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**Introduction**

**Message oriented communication**

I want you to communicate. This means that I want you to understand others and to make yourself understandable to them. These sound like the obvious goals of every language learner., but I think these simple goals need to be emphasized, because learners too often get diverted from them and fall into more of a struggle with the mechanics of grammar and pronunciation that they should. Learners can become timid about using what they know for fear of making horrible mistakes with what they don’t know. All the attention paid to the mechanics of communication sometimes gets in the way of communication itself.

In the early lessons of many language courses, students are encouraged to concentrate heavily upon pronunciation and grammar, while vocabulary is introduced only very slowly. The idea seems to be that even if one has very little to say, that little bit should be said correctly. Students can worry a great deal about the machinery of language, but they worry rather little about real communicating much of anything. Under such circumstances, learners have to think about an awful lot of things in order to construct even a simple sentence. They are supposed to force their mouths to produce sounds that seem ridiculous. They have to grope desperately for words that they barely know. They have to perform mental gymnastic trying to remember bizarre grammatical rules. All these challenges are a fatal distraction from what skillful speakers worry about – the message that they want to convey. If early learners have to worry about getting everything correct, they cannot hope to day anything very interesting. They simply cannot do everything at once and emerge with any real sense of success.

In the German original 'mttteilungsbezogene Kommunikation was coined by Black and Butzkamm (1977)[[1]](#footnote-1). They use it to refer to those rare and precious moments in foreign language teaching when the target language is actually used to arrange communication. À prime instance of this use is classroom discourse, i.e. getting things done in the lesson. Sometimes real communicative situations develop spontaneously, as in exchanging comments on last night' s TV programme or introduction someone' s new haircut. The majority of ordinary language teaching situations before reaching an advanced level, however, are geared towards language-oriented communication or what Rivers calls 'skill-getting': they make use of the foreign language mainly in structural exercises and predetermined responses by the learners. Since foreign language teaching should help students achieve some kind of communicative skill in the foreign language, àll situations in which real communication occurs naturally have to be taken advantage of and many more suitable ones have to be created.

Two devices help the teacher in making up communicative activities: information gap and opinion gap. Information-gap exercises force the participants to exchange information in order to find a solution (e.g. reconstitute a text, solve a puzzle, write a summary). Problem-solving activities. Opinion gaps are created by exercise or program controversial texts or ideas, which require the participants to describe and perhaps defend their views on these ideas. Another type of opinion- gap activity can be organised by letting the participants share their feelings about an experience they have in common. Furthermore, learning a foreign language is not just a matter of memorising a simple set of names for the things around us; it is also an educational experience. Since our language is closely linked with our personality and culture, why not use the process of acquiring a new language to gain further insights into our personality and culture? This does not mean that students of a foreign language should submit to psychological exercises or probing interviews, but simply that, for example, learning to talk about their likes and dislikes and bring about a greater awareness of their values and aims in life. Many of the activities are concerned with the learners themselves. For learners who are studying English in a non-English-speaking setting it is very important to experience real communicative situation in which they learn to express their own views and attitudes, and in which they are taken seriously as people.

As applying the principles of information gap and opinion gap to suitable traditional exercises the teacher can change them into more challenging communicative situations. Thus the well-known procedure at beginner's level of having students describe each other's appearance is transformed into a communicative activity as soon as an element of guessing (information gap) is introduced. However, not all exercises can be spruced up like this. Manipulative drills that have no real topic have to remain as they are. Information and opinion-gap exercises have to hav some content worth talking about. Students do not want to discuss trivia; the interest which is aroused by the structure of the activity may be reduced or increased by the topic.

Many of the activities are concerned with the learners themselves. Their feelings and ideas are the focal point of these exercises, around which a lot of their foreign language activity revolves. For learners who are studying English in a non-English-speaking setting it is very important to experience real communicative situation in which they learn to express their own views and attitudes, and in which they are taken seriously as people. Traditional textbook exercises — however necessary and useful they may be for all- communicative grammar practice — do not as a rule forge a link between the learners and the foreign language in such a way that the learners identify with it. Meaningful activities on a personal level can be a step towards this identification, which improves performance and generates interest. And, of course, talking about something which affects them personally is eminently motivating for students.

Furthermore, learning a foreign language is not just a matter of memorising a simple set of names for the things around us; it is also an educational experience. Since our language is closely linked with our personality and culture, why not use the process of acquiring a new language to gain further insights into our personality and culture? This does not mean that students of a foreign language should submit to psychological exercises or probing interviews, but simply that, for example, learning to talk about their likes and dislikes and bring about a greater awareness of their values and aims in life. À number of activities. adapted from 'values clarification' theory have been included with this purpose in mind.

Learning is very effective if the learners are actively involved in the process. The degree of learner activity depends, among other things, on the type of material they are working on. The students' curiosity can be aroused by texts or pictures containing discrepancies or mistakes, or by missing or muddled information, and this curiosity leads to the wish to find out, to put right or to complete. Learner activity in a more literal sense of the word can also imply doing and making things; for example, producing a radio programme forces the students to read, write and talk in the foreign language as well as letting them learn with tape recorders, sound effects and music. Setting up an opinion poll in the classroom is a second, less ambitious vehicle for active learner participation; it makes students interview each other, it literally gets them out of their seats and — this is very important — it culminates in a final product which everybody has helped to produce.

Activities for practising a foreign language have left the narrow path of purely structural and lexical training and have expanded into the fields of values education and personality building. The impact of foreign language learning on the shaping of the learner' s personality is slowly being recognised. That is why foreign language teaching — just like many other subjects — plays an important part in education towards cooperation and empathy. As teachers we would like our students to be sensitive towards the feelings of others and share their worries and joys. À lot of teaching/learning situations, however, never get beyond a rational and fact-oriented stage. That is why it seems important to provide at least a few instances focusing on the sharing ideas. igsaw tasks, in particular, demonstrate to the learners that cooperation is necessary. Many of the activities included in this book focus on the participants' personalities and help build an atmosphere of mutual understanding.

Quite an important factor in education towards cooperation is the **teacher's attitude.** If she favours a cooperative style of teaching generally and does not shy away from the greater workload connected with group work or projects, then the conditions for learning to teachers are good. The atmosphere within a class or group can largely be determined by the teacher, who- quite often without being aware of it — sets the tone by choosing certain types of exercises and topics.

This section deals with the importance of the atmosphere within the class or group, the teacher's role, and ways of organising discussions, as well as giving hints on the selection and use of the activities in class.

А lot of the activities will run themselves as soon as they get under way. The teacher then has tо decide whether to join in the activity as an equal member (this may sometimes be unavoidable for pair work in classes with an odd number of students) or remain in the background to help and observe. The first alternative has а number of advantages: for example the psychological distance between teacher and students may bе reduced when students get tо know their teacher better. Of course, the teacher has to refrain from continually correcting the students or using her greater skill in the foreign language tо her advantage. If the teacher joins in the activity, she will then nо longer be able to judge independently and give advice and help to other groups, which is the teacher's major role if she does not participate directly. А further advantage of non-participation is that the teacher may unobtrusively observe the performance of several students in the foreign language and note common mistakes for revision at а later stage. А few activities, mainly jigsaw tasks, require the teacher to withdraw completely from the scene.

Whatever method is chosen, the teacher should be careful not to correct students' errors too frequently. Being interrupted and corrected makes the students hesitant and insecure in their speech when they should really be practising communication. It seems far better for the teacher to use the activities for observation and со help only when help is demanded bу the students themselves; even then they should be encouraged to overcome their difficulties by finding alternative ways of expressing what they want tо say. There is а list of speech acts which may bе needed for the activities and the relevant section may be duplicated and given as handouts to help the students.

Many of the activities are focused on the individual learner. Students are asked to tell the others about their feelings, likes or dislikes. They are also asked to judge their own feelings and let themselves bе interviewed by others. Speaking about oneself is not something that everyone does with ease. It becomes impossible, even for the most extrovert person, if the atmosphere in the group is hostile and the learner concerned is afraid of being ridiculed or mocked. The first essential requirement for the use of learner-centred activities (they are marked pers. in all the tables) is а relaxed and friendly atmosphere in the group. Only then can the aims of these activities be achieved: cooperation and the growth of understanding.

Groups or classes that have just been formed or are being taught by а new teacher may not develop this pleasant kind of group feeling immediately. In that case activities dealing with very personal topics should be avoided. The teacher may stimulate а good atmosphere by introducing both warming-up exercises and jigsaw tasks. Even in а class where the students know each other well, certain activities may take on threatening features for individual students. In order tо avoid any kind of embarrassment or ill feeling, the teacher should say that anyone may refuse to answer а personal question without having to give any reason or explanation. The class have со accept this refusal without discussion or comment. Although I have tried to steer clear of I threatening activities, there may still be а few which fall into this category for very shy students. In any case teachers should be able to select activities which their students will feel at ease with. As а rough guideline teachers шght ask themselves whether they would be prepared to participate fully in the activity themselves.

А number of different ways of setting up the communicative activities in this book are explained in the description of the activities themselves. For teachers who would like to change their procedures for handling classroom discussions (е.g. in connection with topical texts) а few major types are described below:

## Buzz groups[[2]](#footnote-2). А problem is discussed in small groups for а few minutes before views or solutions are reported to the whole class.

Hearing. 'Experts' discuss а topical question and mау be interviewed by а panel of students who then have to make а decision about that question.

Fishbowl. All the members of the class sit in а big circle. In the middle of the circle there are five chairs. Three are occupied by students whose views (preferably controversial) on the topic or question are known beforehand. These three start the discussion. They mау be joined by one or two students presenting yet another view. Students from the outer circle mау also replace speakers in the inner circle by tapping them on the shoulder if they feel confident that they can present the case better.

Network The class is divided into groups which should not have mоrе than 10 students each. Each group receives а ball of string. Whoever is speaking on the topic chosen holds the ball of string. When the speaker has finished he gives the ball of string to the next speaker, but holds on to the string. In this way а web of string develops, showing who talked the most and who the least.

