The Relevance of Communicative Competence Theories to Foreign Language Teaching

by

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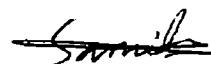
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Declaration

I,   Samih Dlekan, being a candidate for the degree of Master of Arts, declare that I have not been a candidate for another degree and that none oɪ the material used in this thesis has been submitted for another award   I also declare that this thesis is the work of the author except where otherwise acknowledged

Dedication

For my mother, whose eyes are glittering

like two distant stars

Table of contents

Acknowledgements

Abstract

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The purpose of this thesis is to explore the rise of communicative
competence theories and their impact on the practice of foreign
language pedagogy   In this thesis we also investigate the
relation of language learning to culture learning, and argue that
if communicative competence is to be taken into account, then the
target culture should be introduced to the foreign language
classroom

This thesis falls into three parts   theoretical
considerations, pedagogical applications and critique of
communicative teaching   In Part One we first (Chapter One) review
linguistic theory and language teaching in the pre-communicative
era starting from traditional grammar to the emergence of
communicative competence theories   Second, in Chapter Two, we
examine the communicative competence theory in its original form
as developed by Hymes, and the motivations behind the
introduction of this theory   We also consider subsequent
elaborations and interpretations of this theory by linguists and
applied linguists, and discuss some significant terms related to
communicative competence

In Part Two we first (Chapter Three) discuss the influence of
communicative competence theories on language teaching
methodology   We examine a variety of communicative tasks and
techniques explaining their significance for communicative
competence development   We also consider the influence of
communicative competence theories on the evolution and
implementation of different syllabus types   Second, in Chapter
four, we talk about the dramatic changes in the roles of teachers
and learners which came about as a result of the acceptance of
communicative competence as the ultimate goal of language
instruction, and focus on those aspects which we believe should be
prioritized in a classroom which aims to teach communicative
competence

In Part Three, we first (Chapter Five) examine the relationship
between language and culture, and argue that successful
communication between native and non-native speakers requires
non-native speakers to be aware of cultural presuppositions which
underlie language use   We thus argue that associating language
learning with culture learning is an important consideration in
communicative competence development   Second, in the final
chapter, we explain how cultural competence can be taught in the
classroom and suggest a few procedures, techniques and materials
for promoting cultural competence   Moreover, in this chapter we
discuss grammatical competence as an important component of
communicative competence which has been de-emphasized by
over-emphasis on language functions in communicative teaching, and
suggest some criteria for the design and implementation of
communicative grammar tasks

Introduction

More than any language, English has acquired an unprecedented international status As a language for international communication, science and technology, English has become a significant foreign or second language all over the world, and English teaching has become an indispensible part of general educational systems all over the world On both individual and national levels, competence in English is a key to success To use Kachru's imagery, "knowing English is like the fabled Aladdin's lamp, which permits one to open the linguistic gates to international business, technology, science, and travel In short, English provides linguistic power " (1986 1)

In Third-World countries which are desperate to have access to modern science and technology, the need for English teaching is inevitable, and Syria is no exception Over the last three or four decades the need for teaching English has been growing steadily in Syria However, although the demand for English teaching is great, language teaching methodology is still at an early stage of development English is taught over a long period in our national educational system Yet learners often fail to acquire the desired proficiency level, something which can be attributed to ineffective teaching methodology This incompetence in English can hamper learners' academic progress and can counter national aspirations for successful contact with modern science, technology and business

Our interest in communicative competence theories and communicative approaches arises from this fact This thesis is aimed to be a step among few other steps taken towards the introduction of an adequate teaching methodology to Syria Moreover, our emphasis on the cultural aspect of communicative competence stems from three considerations First we believe that insufficient attention is paid by language teaching specialists to making language learning a cultural as much as a new language experience Second, interest in integrating culture teaching and language didactic has been growing over the last few years (e g Byram 1989) Byram writes

> Cultural Studies has a rightful place as part of
> language teaching, not as an adjunct to language learning,
> not just as a means of creating better communication but as
> an integral component with appropriate aims and methods
> It certainly plays a role in language teaching in the sense
> that words in the foreign language refer to meanings in a
> particular culture creating a semantic relationship which
> the learner needs to comprehend (1989 3-4)

Third, we believe that in Syria, a country which has a totally different culture from Western culture, knowledge of the target culture is a significant factor in progress to proficiency

Part I

Theoretical Considerations

Chapter One

Pre-communicative teaching

The aim of this chapter is to briefly review the significant changes in linguistic theory and language teaching methodology which have taken place in this century The reason for this concern is to establish the background against which communicative competence theories and communicative approaches should be seen Understanding the linguistic environment and previous teaching practices is crucial for understanding communicative competence theories

The twentieth century has witnessed a number of radical changes in the methods of teaching foreign languages These changes have been stimulated by changes in linguistic theory on the one hand and the persistent need for teaching languages on the other As Johnson argues, language teaching has always been influenced by linguistic theory because teachers looked to the linguist for guidance on how to teach languages (1982 10-11) However, language teaching does not automatically respond to changes in linguistic theory Because of the immediate need for more teaching of languages, teachers very often cannot wait for the linguist to prescribe language pedagogy Moreover, because of the need for more international communication and cross-cultural understanding in this century, the demand on effective teaching methodology has been grater than ever

1 1 Traditional grammar and the grammar-translation method

At the beginning of this century traditional grammarians' views on the nature of language were dominant These grammarians believed that language consisted of a set of grammatical rules and, therefore, mastering a language was the mastery of these rules They also believed that modern languages are 'degenerate' and 'impure', and the perfect form was to be found in the language of classical writers As a result they neglected speech and focussed on the written from of language as manifested in the works of great authors

According to traditional grammarians, as Bell (1981) mentions, grammar was divided into two categories universal grammar and particular grammar Universal grammar is the principles which are common to all languages, while particular grammar is the rules and principles which are specific to a given language and which are established in the practice of great writers The models for universal grammar were Latin and Greek, and any lack of correspondence between these models and actual practice in modern languages was considered a violation of rules (p 82)

Roulet (1972) mentions the major characteristics of traditional grammar in terms of the grammatical content and data presentation Concerning the content we refer to the following

3

1   Traditional grammar describes the written language of previous centuries and takes no account of present-day use

2   It generally prioritizes morphology and neglects syntax

3   Traditional grammar sets out rules for forming main and dependent clauses but it does not set out rules for joining clauses in more complex sentences

4   Very often the teaching of lexis and phonology is inadequate

Roulet lists several characteristics concerning the presentation of grammatical data from which we mention

1   Traditional grammar provides definitions, explanations and rules which are quite often false, misleading and of little value For example, the subject is usually defined as the doer of the action, the object as what is being acted upon, etc

2   Traditional grammar presents the data in a way which follows the models of Latin and Greek, such as declining nouns in the nominative, accusative, vocative, dative etc   This system is not appropriate for the description of modern languages

3   Traditional grammar emphasizes the avoidance of errors

4   Traditional grammar presents rules in a way which is not ordered, and this does not give the teacher any information on how to progress in the course

5   Traditional grammar adopts an analytic presentation which allows students to grasp the structure of sentence patterns but does not help them construct new sentences   (pp 5-14)

4

These ideas about language and language learning were manifested in language pedagogy in what is known as the grammar-translation method which dominated language teaching until the nineteen forties This method is very old and was associated with the teaching of Latin and Greek Earlier this century, this method was used to enable students to read and appreciate foreign literature and translate from and into the target language The advocates of this method believe that language learning is a mental exercise even if learners never used the target language (Larsen-Freeman 1986 and Richards and Rodgers 1986) The major principles of this method are

1 The goal of language learning is for learners to be able to read foreign literature and develop intellectual abilities Evaluation of successful learning is based on the ability to translate from and into the target language Therefore, literary language was considered superior to spoken language The ability to use language for actual communication is not the purpose of teaching

2 Emphasis is placed on reading and writing and little, if any, attention is given to speaking and listening

3 Awareness of the similarities and differences between the native language and the target language, that is contrastive analysis, is believed to facilitate learning

4 Learners are expected to achieve a high level of accuracy

Therefore, grammatical errors are not tolerated

5   Grammar is taught deductively, that is by isolating grammatical items and providing explicit explanation of them

6   The medium of instruction is the learners' mother tongue

(Larsen-Freeman 1986 9-10, and Richards and Rodgers 1986 3-4)

The major defect of this method, as Rivers (1968) points out, is that little account is taken of pronunciation, intonation and communication skills This method exaggerated the need for knowing rules and exceptions and does not train students in using language for expressing meaning, even in writing Students are encouraged to manipulate structures and irregular forms using language which is often artificial, rare, and old-fashioned The student has to work hard on memorizing vocabulary, translation and written exercises His or her role in the class is mainly a passive one, "he absorbs and then reconstitutes what he has absorbed to satisfy his teacher " (p 19) We sall see later that the shortcomings of this method have beem avoided by communicative teaching as a result of the rise of communcative competence theories which emphasied the ability to convey meaning rather than to manipulate structures which made no reference to their social context

2 3 The direct method
This method emerged as an alternative for the grammar-translation method, which led to an overemphasis on written forms of language when the purpose was teaching modern spoken languages As its

6

name indicates this method relates the meaning directly to the target language without going through the process of translation Theorists of this method, as Rivers notes, believed that "students learn to understand a language by listening to a great deal of it and then they learn to speak it by speaking it in the same way children learn their first language " (Ibid 18) The characteristics of this method are

1 Thinking in the target language should be encouraged

2 Exclusive use of the target language as a medium of instruction

3 More emphasis is placed on oral skills although writing and reading are not de-emphasized

4 Grammar is taught inductively, that is grammatical rules should not be isolated and explained but acquired unconsciously by the learners

5 Some opportunity is given to the students to practice language in real situations

6 Phonological and grammatical accuracy is emphasized, but self-correction is encouraged

Although this method enjoyed some popularity in Europe, there were those who were dissatisfied with it The weakness of this method, as Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) point out, is that the materials were not based on authentic speech and

7

the teacher did not consider meeting the learners' needs outside

the classroom (pp 5-6) Students were usually presented with

sentences such as

> The cat is under the table, but the dog is
>
> behind the door
>
> The colour of John's shirt is darker than the
>
> colour of Mary's skirt

This method has other defects Rivers argues that its main defect

was that it encouraged students to express themselves before they

were ready, and this resulted in students developing "a glib but

inaccurate fluency, clothing native language structures in foreign

vocabulary " She also argues that it was wrong to believe that the

conditions of first language acquisition can be simulated in the

classroom with adolescent students (ibid 20) But it is worth

mentioning that some of the principles of this method such as

teaching grammar inductively and attention to oral skills, have

been adopted by communicative approaches

1 3 Structural linguistics and the audio-lingual method

Dissatisfaction with the views of traditional grammar brought

about a change in linguistic theory which was realized in the rise

of structural linguistics To avoid the drawbacks of traditional

grammar, structural linguists, as Roulet points out, aimed at (1)

describing the modern language of a community, (2) narrowing down

8

the scope of language study by focussing on language structure, and assigning a peripheral role to meaning, and (3) carrying out language description systematically and objectively deriving the grammar of language from "a corpus of recorded data in a quasi mechanical way" (1972 21)

It seems that in attempt to avoid the main drawbacks of traditional grammar, structural linguistics, as Roulet points out, sought to establish solid grounds for modern language teaching, by both its content and form Roulet describes the content and the form of structural linguistics In terms of content Roulet argues that

1 Structural linguistics describes a living language in a particular community at a fixed point of time using recorded data
2 It describes the spoken language which the student needs as a medium of communication
3 It provides phonological analysis of the sound system of language which could be used as bases for teaching pronunciation in a systematic way

Concerning the form of structural linguistics Roulet points out that

1   Structural linguistics provides precise definitions which are based solely on formal criteria   Unlike traditional grammarians, structural linguists believed that it was not necessary to have access to meaning in order to define parts of speech as this example illustrates

The slithy toves did gyre and gimble in the wabe

Although this sentence is nonsensical speakers of English can easily identify nouns, verbs etc   from the positions they occupy in the sentence   Therefore, words are considered to belong to the same class if they regularly occupy the same positions in sentences

2   Structural linguists criticized the analytical approach of traditional grammar and were concerned with sentence-building Their argument was that learners need to know the patterns of the language and which words belong to which pattern   "What is put forward then is a framework of sentences slots" as in this example

Suzanne.	bought	a new dress	on Saturday

which learners can modify and manipulate by making substitutions and transformations using words that can replace elements in one slot or another (ibid 21-4)

Furthermore, the structuralist view on language learning derived from Behaviourist psychology and the ideas of Pavlov and Skinner Behaviourist psychology believed that learning was a matter of habit-formation through a stimulus-response-reinforcement process Therefore, language learning was seen as a matter of overcoming the old habits of the mother tongue and building up the new habits of the target language These habits can be formed by providing continuous drilling However, the ideas of structural linguistics found their application in what came to be known as the audio- lingual method

This method emerged in the United States during World War II and was stimulated by three major factors First, during the period of war there was an immediate need for people who spoke foreign languages Therefore, it was first used to teach military personnel

Second, the Behaviourist school of psychology and the ideas of Skinner gained popularity as a way of explaining the teaching/learning process Third, the ideas of structural linguistics and linguists such as Bloomfield and Fries began to be

11

used in language teaching and gave rise to what has been called the audio-lingual method (Brumfit and Finocchiaro 1983 6-7) The audio-lingual method has the following principal characteristics

1 Language learning is habit-formation Positive reinforcement helps develop correct habits

2 The teacher presents spoken cues and picture cues which act as stimuli to which students give verbal and non-verbal responses

3 Students should learn to answer automatically without stopping to think

4 The teacher controls the students' linguistic behaviour and prevents them from forming incorrect habits Therefore, no errors are tolerated

5 The ultimate goal of language teaching is for students to master a number of finite structural patterns Practice and repetition is the best way to achieve this goal

6 Contrastive analysis will help the teacher predict the areas of difficulty and help the students overcome the old habits of their native language

7 Foreign language learning should follow the natural order of first language acquisition, that is listening, speaking, reading and writing

8 Foreign language teaching should aim at developing an understanding of the foreign culture and people (Larsen-Freeman 1986 41-2)

The strength of this method was that it concerned itself with modern languages and thus freed students from the artificial, useless and literary language of previous centuries This method also associated a language with a culture and aimed at developing cultural understanding This association, as we shall see, was not fully taken into consideration by most communicative teaching, although communicative competence theory was developed to assign an important role for sociocultural factors involved in language acquisition and in the ability to understand and produce speech acts

However, this method has many defects Although many people began learning through the audio-lingual method, this method did not produce fluent learners What the learners were good at was parroting patterns without communication Audiolingualism created a sense of fear of making an erroneous utterance The learners are usually hesitant to utter a sentence unless they are absolutely sure of its grammatical perfection, which is psychologically harmful This method is also psychologically harmful in the sense that the teacher controls the students' behaviour and does not allow them the chance for self-expression This, of course, is dull and unmotivating

Roulet points out that structural linguistics made little progress beyond traditional grammar It exclusively concerned itself with "the system of inventories of elements (phonemes, morphemes) and provided little understanding of the process of sentence formation and interpretation " But as for linguistic descriptions structural linguistics presented them more systematically and explicitly than traditional grammar did As Roulet aptly puts it "If structuralist grammars constituted a step forward from traditional grammar as far as language form was concerned, in the areas of language content they marked rather a step backward " (Original emphasis, ibid 27)

Concerning the application of structuralist ideas in language teaching, Roulet points out three major defects

1 Emphasis on formal criteria led students and teachers to manipulate structures without any concern with meaning and use in actual situations

2 Emphasis on language code resulted in neglecting the problems and processes of language teaching and learning In other words, teachers were concerned with the question of "what to teach" to the neglect of "how to teach it"

3   Audiolingualism was based on an inadequate theory of learning,
ι e   the   conditioning theory associated with   the   Behaviourist
school of psychology   (Ibid 36)

However,   the 1950s witnessed   a strong challenge to structural
linguistics   and Behaviourist psychology   This challenge, as Bell
points out,   "reoriented   linguistics   towards a more mentalistic
philosophy,   rational   scientific   method and,   when   applied   to
language   teaching,   a   cognitive   psychology "   (p 99)   This
challenge came from transformational-generative linguistics

1 4 Trasformational-generative linguistics
The rise of transformational-generative linguistics (TG) came as a
reaction to the   assumptions   of   structural   linguistics   and the
Behaviourist school of psychology   In what follows we present the
key assumptions of TG as mentioned by Bell

1   Language is a   system   which   relates   meanings   to substance
this   view,   as Bell   points   out,   is   contradictory   to   the
structuralist view that language   is   a system of forms   The view
of language as meaning relates TG with traditional grammar

2   Language   is a mental phenomenon   this is also   ιn   contrast
with   the   structuralist   view   that   language   is   a   physical
phenomenon

3   Language is innate this innateness of language is "a genetically imparted ability for language learning"

4   Language is universal this means two things   It means that all normal human children learn a mother tongue, and that all world languages, at an abstract level, share common characteristics   (Ibid 102)

As we have seen earlier structural linguistics assumed that the structure of a sentence is visible, and when sentences have the same visible or observable structure they were grouped in a pattern Underwood (1984) points out that Chomsky showed that this was not the whole story   Chomsky pointed out that "John is easy to please" have the same visible structure as "John is eager to please", but any speaker knows that these two sentences are different in the sense that the relation between John and the act of pleasing in both sentences is quite different   Chomsky accounted for the situation as two similar "surface structures" but two different "deep structures"   As Chomsky explains, and Underwood mentions, this explains how one sentence can have two different meanings (p 4)

On the other hand, when two sentences with two different surface structures have the same meaning, such as "John turned the radio off" and "John turned off the radio", we can often say that

they come from the same deep structure What made them different at the surface structure level is the application of different transformational rules (movement, addition, deletion) Such a view of language accounts for our ability to identify more than one meaning in the same sentence (ambiguous sentences) and recognize the same meaning in sentences of differing structural forms (ibid 5)

1 4 1 Linguistic competence

In TG Chomsky draws a fundamental distinction between linguistic competence and linguistic performance By competence Chomsky means the internalized grammar rules in the mind of the speaker-listener of his or her language, or the knowledge underlying the language user's ability to judge grammaticality of sentences It is obvious that competence is defined solely in terms of syntax

By performance, on the other hand, he refers to the manifestation of this knowledge in concrete situations But in order for us to fully understand competence and performance it is important to understand the nature of the language user and the speech community in which performance is carried out Chomsky was not concerned with a real speaker-listener or a real speech community but, as he wrote

Linguistic theory is primarily concerned with an ideal
speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous
speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is
unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions such
as memory limitation, distractions, shifts of attention
and interest, and errors in applying his knowledge in
actual performance (1965 3)

Chomsky proceeds to argue that only under this idealization can

performance be a direct reflection of competence   But in fact, as

he points out, a record of natural speech shows that performance

cannot reflect competence because it shows deviations from rules,

distractions, changes of plan and so on and so forth   The task

of the linguist, he claims, as well as the child, is to examine

the data available in performance and discover the underlying

rules that are mastered by the speaker and put to use in his or

her performance   Chomsky described his theory as "mentalistic"

because   " it is concerned with discovering a mental reality

underlying actual behaviour" (ibid 4)

Furthermore, Mathews (1979) argues that generative grammar is

considered a theory about the form of the speaker's linguistic

competence and that the internalized rules in the mind of the

speaker (his competence) are of a generative grammar   (pp 11-12)

Chomsky explained this clearly when he wrote

By a generative grammar I mean simply a system of rules
that in some explicit and well-defined way assigns
structural descriptions to sentences   Obviously, every
speaker of a language has mastered and internalized a
generative grammar that expresses his knowledge of his
language (ibid 8)

18

In fact Chomsky's theory of linguistic competence restricts itself to the code or the rule system of the language, and consequently fails to account for the fact that language users considerably vary their speech according to different situations and interlocutors This theory does not take into account the environmental or sociocultural factors which shape the user's competence Campbell and Wales (1970) argued that if we want to understand how the child acquires his or her native language, then studies of how he or she learns the grammatical system are inadequate, we have to consider the environmental factors involved in language acquisition

1 4 2 Implications for language teaching
As regards language teaching generative linguistics has had little influence However, language teachers and applied linguists, as Bell points out, have drawn out some assumptions which had some influence on language teaching Bell mentions the following

1 Transformationalists believed that the activities of the body are different from the activities of the mind Thus learning requires a philosophical rather than a physiological explanation

2 Sine language is primarily a thinking process, "language learning can best be explained as a process of 'problem solving'

19

in which the learner attempts to create 'cognitive maps' for himself by means of which he makes sense of the data", the data of the language to which he or she is exposed

3   Language learning is not a matter of habit formation, but rather a matter of creativity and analysis

4   Attitudes to errors have changed from being considered a failure to acquire new habits and interference from the mother tongue to being regarded as hypothesis-testing on the part of the learner   (Ibid 105-6)

As we have pointed out above generative linguistics had little to offer to language teaching   In fact Chomsky himself was tentative as to the significance of linguistic insights to language teaching   Chomsky wrote

> I am frankly rather sceptical about the significance for the teaching of languages of such insights and understanding as have been obtained in linguistics and Psychology   Surely the teacher of language would do well to keep informed of progress and discussion in these fields and the efforts of linguists and psychologists to approach the problems of language teaching from a principled point of view are extremely worthwhile from an intellectual as well as a social point of view   Still it is difficult to believe that either linguistics or psychology has achieved a level of theoretical understanding that might enable it to support a 'technology' of language teaching   (Quoted by Roulet 1972 42)

What Chomsky did was to show the defects in Skinner's model of learning, but he did not provide an alternative model and never claimed to have done so His ideas paved the way for substantial developments in linguistics and applied linguistics "Chomsky", says Roulet, "has contributed a great deal towards this shift of accent to an investigation of learning strategies as a first step towards working out a new teaching methodology and the development of psycholinguistic research " (1972 530

However, despite the difference between generative linguistics and structural linguistics, the two theories, as Bell argues, share a common view of language in that they consider language as essentially "form and structure in a context-free closed system " This is the reason why Bell labels both theories as "formalist" (1981 99)

In the final analysis, whether in linguistic theory or language teaching, the focus of attention has always been on language structure It is true that Chomsky criticized structural linguistics, but in his theory emphasis on structure remained Competence is no more than rules of grammar underlying language structures This exclusive interest in language as a formal system in both language teaching and linguistic theory, and the limitations of Chomsky's theory brought about a new concern with language as social behaviour and communication Yalden (1987)

argues that three notable contributions have been made to characterize communication First is the theory of language functions, second is work on discourse analysis, and third is the communicative competence theory (p 19) In language teaching, however, this new concern was manifested in the communicative approach

Chapter Two

Communicative competence theories

The notion of communicative competence has enjoyed increasing popularity among linguists and language teaching specialists and has had a great impact on the practice of foreign language teaching   Since Hymes coined the term, it has been widely accepted by linguists, who began to explain, investigate and develop the concept further   The purpose of this chapter is to identify the theoretical premises of Hymes' communicative competence theory and examine later attempts by other linguists to develop this theory   Discussion of communicative competence theory, however, necessitates consideration of the linguistic terms which bear relevance to the term communicative competence   Therefore, examination of the notions of "fluency", "meaning potential", and "capacity" will be the second aim of this chapter

2 1 Communicative competence theory

Hymes developed his theory of communicative competence in reaction to the limitations of the Chomskyan theory of linguistic competence and its failure to deal with problems of communication   Hymes insisted that linguistic theory should be seen as part of a more general theory which includes culture and communication   Hymes challenged Chomsky's basic assumptions about language   He

believed that language use entails knowledge of which linguistic competence is only a part The aim of linguistics, therefore, was to specify communicative competence Explaining the need for a social approach to the study of language Hymes wrote

> We have to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner This competence, moreover, is integral with attitudes, values, and motivation concerning language, its features and uses, and integral with competence for, and attitudes towards, the interrelation of language with the other code of communicative conduct (1972b 277-78)

A key component of communicative competence is the socio-cultural component or appropriacy in terms of the rules of social interaction Appropriacy concerns turn-taking (when to speak), selection of topics (what to talk about), participants (with whom) and the degree of formality (what manner) Hymes argues that such work as Labov's in New York city provides evidence that language users vary their speech according to interlocutors even within a homogeneous speech community This fact, Hymes points out, shows the need for a social approach to the study of language (p 276) The essence of this approach is that "there are rules of use without which rules of grammar would be useless " For example, in Arab culture, it is inappropriate to mention the prophet's name without saying "peace be upon him" This is a rule the child learns in the process of learning the first language This simple example shows that there are social as well as grammatical rules underlying language use

As Hymes argues, children learn how to vary their speech according to different situations, and develop an awareness of speech acts "From a finite experience of speech acts and their interdependence with sociocultural features, they develop a general theory of the speaking appropriate to their community " (p 279)

In the Chomskyan theory judgements are of two kinds grammaticality regarding competence and acceptability concerning performance According to Hymes, however, grammatical competence is only one of several sectors of communicative competence Hymes emphasized that if a theory of language use is to be developed and integrated with theory of communication and culture, then judgements should be of four kinds

1 Whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible
By formal possibility Hymes means grammaticality But he extends the term to include what is formally possible within a cultural system

2 Whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation
The question of feasibility concerns psycholinguistic features such as memory limitation, and is related to Chomsky's term

acceptability in performance   But   here again Hymes relates this

term to cultural behaviour and uses it to mean "   features of the

body and features of the material environment"

