

**The Structural-Oral-Situational Method (The Procedural Syllabus Project)**

This method is linked to the teaching practices of the Bangalore/Madras Communicational Teaching Project, in India, directed and coordinated by N.S. Prabhu.

The **Structural-Oral-Situational Method** (S-O-S) innovations consist of the use of syllabi composed of a series of graded structures and vocabulary, situational presentation of the new items, a balanced attention to the four language skills (oral skills precede written skills), and considerable controlled practice by means of substitution charts and oral repetition. Grammatical structures are to be taught by the learner’s subconscious process of inference from the linguistic models proposed, in which the learner must have «a preoccupation with meaning and an effort to understand» (Prabhu, 1987: 15).
Oposiciones Secundaria – Especialidad Inglés

Its pedagogical procedures can be summarized in three principles: (1) creating a preoccupation with meaning and stimulating the learners to face the demands of communication; (2) avoiding planned progression and preliminary selection of the language structures; (3) activities focused on form (controlled practice).

The method is based on procedural learning, by means of activities which require the learner’s use of the abilities of reasoning, inference or interrelation of information.

Computer aided Language Learning

Computer Aided Language Learning (CALL) may be defined as ‘the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning’. The name is a fairly recent one; the existence of CALL in the academic literature has been recognizable for about the last thirty years. The subject is interdisciplinary in nature, and it has evolved out of early efforts to find ways of using the computer for teaching or for instructional purposes across a wide variety of subject areas, with the weight of knowledge and breadth of application in language learning ultimately resulting in a more specialized field of study.

CALL has been made possible by the invention and subsequent development of the computer. As a result, the nature of CALL is, to a large degree, a reflection on the level of development of the technology. The speed with which technology has developed since the invention of the computer has been both extraordinary and surprisingly sustained. For educators, the rapid and continuing introduction of new technology into education has outpaced the ability of teachers and developers to evaluate it properly. A cursory glance at contemporary CALL activity shows that there are a multitude of approaches. Then, there are practical issues to consider – the selection of the hardware and software development tools for the project, Hypercard, Authorware, Toolbook, CALIS, C, and VISUAL Basic, or a language to enable publishing on the World Wide Web such as the Hypertext or Virtual Reality Mark-up Languages (HTML and VRML). In our country, the most well-known software is JClic, Hot Potatoes and MALTED.

Content-based Instruction

Content-Based Instruction (CBI or CBIL, Content-Based Language Instruction) is a theme or topic-based methodology. Its main features are: (1) It is based on a utilitarian conception of the target language; (2) from a psycholinguistic stance, it may enhance FL learning because it is oriented towards information and knowledge acquisition; (3) it allows for a high degree of innovative creation, as well as involves the learner in their own process of language acquisition. Brinton et al. (1989: vii-viii) define it as: ‘[… the integration of particular content with language-teaching aims. More specifically, […] it refers to the current teaching of academic subject matter and second language skills. […] both in its overall purpose and in its implementation, content-based instruction aims at eliminating the artificial separation between language instruction and subject matter classes which exists in most educational settings’. In CBI, concept and linguistic form go hand in hand, as the input is the combination of the conceptual and linguistic components. The instructional design must include tasks addressed both to contents and language. At some instance during the learning process the learner will reproduce the acquired information, and it is then when he will have to reproduce what he has learned. The output is also integrated by the conceptual and the linguistic components.

Negotiated syllabus (1985 -)

Based on the principle that we first find out what students want and test them to find out what they need, and then negotiate the syllabus with them. It is especially good when the syllabus is emerging and flexible and is being negotiated on a regular basis during the whole course. Being diametrically different from school-set syllabuses and exam-oriented ones, it has to be applied carefully, depending on whether it is appropriate to the specific context.
Task-based approaches (1990 - )
Since the mid-90s, it has become much more established in General English teaching. It is a methodological idea which attempts to get away from Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) altogether; students are not taught language points in advance; but rather are given communicative tasks to prepare for; these tasks require them to ask the teacher to give them whatever language bits they might need in order to fulfill the task; an example would be the following: have the students in groups plan a recreational weekend in London for a visiting friend coming to London; here, the language they need will be: discussion exponents, telephoning language, arrangement language, lexis of sightseeing, etc. Each group would be given the language they need by the teacher as they ask for it. In the final phase, students actually do the complete task and they use the language they have asked for and been given.