Onion. The class is divided into two equal groups. As many chairs as there are students are arranged in а double circle, with the chairs in the outer circle facing inwards and those of the inner circle facing outwards. Thus each member of the inner circle sits facing а student in the outer circle. After а few minutes of discussion all the students in the outer circle move on one chair and now have а new partner rо continue with.

Star. Four to six small groups try and find а common view or solution. Each group elects а speaker who remains in the group but enters into discussion with the speakers of the other groups.

Market. All the students walk about the rооm; each talks to several others.

**The Main Body**

**Language Learning Principles**

Language learning principlesfor mainstream classes. Hutchinson and Waters[[3]](#footnote-3) (1997:128) present eight language learning principles in relation to a learner-centered methodology. A learner-centered methodology need not exist only in a language classroom, and much language learning takes place outside of the language classroom. Hutchinson and Waters relate the learning principles to the ESP classroom, but often these EAL (English as an Additional Language) learners are in classes that are not taught by language experts, and therefore the classes are not remembered as a rich resource for language input.

The discussion on teaching techniques is not meant for language experts only. I have used the principles as a point of departure for discussions on language across the curriculum seminars. These seminars often concern department or campus-wide staff who are not well informed on language issues. Perhaps teachers are intimidated by the thought of fostering language development in the classroom because they equate the notion with grammar rules. The eight (language) learning principles are outlined below along with a discussion of their teaching implications and how they are to be applied to teaching beyond the language classroom.

1. Second language learning is a developmental process. In other words, learners use existing knowledge to make the incoming information comprehensible. Gagne and Bridges (1988)[[4]](#footnote-4) discuss "external" and "internal" conditions of learning in much the same way. The example they use is understanding when the U.S. presidential elections take place: the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, every four years. In order to truly grasp this "external" knowledge (when the elections take place), they explain that a learner must have certain "internal" conditions in place, i.e., the knowledge of the days of the week, and the months in the year, etc. This example may seem too simple to be applicable at the tertiary level, but one can easily imagine how concepts and ideas in a field are made understandable by building on some existing knowledge.

The teaching implications of this principle are that lecturers should reconsider what, if anything, they have been taking for granted concerning their students' knowledge base. The knowledge that each student brings to the classroom is likely to be just as diverse. Do the lecturers adapt the presentation to the "internal" knowledge of the student? In other words, is there ample opportunity given in class to discover what learners understand about the concept being taught? As an example, how is the idea of "perfectly competitive market" explained in an economics class filled with EAL learners? Do learners know what "competitive" means? If they have indeed heard the words, what types of understanding do they have? It is quite possible that "market" for some of the students here in South Africa simply means a fruit and vegetable stand or maybe even what is commonly known in the U.S. as a "flea market" (a number of stalls selling various items ranging from food to crafts). The definition of perfect competition, "a large number of relatively small price-taking firms that produce a homogenous product and for whom entry and exit are relatively costless" (Dillingham et al 1992:250)[[5]](#footnote-5) means nothing for the students if they are unaware of the more basic components of the concept. The components which comprise a concept should be carefully elicited from the students and addressed if necessary.

Students should be given prompts as much as possible. These could take the form of visual aids, handouts, or even words and concepts written on the board. By hearing and seeing the language, the students are better able to match the concepts and terminology to their internal knowledge, and thus be better equipped to add the external information if possible. This suggestion may sound painfully easy or remedial, but many learners, especially language learners, need to see the information as it is being discussed.

2. Language learning is an active process. The learners must actively use the new information. This is easier said than done. In terms of language learning, this means practising the vocabulary and grammar with great frequency for it to be internalized. With this principle in mind, many language classes at the tertiary level in the U.S. are time-tabled for maximum contact time (five hours a week), whereas the "content" subjects average three hours a week. The thinking behind this imbalance is related to the unlikelihood that the learner will have contact with the language outside the classroom.

What can a mainstream lecturer do with a majority of students for whom English is not their mother tongue? The principle of frequency, however, is the same: Revise the information. According to Hamilton and Ghatala (1994:118)[[6]](#footnote-6), elaboration is the key to getting information into long-term memory. By elaboration, the authors mean working with the same information in different but related ways. Examples of elaboration techniques are: summarizing, outlining, mind-mapping, drawing pictures, using metaphors, eliciting examples for learners, etc. In ESP, the terms, concepts, and definitions are new and unfamiliar to students. According to Gagne and Briggs (1988). repetition is the key to retention.

Students often struggle with the information conveyed orally, and perhaps the fact that they are struggling is partly due to the way the information is conveyed and partly due to their level of language proficiency and cognitive ability. Written material is another obstacle, but at least one can take ones time with the reading and consult a dictionary or peers to make some sense of it.

3. Language learning is a decision-making process. Typically, teachers do all the talking and making of decisions in the classroom. The teacher is the knower of the information, so it is considered more efficient for him/her to present the material. But efficient in what way? For the lecturer, no doubt, it is easy to walk into class, deliver the information, and leave. What about the students? Hutchin-son and Waters (1987:129) argue that in order to develop, learners must use existing knowledge, make decisions based on that knowledge, and see results.

This means that learners need to go through a processing step, both internally and externally: internally to formulate decisions, and externally to test those decisions. Externally, the learner would express his/her ideas and receive feedback

External processing implies a move away from summative evaluation to formative evaluation. Learners should demonstrate their knowledge often and if possible be credited for it. To wait until the end of term not only puts more pressure on the students in terms of the "all or nothing" mark, it also leaves the facilitator to estimate what percentage of the lecture material is being internalized during the term. Summative evaluation for first year students might also promote a culture of passiveness or idleness. Checking understanding frequently with mini-tasks, quizzes, or worksheets is beneficial in a number of ways: It gives the facilitator an idea of what is being internalized by the students, and it gives the students reinforcement of the material as well as motivation to attend class (accountability).

4. Language learning is not just a matter of linguistic knowledge. The premise here is that there is more to comprehension, production, and learning in general than the words themselves. A learner may be cognizant of each individual word due to a good vocabulary base, but not understand the ideas expressed in them because of a lack of cognitive development. The reverse could also be true with a student having the cognitive capacity or background to understand the concepts, but not the linguistic ability to respond successfully. As a result, language learners are often inaccurately perceived as being cognitively and conceptually slow, when in fact it might well be their linguistic ability that is lagging.

In the end, many lecturers of these typical second language learners base their judgment of students solely on their surface ability to communicate orally and in writing. If the student is poor in communication due to grammatical errors, that is often where the line is drawn and the mark given. Conversely, a lecturer is often lenient in marking because s/he understands more or less what the learner is getting at even if the message is not clearly conveyed.

5. Language learning is not the learner's first experience (with language). The students are generally competent in another language, and in terms of subject-specific information, they might have some knowledge of the concepts or terminology. A classroom should tap into these competencies and help the learners transfer them from one language (or experience) to another, or activate the existing knowledge to aid in the understanding of the new information.

Hutchinson at all (1987:140) suggests getting the students to predict before reading or listening. Having students predict is advantageous for two reasons: It sets the students' schema (or road map) of the subject, i.e., the internal knowledge, thereby getting it ready to attach to external knowledge, as discussed in connection with principle three above, and it informs the lecturer as to what knowledge the students already possess. A lecturer then will be able to target the session accordingly, spending time on concepts that are not clearly known, and only reviewing those that are.

In terms of teaching, schema-setting can take the form of a brief review of the day's class lesson, pre-reading, pictures, drawing, diagrams, charts, discussions, anecdotes, etc. The function of assigning readings before a lecture serves the schema-setting purpose. However, one needs to bear in mind the level of language used throughout the passage as well as the length of the passage.

6. Language learning is an emotional experience. This principle concerns the affective filter of the student, or variables related to motivation, attitude, anxiety, and self-confidence. The condition of these variables, according to Dulay and Burt (in Oller 1993:32)[[7]](#footnote-7), determines what information is internalised. Students can be fragile entities. They can easily be intimidated, resulting in debilitating effects. The key then is to create a relaxed and non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom for optimal learning. To make the learning more positive, Hutchinson and Waters (1987:129) suggest a number of ways of being sensitive to affective filters:

• Use pair work or group work to build social relationships;

• Give students time to think, and generally avoid undue pressure;

• Put less emphasis on the product (the right answer) and more on the process of getting an answer;

• Value attitude as much as aptitude and ability;

• Make "interest," "fun," and "variety" primary considerations in materials and methodology, rather than just added extras.

Fun and games should not be excluded from study. Fun and games do not preclude learning. Activities can still be fun and challenging and thereby cater to those students for whom pressure is a stimulant. Using pair and group work in the class has numerous advantages; it provides the following opportunities:

• Students get to know other students;

• Students form study groups or join with partners;

• Instructors see progress in class and "test" student knowledge and input;

• Variety is brought into the classroom;

• Pressure for individuals is reduced;

• Students work with the concepts and terminology actively rather than being passive-listeners;

In addition, using pair and group work takes some of the pressure off the instructor in terms of constant "performance," gives the students some independent learning skills practice, and at the same time allows the instructor to observe the "intake" of learners. Following this observation, instructors can provide specific input where necessary.

7. Language learning is to a large extent incidental. One does not need to be actively studying language to learn language. English (or Afrikaans) is the medium through which students learn the content, but the language itself does not need to be the focus. The content subject lecturers would not suddenly be required to explain grammatical rules to the class, but writing down vocabulary and terminology would be appropriate for a class with a majority of second language speakers. The focus would not be taken off the content, but the lecturer should be sensitive to the medium of instruction, should slow down the presentation, should provide visual aids, and should repeat and revise often. These are not radical measures to adapt teaching to a varied student population, but they are helpful.