3 Whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate

The issue here concerns the relation of language to social

situations   Appropriacy refers to rules of speaking in   relation

to the context in which it is used and evaluated

4 Whether (and to what degree) something is done

Hymes explains that although communicative competence is not

restricted to occurrences, it should not ignore them   Language

users have knowledge of the   probabilities   of utterances

"Something may be possible, feasible, and appropriate, and not

occur"   Hymes sums up by saying   "the goal of a broad theory of

competence can be said to be to show the ways in which the

systematically possible, the feasible,   and the appropriate are

linked to produce and interpret actually occurring cultural

behaviour" (pp 281-86)

2 2 Communicative   competence   theory   interpretations   and

elaborations

Canale   and Swain (1980) provided a specification of   three

interacting components of communicative competence which Canale

(1983) later subdivided into four   The view on communicative

competence held by Canale and Swain derives from their understanding of the nature of communication   Canale mentions the following characteristics   communication

a) is a form of social interaction, and is therefore normally acquired and used in social interaction,

b) involves a high degree of unpredictability and creativeness in from and message,

c) takes place in discourse and sociocultural contexts which provide constraints on appropriate language and also clues as to correct interpretation,

d) is carried out under limiting psychological and other conditions such as memory constrains, fatigue and distraction,

e) always has a purpose (for example, to establish social relations, to persuade, or to promise),

f) involves authentic, as opposed to coursebook-contrived language,

g) is judged as successful or not on the basis of actual outcomes (1983 3-4)

Canale draws a distinction between communicative competence and "actual communication"   He argues that in Canale and Swain (1980) communicative competence was understood to be "the underlying system of knowledge and skill required for communication   " However, by "actual communication" Canale means the manifestation of this knowledge and skill   He emphasizes that in Canale and

27

Swain communicative competence was understood to include both knowledge (what the speaker knows about language and the communicative use of language) and skill (the ability to perform in actual communication) (p 5)

Canale provides a framework of communicative competence which includes four areas of knowledge and skill

1 Grammatical competence

This refers to all aspects of language system including syntax, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling etc He argues that this competence "will always be an important concern for any second language programme"

2 Sociolinguistic competence

This competence addresses the appropriacy of utterances with regard to sociolinguistic contexts Canale points out that appropriateness concerns both meaning (the choice of certain language function) and form (the choice of a certain register) For example, it would be inappropriate for an army officer in a battlefield to politely ask his soldiers to carry out a certain military action (not the proper language function) It would also be inappropriate for an adult to say "how do you do" when introduced to a child (wrong choice of register)

3 Discourse competence

This competence refers to "mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres " By genre Canale means the type of text such as narratives, scientific reports, business letters etc He argues that unity of a text is achieved by means of cohesion in form and coherence in meaning Consider the following example which illustrates Canale's point

A It's very warm in here

B I've got flu

A I see Ok

In terms of structure these three utterances have no link among them That is to say, they are not joined by means of any cohesive devices such as pronouns, conjunctions sentence connectors, demonstratives etc Nonetheless, they form coherent discourse The communicative value of A's utterance is a request to open a window 'B' understands this and explains that he cannot open the window A's second remark shows understanding of the situation and acceptance of B's excuse

4 Strategic competence

Strategic competence, as Canale explains, is the communication strategies a language user employs for two main reasons (A) to

compensate for communication breakdowns which result from
momentary loss of a word or a grammatical form, or to compensate
for a deficient competence, and (B) to enhance the effectiveness
of communication (e g deliberately slow and soft speech for
rhetorical effects) It seems to me that the first strategies are
more important, especially in the earlier stages of second
language learning, because they are always needed when learners
are involved in actual communication Canale mentions paraphrase
as one of these strategies If a learner does not know the
meaning of the word island, he or she might say "a piece of land
surrounded by water" (pp 7-11)

Furthermore, Roberts (1986) points out that a pedagogically
utilizable analysis of communicative competence was provided by Di
Pietro According to Di Pietro, Roberts argues, communicative
competence can be subdivided into the following sub-competences

1 Formal competence
This is what is generally referred to as linguistic competence
This competence is further divided into grammatical and idiomatic
competence The former refers to the mastery of the systematic
features of language while the later refers to the ability to
understand and use idioms appropriately, or knowledge of the
unsystematic features of language

2 Sociocultural competence

This refers to knowledge of rules of social interaction in a given society. It is in this area of knowledge that contrasts between two cultures emerge.

3 Psychological competence

Roberts explains that by psychological competence Di Pietro means "the ability to project one's personality and the ability to use language to achieve personal goals". However, the way people express their feelings and ideas, and talk about their likes and dislikes, I concur with Roberts, is culturally determined in many ways.

4 Performing competence

This competence includes all the devices necessary to start, maintain and finish a dialogue. This ability involves using openers, maintenance strategies and closures. This competence presents many contrasts between cultures. Roberts argues that comments on the weather are non-starters in countries where weather hardly changes. He also mentions that in some cultures it is impolite to go straight to the point when discussing serious matters. However, I do not believe that this is a distinct component of communicative competence, it is rather a part of sociocultural competence. Moreover, performing competence provides a wider view than that provided by Canale's strategic

competence   Strategic competence refers only to those strategies we use to keep a conversation in progress such as paraphrase, repetition, foreshadowing, use of fillers etc   Performing competence, on the other hand, refers to knowledge of how to initiate, maintain and terminate conversations without sounding impolite or inconsiderate

Savignon (1983) draws a classroom model of communicative competence based on Canale's framework discussed above   She acknowledges four constituents   (1) grammatical competence, (2) sociolinguistic competence, (3) discourse competence, and (4) strategic competence (p 35)   It is worth mentioning here that Savignon draws a diagram suggesting a possible relationship between the four components of communicative competence   She argues that "an increase in one component interacts with the other components to produce a corresponding increase in overall communicative competence"   She makes an interesting point when she argues that sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence allow the learner a certain degree of communicative competence even before he or she acquires any grammatical competence   Strategic competence, as she argues is present at all levels of proficiency since no one knows all a language even one's own   The interpretation of this argument is that language learners come to the foreign language classroom with a certain amount of communicative competence   This measure of communicative

competence includes "universal rules of social interaction and a
willingness or need to communicate through gestures, facial
expressions, and other available means " (pp 45-6)

In their review of communicative competence theories, Canale
and Swain (1980) subsume these theories under three major
headings (1) theories of basic communication skills, (2)
sociolinguistic theories of communicative competence, and (3)
interactive theories of communicative competence Under the first
heading they refer to Savignon and Van Ek Canale and Swain argue
that these theories were developed to serve second language
programmes The basis of these theories, as they argue, is an
emphasis on minimum skills required by learners to put their
messages across in a second language They also point out that a
communication skills theory tends to de-emphasize other aspects of
communicative competence such as appropriateness and grammatical
accuracy of utterances (p 9)

Such a view of communicative competence, I believe, is very
restrictive We do not teach language simply to enable learners
to get their messages across Language learners have diverse
needs demanding different levels of proficiency which includes an
ability for sociolinguistic variation of language use and a high
degree of formal accuracy For example, learners who study
English for academic purposes need to be taught more than how to
put their messages across because putting one's message across can

33

be done without appropriacy or grammaticality Their abiltiy to communicate through basic communication skills does not guarantee that their language competence can meet their academic needs

Canale and Swain are critical of this view They argue that "it is not clear that second language learners will develop grammatical accuracy in the course of their second language programme if emphasis is not put on this aspect from the start It may be that certain grammatical inaccuracies will tend to fossilize" (p 11)

Under the second heading (the sociolinguistic theories) Canale and Swain refer particularly to Hymes and Halliday These theories, as they argue, are more theoretical than communication skills theories and are concerned with the relation of language to social context We have discussed Hymes' theory above and we will turn to Halliday later in this chapter

Finally, under the heading of integrative theories of communicative competence Canale and Swain particularly refer to the work of Widdowson on discourse analysis However, they refer to these theories as integrative because these pay attention to how utterances are linked to form text and how language functions at the level of discourse

2 3 Accuracy versus fluency

Brumfit draws a fundamental distinction between accuracy and fluency This distinction is essentially a methodological rather than a theoretical one That is to say, it is a distinction which has value for language teachers in making decisions about the content of lessons and the distribution of time between different types of classroom activities Brumfit insists that this is a technological distinction which is being made in order to produce better teaching (1984 52)

Accuracy, as Brumfit defines it, is a concern with language usage rather than use, which has been strong in the history of language teaching In order to clarify the term 'accuracy', Brumfit emphasizes the following points in relation to fluency

1 The term does not imply that fluent language may not be accurate

2 The distinction between accuracy and fluency is not one between what is good and bad in teaching

3 Accuracy can refer to listening and reading as well as speaking and writing

4   Language work which focuses on language is always accuracy work, while language work which results in using the language like the mother tongue is always fluency work

5   Monitoring may take place during fluency work if it has the same function as it has for native speakers   However, the value of this distinction should not lead teachers to prevent students from showing a concern with both fluency and the formal accuracy of certain language items (ibid 52-3)

On the other hand, the nature of fluency, Brumfit argues, can be understood by contrasting it with accuracy   However, he relates the term fluency to the discussion of the concept in linguistics   He argues that Fillmore (1979) discussed fluency with relevance to production distinguishing four kinds of ability   Fillmore's four kinds of ability, as quoted by Brumfit, are (1) "the ability to fill time with talk", (2) "the ability to talk in coherent, reasoned and semantically dense sentences", (3) "the ability to have appropriate things to say in a wide range of contexts", and (4) "the ability to be creative and imaginative in language use" (ibid 53-4)

However, Brumfit argues that apart from the first ability, these capacities are not pure linguistic capacities   For example, as he points out, the ability to be creative in language use is

related to "the ability to establish significant relationships between concepts, visual and aural patterns and systems of thought " As we can see here, and as Brumfit explicitly puts it, "Fillmore's discussion is extremely helpful because it draws attention to the interaction between language and knowledge of the world in the development of fluency" (ibid 54-5) If knowledge of the world is important for language fluency, then cultural knowledge is important as part of knowledge of the world

Fluency, Brumfit concludes, should be regarded as natural language use Such natural language use is what distinguishes communicative classroom activities from the traditional ones (ibid 57) Brumfit's distinction is extremely useful and can be regarded as a major prameter of a sensible approach In Chapter six we will argue that an effectivve communicative approach is one which takes into consideration the polarity of accuracy and fluency

2 4 Meaning potential

The development of the meaning potential theory is an attempt by Halliday to give a perspective on the nature of language and what we learn when we learn our first language The approach which Halliday takes is a semantic one, that is to say he interprets the learning of language as the learning of a semantic system

The viewpoint which he takes is a functional one, he relates the meanings to language functions, to the functions which language serves in the life of the child (Halliday 1975 8)

According to Halliday language potential is a meaning potential Learning one's language is learning the uses and meanings of language, or developing a meaning potential In other words , language learning is learning how to mean, and meaning potential is what can be meant This potential is not what the speaker-hearer knows, it is what he or she can mean (Halliday 1973 24-5)

Language is social behaviour, and this view of language is an acknowledged concern of modern linguistics Halliday argues that a significant fact about human behaviour in the social environment is that a large part of it is linguistic behaviour From a sociolinguistic point of view language is a range of alternatives or a set of options available to the individual in his or her social existence In this connection Halliday refers to Malinowski's two types of context context of situation and context of culture, the understanding of which is important for the understanding of the notion of meaning potential

Halliday and Hasan (1989) explain that Malinowski's term context of situation refers to what is happening or " the immediate sights and sounds surrounding the event " including

38

both the verbal and non-verbal environment of the text   The interpretation of this, as they argue, is that one could not understand the message if they did not know what was going on or if they did not have "   some sort of audio-video record of what was actually happening at the   time "   However the meaning of "the immediate   sights and sounds surrounding the event" becomes   clear if we know that it means   the   same   as   "some sort of audio-video record of what was actually happening at the time" (p 6)

On   the other hand,   Halliday and Hasan explain the meaning   of Malinowski's term "context of   culture" as something more than the immediate   environment,   it   is   "   the   total   cultural background   " of   the   participants   and   the activities in which they   are   engaged   They point out that Malinowski saw that it was necessary to give information   about   the context of situation and context of culture if the meaning is to be understood (p 6-7)

This is a point of special   significance and should be borne in mind   as   we come to discuss the relation of culture   teaching   to foreign language teaching   in   Chapter   Five   It will be argued that   it   is   inadequate to teach language   out   of   its   cultural context   Moreover,   drawing   on   Malinowski's   significant distinction   between context of situation and context of   culture, it will be suggested that foreign language teaching should specify

not only the context of situation but also the context of culture if communicative competence is to be developed   Now let us turn to our major concern with the notion of meaning potential

Halliday argues that the context of culture is the setting for the total set of options while the context of situation is the setting for any particular selection of these options Furthermore, Halliday points out that Malinowski's two types of context represent the distinction between what can be and what is, or as he puts it "the potential and the actual"   The context of culture determines the potential or the set of options and possibilities available, while the choice among these possibilities is determined by the context of situation (ibid 48-9)

I understand that what Halliday means here is that the context of culture offers a wide range of semantic options or meanings (meaning potential) which the language user can choose from or express   But what determines the user's choice of any particular option within this total set of options is the demands of the situation or the context of situation   This argument is comparable to Hymes' notion of what is "formally possible" because he uses the term to refer not only to what is possible within the grammar of the language but also to what is possible within a cultural system

Hymes (1972a) specifies a number of features which describe the context of situation Knowledge of these features is important for the understanding of the communicative event The following are the most important features

1) Addressor (sender, speaker or writer, and the like)

2) Addressee receiver, hearer or reader)

3) Channel (speech, writing, singing, body motion etc)

4) Topic (what is being talked about)

5) Setting (time and place of event)

6) Message-form (genres such as sonnets, sermons, love letters etc) (pp 22-23)

Halliday and Hasan (1989) specify three features of the context of situation These features, as they argue, illustrate the social context of a text

1 The field of discourse this refers to what is going on and what activities the participants are engaged in In other words, field of discourse refers to what a text is about or the subject-matter as well as the activity and the nature of the social action taking place

2   The tenor of discourse   this refers to the participants and the nature of their relationship

3   The mode of discourse   this refers to what functions the language is serving in the text including the channel (written, spoken, etc)   (P 12)

If language is regarded as social behaviour, as Halliday points out, this means that it is a form of 'behaviour potential' or what the speaker can do   But 'can do' or social behaviour includes other types of behaviour than language behaviour Therefore, if we want to relate the notion of what 'can do' to what the speaker 'can say', then we need the notion of 'can mean' as a link between the two   Thus language is a meaning potential which is the "linguistic realization of the behaviour potential, 'can mean' is 'can do' when translated into language"   'Can mean' is in turn realized in 'can say' as the language system or 'lexico-grammatical potential' (1973 51)

It may be helpful at this stage to explain the meaning of the terms semantics and text as Halliday uses them, because these two terms are closely connected with the notion of meaning potential

2 4 1 Semantics

Halliday defines semantics as "what the speaker can mean" It is
the linguistic realization of patterns of behaviour or the
behaviour potential The semantic network gives an account of how
social meanings are expressed in language, and at the same time
forms the intermediate step between behaviour patterns and
linguistic forms (ibid 72) Thus language learning is the
learning of a semantic system realized as meaning potential or
sets of options in meaning available to the speaker-hearer

2 4 2 Text

Text is defined by Halliday as any instance of language use,
spoken or written in the course of daily life Halliday calls
this language 'operational' distinguishing it from what he calls
'citational' language (language of grammar books and
dictionaries) For Halliday text is a semantic unit, it is
meaning encoded in lexical, grammatical and phonological units
Moreover, a text is a selection made within a total set of
options This selection or text represents what is said, while
the total set of semantic options represents what might have been
said but was not, or meaning potential This argument strongly
establishes the relation of text to meaning potential, text is
"the actualization of meaning potential (1975 123-4)

A few words need to be said here about the relation of the concept of meaning potential to Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence and Hymes' notion of communicative competence For Chomsky competence is defined in terms of the mind, but meaning potential, as Halliday emphasizes, is defined in terms of culture Linguistic competence is what the speaker knows, but meaning potential is what he or she can do in the sense of can mean In the Chomskyan theory of competence what the speaker knows is distinct from what he or she does, and the 'does' calls for a theory of performance to explain it But for Halliday 'can do' is related to 'does' as "potential to actualize potential" (1973 52 3)

The notions of communicative competence and meaning potential has been developed within the framework of a social theory of language Both notions attempt to account for the significant variation in language use However, Halliday points out that meaning potential is not unlike Hymes' communicative competence except that Hymes defines competence as what the speaker knows, while Halliday talks about what the speaker can do (ibid 54)

Halliday argues that we have to pay attention to what is said and to what might have been said but was not, if we view language from a social standpoint Hence Halliday denies the dichotomy between knowing and doing He objects to the view of language as

having a perfect form (langue, competence) which becomes imperfect or degenerate when it is manifested in speech (parole, performance)

2 5 Capacity versus competence

The term capacity has been developed by Widdowson and stands in contrast to Hymes' well-established concept of communicative competence Widdowson argues that Hymes objections to Chomsky's notion of competence was not directed at its nature, they are directed at the limitations of this theory which did not account for other than the structural aspect of language

What constitutes communicative competence is the speaker's ability to judge and assess the extent to which a certain expression conforms to linguistic and social rules of language behaviour Widdowson argues that this capability is of an analytic nature which does not recognize the meaning of an expression "but the degree of normality it indicates"

Widdowson explains the difference between competence and capacity as one between an ethnographic and ethnomethodological approach to the study of linguistic behaviour That is to say, competence is concerned with analyzing and describing linguistic behaviour and providing a model of description Or as Widdowson

45

puts it competence "is not a model of member knowledge of language use, but one which provides the means for analyzing member behaviour from the outside "

On the other hand, as an ethnomethodological concept, capacity is "the ability to use knowledge of a language as a source for the creation of meaning, and is concerned not with assessment but interpretation " In other words, Widdowson points out that capacity refers to a language user's perspective rather than an analyst model of language behaviour This is one reason why he prefers the term capacity The second reason is that competence seems to imply conformity, whether to the language system or the social norms Widdowson objects to this assumption that language is rule-governed behaviour and a system that we apply when we communicate

Searle (1972) makes a subtle distinction which could be used to explain this lack of consensus on whether or not language is rule-governed behaviour He argues that "to perform illocutionary acts is to engage in a rule-governed form of behaviour I should argue that such thing as asking question or making statements are rule-governed in ways quite similar to those in which getting a base hit in baseball or moving a knight in chess are rule-governed forms of acts" (p 137)

Searle argues that the denial of some philosophers of the view
that meaning is a matter of rules is the result of a failure to
perceive the distinction between different kinds of rules Searle
draws a significant distinction between two types of rules
regulative and constitutive rules The former regulate forms of
behaviour which are prior to an independent of those rules, such
as rules of etiquette which regulate previously existing personal
relationships The latter, however, "do not merely regulate but
create or define new forms of behaviour" The game of football,
Searle argues, can not exist apart from the rules of this game

Searle argues that what most philosohpers have in mind is the
model of regulative rules But he hypothesizes that "semantics of
a language can be regarded as a series of systems of constitutive
rules and that illocutionary acts are acts performed in accordance
with these sets of rules" (ibid 138-9)

As regards the relation of 'capacity' to 'meaning potential'
Widdowson describes capacity as "a force for the realization of
what Halliday calls the 'meaning potential' of language " It seems
to me that the relation of the term 'capacity' to the notion of
'meaning potential' is stronger than that Halliday explains that
the mother understands everything the child says because she knows
his or her meaning potential (1975 124) And Widdowson argues
that capacity accounts for our ability to understand expressions

47

which break rules The two notions account for the same thing

Furthermore, Widdowson describes capacity as "the ability to

exploit the resources for meaning   ", which means the same as

Halliday's definition of meaning potential as what the speaker can

mean (All information and quotations are in Widdowson 1983 23-7)

Finally, it seems appropriate to illustrate communicative

competence theories in a table showing the term used by each

researcher, what aspect of communicative competence he or she

emphasizes and the general theoretical standpoint from which he or

she views the notion of communicative competence However, it is

important to mention that this table should be seen in relation to

the discussion provided above

RESEARCHER	TERM USED	EMPHASIS	GENERAL FRAMEWORK
Hymes	communicative competence	appropriacy	theory of culture & communication
Canale and Swain	communicative competence	knowledge and skill	communication
Di Pietro	communicative competence	communication strategies	communication
Savignon	communicative competence	strategic competence	second language programmes
Brumfit	fluency	natural language use	second language programmes
Halliday	meaning potential	language functions	theory of language functions
Widdowson	capacity	production of discourse	discourse theory

Theories of communicative competence

2 6 Towards a pedagogical framework of communicative competence

Drawing on analyses provided by Hymes, Canale, Di Pietro and savignon, and discussed above, I suggest a pedagogical framework of communicative competence According to this framework communicative competence is divided into the following three components

1 systematic competence

This competence refers to mastery of the formal system or the regular features of language and covers the following areas of knowledge and skill

a) Syntax competence in syntax covers grammaticality or well-formedness of utterances

b) Pronunciation or mastery of the sound system

c) Intonation

d) Spelling

2 Cultural competence

This competence refers to the ability to use language in its cultural and social context, and the awareness (conscious or unconscious) of the social routines and conventions associated with language use in authentic communication This competence can be further broken down into the following areas

a) **Social competence** this refers to the potentiality for using utterances which are appropriate to a given situation Appropriacy here derives from the right choice of register, degree of formality and measure of politeness In other words, it relates to speech situation and the relationship among participants (for discussion of speech situation, speech acts and participants see Hymes 1974)

b) **Idiomatic competence** this concerns the ability to understand and reproduce idioms, figurative expressions and proverbs Appropriacy is very important here since the use of an idiom in the wrong situation could cause embarrassment Moreover, this area of knowledge provides a lot of insights into the target culture

c) **Paralinguistic competence** this competence covers the area of paralinguistic features which we use with or instead of words or utterances to convey messages These include gestures, facial expressions, body movements, eye contact etc

d) **Tactical competence** this includes knowledge of communication strategies related to how to start a dialogue, how to avoid communication breakdowns and keep a conversation going, and how to finish it These strategies include what Di Pietro called openers, maintenance strategies and closures

3 Discourse competence

Savignon (1985) argues that Widdowson understands communicative competence as "an ability to interpret discourse" (Widdowson's words) (p 30) Discourse competence is used here in this sense and in the sense which Canale explains (see above) It is an ability to interpret and reproduce longer pieces of spoken or written text, the meaning of which is more than the meaning of its separate utterances

2 7 Summary and conclusion

To try to discuss every interpretation of the communicative competence theory is an impossible task What I have tried to do is to discuss the theory in its original form and to consider some of the later interpretations and developments of this theory I have also proposed a pedagogical framework of communicative competence based on my understanding of the theory, and on models and frameworks proposed by other researchers My intention was to provide a framework that could have relevance to foreign language classrooms and cover the different areas of knowledge and skill required by learners if they are to use language for communication

It is important to notice that the views on communicative competence discussed above do not contradict but complement each other All these researchers agree that language knowledge

includes much more than grammatical knowledge   They emphasize the

sociocultural character of language use and insist that

communicative competence is basically an ability to understand and

perform speech acts   They also make it clear that communicative

competence is of an interactive nature and that it is more than

the sum of its parts   I have also considered the notions of

'fluency', 'meaning potential' and 'capacity because of their

relation to the notion of communicative competence   Capacity can

be seen as natural language use and an ability to use language

effectively in a variety of situations

Meaning potential is a   set of options,   or a range of

alternatives that are at the disposal of the speaker-hearer

These options are semantic options   or options in meaning

Language learning is learning how to mean or develop a meaning

potential However,   within the framework of a social theory,

meaning potential is a form of behaviour potential, it is the

linguistic realization of behaviour potential   Meaning potential

is also realized in the syntactic,   lexical and phonological

structure of language

Capacity is a continuous ability for the creation of meaning

It is an ability to create meaning using all resources available

Capacity is concerned with the interpretation rather than the

assessment of expressions   Therefore it is of an interpretative

rather than an analytic nature

Finally, from the preceding discussion of communicative competence theories and related concepts, the following significant implications for foreign language teaching can be inferred

1   Since knowledge of a language is not simply grammatical, language teaching should go beyond grammar teaching

2   Language is use   Encouraging learners to perform in actual situations is the best way to learn

3   Because language is a cultural phenomenon, it is inadequate to teach language void of culture

4   Language learners should be taught how to vary their speech according to situations and interlocutors

5   Language teaching must provide conditions under which the communicative quality of language can be revealed   This implies the teacher devising situations to stimulate learners to converse and exchange meaning

6   Language teaching coursebooks and materials as well as the teacher should provide ample information on both the context of situation and the context of culture of the second language data

7   The ability to perform language functions is important in foreign language proficiency

8 Language teaching should result in an ability to understand and produce discourse

9   The classroom should function as a 'micro-culture' of the target 'macro-culture'

Part II

Pedagogical Applications

Chapter Three

Communicative competence theories

in language teaching

3 1 Introduction

Language teaching has been characterized recently by a shift of interest from mastering language structures to mastery of language use The basis of this change, however, is the awareness that language is not simply a grammatical system, but rather a social and cultural phenomenon Widdowson (1979a) argued that when we communicate we do not only compose correct sentences, but we also perform different speech acts which are "essentially of a social nature" (p 118)

Based on the view that language is is a social system Allen and Widdowson (1979) proposed an approach to language teaching in which the communicative character of language can be focussed upon This approach is an attempt to move from a concern with grammatical forms to a concern with language functions This approach came to be known as the communicative approach or communicative language teaching (CLT)

Widdowson (1978) criticized structural language teaching and drew a significant distinction between usage and use Usage is the manifestation of grammatical knowledge in correct sentences