Noticing («consciousness-raising») (1995 - )
Some studies into the psychology of classroom language learning showed that there is little relationship between what the teacher teaches in one lesson and what students learn in that lesson as conscious learning. This means that when we do presentation and practice work with students on any language item, all we are actually doing is raising the noticeability of that language in the minds of the students; in other words, we are helping the student to notice it the next time and the next time, and little by little to take it on board in a process of successive approximation, or layered noticing; we are not teaching it for immediate active accurate production; this awareness-raising is therefore only the first stage of a series of stages by which the language item, and the language awareness surrounding it, passes into the unconscious of the student. The concept of reformulation (reflective correction) is very much connected with the idea of raising noticeability. The process of assimilation by the student is an unknowable and invisible process, so we don’t need to concern ourselves with it. As a matter of note, the place of fluency work (e.g. free role-play) in the noticing model has two functions: (i) to provide free-speaking scenarios in which we can assess the students’ current state of progress and assimilation; (ii) to show what language points still need more focus and practice, i.e., language focus via reformulation. These activities are a form of informal testing; they do not function as the production phase of a PPP approach, because that is by definition a semi-controlled and, therefore, accuracy-oriented phase.

1. How would you define ‘approach’, ‘method’ and ‘technique’?
2. What elements must be considered at the ‘design’ stage, according to Richards and Rodgers?
3. Mention some of the language teaching methods which appeared in the 60s and 70s. What are their principles and main techniques?
4. What are Krashen’s five hypotheses? What method do they belong to? How have they influenced language learning and teaching in the 90s?
5. How would you define CALL?
6. What are the features of Content-Based Instruction?
7. What is the methodology used in Task-based approaches?
3.- The Communicative Approach

3.1. Origins

As indicated previously, communicative language teaching has its origins in diverse factors which converged in the early 1960s: on the one hand, the works of the linguist Noam Chomsky, which presented the tenets of generative transformational grammar; on the other hand, the contributions of British applied linguists, who emphasized the functional and communicative potential of language and established the need to focus language teaching on communicative proficiency, and not on an exclusive mastery of structures. The main representatives of this trend are Henry Widdowson and Christopher Candlin, who applied the linguistic conceptions of John Firth and M.A.K. Halliday, as well as the ideas of some American sociolinguists and philosophers of language, such as John Firth, John Gumperz, William Labov, John Austin and John Searle.

Another major cause for the communicative shift came from the transformation of educational systems in Europe. The development of the European Common Market and the Council of Europe focused on education as one of the major strategies for consolidation, and they sponsored international conferences on language teaching, as well as the publication of monographs and books about this topic. The publication of L.G. Alexander’s series New Concept English, in 1967, was a didactic revolution in Europe, especially with the publication, years later, of D.A. Wilkins’ Notional Syllabuses (1976) and Munby’s Communicative Syllabus Design (1978), which insisted on the differences between situational and grammatical methods and the innovative notional ones, as well as emphasizing the learner’s communicative needs.

D.A. Wilkins’ contribution proposed a functional or communicative definition of language which was an excellent base for the creation of communicative language syllabuses, in the sense that it provided an analysis of the communicative meanings that language conveyed in real use. He described two types of meanings: notions (time, sequence; quantity, location, frequency) and functions (requests, denials, offers, complaints), so that the method is also known as notional-functional. It is important to distinguish between notions, which are the concepts that a speaker may express in a situation, and functions, which refer to the purpose for which language is used. After the publication of his book in 1976, the Council of Europe incorporated his semantic/communicative analysis into the Threshold Level for Modern Language Learning (Van Ek and Alexander, 1980), and they have had a strong influence on communicative language programmes and textbooks all over Europe.