8. Language learning is not systematic. Although information is stored systematically, the process by which it is assimilated is not necessarily systematic. Each learner has a preferred method of learning, and within a classroom, any combination of learning styles could be represented: visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic. Davis and Nur (1994)[[8]](#footnote-8) discuss various learning style inventories used to determine a student's preferred style of learning: cognitive, affective, and psy-chomotor. Briefly, cognitive inventories determine how a person takes in information: what problem-solving strategies are used and how they classify and sequence information. Affective inventories determine a student's motivation for learning and what factors influence this motivation. Finally, psychomotor inventories show learner preferences for subject matter and mode of presentation. The point of conducting such inventories is to discover the students' preferred learning styles and to match the teaching style to achieve optimal learning in the classroom.

Maybe not so surprising is the idea that listening passively to a lecture is not the most successful mode for learning, but it remains the most common in terms of transmission. Simply adding visuals to a lecture will benefit both the visual and auditory learners. Adding an activity that uses some type of handout will address the tactile learner. Having the students get up and change seats for group work or a jigsaw activity will give the kinesthetic learners some stimulation.

Clearly it is not possible to match all learners' needs to one instructional style. However, alternating the mode of "transmission" will provide an opportunity for all styles of learning to be modeled, give students a chance to become familiar with different strategies, and allow for a varied classroom.

These principles outlined from Hutchinson and Waters all focus on the learner. Although the principles are from a language book, they can be used easily in any subject to address learning in general and learning in a language other than one's home language.

The language teaching principles discussed and the implications drawn from them are meant to suggest ways in which instructors can integrate language in their classroom to reinforce anything from vocabulary to thinking and social skills in the form of group and pair work.

The approach based on the principles outlined above might be very new to both learners and instructors. Fortunately, one does not need to employ them all at once to reap the benefits. A learner-centered approach promotes a culture of active learning and, hopefully, leads to greater confidence and empowerment of the student.

**The nature of speaking and oral interaction**

Brown and Yule (1983)[[9]](#footnote-9) begin their discussion on the nature of spoken language by distinguishing between spoken and written language. They point out that for most of its history, language teaching has been concerned with the teaching of written language. This language is characterised by well-formed sentences which are integrated into highly structured paragraphs. Spoken language, on the other hand, consists of short, often fragmentary utterances, in a range of pronunciations. There is often a great deal of repetition and overlap between one speaker and another, and speakers frequently use non-specific references (they tend to say 'thing', 'it' and 'this' rather than 'the left-handed monkey wrench', or 'the highly perfumed French poodle on the sofa'). Brown and Yule point out that the loosely organised syntax, the use of non-specific words and phrases and the use of fillers such as 'well', 'oh' and 'uhuh' make spoken language feel less conceptually dense than other types of language such as expository prose. They suggest that, in contrast with the teaching of written language, teachers concerned with teaching the spoken language must confront the following types of questions:

What is the appropriate form of spoken language to teach?

* From the point of view of pronunciation, what is a reasonable model?
* How important is pronunciation?
* Is it any more important than teaching appropriate handwriting in the foreign language?
* If so, why?
* From the point of view of the structures taught, is it all right to teach the spoken language as if it were exactly like the written language, but with a few 'spoken expressions' thrown in?
* Is it appropriate to teach the same structures to all foreign language students, no matter what their age is or their intentions in learning the spoken language?
* Are those structures which are described in standard grammars the structures which our students should be expected to produce when they speak English?
* How is it possible to give students any sort of meaningful practice in producing spoken English?

Brown and Yule also draw a useful distinction between two basic language functions. These are the transactional function, which is primarily concerned with the transfer of information, and the interactional function, in which the primary purpose of speech is the maintenance of social relationships.

Another basic distinction we can make when considering the development of speaking skills is between monologue and dialogue. The ability to give an uninterrupted oral presentation is quite distinct from interacting with one or more other speakers for transactional and interactional purposes. While all native speakers can and do use language interactionally, not all native speakers have the ability to extemporise on a given subject to a group of listeners. This is a skill which generally has to be learned and practised. Brown and Yule suggest that most language teaching is concerned with developing skills in short, interactional exchanges in which the learner is only required to make one or two utterances at a time. They go on to state that: *.. .* the teacher should realise that simply training the student to produce short turns will not automatically yield a student who can perform satisfactorily in long turns. It is currently fashionable in language teaching to pay particular attention to the forms and functions of short turns. ... It must surely be clear that students who are only capable of producing short turns are going to experience a lot of frustration when they try to speak the foreign language.

**Communicative Approach and LanguageTeacing**

All the "methods" described so far are symbolic of the progress foreign language teaching ideology underwent in the last century. These were methods that came and went, influenced or gave birth to new methods - in a cycle that could only be described as "competition between rival methods" or "passing fads" in the methodological theory underlying foreign language teaching. Finally, by the mid-eighties or so, the industry was maturing in its growth and moving towards the concept of a broad "approach" to language teaching that encompassed various methods, motivations for learning English, types of teachers and the needs of individual classrooms and students themselves. It would be fair to say that if there is any one "umbrella" approach to language teaching that has become the accepted "norm" in this field, it would have to be the Communicative Language Teaching Approach. This is also known as CLT.

The Communicative approach does a lot to expand on the goal of creating "communicative competence" compared to earlier methods that professed the same objective. Teaching students how to use the language is considered to be at least as important as learning the language itself. Brown (1994) aptly describes the "march" towards CLT:

"Beyond grammatical discourse elements in communication, we are probing the nature of social, cultural, and pragmatic features of language. We are exploring pedagogical means for 'real-life' communication in the classroom. We are trying to get our learners to develop linguistic fluency, not just the accuracy that has so consumed our historical journey. We are equipping our students with tools for generating unrehearsed language performance 'out there' when they leave the womb of our classrooms. We are concerned with how to facilitate lifelong language learning among our students, not just with the immediate classroom task. We are looking at learners as partners in a cooperative venture. And our classroom practices seek to draw on whatever intrinsically sparks learners to reach their fullest potential."

CLT is a generic approach, and can seem non-specific at times in terms of how to actually go about using practices in the classroom in any sort of systematic way. There are many interpretations of what CLT actually means and involves. See Types of Learning and The PPP Approach to see how CLT can be applied in a variety of 'more specific' methods.

From the remarks already made, it should be obvious that the current interest in tasks stems largely from what has been termed 'the communicative approach' to language teaching. In this section I should like to briefly sketch out some of the more important principles underpinning communicative language teaching.

Although it is not always immediately apparent, everything we do in the classroom is underpinned by beliefs about the nature of language and about language learning. In recent years there have been some dramatic shifts in attitude towards both language and learning. This has sometimes resulted in contradictory messages to the teaching profession which, in turn, has led to confusion.

Among other things, it has been accepted that language is more than simply a system of rules. Language is now generally seen as a dynamic resource for the creation of meaning. In terms of learning, it is generally accepted that we need to distinguish between 'learning that' and 'knowing how'. In other words, we need to distinguish between knowing various grammatical rules and being able to use the rules effectively and appropriately when communicating.

This view has underpinned communicative language teaching (CLT). A great deal has been written and said about CLT, and it is something of a misnomer to talk about 'the communicative approach' as there is a family of approaches, each member of which claims to be 'communicative' (in fact, it is difficult to find approaches which claim not to be communicative!). There is also frequent disagreement between different members of the communicative family.

During the seventies, the insight that communication was an integrated process rather than a set of discrete learning outcomes created a dilemma for syllabus designers, whose task has traditionally been to produce ordered lists of structural, functional or notional items graded according to difficulty, frequency or pedagogic convenience. Processes belong to the domain of methodology. They are somebody else's business. They cannot be reduced to lists of items. For a time, it seems, the syllabus designer was to be out of business.

One of the clearest presentations of a syllabus proposal based on processes rather than products has come from Breen. He suggests that an alternative to the listing of linguistic content (the end point, as it were, in the learner's journey) would be to prioritize the route itself; a focusing upon the means towards the learning of a new language. Here the designer would give priority to the changing process of learning and the potential of the classroom — to the psychological and social resources applied to a new language by learners in the classroom context. ... a greater concern with capacity for communication rather than repertoire of communication, with the activity of learning a language viewed as important as the language itself, and with a focus upon means rather than predetermined objectives, all indicate priority of process over content.

(Breen 1984: 52-3)[[10]](#footnote-10)

What Breen is suggesting is that, with communication at the centre of the curriculum, the goal of that curriculum (individuals who are capable of using the target language to communicate with others) and the means (classroom activities which develop this capability) begin to merge; the syllabus must take account of both the ends and the means.

What then do we do with our more formal approaches to the specification of structures and skills? Can they be found a place in CLT? We can focus on this issue by considering the place of grammar.

For some time after the rise of CLT, the status of grammar in the curriculum was rather uncertain. Some linguists maintained that it was not necessary to teach grammar, that the ability to use a second language (knowing 'how') would develop automatically if the learner were required to focus on meaning in the process of using the language to communicate. In recent years, this view has come under serious challenge, and it now seems to be widely accepted that there is value in classroom tasks which require learners to focus on form. It is also accepted that grammar is an essential resource in using language communicatively.

This is certainly Littlewood's view. In his introduction to communicative language teaching, he suggests that the following skills need to be taken into consideration:

* The learner must attain as high a degree as possible of linguistic  
  competence. That is, he must develop skill in manipulating the  
  linguistic system, to the point where he can use it spontaneously  
  and flexibly in order to express his intended message.
* The learner must distinguish between the forms he has mastered  
  as part of his linguistic competence, and the communicative  
  functions which they perform. In other words, items mastered as  
  part of a linguistic system must also be understood as part of a  
  communicative system.
* The learner must develop skills and strategies for using language  
  to communicate meanings as effectively as possible in concrete  
  situations. He must learn to use feedback to judge his success,  
  and if necessary, remedy failure by using different language.
* The learner must become aware of the social meaning of  
  language forms. For many learners, this may not entail the  
  ability to vary their own speech to suit different social circumstances, but rather the ability to use generally acceptable forms and avoid potentially offensive ones.