Use, on the other hand, is the realization of this knowledge as meaningful communicative behaviour This distinction has become a basic polarity in language teaching and a criterion which distinguishes between two different approaches to language teaching, namely the structural approach, which focuses on language usage and the communicative approach, which focuses on language use One of the most influential theoretical concepts which brought about this change in teaching methodology was, beyond any doubt, the concept of communicative competence

My concern in this chapter, however, is firstly to show how language teaching methodology and syllabus design has been influenced by theories of communicative competence, and secondly to consider the procedures and techniques utilized by CLT to promote the learners' communicative competence

3 2 Communicative competence theory in teaching methodology

The introduction of the communicative competence theory by Hymes marked a turning point in linguistics and gained popularity among applied linguists, who started to investigate the ways in which this theory might be put to practice Howatt (1987) points out that Hymes' remark "There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless" became the motto of the communicative movement He argues that Hymes' paper "became one of the basic readings for communicative language teaching, and arguably, it gave CLT its name At all events the phrase communicative competence was universally adopted to describe the aims and objectives of all communicative language teaching" (p 19) Johnson and Morrow (1981) also point out that CLT recognizes as

its aim the teaching of communicative competence (p 10) This argument forcefully establishes the relation of communicative competence to CLT

Communicative language teaching is a term used to refer to a number of developments in teaching methodology Brumfit and Johnson (1979) maintain that the areas of study which contributed directly or indirectly to CLT can be considered under three main headings the sociolinguistic, the philosophical and the linguistic Under the first heading they mention the works of Hymes, Gumperz and Goffman In philosophy they refer to the works of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) In linguistic theory they refer to European and British linguistics, especially the influence of Halliday Moreover, Brumfit and Johnson mention the relevance of work on discourse analysis to CLT (pp 24-5) In this chapter, however, CLT will be generally conceived as a teaching process the aim of which is to lead to a communicative ability or develop communicative competence in non-native speakers

3 3 The communicative content

In terms of content interest in communicative competence brought about a broader view of the content on which learners will be working This interest in the language component expanded to include, in addition to structures, functions and notions The communicative content expanded in three major directions

1 Conceptual and functional meaning

Any speech act has two levels of meaning its conceptual meaning and its illocutionary force The conceptual meaning of a speech

act refers to its literal meaning, whilst ilocutionary force refers to its function For example, if a person who is late for a meeting walks in and says "There was a terrible traffic jam", we can say that the conceptual meaning of the utterance is a description of the state of traffic, but the illocutionary force or the function is an apology for being late Thus CLT presents the language content in a way which prioritizes the functions which speech acts have in authentic language use

2 Sociocultural appropriatenss

Concern with teaching communicative competence meant that learners need to acquire not only grammatical rules which govern the construction of sentences but also the sociocultural norms which determine the use of speech acts Consequently, language content expanded to include demonstrations of how language is used in social situations For example, it was not enough to teach learners how to say "how do you do?" correctly in terms of grammar, but also to teach them when to say this and to whom

3 Discourse level

Unlike structural language teaching which was concerned with single sentences as basic units, CLT concerned itself with longer spans of authentic language which extend beyond the level of isolated sentences Moreover, concern with discourse entailed recognition of the significance of strategies which bring utterances together to make coherent discourse (See Dubin and Olshtain 1986)

3 4 Communicative processes

In a strictly methodological sense CLT can be seen as a process whereby the exploitation of a variety of classroom activities is the means and the development of communicative competence is the end As regards communicative activities, Littlewood (1981 17-18) mentioned the following functions

1 They provide whole-task practice, that is they enable the learners to practice language as a total skill and ability A good example of this type of activity is the use of debates and discussions where the learner has the opportunity to practice language as a system of integrated skills and abilities rather than as discrete grammatical, phonological or other abilities

2 They improve motivation because they allow the learners to take part in actual communication with others What Littlewood means here is that such activities as pair-work, group-work, role-play and the like allow the learners to engage in communication and use language they have already learnt In this case learners will be motivated because they feel that their learning is relevant to their needs

3 They allow natural learning which takes place when the learner is engaged in using language to communicate The interpretation of this is that in the process of communication learners unconsciously acquire new language because focus is on communication rather than the conscious learning of certain language features

4   They create an environment which supports learning by developing relationships among students and between students and the teacher   Language learning would be facilitated if the classroom functioned as a micro-community   Communication activities such as group-work or role-play help develop confidence and familiarity among students and create a sense of belonging to a group,   which has a positive psychological effect on students

Dubin and Olshtain (1986) recognize ten different categories of communicative activities or what they call "workouts"   Apart from structural activities we list the following categories

1   Warm-ups/Relaxers   these are   activities which are intended to motivate   by adding an enjoyment element especially when a   period of relief is needed   These include songs, games, puzzles etc

2   Information-Centred Tasks   these tasks allow natural language use while students are engaged in "fact-gathering" activities such as gathering information outside the classroom, and interviews

3   Theatre Games   these   games   are   intended to simulate reality and yield natural language use   Examples are role playing of different kinds and story telling

4   Mediations/Interventions   these   are   activities in which learners   use language in attempt to bridge information gaps   such as interacting with each other using incomplete information

5   Group Dynamics activities   these are activities which provide opportunities   for learners to   exchange ideas, feelings and emotions   Such activities include discussions which centre around topics of personal interest

6   Problem-solving Tasks   these tasks involve learners in using language in order to make decisions and solutions, e g , posing a problem and asking the group to come up with a solution

7   Skill-getting Strategies   these are activities which focus on developing specific skills   To develop writing skills, for instance,   learners may be presented with scrambled language and asked to compose paragraphs (pp 98-9)

3 4 1 Task-based learning

It is reasonable to argue that   interest in learning tasks came as a result of the rise of the communicative approach   Over the last few years, however, learning   tasks have been the focus of a great deal   of attention   Before we discuss tasks and what their use in the   classroom   entails,   it   seems   appropriate   to   start   with defining   the term "task"   In a dictionary of applied linguistics task is defined as

> an activity or action which is carried out as the result
> of   processing   or   understanding   language   (ie   as   a
> response) For example,   drawing a map while listening to a
> tape,   listening   to   an   interaction   and   performing   a
> command,   may be referred   to   as   tasks   Tasks may or may
> not involve the production of language   A task usually
> requires the teacher   to   specify   what will be regarded as
> successful completion of the task   The use of a variety of
> different kinds of tasks   in   language   teaching is said to
> make   language   teaching   more   communicative   since   it
> provides a purpose   for   a   classroom   activity   which goes
> beyond   the   practice   of   language   for   its   own   sake
> (Richards,   Platt and Weber 1985 289,   also quoted in Nunan
> 1989 6)

As   we   can see from this definition, tasks are used in   order   to provide   conditions   under   which   the   use   of   language for the expression   of   meaning   is   made   possible   Nunan   mentions   a definition supplied by Breen   A task is

any structured language learning endevour which has a
particular object, appropriate content, a specified
working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who
undertake the task 'Task' is therefore assumed to refer to
a range of workplans which have the overall purpose of
facilitating language learning__ from the simple and brief
exercise type, to the more complex and lengthy activities
such as a group problem-solving or simulations and
decision- making (Quoted in Nunan 1989 6)

As the above two definitions indicate, a large number of activity

types which we have classified and exemplified in the previous

section can be referred to as tasks We should mention here that

it is difficult, as Nunan notes, to provide a definition or

criterion which distinguishes between tasks and other activity

types Making such distinctions "will always be partly intuitive

and judgemental" (p 11)

Nunan points out that the definitions which we have looked at

define tasks in terms of communicative language use in which the

learners' major preoccupation is conveying meaning rather than

attention to language form In his definition of a task, Nunan

also prioritizes the same criterion He considers task as "a

piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending,

manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language

while, their attention is principally focused on meaning rather

than form " Discussing what constitutes a task Nunan recognizes

six components (1) goal, (2) input data, (3) activity, (4)

teacher role, (5) learner role, and (6) setting (Ibid 10-11)

To illustrate how a task may be analysed we consider the task

where students are required to listen to a tape-recorded short

story and then re-tell the story

Goal	1) listening comprehension
	2) Language production
Input data	a tape-recorded short story
Activity	1) listening
	2) note-taking
	3) story telling
Teacher role	Monitor
Learner role	1) listener
	2) writer
	3) narrator
Setting	classroom/individual work

Breen (1989) provides an analysis of learning tasks comparable to Nunan's He identifies five interrelated components (1) task objective, (2) task content, (3) task procedure, (4) learner contribution, and (5) task situation and teacher contribution Breen's conception of a task is that it is a means for learning the purpose of which is to develop a communicative ability Therefore, task evaluation is carried out in terms of its 'communicativeness' Breen points out three important criteria against which tasks can be evaluated "i) the extent to which it addresses learner definitions of progress, ii) the extent to which it is developmental towards the demands of the target language and its use, and iii) the extent to which it is open to diversity and change in learner knowledge and capability " (p 192)

The first criterion implies that a task should be directly related to learners' immediate needs as they perceive them The second criterion implies that a task will be developmental if it employs the learner's previous knowledge, skills, and abilities for communication The third criterion acknowledges that learners' contribution to the task is unpredictable and therefore a task should support the diversity of the learning process As Breen aptly put it "To serve as a means for learning our task needs to anticipate that different learners will bring different knowledge and capabilities to it It needs to overtly call upon and engage the differences in what learners know and can do as the bases for real change, and it has to positively allow for different learners to learn different things, in different ways, at different moments even in the pursuit of some common overall objective " (Ibid 192)

As the previous argument clearly indicates, the learner occupies a central position Concerning the selection of task content Breen emphasizes that appropriate content should be selected from the learners' point of view He suggests three alternative ways of making this selection

First, learners may be asked to look for examples in the language data which they consider familiar or unfamiliar, and then identify those aspects which they regard as more difficult Because this selection of data will have aspects which are problematic for some learners but easy for others, it can be worked on to reveal both the known and the unknown "The former",

as Breen puts it, "can serve as input for later work, whilst the latter can reveal new directions for work " The second alternative is to ask students to bring into the classroom language data which they are interested in Individuals or small groups will identify what is familiar and work on what is problematic in a way similar to the previous procedure The third alternative requires that the teacher presents learners with a selection of language data and ask them to discover and identify familiar content which will be utilized as the starting point for working on unfamiliar content (ibid 198-9)

This approach to the selection of task content is extremely useful It is sensitive to learner needs and interests It involves learners in a process of decision-making where they have to be aware of their needs, learning styles and personal interests However, we believe that this approach will be more successful with homogeneous groups of learners where needs and interests do not contradict But in the case of heterogeneous groups, this approach could cause problems If teachers insist that learners select the content of learning tasks from data which personally interest them, they will be confronted with a wide selection of topics in which many particular topics do not meet the demands and interests of many members in the group because the interests of the group are diverse In this case learners will not be working on what is interesting for them as a group, but on what is interesting for a particular individual or individuals in the group, and then the major pillar of this approach, that is language which is interesting, will collapse However, the teacher could solve this problem by asking groups of sudents who

have the same interests to choose their task content, and when this is not possible the teacher could even ask each individual to undertake a separate task

3 4 2 Role-play

One characteristic of a communicative classroom is the frequent and meaningful use of role-play activities They are extremely helpful in the sense that they are intended to bridge the gap between the classroom and the real world, and to encourage authentic language use Sturtridge (1981) maintains that these activities "can reduce the artificiality of the classroom, provide a reason for talking and allow the learner to talk meaningfully to other learners" (p 126)

In real life, however, three conditions should be available in order for communication to take place a reason for communication, a subject to talk about, and at least two participants The significance of role-play activities becomes clear if we understand that they provide these conditions and produce meaningful communication which is the ultimate goal of all CLT

Furthermore, an important fact about real life communication is that the participants in any speech event have the freedom to choose from a wide range of meanings or, in Halliday's terms, a meaning potential Sturtridge argues that role-play activities "have an element of freedom of choice for the student (ibid 126) This element comes from the fact that in a role-play language

behaviour is uncontrolled and the outcome is always uncertain
The following is an example of a role-play activity from
Sturtridge

> You meet your friend B at school You are having
>
> a party on Saturday and you would like B to come
>
> Tell B when to come Say how glad you are that he
>
> he is coming (p 127)

3 4 3 Games and problem-solving activities

"Games and game-like activities have an obvious and important
place in a theory of language learning based on the development of
communicative competence'" (Maley 1981 137)

Maley also makes an interesting point when he argues that it is
true that games are not real in the sense that they are similar to
the kind of activities the learners will be engaged in outside the
classroom, but what is important is that the behaviour associated
with them is real language behaviour The difference between such
activities and role-play , Maley points out, is that in
game-like activities the learner is free to project his own
personality rather than acting as someone else As regards the
function of these activities, Maley argues that they facilitate
natural, unconscious learning (acquisition) rather than
deliberate, conscious learning (ibid 137)

Concerning the distinction between games and problem- solving
activities, Maley argues that it is hard to draw a sharp
distinction Games contain some sort of problem-solving element

and problem-solving activities "do not fail to entertain in a game-like way" The only difference, according to Maley, is that in games the outcome is a winner while in problem-solving the result is a solution (ibid 138) Below is an example of a game and an example of a problem-solving activity

You are a witness

Students are told they will be witnessing an event which they will subsequently have to remember and report on in detail A colour slide is then projected for a very brief lapse of time (e g 5 seconds) Each student individually writes down what he remembers Small groups are then formed to compare notes Finally the slide is shown again for comment, comparison with reports, and discussion (Ibid 138)

Split dialogues

A series of two-line dialogues is cut up into individual utterances e g

1 A What are you doing?

  B what's that got to do with you?

2 A How's he feeling?

  B No idea

These are distributed at random, one to each

participant The activity consists of finding the

other half of your dialogue Normally more than

one solution is possible and in the round-up

session interesting new combinations are revealed

(ibid 142)

3 4 4 Information gap exercises

CLT aims at teaching communication And communication implies

conveying meaning and transferring information It is important

therefore to devise situations in which students can exchange

meaning Information gap exercises are one way of achieving this

(Brumfit and Johnson 1979 and Johnson 1982)

Johnson (1982) argues that conveying information involves an

element of doubt It is quite absurd to convey a piece of

information to people who already know it Johnson makes an

interesting point when he argues that "It is the absence of this

element of doubt in much language teaching which makes it

non-communicative (pp 150-51)

It is on the basis that information gaps involve an element of

doubt which characterizes genuine communication that they are

commonly used in communicative teaching Information gaps can be

created in a variety of ways Johnson mentioned that Wright

(1978) achieved it by means of projecting a slide in blurred focus

and then asking students to speculate about what they can see

Byrne (1978), Johnson argues, created information gaps by

providing "incomplete plans and diagrams which students have to complete by asking for information" Johnson also mentioned Geddes and sturtridge (1979), who directed students to listen to different taped materials and then communicate their contents to other students in the classroom" (ibid 151)

Johnson proceeds to argue that one way of creating an information gap is by providing some people with information which the others do not know Another way of doing this, as he argues, is to allow the students the freedom to choose what to say He maintains that the notions of choice and doubt in communication are closely connected since a listener will be in doubt as to what is to be said only because the speaker can choose from a wide range of semantic options Therefore, Johnson argues that "if we create classroom situations in which the students are free to choose what to say, the essential information gap will have been created" (ibid 152) Communication, however takes place in the learners' attempt to bridge the gap by asking for or providing information

Furthermore, it is true that communication involves exchange of information, but it should be noticed, as Brown (1981) points out, that in real life we do not always exchange information in our daily interaction with people, we quite often talk to people in order to establish a relationship or just to pass the time She draws an important distinction between transactional speech, where giving information is the aim, and interactional speech, where the maintenance of a relationship rather than exchanging information is the aim This distinction is significant for

71

language teaching which should place equal emphasis on both transactional as well as interactional speech Ignorance of the social rather than the informative nature of interactional conversations could result in responding to "How are you?" as to a genuine question, or interpreting the numerous comments on the weather in English as real weather commentaries

3 5 Communicative principles

It has been argued above that communicative activities are generally used to create an environment in which natural, authentic language use and rapid L2 acquisition are facilitated But in order for these activities to be truly communicative, they should be based on certain communicative principles Johnson (1982) discussed five principles underlying communicative activities

1 The information transfer principle

This principle refers to a focus on the learner's ability to understand and convey information Johnson provides an example in which students are asked to read two letters containing information about two people who want to join a sports club and then fill in application forms for these people deriving information from the letters Johnson explains that this exercise provides reading comprehension practice and that a productive form could be devised by asking students to read the completed application forms and then write the original letters

2 The information gap principle

Johnson argues that transferring information is not quite the same as conveying information The former, as he explains, "involves a transmission of 'medium' (from letter to application form, for example) while the transmission in the latter is from person to person " He argues that this principle is useful for teaching the speaking skill because it "creates a condition of unexpectedness", that is student 1 does not already know what student 2 will say This element of unexpectedness, as he maintains, is not crucial in writing because of the absence of face-to-face interaction Nevertheless, he insists that there are two good reasons why the information gap principle could be used for both speaking and writing First, because it allows genuine communication in the classroom Second, because assessment of spoken or written work is done in terms of successful communication (See 3 4 4 for examples)

3 The jig-saw principle

The jig-saw exercise is created by devising situations whereby different students are provided with different bits of information which centre around the same subject Students then communicate the information content to each other and complete the jig-saw An example of this type of activity is getting students to listen to different pieces of a taped dialogue and then talk about what they heard with each other in order to complete the whole dialogue Another example is when different students read different extracts from a newspaper article and then rearrange the segments in the correct, original order

4 The task dependency principle

Activities based on this principle employ the technique of creating a task which cannot be done unless a previous task has been successfully carried out   For example, a student performs the task of drawing a picture utilizing his or her partner's previous task of describing that picture

5 The correction for content principle

This principle is closely connected with the previous one Johnson argues that students know that their work will not be assessed for grammatical accuracy by the teacher, but will be evaluated by their partners for its efficacy in the completion of the task For example, if the picture or diagram produced by student 2 was not satisfactory, this should result in revising student 1 description of them Johnson argues that according to this principle the students' linguistic performance should be evaluated on terms of its communicative validity However, he makes it clear that this principle does not deny the importance of teacher correction for grammatical precision at some other stage (Johnson 1982 164-72)

To the above five principles I would add

6 The suspension of disbelief principle

It is extremely important for the undertaking of any communicative activity that the learners undergo the suspension of disbelief process   It means that learners forget that what they are doing (a role-play, for example) is only fiction and engage in the

activity as if it were real   As many applied linguists have often

observed,   the discrepancy between   the   classroom and the real

world   is   so   great that it can never be   completely   eradicated

However,   the learners suspension of disbelief helps minimize the

disparity between the classroom and real life

Engaging in communicative tasks and activities is like watching

a dramatic performance,   one   cannot enjoy them unless they forget

that   it is all acting   However,   the more convincing the actors'   *J*

roles   are,   the   more   enjoyable   the   performance   would   be

Likewise,   the   more   authentic the language that   students   work

with,   the easier their   suspension of disbelief and engagement in

communication would be

3 6 Communicative competence in syllabus design
Before   we   consider   the impact of the   notion   of   communicative

competence on EFL   and   ESL   syllabus   design,   it is important to

stress   that we will be talking about communicative competence not

only in its original form   but   also   in the wider sense which has

been   developed   by   many   researchers (see   Chapter   II)   Hence

communicative competence will be   generally conceived as a complex

of   skills,   abilities   and knowledge necessary for   engaging   in

speech events,   understanding   and   producing   discourse,   and the

creative negotiation of meaning

Our   major   concern   here is to examine the   influence   of   the

communicative   competence   theories   on the different communicative

syllabus   types   However,   it seems appropriate to begin   with   a

review of the structural syllabus, the weaknesses and shortcomings of which gave rise to the need for a pedagogically more effective syllabus type

3 6 1 The structural syllabus

The structural syllabus (also known as formal or grammatical) is the oldest and most familiar syllabus in the history of language teaching   The origins of this syllabus, as Breen (1987a) points out, can be found in the teaching of the classical languages   The content of the formal syllabus are strongly dependent upon the linguist's description of language   This syllabus primarily focuses upon the systematic aspects of language and therefore places more emphasis on grammar, phonology and morphology   Thus it leads learners to an aspect of language competence which is characterized by grammatical accuracy (p 85)

The basic principle on which the grammatical syllabus sequences and organizes the language content which is to be presented to learners is linguistic complexity   This principle implies that units will present less complex structures earlier and then progress towards more complex structures in subsequent units   Another principle is frequency of occurrence or usefulness of linguistic structures and lexis   This principle implies that consideration may be taken of those structure and vocabulary items which are more commonly used and therefore more useful for learners   In this case structures of high frequency will be introduced first (ibid 86)

Breen argues that there are four major arguments supporting the structural syllabus The first is the fact that it relies on a long tradition of linguistic analysis and language teaching, and is compatible with many teachers' views of language The second argument is that it presents language in a systematic way which helps learners see rules and patterns and consequently reduces the learning burden When the learners master the rules they will be able to use them generatively in other instances

The third argument for the structural syllabus is that since language is an analyzable system, it may be easier for learners to see how the system operates if we provide them with a plan which incorporates the "analytical categories and schemas" of the language system The fourth argument, however, is that the structural syllabus "calls upon the human capacity to be meaningful, to reflect upon, talk about, and try to work out just how a language works In other words the formal syllabus directly addresses our wish to impose order upon the seeming chaos of an everyday activity such as using language" (ibid 86-7)

Recently, however, winds of change have swept linguistic theory and language teaching Many people were dissatisfied with the structural syllabus and offered suggestions for a new syllabus type which is based on a wider and pedagogically more utilizable theory of language competence, viz communicative competence

Wilkins (1979) argued that the grammatical syllabus fails to provide conditions necessary for the acquisition of communicative competence Instead, he proposed a semantic or notional syllabus which ensures the communicative value of the language to be taught Munby (1978) argued that Wilkins' notional approach (later called communicative) "is much more relevant to the development of communicative competence of the learner, and therefore less wasteful, than the commonplace grammatical syllabus The communicative syllabus has potentially wider applicability " (p 25)

Munby formed a model for the specification of communicative competence and the design of a communicative syllabus In the formation of this model, he derived insights from a broad theory of communicative competence which is basically sociocultural in nature Munby wrote

> What is needed is a theoretical framework that stems from a sociolinguistic view of knowledge and communication, where the contextual or environmental factors which constrain competence, or are involved in the development of communicative competence or in the realization of meaning potential are predominantly sociocultural (p 21)

Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) argued that the basis of the functional-notional approach is sensitivity to learners' needs and the awareness of the fact that the ability to use real appropriate language for communication should be the goal of foreign language teaching Yalden (1983) made a significant contribution to syllabus design She argued that the sociological components of of communicative competence must be taken into account in developing the content of the syllabus Yalden (1986) argued that

"in applied linguistics and in language teaching, an important concern during the 1970s and 1980s has been the application of the functional theories to syllabus design" (pp 31-2) Wilkins (1976) distinguished between the synthetic approach (leading to linguistic competence) and the analytic approach (leading to communicative competence) Based on the analytic approach Wilkins proposed three parameters for the specification of a semantic (communicative) syllabus

a) the semantic (what to communicate)

b) the functional (why we communicate)

c) the formal (how we communicate) (p 21-2)

The label 'communicative syllabus' will be used here to refer to a number of developments in syllabus design, namely the functional-notional, the task-based, the process and the relational syllabuses

3 6 2 The functional syllabus

The functional-notional syllabus was developed in the mid 1970s as an alternative to the structural syllabus The basic linguistic idea which influenced the development of this syllabus was Hymes' notion of communicative competence which entailed knowledge of language as both a structural system and a sociocultural system of conventions and rules developed within speech communities The functional syllabus arose from the Council of Europe and the works of Wilkins (1972, 1976) in particular Wilkins explained the rationale of the notional syllabus as

The advantages 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 the motivation of the
learners (Wilkins 1976 19)

Describing the functional syllabus Breen writes

Derived primarily from developments in linguistic theory,
the functional syllabus captures a redefinition of language
knowledge   It focuses upon the learner's knowledge of
Speech Acts or the processes a learner may achieve through
language in particular social activities or events   It
therefore gives priority to the different purposes a
language can serve and how these functions are coded (or
textualized) through the language (p 88)

The aim of learners working within the functional syllabus is

not only to be accurate but also to be appropriate in their

performance The order in which this syllabus selects and

sequences the content, as Breen points out, is "from general sets

of functions to more specific functions, and from the most common

realizations of certain functions to more varied or 'refined'

realization of these functions In this way, sequencing is from

the general to the particular or, more precisely, cyclic in

nature " He also argues that functional syllabuses designed for

specific purposes, such as occupational or academic purposes, may

also follow the route of sequencing from "most needed" functions

to "less needed" ones, or from the most common functions to less

common ones in the particular language situation (ibid 89)   A

good example of this approach is Jones (1977)

Few years later, the claims of the notional syllabus to teach

communicative competence and take account of language use were

seriously challenged   Widdowson (1979b) points out several

weaknesses He doubts that an inventory of functions takes into
account the facts of communication What the proponents of the
functional syllabus fail to discern is that communication does not
take place through isolated, decontextualized functional or
notional units Communication as Widdowson puts it " takes place
as discourse, whereby meanings are negotiated through
interaction " What the notional syllabus offers is "a collection
of idealized elements" which are isolated from their context
(p 253)

    Widdowson points out that Wilkins' (1976) description of
semantic and pragmatic rules is incomplete and inaccurate These
rules reveal nothing about how people apply them when
communication is attempted Therefore, it is difficult to believe
that the notional syllabus can lead to communicative competence
when it does not take into account one of its most important
aspects In the final analysis, instead of presenting lists of
language items labelled sentences, the notional syllabus presents
lists of language items labelled functions and notions
Nonetheless, Widdowson acknowledges that the shift from sentence
to notion was an advance, but it is only the beginning He
insists that "If we are to adopt a communicative approach to
teaching which takes as its primary purpose the development of the
ability to do things with language, then it is discourse which
must be at the centre of our attention " (Ibid 254) This
approach was adopted by other syllabus types, especially the
relational syllabus, as we shall see

3 6 3 The task-based syllabus

The task-based syllabus, as Breen (1987b) explains, represents a view of communicative competence as "the undertaking and achievement of a range of tasks" It focuses on what learners need if they are to participate in communication They "need to know how meaning is coded in written and spoken texts in ways in which the meaning can be shared with other people within the social group or culture" (p 161) In other words what this syllabus aims to develop in learners is a meaning potential

Breen proceeds to argue that the task-based syllabus does not prioritize linguistic knowledge and language functions alone, it views language as an organic unit in which any instance of use requires the user to derive or select from a linguistic, social and semantic repertoire (ibid 161) In other words the task-based syllabus is three dimensional linguistic, sociolinguistic and semantic

The task-based syllabus, as Breen explains, plans the content in terms of two task types, namely communicative tasks and learning tasks The former focus on the meaningful use of language in written and spoken communication, whilst the latter focus on learning the knowledge systems of language, solve any communication problems and prepare for communication (ibid 161)

The following example will illustrate the difference When the learners undertake the task of exploring the social routines and the paralinguistic features associated with closing conversations

in the target language, or when they practice the production of particular sounds or intonational tones, then we can say they are performing a learning or metacommunicative (about the language) task But when they undertake a task in which they are required or encouraged to converse with each other in the target language exploiting all knowledge systems, then they are carrying out a communication task, that is using language to convey messages The former task, however, encourages and facilitates their engagement in the latter

The aim of the teaching/learning process within a task-based syllabus is for learners to develop a sense of accuracy, appropriacy and meaningfulness Unlike formal and functional syllabuses, Breen points out, this syllabus "does not take the four skills as the important manifestation of the language user's capabilities, but calls upon those abilities which underlie all language use and which the four skills reflect in an indirect way" (ibid 162)

Because of its abandonment of a skill-oriented approach, the task-based syllabus, I believe, has a potential risk of not taking into account the fact that some students need to develop oral skills more than they need to develop reading and writing or vice versa These needs are important in ESP courses, where a particular group of learners need to develop a particular skill or knowledge area more than another group For instance, learners who need English for research purposes are required to perform better in reading and writing than speaking and listening Likewise, learners who need English for travel purposes need to

perform better in speaking and listening than in reading and writing. This is especially true in short term ESP courses, where students need immediate progress while there is not enough time to focus upon language as a total skill.