The words of Richards and Rodgers (1986) summarize this period in a brief paragraph: «The rapid application of these ideas by textbook writers; and the equally rapid acceptance of these new principles by British language teaching specialists, curriculum development centers, and even governments gave prominence nationally and internationally to what came to be referred to as the Communicative Approach, or simply Communicative Language Teaching». (65)

Savignon (2006) also summarizes the appearance of CLT as based on two major factors: the second or foreign language acquisition research of the 1970s and a long-standing functional view of language and language use as social behavior.

3.2. Description of Communicative Language Teaching Approach

It is essential to understand CLT as an approach, and not a method (Richards and Rodgers, Savignon), whose main principles are:
a) The goal of language teaching is communicative competence, in opposition to Chomsky’s linguistic competence. In fact, the term communicative is to be understood as referring to the process and to the goals of learning.

b) The four language skills must be taught in a comprehensive way.

A central theoretical point of CLT is communicative competence, a term introduced in the early 1970s into discussions of language (Habermas, Hymes), and second-language learning (Jakobovits, Savignon). Competence is defined as the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning, and looks to second-language acquisition research to account for its development. The identification of learner communicative needs provides a basis for curriculum design.

The coping strategies identified in Savignon (1971; 1972) became the basis for the subsequent identification by Widdowson (1978) and by Canale and Swain (1980) of strategic competence in their three-component framework for communicative competence, along with grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence. Grammatical competence represented sentence-level syntax. Consistent with a view of language as social behavior, sociolinguistic competence represented a concern for the relevance or appropriateness of those forms in a particular social setting or context. There is now widespread recognition of the importance of these various dimensions of language use and of the need for learners to be involved in the actual experience of communication if they are to develop communicative competence.

These two basic principles, which are universally accepted, allow for different models and methods, to the extent that Howatt (1984) has distinguished between a strong and a weak version of CLT. Despite varieties, a common assumption of all versions of CLT is a theory of language that starts from a communicative model of language and language use, which has to be applied into an instructional system, materials, teacher and learner roles, as well as classroom activities and techniques.

CLT thus can be seen to derive from a multidisciplinary perspective that includes linguistics, anthropology, philosophy, sociology, psychology, and educational research.

This theory of language understands language as communication, so that the goal of language teaching is to develop communicative competence, that is, what a speaker needs to know to be communicatively competent in a speech community. To speak a language properly implies, therefore, not only knowledge of the language, but the ability to use it in different registers, according to the situation, for example.

Probably the most important issue stemming from this theory of language is the following: How is language to be learnt? in other words, what learning theory lies behind this approach? Richard and Rodgers (1986) list a number of elements: activities that involve real communication (communication principle); activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks (task principle); the use of language that is meaningful to the learner, that is, selecting activities which engage the learner in meaningful and authentic language (meaningfulness principle).

Other authors, such as Krashen, Littlewood or Savignon have considered alternative learning theories. Krashen considers acquisition as the basic process in language learning, in the sense that it refers to the unconscious development of the target language, as opposed to learning, which is a conscious activity. Littlewood has proposed a skill-learning model that encourages an emphasis on practice in order to develop communicative skills. Savignon (1972) considers the role of linguistic, social, cognitive, and individual variables in language acquisition.