(Littlewood 1981: 6)[[11]](#footnote-11)

At this point, you might like to consider your own position on this matter. Do you think that considerations of content selection and grading (i.e. selecting and grading grammar, functions, notions, topics, pronunciation, vocabulary etc.) should be kept separate from the selection and grading of tasks, or not? As we have already pointed out, we take the view that any comprehensive curriculum needs to take account of both means and ends and must address both content and process. In the final analysis, it does not really matter whether those responsible for specifying learning tasks are called 'syllabus designers' or 'methodologists'. What matters is that both processes and outcomes are taken care of and that there is a compatible and creative relationship between the two.

Whatever the position taken, there is no doubt that the development of communicative language teaching has had a profound effect on both methodology and syllabus design, and has greatly enhanced the status of the learning 'task' within the curriculum.

Students need to be understood and to be able to say what they want to say. Their pronunciation should be at least adequate for that purpose. They need to know the various sounds that occur in the language and differentiate between them. They should be able to apply certain rules, eg. past tense endings, t, d or id. Likewise, a knowledge of correct rhythm and stress and appropriate intonation is essential.

In Extract 1, the teacher plays the part of ringmaster. He asks the questions (most of which are 'display' questions which require the learners to provide answers which the teacher already knows). The only student-initiated interaction is on a point of vocabulary.

• In the second extract, the learners have a much more active role. They communicate directly with each other, rather than exclusively with the teacher as is the case in Extract 1, and one student is allowed to take on the role of provider of content. During the interaction it is the learner who is the 'expert' and the teacher who is the 'learner' or follower.

From time to time, it is a good idea to record and analyse interactions in your own classroom. These interactions can either be between you and your students, or between students as they interact in small-group work. If you do, you may be surprised at the disparity between what you thought at the time was happening, and what actually took place as recorded on the tape. You should not be disconcerted if you do find such a disparity. In my experience, virtually all teachers, even the most experienced, discover dimensions to the lesson which they were unaware of at the time the lesson took place. (These will not all be negative, of course.)

The raw data of interaction, as above, are often illuminating. The following reactions were provided by a group of language teachers at an inservice workshop. The teachers had recorded, transcribed and analysed a lesson which they had recently given and were asked (among other things) to report back on what they had discovered about their own teaching, and about the insights they had gained into aspects of classroom management and interaction. Most of the comments referred, either explicitly or implicitly, to teacher/learner roles:

'As teachers we share an anxiety about "dominating" and so a common assumption that we are too intrusive, directive etc.' 'I need to develop skills for responding to the unexpected and exploit this to realise the full potential of the lesson.' 'There are umpteen aspects which need improving. There is also the effort of trying to respond to contradictory notions about teaching (e.g. intervention versus non-intervention).' 'I had been making a conscious effort to be non-directive, but was far more directive than I had thought.'

'Using small groups and changing groups can be perplexing and counterproductive, or helpful and stimulating. There is a need to plan carefully to make sure such changes are positive.' 'I have come to a better realisation of how much listening the teacher needs to do.' 'The teacher's role in facilitating interaction is extremely important for all types of classes. How do you teach teachers this?' 'I need to be more aware of the assumptions underlying my practice.' 'I discovered that I was over-directive and dominant.' 'Not to worry about periods of silence in the classroom.' 'I have a dreadful tendency to overload.' 'I praise students, but it is rather automatic. There is also a lot of teacher talk in my lessons.' 'I give too many instructions.' 'I discovered that, while my own style is valuable, it leads me to view issues in a "blinkered" way. I need to analyse my own and others' styles and ask why do I do it that way?'

**Chapter I**

**Types of communicative exercises**

**Warming-up exercises**

When people have to work together in а group it is advisable that they get to know each other а little at the beginning. Оncе they have talked tо each other in an introductory exercise they will be less reluctant to cooperate in further activities. One of the pre-requisites of cooperation is knowing the other people's names. А second one is having some idea of what individual members of the group are interested in. One important use of warming-up exercises is with new classes at the beginning of а course or the school year. If уои join in the activities and let the class know something about yourself, the students are mоrе likely to accept you as а person and not just as а teacher. А second use of warming-up activities lies in getting students into the right mood before starting on some new project or task.

However, even warming-up activities mау seem threatening to very shy students. In particular, exercises in which one person has to speak about himself in front of the whole class belong in this category. You can reduce the strain by reorganising the activity in such а way that the student concerned is questioned by the class, thus avoiding а monologue where the pressure is on one person only. Students often find pair work the least threatening because everybody is talking at the same time and they have only got one listener. Depending on the atmosphere in your classes, you mау wish tо modify whole-class exercises to include pair or group work.

А number of warming-up exercises, are also suitable for light relief between periods of hard work. Grouping contains а lot of ideas for dividing students into groups and can precede all types of group work.

Most of the warming-up exercises are suitable for beginners because they do not demand more than simple questions and answers. But the language content of the exercises can easily be adapted to а higher level of proficiency.

**Names**

Aims: Skills — speaking

Language — questions

Other — getting tо know each other' s names

Level: Beginners

Organisation: Class

Preparation : As many small slips of paper as there are students

Time : 5-10 minutes

Procedure : Step 1: Each student writes his full name on а piece of paper. All the papers are collected and redistributed sо that everyone receives the name of а person he does not know.

Step 2: Everyone walks around the room and tries to find the person whose name he holds. Simple questions can bе asked, е.g. 'Is your name...?' 'Are you...?'

Step 3: When everyone has found his partner, he introduces him tо the group[[12]](#footnote-12).

**Interviews**

We watch, read and listen to interviews every day. In the media the famous and not sо famous are interviewed on important issues and trivial subjects. For the advertising industry and market research institutes, interviews are а necessity. The success of an interview depends both on the skill of the interviewer, on her ability to ask the right kinds of questions, to insist and interpret, and on the willingness to talk on the part of the person being interviewed. Both partners in an interview should be good at listening so that а question-and-answer sequence develops into а conversation.

In the foreign language classroom interviews are useful not only because they force students rо listen carefully but also because they are sо versatile in their subject matter.[[13]](#footnote-13) As soon as beginners know the first structures for questions (е.g. Can you sing an English song? Have you got а car?) interviewing can begin. If everyone interviews his neighbour all students are practising the foreign language at the same time. When the learners have acquired а basic set of structures and vocabulary the interviews mentioned in this section can be used. А list of possible topics for further interviews is given at the end of the section. Of course, you may choose any topic you wish, taking them from recent news stories or texts read in class. In the warming-up phase of а course interviews could concentrate on more personal questions.

Before you use an interview in your class make sure that the students can use the necessary question-and-answer structures. А few sample sentences on the board may be а help for the less able. With advanced learners language functions like insisting and asking for confirmation (Did you mean that...? Do you really think that...? Did you say... ? But you said earlier that...), hesitating (Well, let me see...), contradicting and interrupting (Hold on а minute..., Can I just butt in here?) can be practised during interviews. When students report back on interviews they have done, they have to use reported speech.

Since the students' chances of asking а lot of questions are not very good in 'language-oriented' lessons, interviews are а good compensation. If you divide your class up into groups of three and let two students interview the third, then the time spent on practisinig questions is increased. As а rule students should make some notes on the questions they are going to ask and of the answers they get.

**Self-directed interviews**

Aims: Skills — writing, speaking

Language - questions

Other — getting tо know each other or each other' s points of view

Level : Intermediate

Organisation: Pairs

Preparation: None

Time: 10-30 minutes

Procedure:

Step 1: Each student writes down five to ten questions that he would like tо be asked. The general context of these questions can be left open, or the questions can be restricted to areas such as personal likes and dislikes, opinions, information about one' s personal life, еtс.

Step 2: The students choose partners, exchange question sheets and interview one another using these questions.

Step 3: It might be quite interesting to find out in а discussion with the whole class what kinds of questions we asked and why they were chosen.

Variations Instead of fully written-up questions each student specifies three to five topics he would like tо bе asked about, е.g. pop music, food, friends.

Remarks: This activity helps to avoid embarrassment because nobody has to reveal thoughts and feelings he does not want to talk about.

**Jigsaw tasks**

Jigsaw tasks use the same basic principle as jigsaw puzzles with one exception. Whereas the player doing а jigsaw puzzle has all the pieces he needs in front of him, the participants in а jigsaw task have only one (or а few) piece(s) each. As in а puzzle the individual parts, which may be sentences from а story or factual text, or parts of а picture or comic strip, have tо be fitted together to find the solution. In jigsaw tasks each participant is equally important, because each holds part of the solution. That is why jigsaw tasks are said tо improve cooperation and mutual acceptance within the group[[14]](#footnote-14). Participants in jigsaw tasks have to do а lot of talking before they are able to fit the pieces together in the right way. It is obvious that this entails а large amount of practice in the foreign language, especially in language functions like suggesting, agreeing and disagreeing, determining sequence, etc. А modified form of jigsaw tasks is found in communicative exercises for pair work.

Jigsaw tasks practise two very different areas of skill in the foreign language. Firstly, the students have tо understand the bits of information they are given (i.е. listening and/or reading comprehension) and describe them to the rest of the group. This makes them realise how important pronunciation and intonation are in making yourself understood. Secondly, the students have to organise the process of finding the solution; а lot of interactional language is needed here. Because the language elements required by jigsaw tasks are not available at beginners' level, this type of activity is best used with intermediate and more advanced students. In а number of jigsaw tasks in this section the participants have to give exact descriptions of scenes or objects, so these exercises can be valuable for revising prepositions and adjectives.

Pair or group work is necessary for а number of jigsaw tasks. If your students have not yet been trained to use the foreign language amongst themselves in situations like these, there may be а few difficulties with monolingual groups when you start using jigsaw tasks. Some of these difficulties may be overcome if exercises designed for pair work are first done as team exercises so that necessary phrases can be practised.

The worksheets are also meant as stimuli for your own production of worksheets. Suitable drawings can be found in magazines. If you have а camera you can take photographs for jigsaw tasks, i.е. arrangements of а few objects with the positions changed in each picture. Textual material for strip stories can be taken from textbooks and text collections.

Some of the problem-solving activities are also а kind of jigsaw task.