It should be noted here that I am not advocating a skill-oriented approach. Nor am I suggesting that the task-based syllabus necessarily de-emphasizes learners' needs to develop different abilities. This could happen only if a strong version were adopted. It is completely true that language is a unified system of knowledge and that language teaching should address the inherent abilities which underlie all language use. But we should not forget that we are required to manifest these abilities in conversing with people, deducing information, writing books etc, in each of which we need special training.

3.6.4 The process syllabus

This type of syllabus is quite different from the types so far considered. The aim of the syllabuses described above was to select, organize and sequence the subject-matter of the language to be presented to the learners. The aim of a process syllabus, however is different. As Breen (1987b) explains, the aim of this syllabus is not to specify and sequence the language that is to be taught; it is rather " a framework which enables teachers to do these things themselves and, therefore, create their own syllabus in the classroom in an on-going and adoptive way" (p.166). That is to say a process syllabus is not a previously designed plan in which teachers and learners are expected to work in order to proceed from A to B and achieve particular goals. It is a

84

resource of materials and guidelines which teachers and learners may exploit to stimulate and facilitate their engagement in the teaching/learning process

Breen argues that the process syllabus provides two things (1) guidelines which assist the teachers' and learners' decision-making in the classroom, and (2) a resource of communicative activities The guidelines are presented in terms of questions that should be answered by both teachers and students before classroom work starts These questions are related to participation, procedure and subject-matter Questions concerning participation relate to whether students will work in groups or pairs and whether the teacher will work with individual learners or with the whole class Questions concerning procedure refer to when, how, how long a certain activity will be undertaken Finally questions concerning subject-matter relate to the focus of the work and its teaching purposes

On the other hand, the reserve of activities and tasks, as Breen points out, can be used in the same way as in a task-based syllabus These tasks, as in a task-based syllabus, could be either communicative or metacommunicative (learning) Breen says "In offering a bank of alternative activities and tasks, the process syllabus represents an extension of the task-based syllabus The distinction, however, is that activities and tasks are not sequenced The activities are categorized in terms of their own objectives, content, suggested procedure, and suggested ways of evaluating outcomes (ibid 167)

Breen explains that evaluation is an important element of the
process syllabus The teacher and the students decide on who to
work with whom (participation),   agree on how to carry out a
certain task or activity (procedure) and identify the focus and
the purpose of their work   Once this has been done evaluation
will be the important stage   In this stage the teacher and the
students judge their achievement and identify the difficulties
This evaluation stage leads them to reviewing earlier stages and
searching for the reasons of difficulty   In other words they go
back to earlier decisions taken by the   group   concerning
participation, procedure or subject-matter and fill in any gaps
"Therefore,   the initial bank of activities and tasks within a
Process syllabus will be further supplemented by those who exploit
such a syllabus" (ibid 167)

The advantage of a process syllabus is that it allows teachers
and learners the freedom to select and plan their own work
Because of its discontinuous structure the process syllabus leaves
room for other syllabus types and materials to be incorporated
into it depending on the needs and demands of the   group
Moreover, with its emphasis on co-operation among learners and
between learners and the teacher on equal basis, the process
syllabus could reduce the learning burden and leave a positive
psychological effect on the learners who feel that responsibility
for difficulties and failures is shared by the group

The process syllabus has a number of drawbacks It is very

demanding on the part of the teacher and the learner It requires

the teacher to be a syllabus and material designer as well as a

teacher   It also requires students to be fully aware of their

needs and to select and organize the content of their learning

From this point of view, the process syllabus adds to the learning

burden the burden of having to be engaged in planning and

decision-making   Because of its loose form this syllabus may

leave teachers and learners in doubt as to where they are going

However,   I would judge this syllabus to be better seen as a

collection of materials which can be used with some other syllabus

type

3 4 5 The relational syllabus

The relational syllabus was developed by Crombie in attempt to

investigate the most effective ways to construct a syllabus which

could lead non-native speakers to a communicative competence

This new approach stems from her belief that neither a structural

nor a functional-notional approach can accomplish this goal   Her

criticism of these approaches is based on the view that "what we

have not been offered so far is an approach to syllabus design

which takes adequate account of language as coherent discourse   "

(Crombie 1985 1, c f Widdoson 1979)

Crombie argues that if language syllabuses which concentrate on

spoken and written discourse rather than on isolated linguistic or

semantic units are to be designed, then emphasis should be placed

on the concept of discourse value   The discourse value of an

utterance, as she explains, is its "significance or communicative function within a discourse as distinct from its sentence meaning " To illustrate the difference between discourse value and sentence meaning Crombie provides the following example

1 A Why did he have to go into hospital?

  B He broke his leg

2 A What was the result of the car crash?

  B He broke his leg

Crombie explains that the sentence meaning of "He broke his leg" in 1 and 2 is the same, while the discourse value is different In 1 it has the value of reason, whereas in 2 it has the value of result (ibid 2-3)

The label 'relational', however, refers to the fact that linguistic units do not have values in isolation but derive value from their sentence meaning and relationship to the context Thus discourse value, as she points out, is a relational concept She distinguishes between unitary discourse values (warning, invitation, agreement) and binary discourse values (reason/result, condition/consequence) She argues that binary discourse values are the starting point for the design of syllabuses which focus on discourse Crombie further divides binary values into interactional values and general discoursal values Interactional values relate to the type of interactional relationship between the speakers who are involved in a conversational discourse such as that of a question and answer in Crombie's example

A   Why did he do it?

B   He needed the money

On the other hand, general discoursal values, as she explains, are those values which occur in any type of discourse such as result/reason (ibid 2-4) Consider the following example

Due to overwhelming audience response (reason), she decided to sing another song (result)

To explain the basis of the relational approach to syllabus design Crombie writes

> I shall be arguing for an approach to language syllabus design where the relationship between units of discourse which establish those active conceptual meanings that I have referred to as binary values is given centrality__ for an approach which focuses on the creation and understanding of coherent discourse and which therefore moves beyond the idea of a syllabus as an inventory of discrete units only (Ibid 8)

What the language learner needs to know, according to this approach, is how semantic relations (or binary units) are realized in the target language discourse   Crombie argues that from a teaching point of view focus on semantic relations is useful because they have cross-linguistic significance   She argues that semantic relations (comparison/contrast, cause-effect) appear to be present in all languages although they are realized in different ways She also points out that semantic relations are realized in different ways in the same language (ibid 33)

The fact that the same semantic relation may be realized in a variety of ways, as Crombie notes, is extremely important for the designer in that it provides him or her with " the possibility of introducing grammatical constructions in a way that is both systematic and discourse motivated" (ibid 34)   The reason/result relation can be realized in a variety of structures   Consider the following example which illustrates Crombie's point

> He was released because the judge found him innocent
>
> Because the judge found him innocent, he was released
>
> The judge found him innocent and therefore he was released
>
> It was because he was found innocent that he was released
>
> His release was the result of his being found innocent
>
> His being found innocent resulted in his release
>
> The reason why he was released is that he was found innocent

Crombie makes it clear that a relationally-centred syllabus does not take account of only the relational considerations, that is the value of utterances in discourse, but also of grammatical, semantic and intonational considerations   "A discourse-centred approach to syllabus design which concentrates on binary relational values will inevitably be an integrated one since it must, of necessity, involve all aspects of linguistic communication" (ibid 82)

Crombie proceeds to argue that a relational syllabus is cyclic in nature because of the reintroduction of the same relation several times in order to allow for revision and elaboration and to show stylistic variation Concerning stylistic variation, she argues that different realizations of the same semantic relation carry "important stylistic and informational implications" She explains that a significant aspect of the "communicative dynamics of the varieties of scientific report, for example, is "the variety and distribution of relational types together with the various different ways in which each relational type is realized " She provides three examples which show stylistic variation and information distribution through the same relation of concession-contraexpectation

He's a crook but she trusts him

Although he's a crook, she trusts him

He's a crook She trusts him, nevertheless

The organization of the relational syllabus, as she maintains, takes into account the needs of particular groups of learners For example, the organization of a syllabus designed for a group of learners sharing the same linguistic background could follow a certain order emerging from contrastive analysis of the two languages Also syllabuses designed to meet the needs of learners who want the language for specific purposes may concentrate on particular relational values and suggest a certain ordering pattern of these relations

The relational syllabus deserves special attention because of its interest in many areas of communicative ability Through focus on discourse the relational syllabus could succeed in giving equal attention to grammatical, lexical, intonational and other considerations Because it is discourse based a relational syllabus, I believe, could provide cultural insights into the target language and culture Discourse, as we shall argue in Chapter Six, encodes cultural assumptions the understanding of which is important for the understanding of discourse Therefore, the relational syllabus could provide room for more emphasis on the cultural aspects of language use The relational syllabus shares with the task-based and the process syllabuses a view of communicative competence as the ability to understand and produce discourse and create meaning However, the relational syllabus differs from the other syllabus types in that it strongly emphasizes binary discourse values

Chapter Four

Roles of teachers and learners

When we talk about language teaching methods there are at least three major parameters by means of which we can distinguish between one method and the other These are the theoretical or linguistic premises on which they are built, the procedures and techniques they implement, and following from this the roles they assign to teachers and learners   In chapter II we discussed in detail the communicative competence theories as the linguistic background for all communicative teaching In chapter three we discussed the techniques and procedures implemented by CLT to teach communicative competence   The aim of this chapter is to explore the influence of communicative approaches on the roles of teachers and learners   In this chapter we discuss the changes in the teacher's traditional role and the reasons for this change, and consider the significant aspects of the teacher's role which contribute to communicative competence development   We also touch on learner strategies and their significance for the learning process as means for acquiring a communicative ability   We have chosen to discuss both teacher and learner roles at the same time because of the close relationship between them   Changes in teachers' roles necessitate changes in learner roles and vice versa

4 1 The role of the teacher new dimensions

The rise of communicative approaches has had a dramatic effect on

the roles teachers adopt   The role of the teacher in a

communicative classroom is quite different from his or her role in

a traditional classroom It is also more complex and demanding

In the traditional classroom the role of the teacher was

essentially to instruct, that is to convey knowledge of the

language to a group of students whose major concern is to receive

information The most important aspect of the teacher's role as

instructor was to ensure that the students have had ample practice

of the grammatical items of the language, and to prevent the

occurrence of errors

Attention to communicative competence or the ability to produce

speech acts, and the failure of traditional instruction to lead to

proficiency, brought about a major change in the teacher's role

Thus in a communicative classroom instruction is but one aspect of

the multi-functional role of the teacher Even instruction, as we

shall see, is perceived differently Wright (1987) points out

that teachers have two major functions first, they create

conditions under which learning can take place Second, they

convey knowledge to their students in a variety of ways He calls

the first "the management function" and the other "the

instructional function" The management function, as he argues,

entails the following

1   Motivating the learners to the task of learning   This can be done in several ways such as praise and encouragement for the learner's efforts to   learn   Motivation can also be achieved by giving students interesting activities and responsibility for their own learning   This emphasis on motivation is due to recognition by communicative teaching of the significance of motivation to reduce what Krashen calls "affective filter"   The "affective filter" is "a mental block" which prevents learners from making the best use of the language data they receive and consequently impedes their learning   This happens when the learner is not motivated (Krashen 1985 3)

2   Controlling the learners' social behaviour and the learning activity in the class

3   Organizing the group, that is putting the class into small groups to perform certain tasks, or arranging the group in a circle   that gives a sense of community etc   Group organization gained significance in the communicative classroom because of the awareness that language is a social activity which takes place between at least two participants   Thus group organization is important in the sense that it creates one of the conditions of language use participants willing to communicate

95

The management function is crucial in the sense that it prepares learners for the instructional function and facilitates learning The instructional function can be approached, as Wright explains, in different ways depending on the personality of the teacher, the materials available, the prescriptions of the school administrators and many other factors However, the teacher may explain and give information directly or allow students to discover information and learn by themselves through their engagement in a variety of communicative activities

Littlewood (1981) explains the role of the teacher in a more specific way He argues that "the concept of the teacher as instructor is inadequate to describe his overall function In a broad sense, he is a facilitator of learning, and may need to perform in a variety of specific roles, separately or simultaneously " He specifies the following roles

a) A general 'overseer' of learning the teacher should arrange the activities so that they lead to a communicative ability

b) A classroom manager he is responsible for grouping activities into lessons He also decides on his role within each activity

c) A language instructor   he presents new language,   directs, corrects and evaluates the learners' performance

d) An initiator of activities   he will not intervene but let learning take place through the communicative activity   For example,   the teacher starts a debate among students and withdraws allowing the students to carry out the activity by themselves

e) A consultant or advisor   he performs this role when an activity is in progress   He can observe students' weaknesses to help him plan a future activity

f) A communicator   the teacher may wish to act as a participant in communication in order to stimulate or present new language (p 92)

Furthermore, in the following two sections we concentrate on the ways in which the teacher influences and contributes to communicative competence development   We should mention here that when we refer to language learning, language acquisition or communicative competence development, we mean the same thing because we adopt the view that language learning is the acquisition of communicative competence

4 2 Teacher talk

Perhaps the most important aspect of the teacher's role is his or her language use in the classroom (teacher talk) Teacher talk is important as a source of input which is necessary for language aquisition In the majority of cases teacher talk is the only source of input available to the learner especially when the target language is not spoken outside the classroom Although teacher talk is a crucial element not only in communicative teaching but in any language learning situation, we shall argue that teacher talk should meet certain criteria if it is to lead to communicative competence In this section we will discuss the characteristics of teacher talk and the relationship between teacher talk and communicative competence development It is often argued that teacher talk is different from speech addressed at native speakers in a number of ways which enhance comprehension and facilitate learning

Hakansson (1986) wrote "In the second language classroom, when no student possesses full native speaker competence in the target language, the teacher uses a language of instruction which differs in certain aspects from that used in classes consisting of native speakers" (p 83)

4 2 1 Characteristics of teacher talk

Chaudron (1988) reviewed research on second language classroom
which showed that teacher talk is characterized by a number of
structural modifications depending on the task that is being done
and the competence of the students   The following is a summary of
Chaudron's review of research findings

1   Modifications of speech rate and phonology   speech rate is
slower,   voice is louder and   more standard pronunciation is used
Also pauses are longer and more frequent

2   Modification of vocabulary   the teacher tends to use a basic
set of vocabulary items which include fewer idioms and more proper
nouns than pronouns e g , boy instead of lad, Mr Smith instead of
he

3   Modifications of syntax   teachers tend to use shorter
utterances avoiding the use of subordination when their speech is
directed at less competent learners   Research also found that
teachers adjust their speech by using less marked structures   such
as the use of the simple present tense and the use of more
statements than questions

4   Modifications of discourse   the important feature here is   the
frequent use of self-repetition

Ellis (1985) argued that teacher talk can be treated as a register with its own specific properties He mentioned that studies in teacher talk found   (1) adjustments occur in syntax, phonology and vocabulary, (2) ungrammatical modifications do not occur except in free discussions, and (3) interactional adjustments, such as repetition and prompting, occur

Lynch (1988) subsumes teacher talk modifications reported by research under two major headings   modifications of input and modifications of interaction The first type includes aspects of lexis, syntax, phonology and idiom avoidance The second type involves discourse features such as comprehension checks and pauses Moreover, Lynch carried out an experiment to find evidence for a third type of modification which he claims not to have been reported in previous studies   He calls this type of adjustment "modification through information choice" or "selection of information"

Lynch video-taped 24 EFL teachers telling stories to a native speaker and three EFL learners, in turn The learners were at elementary, intermediate and advanced levels respectively The aim of the study was to find differences in the ways speakers talked to the four listeners and find evidence for a third type of modification   The result of the study found evidence for the

three types of modification mentioned above As for modification

through selection of information, as Lynch reports, the study

found that

1 Speakers provided more detailed descriptions of objects and

characters to listeners of lower proficiency level

2 Speakers made more logical explanations and interpretations of

the characters' apparent behaviour to low-level listeners

3 Speakers made more explanation of the socio-cultural features

of linguistic behaviour, such as the use of gestures, to listeners

of low proficiency

Lynch argues that from the learners' point of view these

findings show that learners are being treated as less intelligent

people To test this hypothesis Lynch arranged an informal

experiment in which a group of EAP students were asked to listen

to two audio-taped versions of the stories already used in the

previous experiment The two versions were told by an EFL teacher

to a native speaker and an elementary-level learner Subjects

were then asked to fill in questionnaires in order to mark their

impression as to who is speaking to whom, the age and

intelligence of the speaker and listener, and the friendliness and

clarity of the speaker's speech

The results of the experiment showed that first, none of the subjects realized that the speaker in both versions was the same Second, subjects thought that the speaker was more friendly, clearer and slower in the version told to the non-native listener Third, and most important, the majority of subjects believed that the listener was a child in the case of the non-native narrative

Therefore, Lynch argues that there is "some evidence that the speaker was felt to be 'talking down', since her performance created the impression that she was communicating with a less mature and intelligent listener than in the first version" (p 115) Lynch maintains that when teachers modify their speech there is a risk of appearing "to be making intellectual adjustments, and not merely adjustments of language and discourse "

This is an extremely important consideration in teacher talk modification In a classroom where the learner is the centre of the teaching/learning process, learners attitudes, perception and self-evaluation plays a central part if a true communicative teaching is to be fostered Certainly, talking down to students will have a negative effect on their attitudes and self-evaluation, and may, consequently, hamper learning

However it is important to notice that not all sorts of modification create this impression The only type of modification which has this potential risk is the third type which Lynch reported modification through information selection As we have seen above this type of modification included providing detailed description, explaining logical links such as cause/effect, and filling in cultural gaps The first two of these, I believe, are intellectual modifications which are not needed by learners to aid their comprehension and should be avoided by teachers But filling in cultural gaps is a modification of special significance and sensitivity In a classroom which aims to develop communicative competence, teachers should provide awareness of the cultural assumptions which underlie language use In Chapter Five we explain why this is important and in Chapter Six we show how this can be done in the classroom Nevertheless, filling in cultural gaps could become a kind of intellectual modification when teachers attempt to explain those features which are not culture-specific but have universal validity, e g , explaining the meaning of such paralinguistic features as smiling or waving one's hand

4 2 2 Teacher talk as a source of comprehensible input

Teacher talk provides a necessary input for the learners' aquisition of communicative competence Krashen (1985) claims

103

that humans acquire languages only by receiving input   But he

insists that in order for aquisition to take place, input should

be comprehensible to the receiver

It is a common belief that living in 'the country' is the best

way to learn the language   However, this is only partially true

Krashen (1987) points out that the informal environment is very

helpful because it is a great source of input for the learner who

can understand this input and make use of it   But the natural

environment is of no real use to the adult beginner since the

input he or she receives is incomprehensible   Therefore, in the

case of the adult beginner the classroom can do much better than

the formal environment up to the intermediate level   But for the

advanced learner the classroom is inferior to the natural setting

Krashen says   "If we fill our second language classrooms with

input that is optimal for aquisition,   it is quite possible that

we can actually do better than the informal environment, at least

up to the intermediate level" (p 58)

Furthermore, it is important to notice that even for the

intermediate and advanced learners the informal setting is not of

great help for all of them   We should not forget the fact that

many intermediate and advanced learners live for quite a long time

in the target language community and yet fail to achieve any

remarkable progress   The reason for this, however, is that they

do not integrate in the community, they rather live with their

104

compatriots and speak their native language Their exposure to the target language data is limited to the routine daily interactions in which they exchange no more than few words with a shopkeeper or a neighbour

Needless to say that this argument is not against the informal environment No teacher could provide as much input as the informal environment could But it should be borne in mind that there are many factors which impede the learners' progress in the language It is true that many of these may be due to individual factors, such as introversion or ideological beliefs, for which our teaching is not responsible Nonetheless, our teaching is certainly responsible for some other significant factors

In this respect, there are two important factors which contribute to the problem First, language teaching does not equip learners with enough knowledge of the target culture and the social rules of communication Therefore, learners who have studied language for several years, and who are to continue learning in the natural setting have few clues to help them solve cultural difficulties and thus fail to make full use of the linguistic richness of the natural environment No doubt that this is the responsibility of the classroom which fails in many cases to equip the learner with knowledge of the lifestyle of the

105

native speakers and the cultural assumptions which underlie all language use in social activities   This is a question which will be addressed in the next chapter

Second, until recently language teaching has not taken into consideration the importance of learner strategy training and self-directed study   The result is that learners, being so dependent on the teacher and are not trained in how to approach the task of learning, cannot continue to learn properly even in the natural setting   (On learner strategies see 4 4 in this chapter)

The important implication of this argument is that if intermediate and advanced learners are to make significant progress in language learning in the natural environment, then language teaching should provide them with proper training in crosscultural communication and in the art of learning

This argument establishes the fact that although the informal environment is superior to the classroom, yet the classroom has a great potential The most important feature of this potential is teacher talk which could be adjusted to different proficiency levels of learners, who otherwise would be unable to make sense of the sounds they hear if they are to learn the language in the

natural setting The communicative classroom can prepare learners

to continue learning whether in their own community or in the

target language community

However, the classroom has limitations In addition to the fact

that it cannot provide as much input as the outside world the

classroom, as Krashen maintains, cannot provide the same range

of discourse He argued that "the range of discourse that the

student can be exposed to in a second language classroom is quite

limited, no matter how 'natural' we make it   There is simply no

way the classroom can match the variety of the outside world,

although we can certainly expand beyond our current limitations "

Moreover,   Krashen seems to capture the essential function of the

classroom He said "Its goal is not to substitute for the outside

world, but to bring students to the point where they can begin to

use the outside world for further aquisition, to where they can

begin to understand the language used on the outside (p 59)

Krashen believes that this can be done by means of two things

first, by providing input and second, "by making students

conversationally competent", that is by developing what we called

'tactical competence' (see 2 7)

Krashen insists that in order for input to aid aquisition it

should be characterized by the following features

1 Input should be comprehensible

Comprehensibility is the most important characteristic   But
Krashen explains that comprehensible input is a necessary but not
sufficient condition   However, this characteristic renders the
teacher's role more important   Krashen points out that "perhaps
the main function of the second language teacher is to help make
input comprehensible   " (ibid 64)

The teacher can make input comprehensible by several means The
most common way of achieving this is modifying his or her speech
Chaudron mentioned the work of Hatch (1983) and Keltch (1983)
which showed that the teacher's slower speech allows enough time
for learners to comprehend the message   He also referred to an
experiment carried out by Long (1985)   Long constructed two
versions of a lecture, one of which was syntactically modified He
found that L2 students who heard the modified version were more
successful   at answering comprehension questions than   their
colleagues who heard the original version   Moreover, teachers can
aid their students' comprehension by using visuals such as
pictures and slides

2 Input should be interesting and/or relevant

Krashen (1987) argues that input should focus on the message
rather than the form   In this way input could be made interesting
to learners   He points out that grammatical exercises and drills

fail to interest because they are so repetitive and functionally irrelevant Krashen notes that this requirement is difficult to meet But teachers could meet this requirement if they make their input relate classroom language to the students' needs in the outside world (pp 66-8)

