

Teaching

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Issue

刘守兰 覃辉 主编
Edited by Liu Shoulan
Qin Hui

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Volume 2

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Volume 2

Introduction: Teaching English as a Global Language

Liu Shoulan

The twenty-first century is referred to as an age of globalization and an age of information. At the turn of the new century, people who fail to recognize this fact are sure to lose sight of their own positioning in the structural transformation of the society linked with globalization. To teachers of English, what is important in the processes of globalization is the emergence of new cultural forms and spaces and the breaking down of old categories in the division of world cultures, which occurs as a result of the transnational flow of capital, culture, information and people. On top of all these flows, there is an extra dimension that deserves closer examination, that is the mediation of the use and teaching of a global language. Over the past twenty years, there has been a growing concern about the localization of English as it spreads and develops into a global language. At the same time, there is also an increasing interest in the localization of ways of teaching English as a global language, which may differ from one area to another geographically and culturally.

Whichever language becomes the medium for global communication, it will own the power of mediation. David Crystal puts this as a dilemma and also an affirmation of the role of English: "If language dominance is a matter of political power, then a revolution in the balance of global power could have consequences for the choice of a global language... Small-scale revolutions in the world order would be unlikely to have much effect, given that... English is now so widely established that it can no longer be thought of as "owned by any single nation." (Crystal 1997: 21) This dominance and flow of the English, together with other forms that characterize the globalization process, is in one way or the other built on the emergence of new spaces, which is the result of collapse of the colonial center in cultural formation. In the reshaping of the world order, the various kinds of flow have to be reconceptualized as contestation in the form of dialogue and interaction with regard to the new modes of cultural production and language formation.

In the essay, "Information: Digital Capitalism" (1999), recently published for a special issue "Visions For the 21st Century" in *Deutschland*, Peter Glotz points out that "industrial capitalism is mutating into digital capitalism. The principal characteristics of this new market phase will include acceleration, dematerialization, decentralization, and globalization" (p.48). Thus the "new information age" is characterized by information "as the property, capital, and physical labor." (Von Hardenburg, 1999: 51) The informationalization of society inevitably brings about not only changes in the pattern of formation seeking, but also changes in language use at the global level of communication. In the article "English, Information Access, and Technology Transfer: A Rationale for English as an International Language" (1988), William Grabe puts forth the idea that "English is clearly the dominant language of science and technology world-wide. Given this fact, it must be recognized that any country wishing to modernize, industrialize, or in some way become technologically competitive, must develop the capacity to access and use information written in the English language." (p.65) This view of Grabe affirms at

least two things. First, ESP, as Widdowson (1997) has emphasized, will form the basis of the registers of a global language. Second, access to information is not only necessary for a country's development, but will also serve as a link with different parts of the world. All these views emphasize on the effects that teaching and learning of English as a global language is highly indispensable in this age of information.

At the threshold of the twenty-first century with all existing theoretical paradigms being re-examined and divisional categories being re-visioned, there is a growing need for the re-orientation of education toward an emphasis on critical intellectual development. In language education, many critics have called for an approach to go beyond simply describing conventions of form to show the ways in which form is tied to social relations of power. Robert Phillipson, author of *Linguistic Imperialism*, has made the point in his article "The Politics of English Language Teaching".

English is the language in which a great deal of "international" activity (trade, politics, media, education...) takes place. Worldwide, competence in English is seen as opening doors. This means that ELT in its global and local manifestations is intricately linked to multiple uses of the language and access to power. It is therefore vital to know what forces and values it embodies, what purposes and effects of its professional ideologies are, what economic and cultural factors propel it forward, and ultimately whose interests it serves. (1997: 205)

Here we can see clearly that learning and teaching English is gaining an ever-increasing importance in recent years and the study of language is more and more related to the development of culture and society. Confronted with the new challenge, English teachers must aspire to becoming familiar with the new trend in the field and must keep being informed of the latest theoretical development and practical knowledge that are related to the profession of language teaching. To our delight, in the just-completed century, we have found tremendous achievements in the evolution of language teaching methodologies, the interface between technology and pedagogy, and the design of experimental research studies on language learning and teaching. As Kelly (1969) has shown in his fascinating *Twenty-Five Centuries of Language Teaching*, a great deal of theorizing, experimentation, innovation, debate, and controversy has occurred in the hope of improving practice and of making language teaching more manageable, more effective, and more interesting. While many of us are keen on learning theories and approaches introduced from the outside world, we seldom think about such a crucial question as the exploration of the methods of our own, the methods with Chinese characteristics, and especially with our local features.