**The same or different?**

Aims Skills — speaking, listening comprehension

Language — exact description

Other — cooperation

Level Intermediate

Organisation Class,Pairs

Preparation One copy each of handout А for half the students, and one сору each of handout S for the other half (see Part 2)

Mimе 15-20

Procedure Step 1: The class is divided into two groups of equal size and the chairs arranged in two circles, the inner circle facing outwards, the outer circle facing inwards, so that two students from opposite groups sit facing each other. All the students sitting in the inner circle receive handout А. All the students in the outer circle receive handout S. They must not show each other their handouts.

Step 2: Each handout contains 18 small drawings; some are the same in А and S, and some are different. By describing the drawings to each other and asking questions the two students in each pair have to decide whether the drawing is the same or different, and mark it S or D. The student who has а cross next to the number of the drawing begins by describing it to his partner. After discussing three drawings all the students in the outer circle move to the chair on their left and continue with а new partner.

Step 3: When all the drawings have been discussed, the teacher tells the class the answers.

Variations The material can be varied in many ways. Instead of pictures, other things could be used, е.g. synonymous and non- synonymous sentences, symbolic drawings, words and drawings.

**Chapter II**

**Questioning activities**

This last section in the chapter is something of а mixed bag, in so far as it contains аll those activities which, although they centre around questioning, do not fit into any of the previous sections. First of all there are humanistic exercises that focus on the learners themselves, their attitudes and values. Secondly there is а kind of exercise that could be employed to teach learners about the cultural background of the target country. Thirdly there is а board game. Last of all there are three activities suitable either as warming-up exercises or as strategies for tackling more factual topics. The worksheets belonging tо these exercises can be modified accordingly. Many of these activities are quite flexible, not only as regards their content but also in terms of procedure. By simply introducing а few new rules, е.g. а limit on the number of questions or a time-limit they are transformed into games.

As soon as students are able to produce yes/no and wh-questions most of these activities can be used. You may, however, have со adapt the worksheets as these are not always aimed at the earliest stage at which an exercise can be used. For reasons of motivation similar activities, like Gо and find out and Find someone who..., should not be done directly one after the other[[15]](#footnote-15).

For activities which question forms are practised. The book by Moskowitz (1978) contains а great number of humanistic exercises.

**What would happen if...?[[16]](#footnote-16)**

Aims Skills — speaking

Language — if-clauses, making conjectures, asking for confirmation

Other — imagination

Level Intermidiate

Organisation Class

Preparation About twice as many slips of paper with an event/situation written on them as there are students

Time 10-15 minutes

Procedure Every student receives one or two slips of paper with sentences like these on them: 'What would happen if а shop gave away its goods free every Wednesday?' 'What would you do if you won а trip for two to а city of your choice?' One student starts by reading out his question and then asks another student to answer it. The second student continues by answering or asking а third student tо answer the first student's question. If he has answered the question he may then read out his own question for somebody else to answer. The activity is finished when all the questions have been read out and answered.

Variations The students can prepare their own questions. Some more suggestions:

What would happen

if everybody who told а lie turned green?

if people could get а driving licence at 14? if girls had to do military service?

if men were not allowed to become doctors or pilots? if children over 10 were allowed to vote? i f gold was found in your area?

if а film was made in your school/place of work?

if headmasters had to be elected by teachers and pupils? if smoking was forbidden in public places?

if the price of alcohol was raised by 300 per cent?

What would you do

if you were invited tо the Queen' s garden party?

if а photograph of yours won first prize at an exhibition? if your little sister aged 14 told you she was pregnant? if you saw your teacher picking apples from her neighbour' tree?

if а salesman called at your house and tried со sell you а sauna bath?

if your horoscope warned you against travelling when you want to go on holiday?

if it rained every day of your holiday?

if you got а love letter from somebody you did not know? if you found а snake under your bed?

if you got lost on а walk in the woods?

if you were not able to remember numbers?

if somebody hit а small child very hard in your presence? if you found а 120 note in а library book?

if your friend said she did not like the present you had given her?

if you suddenly found out that you could become invisible by eating spinach?

if you broke an expensive vase while you were baby-sitting at а friend' s house?

if you invited somebody to dinner at your house but they forgot to come?

if you forgot you had asked four people to lunch and didn' t have any food in the house when they arrived?

if а young man came up to you, gave you а red rose and said that you were the loveliest person he had seen for а long time?

if you noticed that you hadn' t got any money on you and you had promised tо ring your mother from а call box at exactly this time?

if you could not sleep at night?

**Values clarification techniques**

The асtivitites in this section are based on the principle of the 'values clarification approach' which originated in the USA[[17]](#footnote-17). It is one of the assumptions of this approach that school must help young people to become aware of their own values and to act according tо them. The psychologist Louis Raths distinguishes between three main stages in this process: 'Prizing one' s beliefs and behaviours,... choosing one' s beliefs and behaviours,... acting on one' s beliefs’[[18]](#footnote-18). Personal values relate both to one' s own personality and to the outside world, including such areas as school, leisure activities or politics. Adults as well as young people may not always be consciously aware of their beliefs and so learners of all ages may find that the activities in this section help them tо discover something about themselves.

The activities in this section mainly concern the prizing and choosing of values; acting on one's beliefs cannot be learnt sо easily in the foreign language class. The individual tasks appeal directly tо the learners, who have to be prepared tо talk about their feelings and attitudes. On the one hand this may be а very motivating experience, because the students feel that they are communicating about something meaningful, as well as being taken seriously as people; on the other hand а situation in which the participants have to reveal some of their more 'private' thoughts mау appear threatening. Thus it is essential tо do these exercises in а supportive and relaxed atmosphere. You mау help create this atmosphere by joining in some of the exercises and sharing your values with уоur students. You should also remind your students of the guideline that nobody has tо answer embarrassing questions, and that the right to refuse to answer is granted to everyone in these exercises. The educational bias of values clarification techniques makes it easier to integrate them into а democratic style of teaching than mоrе traditional teacher- centred methods.

As regards the language items practised in these exercises, speech acts like expressing likes and dislikes, stating one' s opinions and giving/asking for reasons occur throughout. Skills like note taking are also practised, because students are often asked tо jot down their ideas and feelings.

Values clarification techniques share some characteristics with ranking exercises, but the latter are more structured and predictable.

**Personalities**

Aims Skills — speaking, writing

Language — descriptive sentences, past tense (reported speech)

Other — acknowledging the influence other people have on us, note taking

Level Intermdiate

Organisation Individuals, class

Preparation None

Time 10-30

Procedure Step 1: The students are asked tо think about their lives and the people they know/have known. Each student should find at least two people who have influenced him in his life. These mау be his parents, other relations, friends, or personalities from history or literature. Не should note down some points in order to be able tо tell the rest of the class briefly how these people have influenced him.

Step 2: Each student in turn says а few sentences about these people. А discussion and/or question may follow each speal

Remarks Emphasis should be given to positive influences.

**Lifestyle**

Aims Skills — speaking

Language — giving reasons, stating likes and dislikes

Other — thinking about one' s priorities

Level Beginners/intermediate

Organisation Pairs

Preparation Students are asked а day or so beforehand со bring along three objects which are important or significant for them.

Time 10 — 15 minutes

Procedure Step 1: Students work with а partner. Each of them explains the use/purpose of the three objects he has brought with him and says why they are important and significant for him.

Both partners then talk about similarities and differences between their choice of objects.

Step 2: А few of the students present their partner's objects and explain their significance to the rest of the group.

Variations 1: Instead of real objects, drawings or photographs (cut out-3 of magazines or catalogues) may be used.

2: Before the paired discussion starts, а kind of speculating or guessing game can be conducted, where the three objects of а student whose identity is not revealed are shown, and suggestions about their significance are made.

**Thinking strategies**

In the last decade Edward de Bono has repeatedly demanded that thinking should be taught in schools. His main intention is to change our rigid way of thinking and make us learn to think creatively. Some of the activities in this section are taken from his thinking course for schools. Brainstorming, although also mentioned by de Bono, is а technique that has been used widely in psychology and cannot be attributed to him.

The thinking strategies resemble each other in that different ideas have to be collected by the participants in the first stage. In the second stage these ideas have tо be ordered and evaluated. It is obvious that there is ample opportunity tо use the foreign language at both stages. Apart from the speech acts of agreeing and disagreeing, suggesting, etc. these exercises practise all forms of comparison and the conditional.

**Brainstorming**

Aims Skills — speaking, writing

Language — conditional, making suggestions

Other — imagination, practice of important thinking skills

Level Intermediate

Organisation Groups of four to seven students

Preparation None

Time 5 — 15 minutes

Procedure Step 1: The class is divided into groups. Each group receives the same task. Possible tasks are:

(а) How many possible uses can you find for а paper clip (plastic bag/wooden coat hanger/teacup/pencil/sheet of typing paper/matchbox, etc.)?

(b) You have со make an important phone call but you have по change. How many ways can you find of getting the money for the call?

(с) How many ways can you find of opening а wine bottle without а corkscrew?

(d) How many ways can you find of having а cheap holiday? The groups work on the task for а few minutes, collecting as many ideas as possible without commenting on them or evaluating them. All the ideas are written down by the group secretary.

Step 2: Each group reads out their list of ideas. The ideas are written on the board.

Step 3: The groups choose five ideas from the complete list (either the most original or the most practical ones) and rank them.

Variations 1: After Step 1 the groups exchange their lists of ideas. Each group ranks the ideas on its new list according со а common criterion, е.g. practicability, costs, simplicity, danger, etc.

2: Each group chooses an idea and discusses it according to the procedure.

Remarks Brainstorming increases mental flexibility and encourages original thinking. It is а useful strategy for а great number of teaching situations.

**Interactive problem solving**

In this section, we shall look at two approaches in which communicative tasks are sequenced around problem situations. The first is Scarcella's sociodrama, while the second is Di Pietro's strategic interaction. Both approaches allow the teacher to build in exercises which enable learners to develop vocabulary, grammar and discourse as well as interactive skills.

The focus of Scarcella's sociodrama is on the development of skills in social interaction. Unlike most role plays, sociodrama involves a series of specific steps. It is student- rather than teacher-centred in that students define their own roles and determine their own course of action. The following set of steps provides an idea of how the approach works.