3 Input should not be grammatically sequenced

What Krashen implies here is that input should not focus on grammatical gradation, it should rather focus on the successful negotiation of meaning In this case new structures will be automatically introduced Krashen points out that grammatical sequencing assumes that all students are at the same stage of development, which is not true He argues that natural input will be rich enough to contain new language for every learner

4 Input must be in sufficient quantity

Krashen points out that we do not have enough data to make us certain about the input quantity we need to reach a certain proficiency level Nevertheless, he states that little input is not enough (ibid 71) I believe Ellis supports this argument when he says that "the first structures the learner acquires are those to which he is exposed most frequently " (p 156) Data from first language aquisition seem to support this point we all know that the first words or utterances a child acquires are those which he or she hears quite often

4 3 The role of feedback

The provision of feedback is considered a major role of the teacher and an important aspect of classroom interaction Feedback is also an important aspect of authentic communication and a part of the language user's communicative competence which learners need to master Central to the notion of feedback is the notion of error correction, although feedback includes approval of the learners' language performance as well Feedback is important from the point of view of both teachers and learners Chaudron (1985) points out that from the teacher's point of view feedback is an important means by which he or she informs learners of the success of their language behaviour From the learners' point of view it is a source of improvement in their target language (p 113)

Littlewood (1981) argues that feedback draws learners' attention to the focus of the lesson For example, he says, if the teacher insists on correcting linguistic forms, this indicates that students should pay heed to grammatical accuracy But if the teacher repeatedly comments on how communication should be carried out and how successful it is, then this indicates that students should focus on communication of meaning

Chaudron argues that the study of feedback was closely connected with behaviourist theory of learning According to this theory feedback was considered as positive and negative reinforcement of behaviour which was believed to be the crucial factor in learning Therefore feedback was used as stimulus which triggers learner behaviour (response) Traditional language teaching used positive feedback as praise or repetition of the correct sentence, and negative feedback as error correction and detailed grammatical explanation (ibid 133)

4 3 1 Feedback as error correction

Attitude towards learner errors in modern language teaching is more tolerant and sympathetic than the traditional attitude Learner errors are currently viewed as part of the internal processes of learning and an indication that learning is taking place, rather than mere failures to conform to language system Chaudron argues that acceptance of learner errors has led teachers to a paradoxical situation where they have to choose between interrupting communication for the sake of formal correction, or leaving errors uncorrected for the sake of communication (p 134) The solution of this problem raises the following questions which are often dealt with by researchers

1 Should errors be corrected?

2 When should errors be corrected?

3 Which errors should be corrected?

4 How should errors be corrected?

5 Who should correct errors?

Concerning the first question there seems to be a general

consensus that errors should be corrected   Chaudron referred to a

number of studies which argued in favour of error correction   For

example,   he mentioned Hendrickson (1978),   who argued in   favour

of error correction on the basis that errors which are not

corrected can be taken as correct in the process of hypothesis

testing (ibid 135)   Hypothesis testing means that during their

developing stages in learning, learners make assumptions as to how

language operates   When learners make errors they test whether

their assumptions or hypotheses are true   If, however, they do

not receive corrective feedback,   then their hypotheses or

mistakes will be taken as correct   The hypothesis testing

rationale,   I believe, is a strong reason for correcting errors

Chaudron also maintained that research has established learners'

preference for all sorts of error correction,   a consideration

which is very significant if a positive attitude to learning is to

be fostered

As for the question when to correct errors, Murphy (1986) says

"We find no evidence to show that correction has to be given in

the instant following the error,   so there is no value in

interrupting an activity to correct mistakes when they can be

112

corrected afterwards " (p 146)   Chaudron (ibid 136) mentions that

Hendrickson restricted error correction to grammar practice

leaving communicative activities free from a major concern with

correction, a point which Murphy (ibid 146) also emphasizes

Regarding the question of which errors should be corrected,

Hendrickson wrote "Correcting three types of errors can be quite

useful to second language learners errors that impair

communication, errors that have highly stigmatizing effects on

the listener or reader, and errors that occur frequently in

students' speech and writing " (Cited in Chaudron, ibid 140)

Errors which impair communication include grammar, phonology,

wrong choice of lexical items, or wrong choice of register On the

other hand, what Hendrickson means by errors which have a

"stigmatizing effects" , I believe, are those which violate rules

of social appropriacy and could cause embarrassment to producer

and receiver

Concerning the question of how to correct errors, the teacher

has several options He or she can stop or interrupt the learner

immediately after the error has occurred, wait for a transitional

period in the learner's transaction and then provide correction,

or even prefer to give correction at some other time As has been

argued above there is no reason why errors should be corrected

immediately after they have occurred   In fact immediate

correction could have discouraging effects on the learner who is repeatedly interrupted and corrected   It is advised that teachers do the correction afterwards, in which case corrective feedback will be directed not at individual learners but at the group as a whole

But who should correct errors? The apparent answer to this question is that the teacher is the one who should correct errors However, we can argue with Murphy that "correction does not have to come from the teacher alone, for in communicative activities it will come just as appropriately (if not more so) from fellow learners" (ibid 146) Broughton et al (1978) also emphasize that it is not necessary or advisable that all correction should come from the teacher, students should be responsible for their own mistakes and develop an ability for self-correction (p 141) A possible way of doing this is to tap-record or video-tape learners' performance and then assign group tasks in which they are required to evaluate their performance, correct mistakes and suggest possible ways to improve their performance

4 3 2 Feedback and learning outcomes

Chaudron points out that there is evidence on corrective feedback resulting in the learners' ability to benefit from it He refers to a study carried out by Salica (1981), who found that teacher treatment of errors aided learners in providing correct responses She found that learners provided correct responses to 46% of

teacher's corrective feedback   Chaudron also mentions Wren (1982), who reported that her students were able to correct 83% of their errors after she provided treatment of these errors, as opposed to 41% rate of self-correction   Chaudron reports that Ramirez and Stronguist (1979)   found that the teacher's correction of grammatical errors resulted in learners' improvement   on comprehension and production tests (ibid 176-8)

Furthermore, it should be   stressed   that error correction is not,   and should not be,   concerned only with accuracy of grammar and pronunciation, it   should   be   equally concerned with fluency and   the   appropriacy of learners' language behaviour in terms   of communication strategies and   social   rules of language use   In a communicative classroom an important aspect of the teacher's   role is   to   ensure   that   correction   is   provided   in   terms   of both criteria   For example, when a student produces an utterance which violates a social rule, we can say that he or she needs corrective feedback   as much as, if not more, than he or she needs it when   a grammatical rule has been   broken   It has often been argued that native   speakers are more tolerant of foreign   speakers'   language mistakes than social mistakes   No doubt that the omission of the present   simple "s" is not as offending to a native speaker as   an impolite request or an   inappropriate gesture or physical contact Therefore,   correction   is   valid in both   grammar   practice   and communication activities

Feedback is not to be equated with correction   If we examine

any piece of natural discourse, we find that feedback is an

essential part of communication and serves several functions

Murphy (1986) argues that in communication speakers use language

to convey messages and listeners frequently indicate how

successful or unsuccessful communication has been   They indicate

this by means of feedback   People quite often use such utterances

as "I see what you mean", "I know what you are getting at", "I'm

not sure what you mean or "I don't understand"   The major purpose

of this type of feedback is to maintain communication

Maintaining communication, however, requires using feedback for

several purposes like clarification requests "I don't understand",

denial of the truth of the message "I don't think that is the

case", asking for relevant information "Don't change the subject"

etc (pp 148-9)

The implication of this argument is that in classrooms where

concern is with language as communication, an important aspect of

the teaching/learning process would be to enable learners to

handle feedback   Feedback should not be supplied by the teacher

alone, students should be taught how to employ feedback in

communication   Murphy wrote   "If learners are to communicate

successfully, then they will need to use feedback   If they do

not, then I think the teacher should be guiding them to use

116

feedback   Otherwise the implication is that communication between

learners   in a foreign language is expected to be more   successful

than between native speakers who use the language " (Ibid 146)

The teacher can achieve this goal by exploiting what was called

learning tasks and communication tasks in the previous chapter

(see 3 6 3) In a learning task the teacher can give students

examples of feedback language and how it can be used   Then the

teacher can get students to practice this language in actual

communication by assigning to them a communication task such as a

discussion or story-telling   In this case the teacher can go

around the classroom checking to make sure that feedback is

properly supplied and, when appropriate, make comments (cf

Murphy, ibid 149-50)

4 3 3 Error correction and mistake correction

Johnson (1988) refers to a significant distinction drawn by

Corder (1981) between 'errors' and 'mistakes'   Johnson argues

that what Corder calls an error is the result of a faulty or

inappropriate knowledge, while what Corder calls a mistake is the

result of inability to put knowledge into practice In other words

an error is a competence failure while a mistake is a performance

failure (p 90)

What we are interested in here is not the distinction itself but the implications of this distinction for language teaching Although Corder argues that "mistakes are of no significance to the process of language learning" (quoted by Johnson), Johnson maintains that if we use the word 'mistake' to refer to a failure caused by limiting Psychological or other conditions which operate in performance, then mistake correction will be extremely important in language teaching because a great percentage of students' inaccuracies are mistakes and not errors (ibid 91)

The basis of Johnson's argument, as he explains, is that when we want to assess the ability of a person, whether linguistic or non-linguistic, we have to consider the conditions under which he or she can perform this ability He provides two examples, one non-linguistic and the other linguistic He argues that a footballer may be a good goal scorer in normal circumstances But the question is "can he, for example, score in the Mexico World Cup, at an altitude of six thousand feet, against a good side, knowing that spectators at home will bay for the blood of the defeated?" And by the same token, it is quite inadequate, when we come to assess students' language competence, to conclude that he or she has mastered the present perfect tense simply because he or she has used it successfully in a gap-filling exercise What is more important is "can she use the tense correctly over a bad

intercontinental telephone line, with all attention focussed on getting the message across in the shortest possible space of time?" (ibid 91)

The implications of this argument are extremely important Teachers should be aware of the fact that not all students' inaccuracies are the result of inadequate knowledge (errors) but the result of inability to perform (mistakes) This brings us to the question of how mistakes can be eradicated Johnson argues that students will need at least four things if mistakes are to be eradicated

a) The desire or need to eradicate the mistake Some mistakes do not get eradicated simply because students know they are not important like the simple present 's'

b) An internal representation of what the correct form looks like In simple terms the student needs to know the correct form of the mistake

c) A realization by the student that the performance he or she has given is faulty

d) An opportunity to repractise in real conditions (Ibid 91)

Concerning mistake correction two points should be emphasized First, explanation of rules, as Johnson argues, has no value simply because the learner knows the rule More explanation could seriously harm performance Explanation can be useful in the case of errors and not mistakes Second, the best way to eradicate mistakes is to get students to practice more and more in conditions which simulate the type of conditions which are likely to cause mistakes To come back to the example cited earlier, "Part of learning how to use the present perfect on an intercontinental phone involves phoning intercontinentally and using the present perfect " (Ibid 93-5)

This argument draws our attention to the important role which communicative activities could play in eradicating mistakes In the real world we hardly behave, linguistically or non-linguistically, in relaxing conditions, we usually perform our knowledge and skills when we are exhausted, excited, intimidated, late for office etc These are conditions far from being ideal and exert pressure on us Our knowledge and skill cannot be tested away from these conditions So why do not we engage our students in activities which simulate these conditions? This is another reason why communicative activities are a central feature in a communicatively-orientated classroom This argument, moreover, is compatible with our view of communicative competence as a complex

of knowledge and skills to perform this knowledge in actual communication   This view avoids the complexities associated with the distinction between competence and performance

4 4 Learner strategies

The communicative approach represented a shift from a teacher-centred classroom to a student-centred classroom   This shift implied fundamental changes in the roles of both teachers and students   As far as learners are concerned, this shift meant that learners were given more responsibility for their own learning and encouraged to adopt a wide range of learning strategies   Since the early seventies, research into learner strategies has occupied a central position in language teaching theory   But in practice it was until the last few years that learner strategies have been given a prominent position   Research acknowledges that learners employ a variety of processing strategies which influence their language learning

Chaudron defines learning strategies as "the cognitive operations that learners apply while in classrooms or other learning situations " (Ibid 110)   Oxford, Lavine and Crookall (1989) define learning strategies as "actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques   used by learners to enhance learning " (p 29) They refer to Rubin (1975), who described good language learners in terms of the strategies they use   Good language learners

1 are willing and accurate guessers,

2 have a strong, perserving drive to communicate,

3 are often uninhibited and willing to make mistakes in order to learn or communicate,

4 focus on form by looking for patterns, classifying, and analysing,

5 take advantage of all practice opportunities,

6 monitor their own speech and the speech of others, and pay attention to meaning (Ibid 30)

4 4 1 Typology of strategies

Research into learner strategies identified several strategies which have been classified in slightly different ways by researchers Oxford, Lavine and Crookall report an extremely useful classification of learning strategies developed by Oxford (1989) Oxford listed six broad strategy categories

1 Metacognitive strategies such as paying attention, searching for practice opportunities, self-evaluation and self-monitoring

2 Affective strategies such as anxiety reduction and self-encouragement

3   Social strategies such as asking questions, cooperating with others and "becoming culturally aware"

4   Memory strategies such as creating mental linkages and using images and sounds to store or recall information

5   Cognitive strategies such as reasoning, analysing, summarizing and taking notes

6   Compensation strategies such as guessing meanings, using explanations and employing paralinguistic features (ibid 30)

Rubin (1987) recognizes three major learner strategy types learning strategies, communication strategies and social strategies   He points out that learning strategies are further divided into cognitive and metacognitive strategies   Cognitive strategies include (1) clarification/verification strategies which "learners use to clarify or verify their understanding of the new language", (2) guessing/inductive inferencing which utilize previously acquired knowledge to form hypotheses linguistic forms and to infer meaning, (3) practice strategies such as repetition, rehearsal, imitation, application of rules etc , (4) memorization strategies which learners use to store or recall information such as finding auditory or visual association, (5) monitoring strategies such as error correction, decision-making, identifying

problems, evaluation etc Rubin points out that monitoring

combines both cognitive (e g correction) and metacognitive (e g ,

self-management) strategies

On the other hand, metacognitive strategies are those which

learners use "to oversea, regulate or self-direct language

learning " Rubin refers to Wenden, who identifies a number of

planning strategies For example, learners may recognize their

needs, preferences and learning styles and thus decide on what

aspects of the language they want to prioritize and what

strategies they will use

As regards communication strategies (referred to as

compensation strategies by Oxford), Rubin explains that these are

strategies used by learners when there is a disparity between

their communicative competence and communicative intention, and

which are mainly associated with participating in conversations

Examples include using synonyms, using gestures and mime, or using

paraphrase

Finally, social strategies are those used by learners to find

practice opportunities and exposure to the language Examples

include creating situation to practice with natives, fellow

students or teachers, listening to television and radio, reading

extra books etc (pp 23-7)

4 4 2 Teaching implications

The value of the preceding argument is that it establishes the relationship between using learning strategies and developing communicative competence Communicative competence cannot be developed only by following certain teaching procedures, we need to encourage and train learners to operate successful internal processes or employ appropriate learning strategies There is a close relationship between using particular strategies and acquiring certain aspects of communicative competence For example, using social strategies such as seeking practice opportunities, meeting natives, and "becoming culturally aware" art important for acquiring cultural competence Communication or compensation strategies such as paraphrase, using synonyms or gestures are significant for developing strategic or what we referred to as tactical competence in Chapter Two

Moreover, in teaching language skills, e g , reading and listening, students should be encouraged to infer the meanings of new words and expressions from the context in which they occur instead of immediately resorting to the dictionary or asking the teacher Therefore, attention to strategy training should occupy a prominent position in the process of teaching communicative competence

In the light of this discussion, the role of the teacher gains a new dimension Oxford, Lavine and Crookall argue that learners are not always aware of how important learning strategies are in facilitating learning, and cannot necessarily develop these strategies without special training and guidance   "For this reason, it is essential   that the teacher develops the learners' awareness and use of learning strategies by offering training in which the strategies are made very explicit   In this way, the teacher takes on yet another role, that of strategy trainer " (Ibid 36)   Thus in communicative classrooms learning how to use strategies is as important as using strategies to learn

Nunan (1989) reviews a list of functions which teachers perform in the communicative classroom,   all of which are related to training learners to employ a variety of strategies   The following are most important

1 Helping learners to find out which ways of learning or learning styles are best for them   For example, some learners learn lexical items through direct association,   others learn through   translation   and   some   others   learn   through contextualization

2   Guiding learners on how to   make use of what they have already learnt through note-taking, keeping diaries and grouping information for easy reference

3   Helping learners recall previous knowledge, for example through rhymes, context of occurrence, personal experience etc

4   Adopting a tolerant attitude towards errors and understanding of their nature as hypothesis testing   Teachers help learners to prevent errors from hampering their participation in classroom tasks   They also encourage learners to ask for correction and help

5   Developing in learners an ability to infer and guess meanings from context and from their knowledge of the world

6   Encouraging learners to acquire routines, phrases, expressions and idioms which serve as means for the expression of a variety of functions

Here again communicative activities and tasks can play a central role   When students undertake the task of creating a weather report in the target language, they will employ a number of strategies such as cooperation, planning, looking for

language data, self-evaluation etc   The   teacher could explain

which strategies they should focus on,   such as cooperation,   and

how to use these strategies

As   far   as   learners   are   concerned,   research   on   learner

strategies has resulted in a great concern with learner   autonomy

Learner   autonomy   is   an   important   aspect   of   communicative

approaches   and   the   shift   from a   teacher-centred   to   a

learner-centred classroom Learner autonomy can be accomplished by

focusing   on   strategy training   Rubin (1987)   argues   that   once

trained, learners will find out the best way to approach learning

He   also   points out that autonomous learners who are   capable   of

self-directing their   study   outside   the classroom, are those who

use   effective   strategies   Therefore,   it   is   essential   that

learners learn how to   take   control   of their learning and employ

effective   strategies   so   that they can continue   learning   after

their   formal   instruction   has   stopped   (p 17)   Moreover,   this

argument   helps   illuminate   Krashen's point (see 4 2 2)   that   an

important function of the   communicative classroom is to bring the

learner   to the point where he or she can make the best use of the

natural environment
                                              '

Nunan   (1989)   also   points   out   that   "one   role   receiving

increasing   attention   is   that   of   the   student   as   independent

learner " He refers to Dickinson,   who provides   several   reasons

for   the   use   of   self-instruction   and   developing   learner

independence   First, self-instruction is important because some

learners cannot attend regular classes   Second, self-instruction

enables teachers to cope with individual differences in aptitude,

learning style and learner strategies   Third, self-instruction

promotes learner autonomy and allows for continuing learning

Fourth, self-instruction can have a positive effect on motivation

(p 83)   Thus investigating learner strategies and   learner

autonomy is a primary objective of communicative pedagogy

Part III

Critique of Communicative Teaching

Chapter Five

Learning language and learning culture

We have seen in chapter two that Hymes' theory of communicative competence was developed with a theory of communication and culture in mind   This theory assigned a significant role to sociocultural rules of speaking which constitute an intrinsic part of the language user's competence   In this chapter we hypothesize, and seek evidence to support the hypothesis that learning a foreign language involves the learning of another culture   In other words, if the ultimate goal of language teaching is to develop communicative competence, we shall then argue that teaching the target culture should be an indispensible part of our teaching   In this chapter it is assumed that the teaching of the target culture facilitates the   learning   process and subsequently produces more proficient language learners

5 1 Definition of culture

Culture is probably one of the most difficult concepts to   define   Anthropologists and   researchers   provided   several definitions of culture   Sapir (1949) points out that culture is used in   three main senses   In general terms, Sapir points out that "culture is technically used by the anthropologist and culture-historian to embody any socially inherited element in the life of man, material

131

and spiritual " (p 78)   More simply, Lado (1957) defined culture
as "ways of people"   Kluckholn and Kell defined it as "all those
historically created designs for living explicit and implicit,
rational, irrational, and non-rational, which exist at any given
time as potential guides for the behavior of men " (Quoted in Lado
1957 111)

Similar to Lado's definition,   Brown (1980) defined culture as
"a way of life"   But he elaborated on this definition when he
said "Culture might be defined as the ideas, customs, skills,
arts,   and tools which characterize a given group of people in a
given period of time " (p 123)

However, culture will be conceived of in this chapter as a
historically developed synthesis of ideological and philosophical
beliefs, ethical values, and aesthetic standards which interact
with each other to shape and regulate human behaviour in a given
community Culture is thus understood as being a complex of
traditions, religions, arts and sciences which constitute the
framework of the social existence of a particular group of people

5 2 Theory of language and culture
While perhaps not being as dramatic as the strong version of the
Sapir-Whorf hypothesis claims,   the relation of language to
culture is nevertheless established   Among those who contributed

132

to a theory of language and culture, Boas, Sapir, Whorf, Malinowski stand out as having contributed significantly to cultural theory

Sapir, as Henle points out, challenged the conception of language as simply a "systematic inventory of the various items of experience" in the life of individuals Sapir made a strong claim that language is also a "self-contained creative symbolic organization, which not only refers to experience largely acquired without its help but actually defines experience for us by reason of its formal completeness and because of our conscious projection of its implicit expectations into the field of experience " (Quoted in Henle 1958 1) Thus Sapir closely associated language with culture by expressing the view that language does not only guide social experience but it rather moulds and shapes it

Whorf developed Sapir's claim arguing that language constitutes a frame of reference and actually shapes the thought of its users Whorf claimed that there are significant correlations between grammatical features and over-all cultural aspects when a language and a culture have evolved together (ibid 1-2) Moreover, through his work with the Navaho, Hoijer emphasized the claims of Whorf as to the relation of aspects of grammar to patterns of culture (ibid 21) However, it is not the aim of this chapter to review the work of these anthropologists but to refer to their contribution to a theory of language and culture

5 3 Cultural encounters and communication breakdowns

What stems from the above definitions is that two cultures represent two world views Therefore, encounters between members from different cultural backgrounds are likely to involve misunderstandings due to different perception of the same phenomenon For example, the tragic death of someone could be understood as heavenly punishment by a person from one culture and as the result of inevitable natural causes by a person from another culture Moreover, people from cultures where socially accepted sexual relations are practiced only in matrimony are shocked to know that many unmarried couples in Europe have children

Widdowson (1982) argues that "Communication between members within the same tightly knit social network will not create the same tension as communication between strangers, since there will be an extensive overlap of domain It is where domains are distinct and at some degree of distance from each other that difficulties arise " (p 9) Thus many communication breakdowns between strangers can be attributed to dissimilarities between two cultures

Robinson (1988) points out that the studies of Gumperz, Jupp and Roberts (1979) support the idea that differences of speech conventions contribute to misunderstandings The researchers, he

argues, suggest that communication breakdowns between people from different ethnic groups occur due to three major differences

(1) Different assumptions regarding the situation and the appropriate behaviour associated with it

(2) Different ways of arranging information or building up an argument This difference relates to discourse strategies For example, in Arab culture, it is usually inappropriate to go straight to the point when discussing serious matters, in other cultures, like the British, 'beating around the bush' is not common

(3) The use of a different set of linguistic conventions such as intonation (p 55)

To the above three, I would add

(4) The use of a different set of paralinguistic features such as gestures, facial expressions, signals, silence periods etc The best example here is the commonly used example of a 'nod' in Greek meaning 'no' instead of 'yes' Another example is that physical contact is a sign of friendliness in some cultures and over-familiarity in others

Brumfit (1985) points out that when a child learns to communicate in his or her mother tongue, he or she at the same time learns the "culturally appropriate ways of thinking" (p 4) This means that people from different cultures have different ways of thinking and , therefore, communication problems can arise Varonis and Gass (1985) argue that misunderstandings between native and non-native speakers are so common because they do not know each other and they do not share the same background They may have different modes of perception, customs, notions of what is appropriate etc consequently, in conversations between native and non-native speakers "there are more clarification requests, repetitions, expansions and elaborations" (pp 327-8)

In order to illustrate how misunderstanding and inappropriate language behaviour could occur when communicating in a foreign language, it is worth looking at two specific speech acts the act of apologizing and the act of complimenting Olshtain (1983) argues that apologies are called for when someone's behaviour has violated a certain social norm The act of apology, he argues, can be realized in five major semantic formulas

1 An expression of apology such as "I'm sorry" or "I apologize" Olshtain argues that there are sociocultural rules which govern the use of one form rather than the other in a specific situation

2   An explanation or an account of the situation which caused the offense like saying "There was a terrible traffic jam", to apologize for being late

3   An acknowledgement of responsibility such as "It's my fault "

4   An offer of repair such as suggesting to provide payment when actual damage occurs

5   A promise of forbearance in which the apologizer promises that the offense will not happen again (p 236)

Olshtain argues that these formulas are available in all languages but the choice of one formula rather than the other is language-specific He points out that in language A it might be culturally appropriate to always choose one semantic formula (e g , expressing an apology) for a specific situation while in language B another semantic formula (e g , giving an explanation) is quite possible It is likely therefore that a speaker of A learning B to make violations of the rules of apology   When an English speaker is late for a meeting, he or she would usually give an expression of apology that could be followed by an explanation Unlike the English speaker, a Hebrew speaker often provides an explanation only (ibid 237)

Olshtain also argues that violations of sociocultural rules concerning the act of apology are likely to occur in three cases

1   The learner might deviate from the accepted norm when choosing a semantic formula for a specific situation

2   The learner might choose a combination of semantic formats which is inappropriate for a specific situation

3   The learner might perform the speech act at a level of intensity inappropriate in relation to the particular offence (Ibid 237)   For example, it might be accepted in language A to simply say "I'm sorry" for an offence which in language B could require a higher level of intensity like "I'm terribly sorry"