Design

Essentially, the objectives of CLT reflect the needs of the learner. In this sense, its target is to develop a communicative competence on the part of learners. This competence must include functional skills as well as linguistic objects.
One of the most problematic issues in CLT has been the syllabus, and its discussion has been extensive. Wilkins’s original Notional Syllabus Model was soon criticized by British linguists as Widdowson. In fact, the discussion continues, and some have argued that the syllabus concept should altogether be abandoned. Others accept Brumfit’s proposal, which is centered on a grammatical base, around which notions, functions and communicative activities are grouped. At present there are several proposals and models for what a communicative syllabus may be, ranging from structures plus functions in Wilkins (1976) to task-based in Prabhu (1987), as well as learner-generated in Candlin (1976). In a general sense, a communicative syllabus must include:

- Structures
- Functions
- Notions
- Themes
- Tasks
- Situations
- Cultural and experiential aspects

Considering the general situation of the communicative approach, which allows for diversity and plurality in its conception, the range of activities which can be labeled communicative is uncountable, provided that they engage learners in communication and involve communicative processes such as interaction, negotiation of meaning and information sharing. In fact, a common element of all communicative activities is that they require a change in the role of teacher and learner. From a passive recipient of information, the learner must become the center of the learning process, e.g. an active participant in their own learning process and assume a large degree of responsibility about it. Learners become negotiators and must engage in continuous interaction.

The teacher must assume a multidimensional role: one of facilitator of the learner’s autonomous learning process, one of participant himself within the learning-teaching group, and a third of researcher and learner about the development of the learning-teaching process. The teacher must also act as a needs analyst, counselor and group process manager who organizes the activities in the class, prepares suitable materials and provides the necessary linguistic information.

Littlewood (1981) distinguishes between functional communication activities and social interaction activities. The first include tasks as comparing a set of pictures and noting differences and similarities; working out a sequence of events from pictures; discovering missing features in a map or picture; following and giving instructions on how to draw a picture or shape, etc. Social interaction activities include conversation and discussion, dialogues and role plays, simulations and debates.

Therefore, with the purpose of engaging learners in communication, involving processes of information sharing, interaction and negotiation of meaning, work in the classroom must focus on contextualized, situational use of language, obviously by integrating the four skills.

The materials used will be determinant, not only in linguistic terms, but also in thematic content, regarding the tasks and functions planned. They must encourage both participation in their execution and participation in their creation as well. Richards and Rodgers classify CLT materials in three broad categories: text-based, which use textbooks and do not differ very much from prior structurally organized texts; task-based, which include games, role plays, simulations, task-based communication activities, cue cards, activity cards, student interaction materials, and others; realia, or authentic, real life materials, such as magazines, advertisements, newspapers, graphs or charts.

Procedure

A standard communicative session presents the following architecture:

- Pre-communicative activities
  - Structural practice:
    - Audio-lingual drills
Substitution drills
− Quasi-communicative activities
  − Structural practice in context
− Functional practice
  − Cue drills
  − Situational drills
− Social context
  − Open dialogue
  − Cued dialogue
  − Role-card dialogues

Communicative activities
− Functional communicative activities
  − Sharing information (restricted cooperation)
  − Identifying pictures
  − Discovering identical pairs, etc.
− Processing information (free interaction)
  − Reconstructing-story-sequences
  − Decision-taking

Social interaction activities
− Classroom management
− Cross-curricular teaching
− Plenary discussions
− Dialogues on school experience
− Role-playing
− Simulations

Savignon (1983) also describes the most frequent techniques and procedures in CLT classrooms, such as group activities, language games or role plays, noting that none of them are exclusive to CLT. A typical lesson according to CLT principles would follow these guidelines:

1. Motivation and presentation of a brief dialogue in a situation close to the learner’s reality.
2. Oral practice of each utterance.
3. Questions and answers on the dialogue and the situation, or about the student’s personal experiences concerning a similar situation.
4. Study of one of the communicative expressions in the dialogue.
5. Discovery of generalizations or rules underlying the functional expression or structure (on the part of the learner).
6. Oral recognition activities.
7. Oral production activities – from guided to free communication.
8. Imitation of dialogues.