It is with this clear purpose that my young colleagues and I embarked on our ambitious research project about four years ago and started our efforts to find out appropriate ways to teach English in this so-called backward province of the country and Yunnan. All the contributors of these two books have long been engaged in the training of student teachers, who seek orientation or professional development while learning in a normal university. In our research, we found that many English teachers in primary, secondary schools or even tertiary institutions have been persistently doing their teaching either based on their own accumulated experience, or blindly following this method and that one. However, in a rapidly de-

veloping country where a global language is badly needed, every English teacher is urged to become scientific and to rely on the linguistic theory and on research. These two books are therefore addressed to those who need to learn or to refresh their knowledge of English teaching methodologies.

The book, comprising two volumes, presents a panoramic picture of the development of English Teaching in theory and practice in China, especially in Yunnan. The second volume offers a framework for the hot issues and problems that are being discussed and explored in the field of teaching English as a foreign language. These articles are organized according to a series of topics: communicative approach, second language acquisition, grammar instruction, metacognition in EFL, individual learner differences, error analysis, pragmatics and English language teaching, cultural awareness in language teaching, washback effects of CET, and the education of EFL teachers for the 21st century. Nowadays, it seems quite a fashion that English teachers use such terms in their talks as “communicative approach”, “second language acquisition” to display their familiarity with the profession. However, in our study, we found that many of them deplorably lapsed in misunderstanding of the conceptions in one way or another. And this in turn leads their teaching and learning of the language astray.

To solve this serious problem, I think it would be advisable that these teachers build up a sound body of linguistic theory and scientific approach in their language learning and teaching. I could imagine that quite a few English teachers would feel it a headache or even antipathy whenever the word “theory” is mentioned, which seems to them either a labyrinth or an ivory tower. With this in mind, all of our contributors present these issues in such a lucid and concise style and in such a practical approach that I believe those who used to keep a respectful distance from the theoretical works will surely recognize the importance of the guiding role of theories. And I also believe that they will suddenly be delighted to realize that “there is indeed nothing so practical as a good theory” (Wardhaugh 1969: 116)

More pleasing to me is that my young colleagues can come close to the real situation of EFL in Yunnan, a developing ethnic province in Southwest China. We set out from the assumption that learning and teaching English is difficult everywhere, and we also assume that the business is even more challenging and demanding in a mountainous, undeveloped and multi-cultural area like Yunnan. It is delightful to note that our contributors in their articles clearly stated their awareness of the difficulties and then kindly offered their tentative solutions based on their solid theoretical background, pedagogical capacities and keen insight to the issues. In brief, they all discussed the topics from a realistic viewpoint, talking about the language teaching profession in a classroom that most of our readers are familiar with.

One distinguished feature of these two books is that all of the authors endeavored to build up a firm bridge between theory and practice, through which readers are able to see clearly the relations between the two. Both for pre-service and in-service teachers, it is highly necessary that they undergo an entire process of formal professional training in their teaching techniques and skills. They should be made very clear of the purposes, procedures, approaches, and methods in such aspects as the teaching of vocabulary, grammar, listening, comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing. And they should also become experts at composing questions, testing, and planning lessons in their teaching of English. Our authors, with their painstaking efforts and their personal experience in language learning and teaching, recorded in great detail what they have learned at home and abroad from books, from experiments, from teaching practices as well as from their colleagues and students. The valuable information will, I be-

lieve, help to arm our readers, whether they are thoughtful practitioners or students of language teaching, with adequate theoretical foundations and useful teaching techniques. For our main purpose of the compilation of these two books is to enable our readers to help themselves in their teaching and research projects.