1. *Warm up*

The topic is introduced by the teacher.

2. *Presentation of new vocabulary*

New words and expressions are introduced.

3. *Presentation of dilemma*

A story is introduced by the teacher who stops at the dilemma point. Students focus on the conflict which occurs at the dilemma point.

4. *Discussion of the situation and selection of roles*

The problem and roles are discussed. Students who relate to the roles and who have solutions to offer come to the front of the class to participate in the enactment.

5. *Audience preparation*

Those who are not going to take part in the enactment are given specific tasks to carry out during the enactment.

6. *Enactment*

Role-players act out the solution which has been suggested.

1. *Discussion of the situation and selection of new role-players*Alternative ways of solving the problem are explored and new  
   role-players are selected.
2. *Re-enactment*

The problem situation is replayed with new strategies.

9. *Summary*

The teacher guides the students to summarise what was presented.

10. *Follow-up*

These may include a written exercise, extended discussion, aural comprehension exercises or a reading exercise. (Scarcella 1978)[[19]](#footnote-19)

Di Pietro's approach, which he calls 'strategic interaction' is based on improvisations or 'scenarios'. Students act out scenarios, having first memorised the situation and roles they are expected to play and having carefully rehearsed the scenario. However, at certain points during the acting out, additional information is injected into the situation, requiring learners to modify their intended role, and to alter the direction of the interaction.

With a little thought, problem situations and scenarios can be developed which do allow learners to rehearse 'real-world' language i.e. language they might potentially need to use in the real world. Whether or not a given lesson appears to have a real-world rationale really depends on the situation which the teacher has chosen. Scarcella obviously believes that her approach has real-world applications as can be seen in the following quote:

Socio-drama is an activity which obliges students to attend to the verbal environment. First, it is relevant to the students' interests, utilizing both extrinsic motivation, which refers to the students' daily interests and cares, and intrinsic motivation, which refers to the students' internal feelings and attitudes. . . . Furthermore, socio-drama is a problem-solving activity which stimulates real life situations and requires active student involvement.

(Scarcella 1978: 46)

In the following activities the learners have to find solutions tо various types of problem. In the case of puzzles there is just one correct solution: however, most of the ехеrcises lead tо а discussion of several ways of solving the problems. The problem tasks themselves range from the imaginary to the more realistic. The latter provide situations which the learners might conceivably have . to face outside the classroom.

Apart from the activities focusing on the likes and dislikes of individual learners, which therefore need an initial phase where each student works on his own, most of the problem- '. solving tasks in this section require pair or group work throughout. In some ways these activities are similar to ranking exercises because, like them, they generate discussions of the importance or relevance of statements, ideas or procedures. But unlike ranking exercises, problem-solving activities demand that the learners themselves decide upon the items to be ranked. Thus there is more creative use of the foreign language. It is advisable to use the less complex ranking exercises before any problem- solving activities if the students have not done this kind of work before.

The language which is needed for problem-solving activities depends on the topic of each exercise, but in general students will have tо make suggestions, give reasons, and accept, modify or reject suggestions and reasons given by others.

**Desert island**

Aims Skills — speaking, writing

Language — giving and asking for reasons, agreeing and disagreeing, making suggestions

Other — imagination, common sense, fun

Level Intermediate

Organisation Individuals, pairs, groups.

Preparation None

Time 10-20

Procedure Step 1: The teacher describes the task tо the students: 'You are stranded on а desert island а long way from anywhere. There is а fresh water spring on the island, and there are banana trees and coconut palms. The climate is mild. Make а list of eight to twelve things which you think are necessary for survival.' Students work on their own.

Step 2: Students pair up and compare lists. They agree on а common list of а maximum of ten items.

Step 3: The students discuss the new lists in groups of four tо six students. They decide on а group list of а maximum of eight items and rank these according to their importance.

**Rescue**

Aims Skills — speaking

Language – stating an opinion, giving and asking for reasons, agreeing and disagreeing, comparisons

Other — thinking about one' s values

Level Intermediate/advanced

Organisation Groups of five to eight students

Preparation None

Time 10-20

Procedure Step 1: The teacher explains the situation:

'The Earth is doomed. All life is going tо perish in two due tо radiation. А spaceship from another solar system lands and offers to rescue twelve people, who could start а new world on an empty planet very much like Earth. Imagine you are the selection committee and you have to decide who mау be rescued. Think of а list of criteria which you would use in your decision.'

Step 2: Each group discusses the problem and tries to work out а list.

Step 3: Each group presents its list of criteria to the class. The lists are discussed.

Variations The task can be made mоrе specific, е.g. 'Find ten criteria. You can award up tо 100 points if а candidate gets full marks on all counts, е.g. appearance 5, intelligence 30, fertility 15, physical fitness 20, etc.

Remarks Although the basic problem is а rather depressing one, it helps students to clarify their own values as regards judging others.

**Chapter III**

**Stories & Poetry– painting that speaks[[20]](#footnote-20)**

The aim of these activities is to get the students to produce longer connected texts. For this they will need imagination as well as some skill in the foreign language. Stimuli are given in the form of individual words or pictures.

Story-telling activates more than а limited number of patterns and structures and these activities are best used as general revision.

**Chain story[[21]](#footnote-21)**

Aims Skills — speaking

Language — simple past

Other — imagination, flexibility

Level Beginners/intermediate

Organisation Class

Preparation Small slips of paper with one noun/verb/adjective on each of them, as many pieces of paper as there are students

Time 10 — 20 minutes

Procedure Step 1: Each student receives а word slip.

Step 2: The teacher starts the story by giving the first sentence, е.g. 'It was а stormy night in November. А student (either а volunteer or the person sitting nearest to the teacher) continues the story. Не mау say up to three sentences and must include the word on his slip of paper. The next student goes on.

Variations Each student is also given а number. The numbers determine the sequence in which the students have to contribute tо the story.

Remarks One can direct the contents of the story to а certain degree by the choice of words.

**Newspaper report[[22]](#footnote-22)**

Aims Skills — writing

Language — reporting events, past tenses, passive

Other — imagination

Level Intermediate

Organisation Groups

Preparation А large number of photographs taken from magazines and newspapers

Time 20 — 30 minutes

Procedure Step 1: Each group is given five pictures of which they have to use three. Their aim is tо write а newspaper rероrt linking these three pictures.

Step 2: When each group has decided which pictures to use they write their report.

Step 3: The reports are read out and the pictures shown to the class.

Variations 1: Each group chooses three pictures which another group has tо write about.

2: After Step 2 all the pictures are displayed on the wall. When the reports are read out the others have to guess which pictures fit which report.

3: The reports are taken as starting points for interviews and role plays.

Remarks If unusual and widely differing pictures are chosen the result can be very funny.

This work is based on the assumption that the handing-down of grammatical rules is made easier if students are told in the regular beat of a verse scheme. The poems themselves are here to give the words a special measured motion as they are spoken. The rhythmic movement is sufficiently controlled to show some regularity. In some ways the poetic lines are like careful conversation; each word is chosen to give the fullest possible effect, and the rhythm of the lines ensures that heaviness is avoided to some extent. However, poetry is essentially spoken language, and so the lines are more memorable than prose. One advantage of these poems is that the lines are easily remembered.

The general meaning of a poem is more important than the literal meanings of the individual words. Thus, to read a poem effectively is to read it wholly and appreciate its unity.

The following poem states that the passive voice is preferable in scientific writing. It also shows how active voice can be changed into passive voice. The last two lines explain that the subject of the active voice is put at the end in the passive sentence and it is often omitted as it is expressed through the word "dead."

Active and Passive Forms:

Hi, Ahmad, come and see,

Two forms may a sentence be.

Active or passive voice, Each one a free choice,

Active in all speech, Passive for science teach.

Active form is formal, Passive also be normal.

To get passive as we know, After a verb should object go.

In the passive object needed, Being subject firstly seated.

Object comes to be first, As a subject not to hurt.

Subject goes to the end, Following "by" as a friend.

Abdul Hassan Sh. Qassim Ajdubia, Libya

Poetry is painting that speaks, according to Plutarch. It is the artistic use of language which sums up its essence and unbounded versatility. It requires, however, a degree of linguistic sophistication for understanding and appreciation. Therefore, you should reserve English poems for FFL/ESL students who are both proficient in English and genuinely interested in poetry. Only with such groups can poems become popular and productive items for conversation.

In choosing poems for your group, I suggest that you limit your choice to nineteenth- and twentieth-century poetry. If you are considering American poetry, for instance, poems by Emily Dickinson, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Robert Frost, and other well-known poets should provide excellent discussion material. Of course, you do not have to limit your choice to great poets only. There are, for instance, collections of poems by talented American high school and university students-collections which often contain fine selections for use in English conversation sessions.

A poem that is short, written in clear language, and universally appealing is most likely to interest your students. As Jerome Gram said in a recent seminar in Turkey, "Unlike a novel or a play or a story, such a poem presents itself on the page in bite size-encouragingly compact and accessible—a manifestly possible task. And at the same time, the density of meaning and possibility in a word or a line of poetry yields ample and varied material for study."

Once you have collected poems that you consider suitable, you may want to use the following procedures;

1. Read each poem two or three times to your students before they see it in the written form. They should listen for meaning as well as for rhythm in the individual words and lines.

2. Give everyone a copy of the poem. If there are no duplicating facilities available, write the poem on the blackboard so that the students can copy it.

3. Explain the meaning of words or expressions that students may not be familiar with.

4. Read the poem again while the students follow the written form.

5. Discuss the message or messages in the poem. Ask: the students why they agree or disagree with the poet's views. Have students restate the message(s) in prose.

6. Read the poem and have the students listen to it with their eyes closed so that they can concentrate on the sound of the words.

7. Have the group go through the poem with a different student ding each line, one student reading one verse and the entire group heading the next, female students reading some lines and male students reading others, or any other pattern that adds interest and pried vocal quality during the reading of the poem.