Moreover, what is considered an offence in one culture is not necessarily considered so in another   Not visiting one's mother in hospital, for example, is a situation which calls for intensive apology and explanation in Arab culture   In British, or the Western cultures in general,   sending a bunch of flowers or expressing a simple apology is generally acceptable   This argument shows that misunderstandings are most likely to occur when two cultures come into contact

The second example which we will examine in order to show how different cultures differ in the values they assign to speech acts

is the act of complimenting Holmes and Brown (1987) write that

"Paying appropriate compliments and identifying them accurately is

an aspect of communicative competence which may differ in a

variety of ways from one culture to another " (p 523) They

provided and analysed a number of examples involving people from

different cultural backgrounds Their assumption was that there

is evidence that paying compliments in English is a bothersome

aspect for learners from different cultures They argue that

Wolfson (1986) noted that some learners find it difficult to

understand why Americans pay so many compliments Wolfson

reported that in Indonesian culture compliments are comparatively

rare Holmes and Brown also point out that Malaysian students in

New Zealand commented that they found the frequency of compliments

among New Zealanders very surprising Wolfson points out that in

some cases people from different cultures would not agree on "what

counts as a compliment" (p 525)   Consider the following example

which Holmes and Brown provide

Complimenter what a big family you have

Recipient Yes, but it has its advantages, too

They explain that the complimenter is from a culture where big

families are considered an advantage The recipient is a New

Zealander who takes the visitor's compliment as a critical remark

(ibid 527)

Holmes and Brown explain that the reason for misunderstanding in the previous example is that the recipient failed to understand the illocutionary force of the utterance, that is the function which the utterance is intended to serve Wolfson (1986) mentions an interesting example A foreign student complimented a British teacher that she was old and fat (p 119) It is obvious that in the student's culture a fat person is considered healthy and good-looking, and old age is associated with wisdom and knowledge So the illocutionary force of the student's utterance probably was that the teacher was wise and good-looking

Brumfit (1985) mentions that "I must have a drink" implies, at least in Britain, an alcoholic drink (p 11) But in a non-alcohol-drinking society this speech act usually means a soft drink To provide another example, the English leavetaking speech act "See you" could be interpreted by an Arab addressee to mean that the speaker really will see the hearer at some other time But the speech act is not a genuine wish to see the other person and could be said by someone who would never see the hearer again

Thus a potential source of communication failure is misunderstanding of the illocutionary value of speech acts Another source of failure or offence, as Holmes and Brown argue, which can be attributed to inadequate cultural knowledge is the

140

choice of the wrong strategy to convey a speech act in a given situation (ibid 528) They provide the following example where a Malaysian student compliments his university female teacher when she enters the classroom

> Complimenter You are wearing a very lovely dress It fits you
>
> Recipient Oh— thank you

They explain that the student meant "suits you" However, the teacher reported that she was taken aback and commented that to receive such a compliment from a male student seemed too familiar (ibid 526)

Holmes and Brown mention a third source of inappropriate language behaviour concerning compliments "Knowing whether a compliment is appropriate at all" In the following example they provide, a four-year old girl on a bus loudly addresses an old woman with whom she is not familiar

> Complimenter That's a nice hat
>
> Recipient Oh—thank you

They report that the woman was embarrassed and so was the the girl's mother The girl selected the right strategy but she was not yet aware of other situational factors such as her

relationship with the addressee and "the publicity of the situation" (ibid 528)   Another example where a speech act is not possible can be provided   At least in Arab culture, inviting one's parents to one's wedding celebration is quite unusual since they are most often involved in the preparation for the celebration   Inviting them would be treating them like strangers

Furthermore, Holmes and Brown touch on an important aspect of the ability to pay appropriate compliments   the choice of topics which may be the focus of a compliment   Although compliment topics such as appearance, ability and possession could be universal, yet who compliments whom on a certain topic is often culture-specific   They report that New Zealand men receive compliments on their appearance but the vast majority of them comes from women   But although New Zealand and American men hardly compliment each other, the appearance of American men seems to be an inappropriate topic of compliment either from men or women (ibid 533)

The argument and the examples provided above show that miscommunication is likely to occur among members of different cultural backgrounds   The reason for this, as we have seen, is that there could be considerable differences in the ways cultures encode meaning in language and how they perceive reality

5 4 Sources of cultural differences

In this section we attempt to show the ways in which cultures differ and the grounds or reasons for the these differences Brislin et al (1986) provide a possible framework for understanding cultural differences Although this framework is not intended to serve language teaching purposes, it can be extremely useful for our discussion Brislin et al discuss five variables which they believe to be the bases of cultural differences, viz, categorization, differentiation, the ingroup-outgroup distinction, learning styles and attribution

Categorization is the process whereby people divide, group and categorize the material and emotional world into easily recognizable units As Brislin et al argue, people divide foods into categories like meats, breads, fruits etc, animals into domestic and wild, people into children, elderly, men and women etc Their argument is that people from different cultural backgrounds categorize their experience in different ways and, subsequently, misunderstandings could occur due to different expectations and perceptions of the same social reality (ibid 306-7)

For example, because social roles of men and women are categorized differently in different cultures, people from

strongly male-dominated societies view the roles of women in less

male-dominated societies as inappropriate because "they behave

like men" This occurs because a particular woman's role in

culture A, e g , 'bus driver", is categorized as a man's role in

culture B

As for the differentiation variable, Brislin et al define

differentiation as "the seperations people make within a concept"

(ibid 311) For example, the Arabs distinguish among horses in

terms of breed, age, colour etc , the Eskimos distinguish among

different types of snow, the English distinguish fog from mist

Brislin et al argue that when a foreigner does not make the same

distinction as the natives, "misunderstanding and ill feeling can

result " (Ibid 311) For example, a foreigner in the South Sea

Islands will be astonished to be asked to specify what he or she

exactly wants if he or she wants to buy some coconut The reason

for this is that people there, as Brislin et al note, "have no

one word for coconut but numerous words depending on the function

or state of the particular part of the coconut indicated "

(Ibid 276)

Another reason for cultural differences and a potential source

of miscommunication between members of different cultural

backgrounds is the perception of the ingroup-outgroup distinction

By an ingroup they refer to "those people with whom an individual

feels comfortable and secure " On the other hand, an outgroup

144

"refers to people who are excluded as much as possible from one's everyday experience " (Ibid 314) But who is considered a member of an ingroup differs among cultures and could cause misunderstanding Brislin et al supply a pertinent example An American arrives in Greece and is received by host coworkers Surprisingly the Greek coworkers started asking the American personal questions related to salary, family, religion, and political opinions However, the Greeks treated the American as a member of the ingroup while the American's perception of the incident was invasion of privacy from members of the outgroup The result was that the American formed a negative attitude towards Greeks and did not make any further contact (ibid 315)

The fourth basis for cultural differences which Brislin et al consider is learning styles (ibid 316-8) Learning styles refer to the ways in which people learn and how they were taught how to learn Students who are exposed to new learning styles in a foreign country could be frustrated by the new learning experience and nurture negative attitudes towards the whole institution For example, Students who come from countries in which foreign language teaching is heavily teacher-centred will experience a different approach in countries where learning is learner-centred These students sometimes feel disappointed and believe the the teacher is not doing his or her job very well simply because he or she is letting them work on their own most of the time

145

The final variable provided by Brislin et al is attribution
Attribution is "the conclusions we make after observing behaviour
whether other people (or the observers themselves) are competent,
well-intentioned, effective, naive and so forth "(Ibid 319)
An example of misunderstanding due to wrong attribution is that
touching a person during a conversation is considered a sexual
advance in some cultures and a sign of friendliness in others

Furthermore, Richards and Sukwiwat (1985) maintain that there
are five major areas of difficulty in learning conversational
competence in a foreign language (1) differences in social
situations, (2) different routines associated with the same
situation, (3) different functions of the same social routine,
(4) using a correct routine in the wrong situation, and (5)
different conditions for the performance of a routine

Concerning the first question Richards and Sukwiwat argue that
such situations as meals, weddings, funerals are common across
cultures But there are situations which are specific to a
particular culture, e g , "at the pub" in Britain or visiting
elders and family members on Chinese New Year in china (p 131)
Other examples are baptism and first communion in Christian
societies, Thanksgiving in the United States, or Ramadan in
Islamic societies

146

As for the second question, they argue that even when the situations are the same the social routines which accompany them are different They point out that routines which accompany speech acts may differ For example, a compliment is acknowledged with thanks in English but in Thai culture a person may not respond verbally because "this might not sound suitably humble" (Ibid 132) Although social situations such as weddings, visits or meals are universal, the conventions associated with them may differ across cultures An Arab host or hostess repeatedly uses a variety of utterances over a meal to make sure that guests are eating well and feeling comfortable

Regarding the question of different functions in two languages of the same routine, Richards and Sukwiwat argue that in English "Thank you" may be used to express gratitude But in Japanese the equivalent does not sound sincere enough and thus Japanese speakers usually add "I'm sorry" They also mention that the English routines "You are welcome, Don't mention it, Not at all, It doesn't matter, and Never mind" have one routine speech act in Thai Therefore Thais using English produce such errors as

Boss Thanks a lot That was a great help

Secretary Never mind (Ibid 132-3)

Concerning the use of a correct routine in a wrong situation, they argue that non-native speakers may overgeneralize and extend

the use of a social rule to situations where the rule does not

apply   For example, "Nice to meet you" is generally accepted to

say when introduced to someone, but it is not appropriate for an

adult to say "Nice to meet you" when introduced to a child

(ibid 133)

As for the last question,   there are conditions under which a

speech act can be performed These conditions, however, vary

across cultures for example, the French and the Japanese use a

routine speech act before eating, but the Japanese formula cannot

be used by the provider of the meal (ibid 133) Conditions for

the successful performance of speech acts can be related to

certain age or sex group   In Arab culture at least, it is

inappropriate for a woman to make a marriage proposal to a man, it

is the man who should propose   However, this argument and the

examples provided clearly illustrate the fact that if foreign

language learners are to perform successfully then they need to be

familiarized with sociocultural rules of languge discourse, which

in turn entails knowledge of the culture

5 5 Foreign language learning in a cross-cultural perspective
It is often argued that learning a language does not only involve

the learning of its sound system, structural patterns and

semantic rules but also the learning of culturally accepted modes

of thinking and behaviour Kim (1988) argues that to learn a

foreign language "is to learn not only the linguistic code 'per

se' but also to gain access to the accumulated records of the host

cultural experience   To be proficient in the host language

requires an understanding of not only its phonetic, syntactic,

and semantic rules but also its pragmatic rules" (emphasis added)

(p 89)   This view was also expressed by Brislin et al (1986)

They write "a language often represents a world view of a people

and as such reflects important concepts and modes of thinking"

(p 277)

As we always emphasize, communicative competence theories were

developed within a sociocultural framework of language and

communication Hymes developed his theory of communicative

competence from an ethnographic perspective with a theory of

communication and culture in mind   Halliday's theory of meaning

potential was developed with reference to semiotics and

pragmatics   And   Widdowson's   term   'capacity'   expressed   an

ethnomethodological approach to the study of language (See Chapter

II)

However, the relation of language to culture can be better

understood if we perceive the relation of social behaviour to

culture   Human social behaviour is regulated and evaluated in

terms of the prescriptions of particular cultures concerning what

is appropriate and inappropriate   Language behaviour, as

Halliday notes, is mostly social behaviour   Therefore, language

behaviour is subject to the same rules which govern social

behaviour   Thus   learning   to   communicate   successfully   or developing   communicative   competence   involves   learning   how to behave in a culturally appropriate manner   Halliday expresses the relation of language behaviour to social behaviour in terms of "saying" and "doing", saying something is a form of doing something

Communicative language teaching aims to teach learners how to communicate effectively in the target language   It is important, therefore, that learners have subtle knowledge of communication rules   Kim defines communication rules as "a coherent system of expected patterns of behaviour that serves to organize interaction among individuals   " These rules govern all levels of behaviour whether verbal or non-verbal   Communication rules are cultural rules because "Culture provides the 'rules of the game' that enable individuals to make sense of events, activities, actions, and behaviors " (Ibid 92)

Communication is the most important aspect of individuals' social being   It is through communication that we learn how to adapt to our environment and undergo and participate in the process of socialization   Kim emphasizes the importance of communication as a means of socialization   He argues that "through   communication   we   learn   to   relate to our environment   Through continuous interaction with the various aspects of the environment,   individuals undergo a progression of

stages, integrating numerous culturally accepted concepts, attitudes, and actions into themselves " (Ibid 45) Thus communication is culture-bound, and if language is primarily communication and communication is mostly carried out through language, then language is bound by the same rules which govern communication and serves the same functions that communication serves Consequently, learning a foreign language requires a degree of acculturation, i e , becoming adapted to the world views, modes of thinking, behavioural patterns, customs and assumptions of the target culture The keys of successful communication in a foreign language are those which open the doors of the cultural edifice

Hendon (1980) says "If we teach a foreign language without introducing at the same time the culture in which that language operates, we are merely conveying words to which the student attaches the wrong meaning " (Quoted in Winfield and Barnes-Felfeli 1982 373) However, this concern with associating a language with a culture is not a recent concern Politzer (1959) Wrote

> As language teachers we must be interested in the study of culture (in the social scientist's sense of the word) not because we <u>want</u> to teach the culture of the other country but because we <u>have</u> to teach it If we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning (Quoted in Brooks 1986 123)

Moreover, we should mention here that the argument for associating language learning with culture learning poses two controversial questions do all learners of other languages need to undergo the process of acculturation? And, in the case of English, which linguistic and cultural norm is the model for language learning? Before we attempt to answer these questions, we should refer to the distinction between a foreign and a second language A foreign language is a language which is neither the mother tongue nor the official language or one of the official languages of a speech community, e g , English in the Middle East, China, Japan, Europe etc On the other hand, a second language is not the mother tongue but the official or one of the official languages of a country, e g , English in India, Pakistan, Nigeria etc , Irish in Ireland or French in Algeria Furthermore we will use the term "other languages" to refer to both foreign and second languages

To touch on the first question, we can say that it is not reasonable to argue that all learners of other languages need to learn another culture In a number of his works (e g , 1983, 1986) Kachru shows that non-native varieties of English have been de-Anglicized" and "de-Americanized" reflecting a new sociocultural reality Kachru (1986) writes "English is thus a medium that in its various manifestations, East an West, results in cultural adaptations In South Asia, it connotes the Indian,

152

Lankan, or Pakistani ways of life and pattern of education and administration The nativized formal characteristics acquire a new pragmatic context, a new defining context, culturally very remote from that of Britain or America " (p 92) Therefore, learners of English in India, Pakistan or Kenya do not require the acculturation process in order to have command of English, unless they are aspiring to a native model or seeking integration with native speakers But how many speakers of nativized varieties have learnt English in order to interact with native speakers?

Kachru points out that members of the Indian English speech community use English mainly in the sociocultural context of India, where interaction is basically among Indians who use English as lingua franca He explains that only a minimal fraction of Indian English users have any interaction with native speakers In a survey which he carried out, Kachru showed that 65 64 percent of the graduate faculty of English in the universities and colleges which he surveyed had only occasional interaction with native speakers, and 11 79 percent had no interaction Only 5 12 claim to have regular interaction with native speakers (ibid 110) In a context like this, it is absurd to argue that Indian learners of English need to learn a second culture or undergo the acculturation process In the Indian context, and in the context of many other no-native varieties,

acculturation denotes a different sense. Acculturation here is the nativization process, as Kachru points out, which English has undergone in a new linguistic and sociocultural ecology. It refers to the language being "localized" and not to the learner becoming adapted to another culture.

Another aspect of language and culture learning is the question of learner resistance. During the colonial period, English was associated with colonialism in the British colonies. Reactions to the English language and culture were important for preserving a cultural identity. For this reason, and several others, a deviation from a native model, as Kachru maintains, was inevitable. He argues that in some cases "the recognition of a localized norm is used as a defense mechanism to reduce the 'Colonial' and 'Western' connotations associated with English." In Nigeria, Bamgbose points out, and Kachru mentions, that Nigerians who speak like native speakers are considered snobbish. In Ghana, an educated Ghannian is supposed to use the nativized educated variety of English. Kachru also notes that in South Asia there is a reaction to standards such as RP and GA (Received Pronunciation and General American English respectively) (ibid:97-8).

This argument apparently contradicts our call for teaching the target culture with the target language. But this is only a seeming contradiction. What is important here is the distinction between a second and a foreign language. In countries where

154

English is used as a second language, learning a second culture, as we have seen, is out of question for the simple reason that the model for language learning is not a British, American, Irish or any other outside model. It is a nativized model by and large. But in many parts of the world English is taught as a foreign language. In these contexts, learning a foreign culture is a prerequisite of learning a foreign language unless we want to isolate language from its sociocultural ecology. Therefore, we can say that foreign language learning requires a degree of acculturation for reasons we have explained throughout this chapter. Acculturation, however, does not mean losing one's cultural identity, it implies open-mindedness towards a different culture and understanding of the fact that different people think, behave and do things in ways different from ours and the ways in which we think, behave and do things are not universally accepted.

We now turn to the second question which norm is the model for language learning? We have to state first that by a norm we refer to a linguistic as well as a cultural norm simultaneously, that is to a language variety and its cultural context. English is a multi-cultural language. Which is the cultural model that we have to introduce to students learning English? Obviously, this question was partly answered in the preceding discussion. Where English is a second language, the model is not a native model. As

we have seen in the attitudes of speakers of English as a second language, and as Kachru notes, "an unrealistic adherence to an ex-normative standard is clearly not attitudinally desirable " (Ibid 97)

But which is the model in the case of English as a foreign language? To provide a simple answer, we can say that what determines the choice of a cultural model is the choice of a linguistic model For example, if the aim is to teach standard British English, then British culture is the model And if the aim is to teach Irish English, then the model is Irish culture and so on and so forth But what are the factor which determine the selection of a particular variety of English? Undoubtedly, personal factors play a part In Syria for example, teachers who were trained in the United States tend to teach American English, and teachers who were educated in Britain would like to teach British English However, pedagogical considerations play, or should play, a significant part in the choice of a model When feasible, the choice should be based on a careful analysis of learner needs If a group of learners are to move to Ireland, for example, to further their education, then the Irish language and culture model should be presented We should mention here that if the choice of a model is based on learner needs, then a model could be a non-native model For instance, if students are

learning English to interact with Indians using English, then

Indian English and culture should be the model In other words,

specific learner needs should be taken into account and

appropriate cultural models should be presented

In some cases the situation is less clear   This occurs when

learner needs analysis does not inform the teacher of which model

to use In the Middle East, for example Syria, the teacher

should in this case choose a native model, a non-native model

being out of question, except in very rare situations, because of

the limited scientific and educational co-operation between Syria

and Third World English-speaking nations   In other words, a

non-native model is not needed because interaction mainly occurs

with native speakers   In this case the teacher is free to choose

whichever Western model depending on personal considerations   But

he or she should pay attention to introducing the language and

culture model with emphasis on those common sociocultural routines

and beliefs which underlie the use of English in all Western

English-speaking countries   Moreover, at more advanced levels of

proficiency, the teacher could introduce more than one model

because the ability to understand more than one variety of a

language is an important aspect of communicative competence which

our classrooms claim to teach

5 6 Empirical evidence

In this section we review some studies which showed that language

157

learning can be facilitated by learners' knowledge of underlying cultural presuppositions Winfield and Barnes- Felfeli (1982) investigate the effects of familiarity with the cultural context on ESL reading They argue that recent research supports the position that writing can be facilitated if the student is familiar with the cultural context of the subject-matter They also point out that evidence from cognitive psychology shows that fluency may be impeded when individuals work at unfamiliar topics (pp 373-4) However, the position of the writers is contrary to our position Their view is that "in choosing topics for writing exercises attention should be placed upon selecting themes drawn from known contexts or themes that can be directly related to personal experience " (Ibid 377) This implies that writing topics should not be drawn from the context of the target culture because students may not be familiar with them, the thing that impedes their performance

But what concerns us here is the finding that familiarity with the cultural context of writing topics was an important determiner of fluency in writing Thus if we familiarize our students with the cultural context of their writing topics, then their writing will be facilitated

Furthermore, there is argument for the assumption that the greater the difference between two cultures is the more difficult language learning will be It could be argued that it is easier

for an English person to learn German than it is for a Turk or an

Arab   Likewise, it is easier for a Turk to learn Arabic than it

is for a German or an English person   Osterlo (1986) argues that

"Between societies of greatly differing socioeconomic structures,

however, intercultural differences play a significant role when

members of one culture learn the language of the other " He points

out that a German, for example, does not require to learn a new

social strategy if he or she wants to learn how to welcome a

friend in French   But for a Senegalese the case is different

because welcoming a friend in the Senegalese social experience

could easily extend over a period of a quarter of an hour's time

(p 77)

    Svanes (1987) makes the same argument   He says "It   is

reasonable to assume that the more one has in common with the

target language group, the easier it will be to learn   the

language " He also argues that "If the TL belongs to the same type

of language as the mother tongue, this will facilitate language

learning And if one is familiar with the culture of the host

country, the easier it will be to communicate, and this again will

promote language learning " (p 343)

    It is interesting to notice that closeness of languages is most

often associated with closeness of cultures   For instance,   The

Arabs and the Turks have similar languages and cultures   Also
Western Europeans have similar languages and cultures   Thus
learners from either group of languages learning the language of
the other group will be travelling a linguistic and cultural
distance

Svanes (1987) conducted a study involving 167 foreign students
from 27 countries learning Norwegian in Norway   The aim of the
study was to find out if differences in language proficiency among
groups of students from different countries can be accounted for
by motivational factors or by cultural difference   The students
were divided into four groups based on their familiarity with
Western culture and language   Thus the first group included 25
Europeans who all spoke two or more European languages and
belonged to "a common European cultural tradition " The second
group included 35 American students who have English as their
first language and culturally have much in common with the
Europeans

The third group involved 13 African students who come from
countries which were French or British colonies   Those students
are exposed to Western culture through their education in their
countries because English or French is the official or second
language   This group also included 23 students from the Middle
East (Lebanon, Palestine, Turkey and Iran)

In group four were Asian students from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Vietnam These students are less exposed to Western culture than the other groups

The students' motivation for studying Norwegian was assessed by means of a questionnaire and the study used examination grades to measure the students' proficiency levels in all language skills Concerning motivation, as Svanes reports, the study found that the European and American students were more integratively motivated than the two other groups who were more instrumentally motivated Concerning proficiency the results of the study showed that European and American students scored the highest grades, Middle Eastern/African students scored third highest and Asian students scored the lowest grades

Svanes argues that there seem to be a positive corrolation between integrative motivation and grades, and a negative corrolation between instrumental motivation and grades However, to check the truth of this, Svanes examined the relation of grades to the two types of motivation within each group The result was that "No significant positive corrolations between grades and the two motivational variables were found " (p 352) On the contrary, a negative corrolation between grades and integrative motivation was found in the American group Svanes showed that only 2% of of the difference in grades can be accounted for by integrative motivation Integrative and

instrumental motivation together accounted for 9% of the variance in grades But the two motivational variables and the cultural distance variable accounted for 23% Thus "difference in grades between the different groups cannot be explained by motivational factors So if type of motivation is not an important factor in proficiency, what is the crucial factor? Obviously, as this study showed, the cultural variable is the most important Svanes writes "This may point to the conclusion that although motivation is an important factor in the acquisition of a second language, type of motivation is of less importance in groups of adult university students, who are all well motivated In this context 'cultural distance' has been found to be the predictor of second language proficiency " (Ibid 355- 7)

Another support for the assumption that familiarity with the cultural content facilitates learning and promotes communicative competence comes from Floyd and Carrell (1987), who investigated the effects of knowledge of the cultural background of a text on the learners' reading comprehension Floyd and Carrell also reported the results of similar studies They mention that Gatbonton and Tucker (1971) demonstrated that "due to cultural misunderstandings, EFL students drew incorrect assumptions when reading unfamiliar texts, however, when provided by pertinent cultural information their performance increased significantly "

They also mention a study by Johnson (1981) which showed that "the cultural origin of a text has a greater effect on ESL reading comprehension than does linguistic complexity " (p 89) As for Floyd's and Carrell's study we will concern ourselves with the conclusions only because limited space does not permit a description of the detailed procedures of the study The basic findings and conclusions of the study can be listed as follows

1   Background Knowledge relevant to reading comprehension can be taught in the classroom, and this increases comprehension

2   Knowledge of the cultural background of a text has greater effect on reading comprehension than syntactic complexity

3   Cultural content is very significant in the reading classroom and should be explicitly taught

4   The ESL reading teacher should be a teacher of the culturally relevant content

5   ESL students need to be exposed to activities which could aid their acquisition of culturally appropriate information outside the classroom

6   Having appropriate background knowledge of a text is as

important for scientific texts as for culture-specific texts (ibid 103-5)

Moreover, although the results of this study were restricted to reading comprehension, there is no reason why the results cannot be valid for other language skills

5 7 Conclusion

In this chapter we have investigated the relation of language to culture as far as language use is concerned We have seen that language and culture are inseparable because language use reflects a way of life, a mode of thinking, philosophical and moral presuppositions etc We have found evidence for the hypothesis that language learning can be facilitated by familiarity with the target culture Hence our ultimate conclusion is that foreign language learning should take place within the context of the target culture If we aim to create in learners an ability for language use or promote their communicative competence, then introducing the culture to the classroom should be a major concern of communicative language teaching But how can culture be taught? A few suggestions will be put forward in the final chapter