Languages are difficult to learn and no less difficult to teach. For those who have serious interest in language teaching, I think they will find that reading the book is demanding as well as rewarding. The two books may also be of interests to administrators, teacher trainers, textbook writers, researchers, and students of applied linguistics, language pedagogy, and education generally.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to give my profound thanks to all those who have had a hand in this book. The references at the end of each chapter is perhaps the best way to express our indebtedness to those writers whom we have never seen. The Scientific Research Office and the Dean's Office of Yunnan Normal University has given us tremendous supports in the whole process of our project. School of Foreign Languages, Yunnan Normal University, where all of the authors work in, has supplied us with a most ideal environment to produce our articles. I would also like to give my special thanks to our dear Australian friends Kevin and Erica Smith. It is their utter devotion to the training of our young colleagues over the past eight years that makes the completion of our project possible. Finally I would like to thank all of the authors and editorial staff who contributed to the production of the book. It is my sincere hope that this project, as difficult and as complex as it was to bring to fruition, represents a beginning rather than an end to the process of the study of theories and practical techniques in the field. Although what we put in these two books may be limited in the scopes of topics covered, it would, I believe, be helpful for the profession of teaching English as a global language in a Chinese context, especially in Yunnan.

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CHAPTER 1 ON LOCALIZATION OF THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

Qin Hui

1.1 Introduction

More than 20 years have passed since the Communicative Approach first set its feet on the domain of foreign language teaching in China. Looking back retrospectively on the road on which English educators and teachers in China have traversed over these years, we cannot help saying that the Communicative Approach has made great contributions to initiating language teaching innovations and to the improvement of English language teaching in China. Just as Stern (1983) has mentioned that “the Communicative Approach has so profoundly influenced current thought and practice on language teaching strategies that it is hardly possible today to imagine a language pedagogy which does not make some allowance at all levels of teaching for a non-analytical (experiential or participatory), communicative component.” (p.473). However, at the same time, we cannot neglect the fact that even now there are some English teachers in China who consider themselves as communication-oriented teachers still hold an unclear picture of what the Communicative Approach is, misunderstanding that the approach is revolutionary, that is, the traditional methods should be discarded and only listening and speaking should be included as focused activities in class. The misconceptions are not dissimilar to the ones discovered by Thompson (1996), which are commonly held by his colleagues concerning the meaning of the Communicative Approach “as (a) not teaching grammar, (b) teaching only speaking, (c) completing pair work (i. e., role play), and (d) expecting too much from teachers” (as cited in Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). The misconceptions consequently lead to the pendulum effect—the undervaluing of grammar teaching, which is damaging to the effective language teaching, especially in the case of China. Therefore, it is necessary to have a panoramic look at the history of ESL/EFL teaching and a good understanding of the Communicative Approach. This chapter intends to discuss the concept of the Communicative Approach, its localization in the field of foreign language teaching in China and the training of English language teachers need to have to avoid pendulum effect in their practical teaching.

1.2 Historical and Theoretical Overview

To look for good methods, experts and methodologists would not only get sustenance from the antecedents of contemporary second language teaching methods, but also absorbs the theories of contemporary linguistics and pedagogy. If we study the history of ESL/EFL teaching, we will find that the idea of the Communicative Approach is not anything but new and revolutionary, instead, it is progressively evolutionary and sometimes even cyclically with the advance of human being's better understanding of the nature of language learning. Some of the principles of the Reform Method, the Natural Method, the Situational