3.3. Contemporary Trends in CLT

Savignon (2006) recognizes three major themes emerging within the field of communicative language teaching in the 21st century:
Oposiciones Secundaria – Especialidad Inglés

1. The highly contextualized nature of CLT is underscored again and again. It would be inappropriate to speak of CLT as a teaching method in any sense of that term as it was used in the 20th century. Rather, CLT is an approach that understands language to be inseparable from individual identity and social behavior. Not only does language define a community but a community, in turn, also defines the forms and uses of language. The norms and goals appropriate for learners in a given setting and the means for attaining these goals are the concern of those directly involved.

2. Related both to the understanding of language as culture in motion and to the multilingual reality in which most of the world population finds itself is the futility of any definition of a native speaker, a term that came to prominence in descriptive structural linguistics and was adopted by teaching methodologists to define an ideal for language learners.

3. Assessment seems to be the driving force behind curricular innovations. Increasing demands for accountability along with a positivistic stance that one cannot teach that which cannot be described and measured continue to influence programme content and goals. Irrespective of their own needs or interests, learners prepare for the tests they will be required to pass. High-stakes language tests often determine future access to education and opportunity.

1. What are the origins of communicative language teaching? What are its theoretical bases?
2. Can you describe the development of CLT in Europe?
3. What is the goal of communicative language teaching? How does it deal with the four skills?
4. What is communicative competence? What sub-competences can be distinguished?
5. How does CLT understand language?
6. What kind of activities does CLT propose?
7. What is a ‘syllabus’? What elements must a communicative syllabus include?
8. What is the role of the teacher in CLT? What about the learner?
9. What is the structure of a typical communicative lesson?

The concept of communicative competence is extensively analyzed in unit 4.
CONCLUSION

Any survey that attempts to review the history of language teaching and the different approaches and methods appeared in the 20th century may be qualified as ambitious, at least. If our purpose is to do so in less than twenty pages, we may qualify it as ambitious and probably unsuccessful. Nevertheless, this unit shows the major trends in the history of language teaching, together with a description of their fundamental principles, their objectives and their procedures and techniques.

As observed in our survey, the history of language teaching goes hand in hand with that of the theories of language. When the Grammar-Translation Method was seen to be unsuccessful for the teaching of modern languages, the tenets of Saussure and later those of Behaviourism conceived language as a system of grammatical rules and lexical items which had to be learned in a stimulus-response-reward sequence. When Transformational Grammar, under a cognitive point of view, challenged this conception and opened up the possibilities for the analysis of the context and the situation, language teaching adopted a prominent communicative approach which, with different varieties and hues, is still dominant today.

Finally, regarding the didactic application of this unit, it is obvious that the teacher will not explain the different methodologies to learners. These are interested in learning the language; therefore, the application of this unit must be shown in actual practice, in everyday classroom techniques, in the materials used, in the syllabus design, in the focus on interaction on communication in the classroom. By analyzing the history of language teaching and learning from its discoveries and faults, we may become better teachers and choose the road that best suits us and our students.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

   The paper where Canale and Swain define the concept of communicative competence.

   They describe the factors which must be considered in constructing courses and materials: establishing realistic goals, realizing goals through instructional plans, selecting the shape of the syllabus, especially in relation to CLT.

   It synthesizes the findings of pragmatics and its effects on the evolution of CLT.

   This document marks the future of language teaching in Europe for the next decades. All educational reforms in Europe are based on it.

   An essential book to obtain a general view of the evolution and ideas in language teaching.

   A must-read to have a global perspective on the matter.

   The description of the Monitor Model is presented in this publication.

   One of the most relevant descriptions of the origins, objectives and development of CLT.

   In it you can find a monographic explanation of the Design component of CLT.

   A reference book for future teachers, it reviews all existing methodologies and points out the positive aspects for classroom practice.


   A basic companion for reviewing the language teaching methods in the 20th century, as well as the most influential distinction between approach and method.

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