Chapter Six

Teaching grammatical and cultural competence

The theme of this chapter is twofold first, we shall discuss the position of grammar in communicative teaching and suggest some criteria for the design and implementation of grammar tasks Second, we consider possible ways of teaching cultural competence We should stress, however, that the question of grammar should not be seen as irrelevant to a concern with communicative competence Throughout the chapters our view has been that communicative competence is a total ability and knowledge Therefore, all areas of knowledge and skill are important for the ability to use language for successful communication Furthermore, in theories of communicative competence and meaning potential, grammar is recognized as an important factor According to Hymes, "what is formally possible" or linguistic competence is a sector of communicative competence And for Halliday "lexico-grammatical competence" is the realization of meaning potential (see Chapter two)

6 1 Systematic competence and the dilemma of grammar teaching

The rise of communicative approaches was accompanied by a shift of attention from grammar to language functions The failure of grammatically-orientated teaching to lead to a communicative ability has resulted in a great deal of scepticism about the

validity of grammar teaching   Dickins and Woods (1988) point out
that "the   rise   of   the   notional/functional/   communicative
curriculum has   sometimes   been   accompanied   by   a devaluation of
grammar   as   one   of   the   organizing   principles   in   commercially
available language-learning materials " (p 623)

This devaluation of   grammar   was   expressed   in claims that we
should   not devote much time (if any) to the teaching   of   grammar
and that grammar should not   be   taught   for its own sake beacause
learners'   explicit knowledge of grammar will not automatically be
used by them in   natural   communication   (c f   Garret 1986 133)
However, the question of grammar recently has been the subject   of
much controversy among language   teaching   practitioners   Dealing
with aspects of this controversy is not our aim and is beyond   the
scope of this section   The   limitations   of   space require us to
narrow   down   the   field   of   inquiry   to   specific   issues
non-traditional   views   of   grammar,   why   we   need   grammar
instruction,   and classroom implications

There   are   several reasons for our interest in   grammar   here
First, grammatical competence, as we have mentioned earlier, is an
essential component of overall communicative competence   Second,
because   of   over-emphasis   on   language   functions   and   getting
messages   across,   as Garret (1986) argues,   "students   who   have
been encouraged not to worry   about   grammar may develop a kind of
irremediably   inaccurate fluency " (p 133)   Third, some   problems

166

faced by many overseas students in tertiary education, as Dickins and Woods (1988) note, "arose from their need to communicate at a rather sophisticated level in English when their linguistic competence was at a very low level " (p 623)

Canale and Swain (1980) point out that communicative competence theories grouped under the heading of "basic communication skills" (see 2 2) emphasized getting one's message across over grammatical accuracy One reason for this was the assumption that, as in the case of first language development, second language errors will disappear at a later stage Canale and Swain argue that there is "no strong theoretical reason for emphasizing getting one's message across over grammatical accuracy at the early stages of language learning " (p 14) On the contrary they provide three good reasons for not doing so First, not all second language learners' grammatical errors, such as interference errors, are the same as those made by first language acquirers First language acquirers' inaccuracies will be eradicated at a later stage of development, but not all second language learners' errors are likely to follow the same route If we do not attend to grammatical acccuracy, we run the risk of allowing many errors to fossilize (We will touch on the problem of fossilization later in this chapter)

Second, there is no evidence to suggest that adolescent and adult second language learners are willing to be exclusively interested in getting their messages across Canale and Swain refer to Savignon (1972), who found that college students in classes which emphasize getting meaning across showed a decline in integrative motivation compared with students from classes where putting one's message across was not emphasized on the behalf of their developing a sense of grammatical correctness

Third, they argue that "it is not clear that second language learners will develop grammatical accuracy in the course of their second language programme if emphasis is not put on this aspect from the start It may be that certain grammatical inaccuracies will tend to 'fossilize' (ibid 11)

There is certainly a pedagogical risk in a communicative approach which over-emphasizes communicative functions, getting one's meaning across, or fluency Brumfit (1984) recommends a communicative approach based on the fundamental polarity of accuracy and fluency (For the discussion of the terms accuracy and fluency see 2 3) He argues that concern with fluency should not prevent teachers from showing a concern with accuracy

Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that lack of attention to grammatical accuracy is potentially risky Marton (1988) mentions Omaggio, who described a number of empirical studies concerning the assessment of proficiency of students of the CIA Language School Reporting Omaggio's conclusion Marton writes

> First of all, fossilized lexical and grammatical items acquired in the beginning stages of language study are generally not remediable, and that learners using a highly inaccurate, pidginized version of the target language usually become 'terminal cases' and achieve a very low proficiency level, never attaining the linguistic skills needed to meet minimum job requirements (p 52)

The "push towards communication" characteristic of most communicative approaches has many critics who are strongly in favour of communicative approaches Marton referes to Eskey (1983), who argued that knowledge of a language is not simply the ability to get things done in the language Eskey writes

> Knowing English, for example, ought to mean more than being good at finding ways to get things done in the language If I point to my mouth and shout "Whiskey! Whiskey!" urgently enough, I succeed in the function of ordering a drink, but this hardly qualifies as a successful demonstration of what we normally mean by having learnt to speak English (Quoted in Marton 1988 53)

Moreover, Marton considers the problem of fluent, but inaccurate language production, which is a likely consequence of what he calls "the communicative teaching strategy", from a social perspective the attitude of native speakers towards this kind of language He reports that some studies related to this problem were summarized by Omaggio She concluded that lexical and

169

grammatical items were found to be most hindering to communication among all error types, and that native speakers differ in their acceptance of certain errors Marton argues that social roles of foreign speakers are an important factor in native speakers tolerance of errors For example, a tourist is not expected to acquire the same degree of accuracy as a scholar or a politician Scholars or diplomats lexical and grammatical erroneousness could seriously irritate addressees and influence their opinion of them "It can be concluded that allowing our learners to use a highly inaccurate version of the target language, full of fossilized errors, may not only arrest their linguistic development at some fairly low level of proficiency, but it may also stigmatize them socially in certain types of encounter with native speakers " (Ibid 53)

The value of the above argument is to establish the importance of grammar in communicative teaching and to call for a balanced approach which attends to both accuracy and fluency, and consequently, avoid the pedagogical risks associated with over-emphasis on communication and language functions However it is important to stress that by grammar we mean communicative grammar

Dickins and Woods (1988) use the term grammar in a non-traditional sense According to them grammar does not only make possible the grouping of words into certain patterns, but

170

also allows us the choice of which combinations to use They provide the example of choosing between saying "To be, or not to be that is the question" and "The question is whether to be or not to be " They argue that the first structure chosen by Hamlet is an elegant expression of meaning which may not be suitable to convey the same meaning or message in some other situation So grammatical choices are made "with the purpose of enhancing the message to be conveyed, so that its interpretation by the receiver will be not only accurate with regard to meaning but also made with an awareness of the attitude of the speaker " (p 627-8) In this sense grammar is extended beyond the level of single utterances to discourse level Thus grammar rules, as they argue, explain not only the use of forms in semantic terms only, but also in pragmatic terms (ibid 629) Consider the following example

A We had a good time in Damascus

B It was a good time that we had in Damascus

In the two examples grammatical choice between A and B carries pragmatic considerations While in A the speaker conveys a rather neutral attitude, in B the speaker enhances the effectiveness of the message and expresses a positive attitude towards the time spent in Damascus and probably a feeling of nostalgia In this sense grammar is more than accuracy It is a vehicle which carries attitudinal tones and pragmatic considerations, and allows the dynamics of stylistic choice

Dickins and Woods also argue that grammar is the means by which we express past, present and future time through the use of tenses Through grammar we also order information to show the listener what the theme is or where the focus of information is They provide the following example

The queen bee lays eggs in the honeycomb during the Summer

During the Summer, the queen bee lays eggs in the honeycomb

The grammatical choice in the first sentence tells what the queen bee does during the Summer, while the second sentence tells what happens during the Summer (ibid 631) To summarize what they mean by grammar, Dickins and Woods write

> We can say that grammar is the resource available to indicate a number of elements crucial to the appropriate and accurate interpretation of utterances (a) the relationship between the participants in an interaction, (b) the topic being discussed, (c) the time of the event, (d) the mood of the utterance(s), and (e) the attitude taken by the speaker Furthermore, within grammar, there is constant interaction that brings all these functions together to allow a full interpretation of the message (Ibid 632-3)

It should be mentioned here that this view of grammar is comparable to the view advanced by Rutherford (1987) and his discussion of grammatical consciousness-raising It is also comparable to the view held by Crombie (1981) in her discussion of the relational syllabus and how grammar can be incorporated to the syllabus (see 3 6 5)

With regard to the incorporation of grammar to the language teaching programme, Dickins and Woods put forward several criteria for the design and implementation of communicative grammar tasks First of all, they draw a distinction between the content and the construct of grammar tasks By "content" they refer to the grammatical content itself or "what is being presented to the learner" By the construct of grammar tasks, on the other hand, they refer to the process in which the grammatical content is to be presented (ibid 633)

From a traditional standpoint grammar and communication, as they point out, has always been two separate issues rather than two complementary elements of language use The pedagogical consequence of this view was that learners were presented with exercises and encouraged to manipulate structures without any consideration of how they function in the context in which they occur Thus grammar is emphasized and communication is neglected However, in contrast to the traditional view, current practices emphasize communication and "In many cases, the functions of grammar in the effective communication of ideas, beliefs, feelings, and so on are ignored " (Ibid 633) To illustrate this point they provide the following example from Draskau

Arrange in order of politeness (1= most, 10= lest polite)

You could open the window
You can open the window
please open the window
Why is the window closed?
I must ask you to open the window
Open the window
It's very hot in here
Can you open the window?
Could you open the window?
Open the window, please

Suggest other ways of making the request
How do your suggestions fit into the scale above?
Discuss your results with the other group
What do you notice about the word 'please'?

Dickins and Woods explain that this example presents learners with a variety of ways to convey the act of requesting in varying degrees of politeness But these requests are "presented as discrete phrases" and the problem is that learners do not know "why certain grammatical choices are made in favour of others in the expression of a given communicative function " (ibid 634)

Dickins and Woods suggest that grammar tasks should illustrate both content and construct The weakness of the above example is that it presents the content without any consideration of the construct, that is the way in which the grammatical content may be appropriately presented to learners (ibid 635)

A key issue in their view of grammar is that it is not an end in itself but rather a means for successful communication Therefore, a communicative grammar task should develop in learners

"(a) an awareness of grammatical choice and (b) the capacity to make the appropriate choices according to given contextual constraints In other words, a communicative grammar-learning environment should facilitate the comprehension of <u>how</u> grammar works in the conveying and interpretation of meaning " (ibid 636) To demonstrate how this can be achieved, they provide this example

> In groups, examine the following text and see where you
> think it can be improved by using the passive Give reasons
> for the changes you make
>
> If it is true that one can tell an area from its
> notice-board, then one can easily find out if one would
> like to live there Of course, one has to interpret the
> messages carefully, and also consider them as a whole This
> is necessary in order to avoid the situation where a minor
> piece of exotica takes you in, although it isn't
> representative of the notices as a whole Equally one
> should not totally ignore the unusual notice, since this
> may herald a new trend in the area While it is true that
> one swallow doesn't make a Summer, one should remember that
> a change has to start somewhere Often this affects older
> districts which people have neglected and allowed to run
> down Suddenly, because there are often quite cheap areas
> to live in, some young people move into them and this
> starts the change in the district
>
> CHANGES TO BE MADE   REASONS

Dickins and Woods explain that the merit of such a task is that, unlike grammar exercises in which students are asked to transform single active sentences into the passive, it presents students with a whole task where they are invited to think and account for whatever grammatical choices they make This type of task provides the learner "with a more adequate linguistic environment that more overtly integrates linguistic form with

communicative intention " Because of this, they insist that learners should be familiarized with "contexts and situations in which the application of grammatical rules in use may be demonstrated" (ibid 636-9)

Finally, what we have tried to do in this section is first, to give reason for our interest in grammar, second, to present a communicative view of grammar, and third to consider some criteria on which communicative grammar tasks can be designed and utilized in the classroom However, it should be noted that I am not suggesting a return to grammar-centred approaches But we should not forget that the failure of traditional methods to lead to proficiency was not because grammar is has no relevance to language learners Grammar can be useful and taught for the benefit of students, but only if we have a clear idea of what grammar is and the appropriate methods of teaching it

6 2 Teaching cultural competence

Although the need for introducing culture to the foreign language classroom has been emphasized and justified by many researchers, and although communicative competence theories were developed in order to assign a significant role for the cultural factors involved in language acquisition, this need was not always met in most communicative teaching Byram (1986) notes that despite the significance of textbooks in language teaching, "Attention to cultural studies dimension is often missing " (p 331) He

176

refers to Anderson and Risager (1981), who demand that textbooks should give "a true experience of the society they claim to represent " They argue, and Byram mentions, that "textbooks often give the impression of ideological neutrality_ in both cultural and linguistic terms_ but in fact any selection of content or language variety carries ideological overtones " (Ibid 331)

6 2 1 Coursebooks with a cultural focus

It should be mentioned, however, that a few attempts have been made to devise textbooks which exemplify an interest in the cultural dimension of language learning Byram points out that Hurman's (1977) textbook As Others See Us presents learners with a series of materials which is intended to increase their cultural understanding (ibid 333-4) But two of the important and recent textbooks which have been written with a focus on culture and the development of cultural competence in mind are The Culture Puzzle by Levine et al (1987) and Irving's Communicating in Contexts (1986)

Irving points out that Communicating in Contexts is based on the view that "good communication skills depend on becoming familiar with the cultural context to which language naturally belongs " Irving believes that many communication failures are the result of inadequate cultural knowledge rather than inadequate linguistic competence Therefore, this book aims to "bridge the

gap between linguistic and cultural competence that often exists

for students who have already spent some time (in some cases,

years) studying the English language by focus on its linguistic

features instead of cultural features"

Irving begins each chapter with a few discussion questions and

a number of reading passages The rest of the chapter consists of

two sections Focus on Communication and Focus on Culture In

the first section the student is asked to paraphrase the passages

and then do some exercises on vocabulary and the use of idioms

These exercises are then followed by a cartoon which illustrates a

cultural point or provides more vocabulary exercises and

discussion questions The other section is intended for students

to practice intercultural communication by interviewing Americans

or non-native speakers of English on the topics of the passages

which introduce the focus of the chapter The chapters of the

book focus on values, social institutions, family relations and

other aspects of of American culture Amomg the topics which the

book covers are learning another language and another culture,

developing cross-cultural awareness and individualism in the

United States (See Appendix for examples)

The Culture Puzzle, fosters a view which integrates language

learning and culture learning Therefore, the book aims to provide

cultural understanding of aspects of American culture which

influence communication strategies and language use in the

American context As the authors claim, The Culture Puzzle is a

coursebook "which integrates language learning and culture

learning It emphasizes cross-cultural knowledge and skill The

themes and content of the text provide an awareness of

cross-cultural communication " The writers acknowledge that

communication among members of different culture is likely to

create misunderstanding due to differences in the ways people

behave and think The book thus provides students with

opportunities to study examples of cultural differences in

communication As the authors point out the book "helps students

identify ways to avoid misinterpretations in their own interaction

with Americans and with people from other cultures" (p xiii)

The book is divided into units, each unit containing several

chapters Each chapter contains eight sections (1) Chapter

Introduction, (2) Cross-Cultural Interactions, (3) Questions and

Discussion, (4) Interaction Summaries, (5) Focus on U S Culture,

(6) Exercise and Skill Practice, (7) Phrases and Expressions and

(8) U S and Cross-Cultural notes (See Appendix for an example)

The interest of the authors in teaching communication skills

and raising cultural awareness is clearly reflected in the

selection of topics addressing people, interacting in a group,

choosing conversation topics, understanding cultural differences

etc

Furthermore, such books can be employed, together with other
materials, to raise learners' cultural awareness and to teach them
how to handle communication strategies in English   Although these
two books can be used with all English learners as a part of their
language course, they can be particularly useful for students who
are to move to America for academic,   occupational or other
purposes

6 2 2 Possible procedures for teaching cultural competence
It should be mentioned that although coursebooks like those
referred to above are effective means for teaching cultural
competence, teachers should not use them to the exclusion of other
means   Cultural competence can be taught by employing a variety
of techniques and using a bank of other materials   Brooks(1986)
describes a familiar device used frequently by teachers   Teachers
devote some time at the start of a lesson to introduce a topic
which has not been previously introduced   In this case teachers
draw attention to similarities and dissimilarities across cultures
among behavioural patterns associated with a particular situation
(p 123)   But when teachers are not familiar with the students'
cultural background, they can only focus on the characteristic
routines of the speech event and allow students to identify
similarities and contrasts   Brook listed a number of topics that
may be considered in the classroom   As examples we quote the
following

Greetings, friendly exchange, farewells   How do friends
meet, converse friendly, take their leave   What are the perennial
topics of small talks?   How are strangers introduced?

Patterns of politeness   What are the commonest formulas of
politeness and when should they be used?

Festivals   What days of the calender year are officially
designated as national festivals? What are the central themes of
these occasions and what is the manner of their celebration?

Games   What are the most popular games that are played
outdoors, indoors, by the young, by adults?

Appointments   How are appointments for business and pleasure
made? What are the usual meeting places?   How important is
punctuality?

Soft drinks and alcohol   What type of nonalcoholic beverages
are usually consumed by young people and adults? What is the
attitude toward the use of beer, wine, and spirits? What
alcoholic drinks are in frequent use at home and in public?

Careers   What careers have strong appeal for the young? How important is parental example and advice in the choice of a career   (ibid 126-8)

Brook explains that such information can be acquired by students through teacher's presentation   Although this is possible and useful,   a better way of teaching such information, we believe,   is to assign learning tasks to groups of students   in which they are required to find out the appropriate cultural behaviour related to such topics   To aid the implementation of the task, the teacher may guide students to sources of information such as particular books in the library, television, friends and relatives who have been to the target language community, etc   The value of such a procedure is that it gives learners responsibility for their own learning,   and is compatible with the view of a learner- centred classroom

Another possible procedure for teaching the previously mentioned and similar topics is to present learners with authentic pieces of spoken or written discourse which centres around particular communicative events   It should be stressed, however, that when teachers present students with such pieces of discourse, it is important that they explain the situation in which they occur,   and the general cultural assumption underlying the communicative event   In more technical terms,   teachers should

make sure that students have understood the "context of situation" and the "context of culture" of the communicative event around which the text centres (On the two types of context see 2 4) For example, if students are to be given a written text entitled "At a Dublin Pub", the teacher should specify the "context of situation" by explaining, for instance, that a group of young men and women arrange to meet at the pub on a Saturday night, order their drinks and have a good time The teacher should also specify the "context of culture" by providing information about the social role of the pub as a meeting place in Ireland, the importance of a Saturday night, the attitude of Irish people towards alcohol and women, and any other relevant information In this case the perfect interpretation of discourse will be rendered possible

This kind of presentation is extremely useful in the sense that students will perceive that cultural knowledge is relevant and aids their comprehension of instances of language use, and that language use is contextualized, that is placed in its cultural context However, such a method of presentation, we believe, is absent from most communicative teaching When presented with a text, albeit authentic, the student has only the immediate situational factors (context of situation) at his or her disposal It is the other side of the equation (context of culture) which is often missing

6 2 3 Materials for teaching cultural competence

In addition to coursebooks teachers have a variety of sources of cultural information available to them   Newspapers are a rich and continuously   up-to-date   vehicle   for   teaching   cultural understanding   as well as many other aspects of language use   In this   section   we   shall   concentrate   on   a   number   of newspaper features   and   the   purposes for which they may   be   used   in   the classroom

The front page   Front pages can   be used in the classroom to make students   aware   of which topics or visuals would attract   readers and   to   which   age   or   sex   group   they   appeal   (c f Blachford 1986 131)

The   horoscope   Blachford argues that the horoscope reveals   how much people believe in   the   supernatural   and to what extent they relate   daily   events to supernatural prophecies   (ibid 131)   In addition to its value as a   source of information about particular patterns of belief,   the horoscope can be amusing for students and may trigger a discussion between believers and disbelievers in the supernatural, and thus create a reason for communication

Sports pages   From sports pages learners find out about the games played in the target community,   the   most popular games,   and the attitude of the public towards sport

Readers' letters   Letters seeking professional advice on a variety of problems are a source of information about the sort of problem people pose, their attitude towards marriage, sexuality, family relations and so on

Probably the most important facet of the newspaper is that it offers a wide range of discourse and register Blachford notes that "Within any newspaper is a variety of styles   There is the very formal editorial, the argument of the news analysis,   the slang or the sarcasm in a letter to the editor, the elliptical phrasing of some colomnists, the truncated style of the headline, the dialect of the comic strip " (Ibid 133)   Although the same newspaper presents a variety of styles, teachers could compare and contrast quality and popular newspapers to show even a wider range of styles, discourse and register   Therefore , newspapers can be used to sensitize learners to variation in language use and to develop an ability to vary their speech and writing according to the demands of the situation,   an ability which is at the core of communicative competence

Furthermore, using newspapers in the classroom allows a number of activities and tasks to emanate   Apart from discussions about various issues in the newspaper, students can be assigned tasks which require practicing a number of language skills at the same time   For example,   asking groups of students to write news

headlines, create sports commentaries, make advertisments etc
In this case, acquiring cultural understanding and practicing
language use are dealt with as one issue, in learning about the
culture learners are simultaneously practising language, and in
their use of the language they are gaining cultural understanding
Blachford emphasizes this point when he writes

> In terms of language skills, there is plenty to talk about
> or recognize in the different registers of English and the
> appropriate use of each   Activities which emanate from a
> newspaper class can center around a cultural theme, but
> give practice in the language   The discussion of cultural
> differences practices speaking, the discussion itself
> involves comprehension, understanding the topic under
> discussion involves reading   (Ibid 133)

Reading newspapers is an extremely difficult task even for
advanced learners   Linguistic complexity is one reason, but the
crucial factor is that newspapers are highly culture-related   A
learner has little chance of understanding a newspaper report on
Irish football or cricket if he or she is unfamiliar with these
games no matter how competent in English he or she might be
Therefore, in dealing with newspapers, as Blachford says,
learners need "to be guided and taught"   When tackled in the
classroom newspapers can be effective means for teaching language
in a cultural perspective, that is teaching communicative
competence

Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) emphasize the role of cultural
knowledge in the abilitiy to understand and produce speech acts,
and its implications for language teaching and learning   They

186

recognize three factors which underlie the use of any speech act, viz, language functions, language varieties and the "shared sociocultural allusions" or "presuppositions" (p 22)   It is important, therefore, that communicators have knowledge of each other's cultural experiences in order for successful communication to take place   As has been suggested by many researchers (e g Widdowson 1982) Finocchiaro and Brumfit also suggest that "Parts of messages in oral or written communication are misunderstood or given false values due to the fact that socio-cultural experiences have not been shared by listener and speaker, or writer and reader " (Ibid 26)

Finocchiaro and Brumfit suggest a variety of techniques which can be adopted to teach aspects of the target culture   In what follows we mention those which we believe are the most important First, they insist that the language classroom should reflect the target culture through the use of a number of materials   the display of newspaper extracts showing advertisments, proverbs, comic strips, pictures etc , the use of books and magazines with the learner's proficiency level in mind, the use of records of contemporary music and songs

Second, they recognize the great value of individual and group projects   Among the topics which learners can work on are maps of all kinds,   menus, a class newspaper, a book fair, the study of some cultural customs etc   However, we should stress that projects

would be more useful if students work on other subjects than those proposed by Finocchiaro and Brumfit   Although important, most of these topics are related to superficial aspects of the target culture which have little bearing on the learners' ability to communicate successfully We believe that more appropriate project work topics are such as those listed by Brook and mentioned in the preceding section   These include forms of politeness,   gestures, leavetaking etc

Third,   Finocchiaro   and   Brumfit   suggest   that   literary masterpieces (simplified if necessary) should be studied in the classroom because   literature   reflects   cultural   patterns   of behaviour, beliefs, values, customs etc , and provides exposure to authentic use of registers and dialects   It can also provide excellent topics for classroom discussion

Fourth,   they   mention   the technique whereby members of   the community who have been to the country are invited to come to class   and   talk   about their experience and observations in   the country and, if possible,   illustrate with photographs and other means   Students will write invitation and thanks letters to visitors in which they practice communication and learn about invitation forms, compliments and forms of politeness and address (ibid 130- 2)   This technique is both interesting and useful especially for students who are to move to the target language community

188

Furthermore, the introduction of a wide range of discourse to the classroom is one of the most effective means for teaching cultural competence because, as Fine points out, "second language discourse is crucially related to the culture and situation of the second language " (p 2) By discourse me mean any instance of authentic, contextualized spoken or written language Discourse is important for teaching cultural competence in at least two ways First, it is a rich source of information about attitudes, beliefs, manners, way of life etc of native speakers Second, and more importantly, discourse demonstrates a wide range of strategies which are specific to the language in question

We should mention that learners must be familiarized with the discourse strategies of the target language because, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, variation in the use of discourse strategies across cultures is the cause of numerous communication breakdowns Fine explores the value of discourse for the second language classroom even further He argues that through exposure to discourse learners will develop a meaning potential "As a second language learner becomes more familiar with the culture and the discourse patterns of the new language, he or she learns what the possible meanings are for the culture " (Ibid 4)

189

However, acquiring a meaning potential in the target language is not to be seen as separate from acquiring a cultural competence or communicative competence in general since both derive from the content of the culture to which they are related (see Chapter two)

Finally, cultural competence can be promoted in a variety of ways We have discussed some techniques, procedures and materials which can be used to accomplish this goal They are by no means exhaustive The sophisticated, imaginative teacher will always discover new ways depending on the demands and interests of students