Language Teaching, the Audio-lingual Method and the Cognitive Method are actually integrated into the principles of the Communicative Approach. The history of ESL/EFL teaching methods also indicates that the idea that people can learn to communicate in second/foreign languages only by communicating has been recognized as long as there have been second language learners. The most frequently cited instance of a successful L2 learning is Montaigne's (1533 ~ 1592) experience of learning Latin by being immersed in the target language environment (He had a Latin tutor, his parents and even the servants conversing with him solely in Latin). Comenius (1592 ~ 1670) is well known in the history of language teaching methodologies for his objection to the Grammar-translation Method of L2 teaching prevalent in the Middle Ages. In the nineteenth century, proponents of the Natural Method, which advocates that learning a second language is similar to the way one's native language is acquired, insisted on the view of language learning through language use. They rejected translation and encouraged learners to discover for themselves how to function in their new language. Later on, the famous methodologist Palmer (1877 ~ 1949) "saw the necessity for a rational, systematic approach to language teaching. But at the same time he championed a careful eclecticism that would facilitate the learning of persons differing in age, temperament, language background, and the like." (Madsen & Hilferty, 1985, p.27) In the last few decades of the 20th century, structuralist and transformative-generative schools of linguistics, together with behaviourist and cognitivist schools of psychology, enabled people to understand better the nature of language learning.

Structuralist linguistics arose in the 1930's as a result of two needs felt by the academic community in the USA. First, there was a general feeling of dissatisfaction with "traditional grammar" which emphasizes the prescriptive and mechanical instead of the systematic aspect of grammar limiting the learners' capacities for observation and analysis. Second, linguists in the Americas needed to describe and preserve the native Indian languages before they literally died out. But the structures of the American languages were quite different from those of Europe and traditional grammar was quite unable to provide the kind of analysis required.

At the same time, structuralist linguistics had its voice in philosophy and psychology of the behaviourist school. Therefore, the structuralist's philosophical position in relation to human learning was mechanistics, i. e. the dichotomy between mind and body was denied and the activities of the mind were only complicated extensions of activities of the body.

basu. / On the other hand, the psychology of the behaviourist school (Oavlov, Thorndike, Hull and latterly Skinner) — provided the model of learning accepted by the structuralists, who thought language as one of the human activities, so language learning was achieved by building up habits on the basis of stimulus-response chains. For instance, when a baby begins to learn to speak, it utters a sound that is similar to the proper word for some person or object nearby. This utterance is rewarded or reinforced with approving noises and smiles from his parents. As a result, the baby feels encouraged to utter the same groups of sounds in a similar situation and with repeated reinforcement, a habit is established. And the baby continues to name the person or object in the same way. Meanwhile, inappropriate responses are discouraged through lack of reinforcement. As more combinations of sounds are reinforced, and as the use of these is generalized to similar stimuli, the child learns to combine verbal responses in more and more complex ways.

According to behaviourist learning theory, old habits get in the way of learning new habits. Interference was the result of proactive inhibition which is concerned with the way in which previous learning prevents or inhibits the learning of new habits. So in SLA where the first and second language share a meaning but express it in different ways, an error is likely to arise in the L2, because the learner will transfer the realization device from his first language into the second. Therefore, in order to develop the new language habits, the learner has to overcome proactive inhibition. Errors are considered as undesirable, being evidence of non-learning and of the failure to overcome proactive inhibition.