8. Discuss the poet-his life, philosophy, other poems he has written, and additional information that would interest your students.

9. Delineate the cultural elements appearing in the poem. Have the students compare these with elements in their own culture.

10. Help the students memorize the poem if they are interested in doing so. Poems learned by heart can be repeated by the group as a whole or by individual students and are apt to be even more attractive with familiarity. Besides, a poem which is memorized becomes the students' actual ""possession," a living part of his own linguistic and intellectual heritage.

Professor Gram told his students, "There's no better way to get familiar and at home with English than to have a few English poems running through your head." You may make the same observation with your students.

**Games as a way at breaking the routine of classroom drill**

Language games can add fun and variety to conversation sessions if the participants are fond of games. I, myself, have always enjoyed games, and students (most of them adults) seem to share my enthusiasm. Games are especially refreshing after demanding conversational activities such as debates or speeches. Here, the change of pace from the serious to the lighthearted is particularly welcome, although language games can fit into any directed conversation program quite well.

Socio-drama is an activity which obliges students to attend to the verbal environment. First, it is relevant to the students' interests, utilizing both extrinsic motivation, which refers to the students' daily interests and cares, and intrinsic motivation, which refers to the students' internal feelings and attitudes. . . . Furthermore, socio-drama is a problem-solving activity which stimulates real life situations and requires active student involvement.

Some teachers feel that language games are more appropriate in the manipulative phase than in the communicative phase of language learning. Most teachers, however, find language games valuable in both phases. In the manipulative phase, a game is a wonderful way to break the routine of classroom drill by providing relaxation while' remaining within the framework of language learning. In the communicative phase, a game can be stimulating and entertaining, and when the participants have stopped playing the game you can use it as a stimulus for additional conversation. For instance, if the group has just finished the game in which players indicate whether a statement is true or false by running to chairs labeled “True” and “False,” you may then ask questions about what happened during the game. ("Who was the first player?", "Who knocked the chair over by accident?", "What was the first true statement in the game?", "How many points did Team II score?" etc.)

Of course, for maximum benefit from a language game in either phase, the teacher should select only the best from the hundreds of language games available. Most people would agree that a *good* language game

(1) requires little or no advance preparation,

(2)is easy to play and yet provides the student with an intellectual challenge,

(3;) is short enough to occupy a convenient space in the conversation program,

(4) entertains the students but does not cause the group to get out of control, and

(5) requires no time-consuming correction of written responses afterward.

These games are for teen-agers and adults but often enjoyed by children as well, are especially suitable for use in conversation sessions. Before you read the instructions, you may wish to consider the following suggestions—suggestions designed to insure the greatest success with any of the games you select:

1. Make thorough preparations for the game. Read the rules to yourself several times so that you have a good understanding of how it is played. Gather materials for the games that require special equipment. Plan how you will direct conversation during or following the game.

*2.* Before introducing *a* game to a class, ask the students if they think they would enjoy this kind of activity. Occasionally an adult class expresses in no uncertain terms its lack of interest in the prospect of playing a game. When this happens, it is best to abandon the idea-at least for the time being.

3. Choose a game that allows as many students as possible to participate. If the class is large, a number of students will sit as the audience during some games. But even there, members of the audience may keep score and in other ways take part in the game. In small classes, you should make sure that every student has an active role in every game.

4. Be sure that the game you select is within the range of your students’ ability. Remember that the students will be greatly challenged by the fact that they are playing the game in a language other than their own.

5. Do not play a game at the beginning of the conversation period. Save the game for use in the middle or toward the end of the session, when the students would welcome a change of pace.

6. Give the directions to the game very clearly; making sure that everyone understands exactly how to play. You may want to play a few "trial" games first, just to make sure that everyone knows his role.

7. Direct the game yourself. Always stand in front of the class, so that all students can see you while you act as the leader or referee.

8. Be sure to follow the rules of the game exactly. If you do not "stick to the rules" but permit even one student to break a rule, you will establish a precedent that may lead to hostility among the students. It is always best, therefore, to anticipate problems of this kind and to play strictly according to the rules.

9. Keep the game well under control. Even though you want your students to have a good time, you cannot allow class discipline to disintegrate. Establish a pleasant but firm tone, and the students will be able to enjoy the game and learn in the process.

10. Observe how the individual players react to the game. Students who make an error in a game may feel a bit sensitive, so you should soften any blows to pride. If you constantly encourage a good spirit of fun, you *will* reduce the chances of unhappiness during the game.

11. In team games, try to have in each team an equal number of more proficient students and less proficient students. This will balance the teams and prevent embarrassment on the part of the weaker students. It also makes the contest more exciting. Some methodologists recommend that you set up permanent teams so that you do not have to name new teams each time. This has its merits, but you may prefer to create new teams each time you play a game, thus lending variety and interest to every fresh contest.

12. If a game does not seem to be going well, try a different game. Since some games appeal to one group of students but not to another, you should be flexible in your use of games.

13. Always stop playing a game before the students are ready to quit. In other words, never play a game so long that it begins to bore the participants. Similarly, do not play one game too often, since this will cause it to lose its novelty.

As you read the directions to the games that follow, do not be discouraged by the length of some of the directions. Long directions might make you think that the game is a complicated one, but all the games are easy for the student to learn if they are geared to his English proficiency level.

For this lively game you should set two chairs close to each otherin front of the class and label one chair "True" and the other chair "False." Then divide the students into two teams of equal size and have members stand one behind the other on opposite sides of the room, with everyone facing the two chairs.

Explain that you are going to make a statement which may or may not be true, such as "John is absent today" (when he actually is absent) or "It was cloudy this morning'" (when it was sunny) or "Mary is wearing a red dress"' (when she is wearing a blue one) or "There are ten girls in this room" (when there are only seven). You should say the statement fairly rapidly, and only once.

As soon as you have completed the statement, a member of Team I and a member of Team II standing at the head of their respective team lines should quickly decide if the statement is true or false and run to the appropriate chair. The first person who sits down squarely on the right chair scores a point for his team. Both contestants then go to the end of their team lines and you make another statement for the second set of contestants. The game continues in this fashion until everyone has had a chance to play or until the time limit, agreed upon in advance, has been reached. Because the statements can be short and easy, or long and difficult, the game is ideal for all language-learning levels.

**Classroom twenty questions**

This is an excellent guessing game in which one person chooses a visible object in the room and the other students try to guess what it is by asking questions.

Suppose that you, for instance, begin the game by mentally selecting a pink scarf that one of the girl students is wearing. Tell the students that you have chosen an object and that each student can ask one question about it. You will give a complete answer to the question.

After several questions have been asked, the person whose turn is next may think he knows what the object is, In this case, he can ask, "Is it a (the). . . ? If he has guessed correctly, he wins the game and becomes the person who chooses the object in the second game. You will need someone to keep count of the number of questions asked. If no one has guessed the object after twenty questions, the person who selected the object wins the game and can choose another object for the second game.

The game might go something like this:

Student A: Is it as large as the map on the wall?

Answer: No, it isn't as large as the map.

Student B: Is it made of metal оm cloth?

Answer: It's made of cloth.

Student C: Does it belong to a student?

Answer: Yes, it belongs to a student.

Student D: Is it in front of me or behind me?

Answer: It's in front of you.

Student E: Is it round?

Answer: No, it isn't round.

Student F: Is it very expensive?

Answer: No, it isn't very expensive.

Student G: What color is it?

Answer: It's pink.

Student H: Is it Anna’s scarf?

Answer: Yes, it is. You've won the game!

At this point, Student H comes to the front of the room and mentally selects a new visible object for the next game.

If your students are quite advanced, you may wish to play the original game of 'Twenty Questions." In this form of the game, only questions that take a Yes or No answer are permitted. Another variation of the game is to select a famous person, living or dead, to be guessed, instead of an object.

**What would you do if…?**

This is such an amusing game that your class will probably want to play it often.

Begin the game by dividing the class into two teams of equal number. Designate one as Team I and the other as Team II. Then, write the following on the blackboard:

Team I Team II

What would you do if. . .? I would. . .

Now give everyone on Team I a slip of paper and explain that each person on the team must write an imaginative question beginning with *What would you do if, . . .* For example, someone might write: "What would you do if you saw a tiger in the street?" Someone else might write: "What would you do if you won a car in a lottery?". Etc.

As Team I carries out these directions, give everyone on Team II a piece of paper. Explain that each member of this team must write an imaginative sentence beginning / *would. , . ,* For instance, someone could write "I would dance for hours." Another person might write "I would buy a wig.” etc.

When everyone has finished writing his assigned sentences, collect all Team I's questions in one box and all Team II's answers in another. You can now draw and read first a question and then an answer. This game is sometimes called "Cross Questions and Crooked Answers"; the fun comes from the fact that the questions and answers are so utterly and ridiculously unrelated.

**Projects**

Projects involving hobbies, crafts, physical exercise, sports, and civic services are extremely fruitful for English conversation groups, provided that only English is spoken during a given activity. All you need to do is to find a common denominator in your group's interests and your abilities to supervise plus adequate time, space, and equipment to create projects successful in their own right as well as in conversation practice. While possibilities for projects are almost limitless, here are a few that you may wish to consider for teen-age and adult groups:

1. Playing card games such as bridge, or board games like chess or Scrabble.

2. Engaging in carpentry.

3. Doing metal or leather work.

4. Making jewelry.

5. Exchanging recipes and demonstrating the preparation of certain dishes.

6. Sewing.

7. Telephoning English-speaking convalescents or shut-ins to brighten their day and to practice English over the telephone.