Conclusions

In this thesis we have explained that the different versions of the communicative competence theory were developed within a socio-cultural framework, and the notions of meaning potential, fluency and capacity are closely associated with communicative competence and were also developed from the same general standpoint that the ability to use language successfully is governed by cultural presuppositions of a particular culture Therefore, throughout the thesis we have adopted the view that communicative competence implies the ability to verbally behave in a culturally appropriate manner We have pointed out that although communicative competence was accepted as the aim of foreign language teaching in communicative approaches, little attention has been paid to the teaching of the target culture in most communicative teaching Hence our major conclusion is that raising cultural awareness should be, and can be as we have explained, an integral part of foreign language education

We have also argued that over-emphasis on language functions and dissatisfaction with traditional grammar has led to an underestimation of the role of grammar Our second conclusion is that grammar need not be traditional grammar, we can talk about communicative grammar and teach it for the benefit of students In this case grammar is another important aspect of communicative competence which communicative teaching should attend to

To turn to our major conclusion, it seems reasonable to argue that understanding a culture other than one's own is important not only for the ability to use the language of that culture, but it is also significant for the creation of a better world In a world which is confronted with existential problems which need international cooperation, in a world which is torn apart by national, racial and cultural bias, it is not absurd to argue that more cultural understanding is called for

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Appendix

In this Appendix we include some extracts from the first chapter in <u>Communicating in Contexts</u> and the seventh chapter in <u>The Culture Puzzle</u> Our aim is demonstrate that coursebooks can serve as effective means for teaching English with a cultural focus if coursebook writers adopt a view which integrates language learning and culture learning, and acknowledge the significance of cultural competence as a major component of overall communicative competence However because of limited space we could not include a whole chapter of each book, and thus we have chosen to quote some extracts which are typical of the books First we include extracts from <u>Communicating in Contexts</u> followed by our comment on the structure of the book and the pedagogical function of the sections Second we incorporate extracts from <u>The Culture Puzzle</u>, also followed by some notes
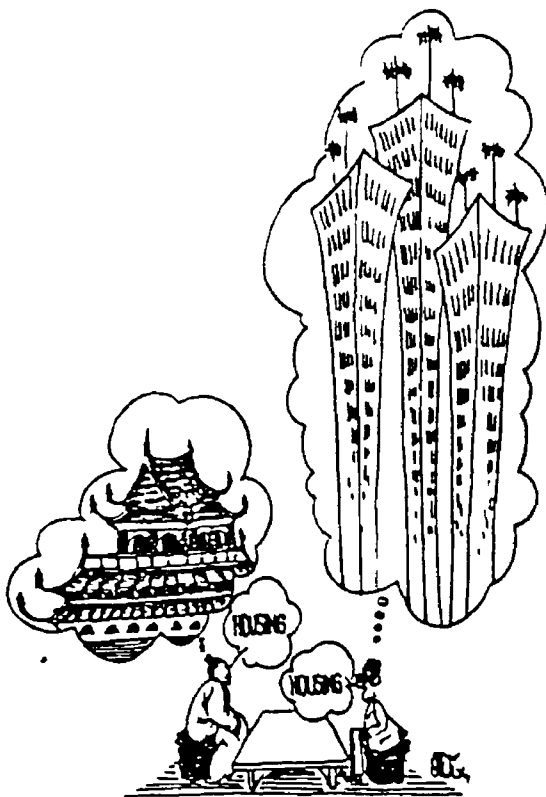
Discussion Questions

1 Where are these characters from?
2 What visual clues did you depend on to identify their origin?
3 What country are they in? How do you know?
4 Describe how these two men differ in their perceptions of what the word "housing" means
5 Why don't they agree on the meaning of the word?
6 Describe what the word "housing" usually brings to mind in your culture
7 This cartoon points out some potential problems in communicating with someone in a second language and a second culture What are those potential problems?
8 Discuss your own experiences and problems in trying to communicate in a new language and a new culture

The Link Between Communication and Culture

It has been said that without a culture we cannot see, but with a culture we are forever blind In other words, each of us is born into a culture that teaches us a number of shared meanings and expectations We usually learn our own cul-

ture s ways of doing, speaking, and thinking so well that it becomes difficult to think feel speak and act as people in other cultures do

For example a baby born in India into an orthodox Hindu tradition will learn that cows are sacred The child becomes a vegetarian like the rest of his family and the thought of cows as a source of food never occurs to him even though his Muslim neighbor eats beef If he were to come to the United States as an adult and observe the gusto with which some Americans enjoy a good beefsteak, he might have difficulty understanding and accepting this behavior He might think that Americans had no respect for religion or that they showed poor taste However the practice of eating beef in the United States, a predominantly Judeo-Christian culture, has little or nothing to do with religion, nor from the American point of view does it mean Americans don't know what

tastes good It is just that Indians and Americans have been raised in different cultures with varying ideas about what to eat and what not to eat, what is sacred and what is not sacred In the same way, the carnivorous American who visits India, craving a good steak and noticing a lot of Indians who appear to be skinny, might find it absurd that these people who from the American's perspective, look like they need more nourishment and protein, don't break down and enjoy a good, juicy hamburger or steak Both the Indian and the American have a word for ' cow " in their respective vocabularies, but just as the word hous- ing' means different things to different people, so does the word "cow" mean different things to people of different cultures

As the basic building blocks of communication, words communicate mean- ing, but as we have seen, the meanings of words are very much influenced by culture Meaning is in the person, not in the word, and each person is the prod- uct of a particular culture that passes on shared and appropriate meanings Thus, if we want to learn to communicate well in a foreign language, we must un- derstand the culture that gives that language meaning In other words, culture and communication are inseparably linked you can't have one without the other Culture gives meaning and provides the context for communication, and . the ability to communicate allows us to act out our cultural values and to share our language and our culture

But our own native language and culture are so much a part of us that we take them for granted When we travel to another country, it's as if we carry, along with our passports, our own culturally designed lenses through which we view the new environment Using our own culture as the standard by which to judge other cultures is called ethnocentrism, and although unintentional, our ethnocentric ways of thinking and acting often get in the way of our under- standing other languages and cultures The ability and willingness to change lenses when we look at a different culture is both the cure and the prevention for such cultural blindness Studying a new language provides the opportunity to practice changing lenses when we also learn the context of the culture to which it belongs

When linguists study a new language they often compare it to their own and consequently they gain a better understanding of not only the new lan guage, but of their own language as well Students who study a foreign lan- guage will also learn more about their own native tongue by comparing and contrasting the two languages You can follow the same comparative method in learning more about culture—your own as well as others' Remember that each culture has developed a set of patterns that are right and appropriate for that culture If people do things differently in another culture, they are not wrong"—they are just different' Always thinking that ' culturally different" means culturally wrong will only promote intercultural misunderstanding

Learning about American culture along with the American language does not necessitate your becoming "Americanized" and acting just like an Ameri- can but it does mean making an effort to understand American people and

4

culture In other words it helps you to *see* like an American without your having to *be* like an American

You Can Talk, but What Do You Communicate?

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY, IT'S HOW YOU SAY IT.

Reynolds/Leteron Company creative by R Kwong

How often have you heard someone say, in an attempt to clarify, "Yes, that is what I *said* but that s *not* what I meant"? Just because we talk does not mean that we actually communicate what we intend Communication can be defined as any behavior that is given meaning, whether the behavior is verbal or nonverbal, intended or unintended, consciously or unconsciously performed So, it is impossible *not* to communicate, even though one does not always communicate in words

ЭCUS ON COMMUNICATION

immary of Key Ideas

After each summary, *paraphrase* the idea—that is, restate it in your own words

> *Example* We are all, to some extent, culture-bound
> *Paraphrase* Everyone is, to one degree or another, influenced by the culture he or she was raised in

1 Meaning is in the person, not in the word

   Paraphrase

2 We tend to take our own language and culture for granted

   Paraphrase

`   *Peter Adler, Culture Shock and the Cross-Cultural Learning Experience," in *Readings in Intercultural Communication* ed David S Hoopes (Pittsburgh University of Pittsburgh, Regional Council for International Education 1979), II 13

3   People everywhere tend to be ethnocentric

Paraphrase

4. Much of what we communicate is nonverbal

Paraphrase

5   Communicating interculturally can often lead to misunderstanding due to cultural differences that people are often not even aware of

Paraphrase

6. Although the term carries a negative connotation, culture shock can be beneficial in the long run, as it leads to cultural awareness and helps us to better understand ourselves as well as others

Paraphrase

7   Culture and communication are inseparable

Paraphrase

Idioms in Context

Now men I want a thorough combing of the area

Reprinted from *The Saturday Evening Post* © 1967 by The Curtis Publishing Company

7

Idiom to *comb the area* = to *search the area carefully* so as not to miss anything

Example The police searched the area with a fine-tooth comb

Meaning _____

Make up your own sentence that uses the idiom "to comb the area '

_____

_____

Each idiom is repeated below as it was found in the text, it is followed by a second example of usage in context Based on the examples, make an "educated guess" as to the meaning of the idiom

1 to *take something for granted*
   Text Our own language and culture are so much a part of us that we *take them for granted*

   Example I am accustomed to getting cash every Friday from the cash machine at my bank, I never wonder whether or not there will be money in the machine—*I just take it for granted*

   Meaning _____

   Now write your own examples using the idiom in context:

   a _____

   b _____

1a to *take someone for granted*
    Compare "to take *something* for granted" and "to take *someone* for granted." "To take something for granted" does not necessarily carry a negative connotation, but to "take *someone* for granted" does, because it implies that the person taken for granted is not appreciated.

    Example Joan complained that after twenty-five years of marriage, her husband no longer brought her flowers on their anniversary and never told her he loved her; she accused her husband of *taking her for granted*

    Example Henry's boss refused to give him a raise or to give him additional time off, even though he had been working very hard Henry felt that his boss just *took him for granted*, so one day when he knew his boss would need him, he called in sick and took the day off

    Meaning _____

    Now write your own sentences

    a _____

    b _____

4 Do moviestars in your country marry and divorce more often than other people?

FOCUS ON CULTURE

Reprinted with permission of Oruc Cakmakli

Practicing Intercultural Communication

Ask an American, yourself, and a person from a third culture the following questions about the link between language and culture Compare the answers from these three different sources and then compare them with the answers of others in your group Although you may see some patterns emerge, don't jump

to hasty conclusions and make sweeping generalizations about cultures based on this small sample Any particular person is not necessarily representative of his or her culture as a whole Once your group has enough samples from any one culture, you might ask a person from that culture if he or she thinks those answers are representative of that culture

Interview Questions

1 What makes your native language special or unique?

2 What features of your native language make it easier or more difficult for you to learn another language?

3 Can you think of any individual characteristics you have that help you or hinder you in another culture?

4 Can you think of any cultural characteristics you have that help or hinder you in another culture?

5 Can you think of an example of a gesture common in your culture that is not used in other cultures or means something quite different?

6 What do you think Peter Adler meant when he said the greatest shock in culture shock may not be in the encounter with another culture, but with the confrontation of one s own culture' ? Do you agree with him? Why?

7 Try to explain what the following words mean to the majority of people in your culture

house	work	competition	boss
family	leisure	cooperation	friend

Cross-Cultural Analysis

JAPAN Consider the following incident between an American business-man and a Japanese visitor to the United States, analyzing each person's actions and attitudes from a cross-cultural perspective Discuss the incident and the questions that follow

> Mrs Kobayashi, a Japanese woman temporarily staying in the United States, and Mr Keller, an American businessman, were involved in a "fender-bender" at a busy intersection Mr Keller had been daydreaming about his upcoming vacation and had neglected to turn on his blinker before turning left at the intersection Mrs Kobayashi was very surprised when Mr Keller turned left with no warning and hit her left front fender, bending it out of shape Fortunately they were both driving slowly, and neither person was injured But they were both a little shaken
>
> As they were both getting out of their cars to inspect the damage, a policeman, who had heard but not seen the fender-bender, approached the scene of the accident He overheard the Japanese woman saying to

the man who was at fault   Oh I m so sorry ' The police officer gave
Mrs Kobayashi a ticket for a moving traffic violation She paid $30 and
Mr Keller got away without any blame

Discussion Questions

1 Who was really to blame for the accident?

2. Why did the policeman give Mrs Kobayashi and not Mr Keller a ticket?

3 Why did Mrs Kobayashi say "I'm sorry" to Mr Keller? What did she mean?

4 The words ' I'm sorry   don t always mean the same thing—it depends on the
   context Discuss with your group different meanings "I'm sorry" could have and
   explain the situation for each of the different meanings

5 Explain how Mrs Kobayashi and the policeman were both influenced by their cul-
   tural values How might this wrongdoing have been avoided?

6 Does this incident bring to mind any stereotypes about men, women, and police-
   men? Explain

7 Why do vou think Mrs Kobayashi paid the ticket?

8. What do you think Mrs Kobayashi should have done?
   What do you think Mr Keller should have done?
   What do you think the policeman should have done?

9 Discus how your own cultural values influenced your ideas of "right" and "wrong"
   in this situation

Survival Skills in a New Culture

11

These pages are extracts from the chapter entitled "Learning Another Language and Another Culture" in Communicating in Contexts The chapter begins with a cartoon and a number of discussion questions The cartoon serves as a stimulus to trigger a response among the students in order to answer the questions which centre around the cartoon The questions help to initiate a discussion among students, and thus provide the opportunity to practice the oral skill while their attention is focused on a cultural point Attention to culture learning is evident from the very beginning The cartoon contrasts people's perceptions of "housing" This contrast sensitizes students to the fact that the same words do not have the same connotations across cultures As we have argued in Chapter five, people from different cultures assign different meanings to the same word or speech act

This part of the chapter is then followed by a reading passage on the relation of language to culture The passage explains that the way people think and behave is culture-bound, and provides examples The author urges students to be open-minded towards other cultures, because learning another culture does not imply that learners should become "Americanized", for example, but that they should make an effort to understand how Americans think and behave As far as language skills are concerned, this passage is intended to provide practice in the reading skill

Following the reading passage there are two important sections in the chapter Focus on Communication and Focus on Culture In the first section students are presented with a number of key sentences which occur in the passage They are then asked to paraphrase the ideas using their own words The aim of this section is to get students to practice writing skills and to reinforce the cultural points which the chapter aims to convey An important feature of this section is "Idioms in Context" Students are given a number of idioms which can be found in the text, with examples illustrating their use Students are required to infer the meaning of the idioms from the context and then show their understanding by writing examples using the idioms There are two important points about idioms here First, the ability to understand and use idioms appropriately is a sign of fluency In Chapter two we considered "idiomatic competence" as part of "cultural competence" which is in turn part of communicative competence (see 2 7) Second, students are encouraged to infer the meaning of idioms from the context and thus employ a significant learner strategy The use of learner strategies is important for communicative competence development (see 4 4)

Moreover, the second section is intended to practice intercultural communication Students are assigned a group task in which they are required to ask themselves, an American and a person from a third culture a number of questions related to aspects of language and culture This section also includes an incident which shows a cultural misunderstanding Students are asked to analyse and discuss the incident The function of this section is to create conditions for genuine language use where students interact with native speakers and other people and find out about differences between cultures
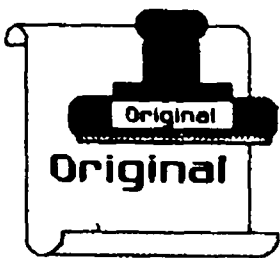
chapter 7

Interacting
in a Group
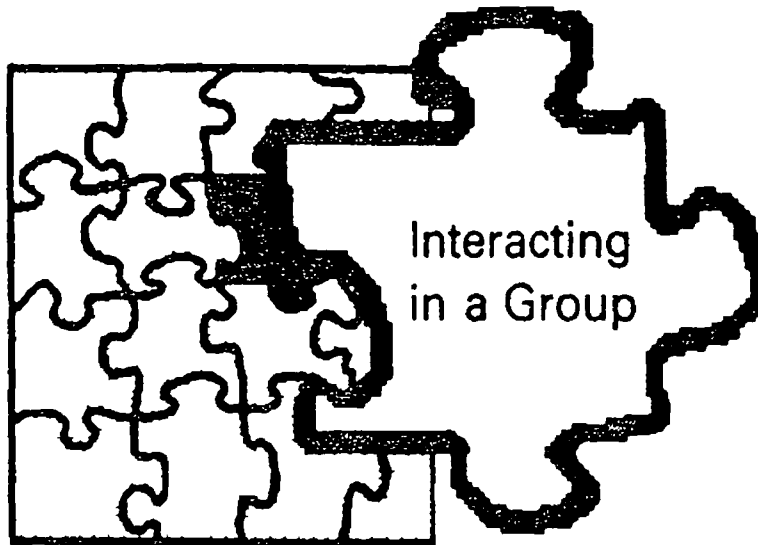
Introduction You probably find yourself in situations where there are conversations or discussions among three or more people These include class discussions, meetings at work, and social conversations It is often difficult for non native speakers of English to participate in group discussions and conversations when the others are native speakers of English This chapter will apply skills presented in Chapters 5 and 6 to interaction in group contexts

CULTURE LEARNING QUESTIONS

1 Which do you feel is more difficult, communication between two people or communication in a group?

2 Which is more difficult when you are speaking your own language? Which is more difficult when you are speaking English? Give examples from your own experience

(Revised interaction appears on page 91)

CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION 7A·
Ineffective Communication

Situation Bill is leading a staff meeting in a company in the U S There are eight people who are all American, except Anna, who is from Hungary She is a supervisor in the manufacturing department Today, Bill is talking about two things at the meeting The first is a new health insurance plan for the employees The second is vacation schedules The meeting has been going on for twenty minutes Bill has just finished explaining the insurance plan

Bill   "Okay, so that's the insurance plan Any questions?"

Anna   "Yes, I   "

Margie   (Margie interrupts Anna) "Bill, where do I sign up for this insurance?"

Anna   (Anna thinks to herself "What did Margie ask? I couldn't hear the question ' Anna does not speak)

15

Bill	See John in the Personnel office " (Then Bill looks at Anna)
Anna	'Personnel office?'
Bill	"You don't know where the Personnel office is?"
Anna	(Anna thinks to herself, "No, that's not my question I want to know what Margie asked you " Anna is not sure what to say, so she says nothing)
Bill	' Margie, after the meeting will you show Anna where the Personnel office is?"
Margie	' Okay "
Bill	"Any other questions?"
Anna	(Anna thinks to herself, "Yes, I have a question about the insurance, and I still don't know what Margie's question was What did they mean about the 'Personnel office'? How can I interrupt?" Anna looks confused, but says nothing)
Bill	(No one asks a question, so he continues speaking quickly) "Okay, let's move on then Have you all turned in your vacation schedules for this year?"
Anna	(Anna thinks to herself, "What does he mean, 'turned in'? I'm not going to ask since everyone else probably understands ")

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

Comprehension

Write T (true) or F (false) in the space provided

1 _____ Margie needs to see John in the Personnel office to sign up for insurance
2 _____ Anna wants to know where the Personnel office is
3 _____ Anna asks Margie to show her where the Personnel office is
4 _____ Anna does not ask the question that she wanted to ask before Margie interrupted

Analysis Can You Explain?

1 Bill looks at Anna after he answers Margie's question Why do you think he does this?
2 Anna thinks to herself, "No, that's not my question " Why doesn't she say this, aloud, to Bill?
3 Bill asks Margie to show Anna where the Personnel office is, even though this was not Anna's question Why do you think Bill did th·· ?

TALK ABOUT YOUR OWN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

1 Is the style of communication in the meeting in Cross-Cultural Interaction 7A typical of one that might take place in your language and culture? If it is not what are the differences?
2 Do you think that people who lead meetings in your culture would take the time to speak slowly and explain difficult words to non-native speakers of your language? Explain your answer

16

FOCUS ON U S CULTURE
Cultural Notes, Exercises, and Skill Practice

HOW MUCH DO YOU ALREADY KNOW ABOUT U S CULTURE?

Wnte T (true) or F (false) in the space provided

1 _____ If two people are speaking and a third would like to speak, he or she should never interrupt the two speakers

2 _____ In a group conversation or discussion, it is rude to talk again about a topic people already talked about earlier

3 _____ Americans will usually give non-native speakers of English extra thinking time and extra time to translate from their own language to English

4 _____ Americans generally think that it is good to speak up in meetings rather than be silent

5 _____ Americans are expected to bring up new ideas and suggestions in most meetings

SECTION 1 GETTING INTO THE CONVERSATION

Margie   "Bill, where do I sign up for this insurance?"

Bill   "See John in the Personnel office "

Anna   "Excuse me, Bill What was Margie's question?"

Bill   Let's move on

Anna   Before you move on I ve got another question '

Using the skills of holding your turn and interrupting can be very important in a group interaction especially if you are the only non native speaker of English When two or more native speakers are talking together it can be hard to get into or join, the conversation Sometimes it is necessary to interrupt quickly before the topic of conversation changes You may have to do this even before you have decided exactly what to say You may sometimes need to interrupt and hold your turn for a few seconds before you speak


Phrases and Expressions for Getting into a Group Conversation _____

When you want to get into, or break into, a group conversation, you have to wait for a pause and then interrupt quickly You could use the interruption phrases presented earlier

> "Excuse me I have something to add here "
> "Uhm   I have a question about that "
> "Could I ask a question?"
> "Could I interrupt for a quick second?"
> "Just a quick interruption   "

You could interrupt, hold your turn, and then say what you want to say

> "Um   "
> "So   this is what we need to do "
> "Do you mean, uh   ?"
> "Uh   I'd like to know   "
> "Can you tell me   ?"
> "I can add something here   "
> "Ah   you know   "
> "Well   you know   "

18
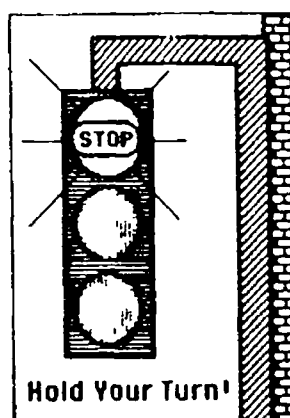
Hold Your Turn!

When you hold your turn it is as if you are putting up a stop light. You are telling others that you want to say something and you don't want anyone else to speak until after you speak

Skill Practice Getting into the Group Conversation

Use the phrases above to interrupt quickly and hold your turn. Then ask for focused repetition or explanation when you don t understand something. When you want to add something get into the conversation

Topics for a Group Discussion

- Your instructor discusses students' goals and his own goals for the class
- You and the other students list the problems of speaking a second language and discuss solutions to those problems
- Compare a typical school or work day in your native country with that of other students
- Your choice of topics

Cross-Cultural Exercise Getting into the Conversation

With two other people who speak your language, demonstrate for the class how you would break into a conversation in your language

- See if the class can identify any 'interruption sounds" you use (In English, "Uh ' and Uhm" are interruption sounds)
- Translate into English the phrases and expressions that you used to break into the conversation

---

CROSS CULTURAL NOTE

An Ethiopian man who worked in a hotel restaurant talked about a frustrating experience "When the kitchen staff have a meeting, I never ask any questions or say anything Sometimes I want to but by the time I decide how to say what I want to say, it's too late They're already talking about something else "

Phrases and Expressions for Going Back to Earlier Topics _____

If you miss the chance to say what you want to say you can often go back to it later in the conversation Repeat the following after your teacher

"Going back to what we were talking about earlier   "
"Could we go back to [state the topic] that we were discussing earlier? '
"I had a question earlier about [state the topic] "
"I wanted to add something to what we were saying earlier "

Skill Practice Going Back to Topics

Choose a topic to discuss with several other people If you lose the chance to say something, go back to the topic later in the discussion Use the phrases listed above Have your teacher listen to you and tell you if you are using the phrases correctly

Topics

Experiences in a second culture	Customs in your country
Learning a second language	Your choice of topics

These extracts form part of Chapter 7 (Interacting in a Group), which is part of Unit II (Interacting in English) In The Culture Puzzle This coursebook shows an interest in teaching cross-cultural communication skills, and this chapter is a good example of this interest The chapter recognizes that non-native speakers of English have difficulties in participating in group discussions when the participants are native speakers of English The chapter begins with two questions about communication problems in the students' mother tongue and in English Students are urged to think of communication problems and supply examples from their own experience The answers and examples provided could help the teacher identify areas of difficulty concerning group interaction and perhaps devote more classroom time and work to these problems The value of a procedure as such is that it actively involves students in the learning process by allowing them the chance to talk about their needs and difficulties, a procedure which is emphasized by communicative approaches The questions are followed by a conversation which demonstrates a non-native speaker's difficulty in making successful participation in a conversation

"Focus rn U S Culture" is an important section which elicits students' previous knowledge of conversational routines in American English In this section students are required to answer true-false question concerning rules of group conversations and

discussions Moreover, an important feature of this chapter is the section entitled "Getting into the Conversation" In this section the authors explain to students the importance of using the skill of holding one's turn and interrupting in group discussions, and then provide them with some useful phrases and expressions which could be used to interrupt to take part in a conversation This is followed by "Skill Practice" where students are asked to practise these phrases and expressions in suggested group discussion topics

Finally, although the two textbooks attend to other aspects of communicative competence such as vocabulary, attention to other aspects such as pronunciation and intonation is missing But to do them justice we could say that no single coursebook can equally attend to all aspects of communicative competence It is the teacher's job to select other coursebooks and a variety of materials to ensure that not only cultural competence, but overall communicative competence is well attended to These two textbooks are effective means for teaching language from a cultural perspective But however good they might be, the teacher will have to look for other sources and rely on a variety of procedures (see Chapter six) for teaching cultural competence