Hence, the audio-lingual approach views the foreign language learner as an essentially passive recipient of stimuli provided by the teacher. The learner is trained to perform the habits of the new language. In fact, one proponent of this approach has characterized language learning as “the acquisition of non-thoughtful responses” (Falk 1978: 358). The major characteristics of the audio-lingual method are that language use is considered as a set of habits acquired primarily through the procedure of stimulus, response and reinforcement. Based on the assumption that writing is a relatively unimportant aspect of language, the method emphasizes speaking and listening. Reading and writing usually are considered secondary goals. When the principles of this method are strictly observed, students are never presented with written material until they have mastered it orally. Therefore, to create in the student the habits of language use, the use of pattern practice is implemented through imitation, repetition, and highly controlled practice with a particular grammatical structure being presented. The systematic arrangement and presentation of material in contrast to the almost random nature of the direct method, appeals to both teachers and students. But the audio-lingual approach is limited to first-and second-year courses. Once the student has mastered the sounds and rudimentary surface structure aspects of syntax, the audio-lingual method has little more to contribute” (ibid.). In Audio-lingual Method classroom, students are not expected to make any spontaneous, personal contribution. The emphasis on presentation of the language is on its spoken form first. Only after practice in the aural-oral mode (first listening, then producing utterances) are students presented with a graphic representation of what they have been learning. Grammar is learned through drilling in substitution, expansion, or conversion of elements in the language patterns. These drills often concentrate on points of contrast between the structure of the native language and that of the foreign one trying to avoid making errors as a result of interference of the native language. For example, Chinese language does not contain English-like relative clauses, so our teachers would put some emphasis on teaching students the attributive clause. If anybody’s pronunciation of certain words is not correct or if anybody makes a grammatical mistake, the teacher would interrupt her/him and pointed out the mistakes. As a result, students are very careful in speaking the sentence pattern and made fewer and fewer mistakes. So the students practice in this stimulus-response way one by one. Both the learning materials and the classroom situation are structured in such a way that the students rarely make mistakes and the teacher would think that the students have formed correct habits.)

The audio-lingual approach was so tedious, mechanistic that students are not expected to make any spontaneous, personal contribution. As a result, the students can speak fluent language in the exact form in which it have been practiced in dialogues or drills, but they were at a loss to adapt this material for the expression of a multitude of personal meanings in communication with others.)

Transformational-generative linguistics has different views on language acquisition from those of

structuralist linguistics. Transformational-generative linguistics arose because linguists were not satisfied with structuralist linguistics. Transformational-generative linguistics also found its voice in philosophy and psychology. The philosophical position adopted by the transformationalists in relation to human learning is mentalistic, i. e. the dichotomy between mind and body has been reasserted and the activities of the mind are seen as different from those of the body. And at the same time, cognitive psychology became active in studying processes of the mind. (Perception, memory, thinking, how meaning is encoded and expressed, and how information is processed became areas of major concern.) Language were no longer regarded by the linguists as distinct sets of arbitrary vocal symbols, nor as systems of habits acquired through conditioning by the psychologists. Chomsky is the protagonist of the revolution in linguistic theory. He attacked the notion that language was acquired by children through a form of conditioning dependent on reinforcement or reward. He stressed that children come into the world with innate language-learning abilities and deemphasized the importance of imitation and reinforcement. He thought that children acquire a language by making hypothesis about the form of the grammar of the language with which they are surrounded. They then compare this with their innate knowledge of possible grammar based on the principles of universal grammar. In this way, the child internalizes a knowledge of the grammar of the native language (competence) and this competence makes language use (performance) possible. Three insights into Chomskyian theory can give us some idea of cognitive view of language acquisition:

- Rule-governed behavior: The audio-lingual approach neglected the teaching of grammar, just asking the students to have stimulus-response language habit-formation exercises. While the term “rule-governed behavior” proposed a return to systematic presentation and explanation of grammar rules first. This would involve the reasoning processes of the students in their learning of a language.
- Creative language use: Chomsky drew attention to the fact that most sentences one utters are not in the same form. These utterances have been created by the speaker in conformity with the grammar they have internalized (competence). So language teaching methodology is influenced by Chomskyian theory—that is, for example, where dialogues are used, greater emphasis was laid on using dialogue sentences as a springboard to create new utterances. Teachers realize that students need to understand the grammar if they are to use it effectively to create new utterances.
- Hypothesis testing: On the other hand, L1 acquisition researchers also observe that children seem to pass through a series of interim grammars, from simple to more complex, as they test hypotheses about the form of the language they are learning. This phenomenon interests L2 acquisition researchers, who begin to use the term, interlanguage, to describe the systematic language a L2 learner is using at a particular stage of learning, that is, the learner's version of L2, which deviate in certain ways from the target language. This interlanguage is regarded as an indication that L2 learners, too, are testing hypotheses about the form of the grammar of the new language. For example, when interlanguage speakers produce utterances that are not comprehended by speakers of the language, they would reject their former hypotheses and develop others, gradually bringing their interlanguage into closer conformity to the accepted forms of the L2.

The hypotheses-testing and interlanguage (interim grammar) approach had considerable influence on classroom practice. Language educators now regard second language acquisition/foreign language learning as a series of an evolving system which comprises the interlanguage continuum. Each system is considered to be internally consistent in the sense that it is rule-governed. It is, however, also permeable to new rules, and therefore, dynamic that results in the reassessment of errors (Ellis, 1985). The cognitive view of language acquisition contends that errors serve as evidence of the learner's active contribution to acquisition. They have been studied to discover the process learners make use of in learning and using a language.

The discussion above shows us that behaviorist's view of language acquisition thinks that language is one of the human activities, so language learning is achieved by building up habit on the basis of stimulus-response-reinforcement chains. Structuralists also think that interference is the result of proactive inhibition. Therefore, an error is likely to arise in the L2, and errors are considered undesirable. On the basis of behaviorist view of language acquisition, audio-lingual approach was generated and was popular for one time.

However, later criticisms were showered on audio-lingual approach and transformationalists came up with their language approach, they think that language is the activities of the mind and different from those of the body. They think the children come into the world with innate language-learning abilities that proceed by hypothesis-testing.

For transformationalists, what appears to be interference from L1 language knowledge may be the result of testing the hypotheses that L2 structure and semantic distinctions are similar to those of L1. On the other hand, it may be an example of the common learning strategy of drawing on what one knows (L1 syntax and semantics) and adapting it, when one is unsure of the L2 system. So errors are a natural part of the language-testing process, helpful to students in providing opportunities to test their hypotheses about the functioning of the L2 system and helpful to teachers in revealing to them the interim grammars on which students are basing their utterances and the strategies they are employing to express meaning with the meager means at their disposal. Consequently, Chomskyan theory (three main parts: (1) rule-governed behaviour; (2) creative language use; (3) hypothesis-testing) has great influence on theories of language acquisition:

- Natural Language Learning Approach: The basic principle of natural language learning is the distinction Krashen has drawn between acquisition of a language and learning. Acquisition refers to students' natural exposure to authentic language context and it is also the source of the students' ability to use the language in untutored interaction. While learning in formal cognitive sense refers to learning a language with teachers and with structured materials. Krashen minimizes the importance of formal learning in the development of communicative competence for most language learners whereas he advocates active interaction in the language is the major activity in the classroom. The Natural Approach complements the notion of the Communicative Approach. As Krashen (1983) mentions, "The approach...is in many ways the natural, direct method re-discovered. It is similar to other communicative approaches being developed today" (p.17). Based on the five principles of the Natural Approach ((1) the goal of the Natural Approach is communication skills (2) comprehension precedes production (3) production emerges (4)

acquisition activities are central (5) lower the affective filter), Krashen comes up with the famous five hypotheses: Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis; The Natural Order Hypothesis; The monitor Hypothesis; The Input Hypothesis; The affective Filter Hypothesis. Besides these, he maintains that language acquisition can only take place when a message which is being transmitted is understood, i. e., when the focus is on what is being said rather than on the form of the message. Therefore, in classroom teaching, visual aids are suggested to be used for their being able to supply the extra-linguistic context that helps the learner to understand and thereby to acquire. Unlike grammar-based approaches to language teaching, the Natural Approach thinks that “with more vocabulary, there will be more comprehension and with more comprehension, there will be more acquisition” (Krashen 1983: 55).

Thus, in the Natural Approach classroom, teachers are suggested to make it possible for individuals’ innate capacities of acquiring a language to be tapped. Students have sufficient opportunities to test their hypothesis about the nature of the new language. Their interim grammar will be accepted and tolerated while they are refining their hypotheses through experience in communication. They will get much practice in creating new utterances in meaningful contexts. In order to succeed, teachers are required to create an easy situation where students feel at home with each other and with teachers and are willing to express themselves freely. To maintain this atmosphere, students’ mistakes will not be corrected during acquisition activities although corrections of students’ deviant utterances by teachers in a conversational, unpressured mode will be made.

- Being dissatisfied with Chomskyian competence theory, In 1971, at a conference on language development among disadvantaged children, the anthropologist and sociolinguist, Dell Hymes delivered a paper “On Communication Competence” criticizing Chomskyian notion of competence which deals with the ideal speaker-listener in a homogeneous speech community. Hymes (1971) points out that Chomsky’s category of competence provides no place for competence for language use but neither does his category of performance, despite his equating language use with performance. This omits almost everything of the importance of context in determining appropriate patterns of behaviour, both linguistic and extralinguistic, that is, Chomskyian competence omits by far the most important linguistic ability, that is, “to produce or understand utterances which are not so much grammatical but, more important, appropriate to the context in which they are made” (Campbell & Wales, 1970). Therefore, the notion of competence must be enlarged to include contextual appropriacy because “Hymes observes that a normal member of a community has both a knowledge of and a capability with regard to each of these aspects of the communicative systems available to him. Those four sectors of his communicative competence reflect the speaker-hearer’s grammatical; psycholinguistic; sociocultural and de facto knowledge and ability for use” (Munby 1978: 15). Hymes’ “communicative competence” emphasizes the importance of context in determining appropriate patterns of behaviour, both linguistic and extralinguistic:

- *whether or not something is formally possible;*
- *whether and to what degree something is appropriate;*
- *whether and to what degree something is feasible;*

● *whether and to what degree something is done*. (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979, 19).

This perspective on communicative and contextual factors in language use has been influenced by the views of the anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski and the linguist, John Firth who stressed that language needs to be studied in a broader sociocultural context of its use, which includes participants, their behaviour and beliefs, the objectives of linguistic discussion, and word choice.

The theories of communicative competence makes teachers and writers of materials aware of the fact that students needed to be able to do more than express imposed ideas in correct grammatical form, or their own ideas in incorrect forms. If they are really to communicate with speakers of the target language, they need also to know the culturally acceptable ways of interacting orally with others.

Another theoretical source of the Communicative Approach comes from Halliday's functional description of language use. Deriving from Firth, Halliday is interested in language in its social perspective and so he is concerned with language use to account for the language functions realized by speech. However, in regard to the question of the language user's competence, "he rejects the distinction between competence and performance as being of little use in a sociological context" (Munby 1978: 13). At the heart of his socio-semantic approach to language and the speaker's use of language "is his language-defining notion of 'meaning potential', the sets of options in meaning that are available to the speaker-hearer. This meaning potential relates behaviour potential to lexico-grammatical potential: what the speaker can do → can mean → can say" (ibid.). According to Halliday, his meaning potential is not unlike Dell Hymes' notion of communicative competence, "except that Hymes defines this in terms of" competence "in the Chomskyian sense of what the speaker knows, whereas we are talking of a potential—what he can do" (Halliday as cited in Munby, 1978). Halliday's description covering seven basic functions that language performs for children to learn their first language also complements Hymes's view of communicative competence:

- *the instrumental function: using language to get things;*
 - *the regulatory function: using language to control the behaviour of others;*
 - *the interactional function: using language to create interaction with others;*
 - *the personal function: using language to express personal feelings and meanings;*
 - *the heuristic function: using language to learn and to discover;*
 - *the imaginative function: using language to create a world of the imagination;*
 - *the representational function: using language to communicate information*
- (Richards & Rogers 1986: 71).

As a strong advocator for the implementation of the immersion language teaching and learning program, Widdowson is frequently cited for his views on the communicative nature of language. He is famous for the book "Teaching Language as Communication (1978), in which he presents "a view of the relationship between linguistic systems and their communicative values in text and discourse." (Richards & Rogers 1986, p.70)

Since the introduction of the term communicative competence into the language teaching literature, there have been numerous interpretations of its meaning. These interpretations have had a widely felt influence on our understanding of the concept (Savignonn, 1983). Going through the literature on the Communicative Approach, we can find that most discussions of communicative competence in language