8. Participating in projects to improve the environment such as clearing a stream of rubbish.

9. Drawing or painting pictures to be used as decorations in the classroom or clubhouse.

10. Taking care of a bulletin board by bringing in and posting appropriate items for display.

11. Playing team sports such as volleyball or basketball.

12. Learning songs and dances that are popular in English-speaking countries.

13. Giving talent shows, plays, or concerts.

14. Participating in various audio-motor units. An audio-motor unit is a language teaching device developed by Robert Elkins, Theodore Kalivoda, and Genelle Morain in which the teacher records a sequence of ten to twenty commands around a common theme on tape. When the teacher plays the tape, he pantomimes responses to the commands while the students watch. Next, the students join the teacher in pantomiming responses to the tape. Eventually, the teacher can read off commands in a scrambled fashion with the students performing the correct physical response to each command. For example, if the teacher has recorded a series of commands about unwrapping a birthday present, the following audio-motor unit might result:

(1) Pick up the package.

(2) Shake it gently to see if it rattles.

(3) Put the box down.

(4) Remove the card.

(5) Read the card.

(6) Put the card down.

(7) Untie the ribbon.

(8) Remove the paper.

(9) Open the box.

(10) Look surprised as you see a sweater inside the box.

(11) Take the sweater out of the box.

(12) Try the sweater on.

(13) Look at yourself in the mirror.

(14) Take the sweater off.

(15) Lay the sweater on the table.

(16) Fold the paper up neatly.

(17) Put the paper and ribbon in a drawer.

(18) Hang the sweater in the closet.

Since this sequence represents a typical birthday ritual in an English-speaking country, it contains elements that may contrast with birthday customs in the students' country. After the group has completed the pantomime, the teacher might want to lead a discussion on such matters as birthday cards, gift wrapping, and birthday celebrations in general.

A project that provides abundant material for conversation is an imaginary trip to a real town in an English-speaking country. You can select from a map of the United States, for instance, a medium-sized town in a section of the country that interests your class. Your students may then write a letter to the Chamber of Commerce in the town, explaining their interest in the community and asking for pertinent information. This might include brochures describing the town, postcards, a street map, telephone book, parking ticket, restaurant menus, local newspapers, and the like. If the Chamber of Commerce cannot answer the request directly, they may put your students in touch with local schools or service clubs that might be willing to send these items. When the material is received, you and your students can inspect and discuss the various items at length.

A lasting relationship between citizens of the two towns may sometimes result from such a project. In an article entitled "Teaching the Telephone Book," Clifford Harrington describes his Japanese students' experience with a "city-to-city" project: "One unexpected benefit was brought about by an article concerning our class that appeared in an issue of the local newspaper we were studying. A young American who was planning to vacation in Japan and whose family had lived in our' town since 1885 learned about us through this article. His visit to our class when he arrived in Tokyo was one of the highlights of the course. Perhaps the most rewarding result was the fact that one young Japanese woman who was planning to take a trip to the United States after completing her studies decided to visit the community we had studied. She now knew so much about it that she wanted to see with her own eyes the places she had visited in her imagination."

**Content-based instruction (CBI)**

In recent years, increasing numbers of language educators have turned to content-based instruction and project work to promote meaningful student engagement with language and content learning. Through content-based instruction, learners develop language skills while simultaneously becoming more knowledgeable citizens of the world. By integrating project work into content-based classrooms, educators create vibrant learning environments that require active student involvement, stimulate higher level thinking skills, and give students responsibility for their own learning. When incorporating project work into content-based classrooms, instructors distance themselves from teacher-dominated instruction and move towards creating a student community of inquiry involving authentic communication, cooperative learning, collaboration, and problem-solving.

In this article, I shall provide a rationale for content-based instruction and demonstrate how project work can be integrated into content-based classrooms. I will then outline the primary characteristics of project work, introduce project work in its various configurations, and present practical guidelines for sequencing and developing a project. It is my hope that language teachers and teacher educators will be able to adapt the ideas presented here to enhance their classroom instruction.

Content-based instruction (CBI) has been used in a variety of language learning contexts for the last 25 years, though its popularity and wider applicability have increased dramatically in the past 10 years. There are numerous practical features of CBI which make it an appealing approach to language instruction:

In a content-based approach, the activities of the language class are specific to the subject matter being taught, and are geared to stimulate students to think and learn through the use of the target language. Such an approach lends itself quite naturally to the integrated teaching of the four traditional language skills.

For example, it employs authentic reading materials which require students not only to understand information but to interpret and evaluate it as well. It provides a forum in which students can respond orally to reading and lecture materials. It recognizes that academic writing follows from listening and reading, and thus requires students to synthesize facts and ideas from multiple sources as preparation for writing. In this approach, students are exposed to study skills and learn a variety of language skills which prepare them for the range of academic tasks they will encounter (Brinton, Snow, and Wesche 1989:2)[[23]](#footnote-23)

This quotation reflects a consistent set of descriptions by CBI practitioners who have come to appreciate the many ways that CBI offers ideal conditions for language learning. Research in second language acquisition offers additional support for CBI; yet some of the most persuasive evidence stems from research in educational and cognitive psychology, even though it is somewhat removed from language learning contexts. Worth noting here are four findings from research in educational and cognitive psychology that emphasize the benefits of content-based instruction:

1. Thematically organized materials, typical of content-based classrooms, are easier to remember and learn (Singer 1990)[[24]](#footnote-24).

2. The presentation of coherent and meaningful information, characteristic of well-organized content-based curricula, leads to deeper processing and better learning (Anderson 1990)[[25]](#footnote-25).

3. There is a relationship between student motivation and student interest—common outcomes of content-based classes—and a student's ability to process challenging materials, recall information, and elaborate (Alexander, Kulikowich, and Jetton 1994)[[26]](#footnote-26).

4. Expertise in a topic develops when learners reinvest their knowledge in a sequence of progressively more complex tasks (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1993)[[27]](#footnote-27), feasible in content-based classrooms and usually absent from more traditional language classrooms because of the narrow focus on language rules or limited time on superficially developed and disparate topics (e.g., a curriculum based on a short reading passage on the skyscrapers of New York, followed by a passage on the history of bubble gum, later followed by an essay on the volcanos of the American Northwest).

These empirical research findings, when combined with the practical advantages of integrating content and language learning, provide persuasive arguments in favor of content-based instruction. Language educators who adopt a content-based orientation will find that CBI also allows for the incorporation of explicit language instruction (covering, for example, grammar, conversational gambits, functions, notions, and skills), thereby satisfying students' language and content learning needs in context (see Grabe and Stoller[[28]](#footnote-28) 1997 for a more developed rationale for CBI.)

Content-based instruction allows for the natural integration of sound language teaching practices such as alternative means of assessment, apprenticeship learning, cooperative learning, integrated-skills instruction, project work, scaffolding, strategy training, and the use of graphic organizers. Although each of these teaching practices, is worthy of extended discussion, wewill focus solely on project work and its role in content-based instructional formats.

Some language professionals equate project work with in-class group work, cooperative learning, or more elaborate task-based activities. The purpose is to illustrate how project work represents much more than group work per se. Project-based learning should be viewed as a versatile vehicle for fully integrated language and content learning,- making it a viable option for language educators working in a variety of instructional settings including general English, English for academic purposes (EAP), English for specific purposes (ESP), and English for occupational/vocational/professional purposes, in addition to pre-service and in-service teacher training. Project work is viewed by most of its advocates "not as a replacement for other teaching methods" but rather as "an approach to learning which complements mainstream methods and which can be used with almost all levels, ages and abilities of students" (Haines 1989:1).

In classrooms where a commitment has been made to content learning as well as language learning (i.e., content-based classrooms), project work is particularly effective because it represents a natural extension of what is already taking place in class. So, for example, in an EAP class structured around environmental topics, a project which involves the development of poster displays suggesting ways in which the students' school might engage in more environmentally sound practices would be a natural outcome of the content and language learning activities taking place in class. In a vocational English course focusing on tourism, the development of a promotional brochure highlighting points of interest in the students' home town would be a natural outgrowth of the curriculum. In a general English course focusing on cities in English-speaking countries, students could create public bulletin board displays with pictorial and written information on targeted cities. In an ESP course on international law, a written report comparing and contrasting the American legal system and the students' home country legal system represents a meaningful project that allows for the synthesis, analysis, and evaluation of course content. Project work is equally effective in teacher training courses. Thus, in a course on materials development, a student-generated handbook comprising generic exercises for language skills practice at different levels of English proficiency represents a useful and practical project that can be used later as a teacher-reference tool. The hands-on experience that the teachers-in-training have with project-based learning could, in turn, transfer to their own lesson planning in the future These examples represent only some of the possibilities available to teachers and students when incorporating project work into content-based curricula.

Project work has been described by a number of language educators, including Carter and Thomas (1986), Ferragatti and Carminati (1984), Fried-Booth (1982, 1986), Haines (1989), Legutke (1984, 1985), Legutke and Thiel (1983), Papandreou (1994), Sheppard and Stoller (1995), and Ward (1988). Although each of these educators has approached project work from a different perspective, project work, in its various configurations, shares these features:

1. Project work focuses on content learning rather than on specific language targets. Real-world subject matter and topics of interest to students can become central to projects.

2. Project work is student centered, though the teacher plays a major role in offering support and guidance throughout the process.

3. Project work is cooperative rather than competitive. Students can work on their own, in small groups, or as a class to complete a project, sharing resources, ideas, and expertise along the way.

4. Project work leads to the authentic integration of skills and processing of information from varied sources, mirroring real-life tasks.

5. Project work culminates in an end product (e.g., an oral presentation, a poster session, a bulletin board display, a report, or a stage performance) that can be shared with others, giving the project a real purpose. The value of the project, however, lies not just in the final product but in the process of working towards the end point. Thus, project work has both a process and product orientation, and provides students with opportunities to focus on fluency and accuracy at different project-work stages.

6. Project work is potentially motivating, stimulating, empowering, and challenging. It usually results in building student confidence, self-esteem, and autonomy as well as improving students' language skills, content learning, and cognitive abilities.

Though similar in many ways, project work can take on diverse configurations. The most suitable format for a given context depends on a variety of factors including curricular objectives, course expectations, students' proficiency levels, student interests, time constraints, and availability of materials. A review of different types of projects will demonstrate the scope, versatility, and adaptability of project work.

Projects differ in the degree to which the teacher and students decide on the nature and sequencing of project-related activities, as demonstrated by three types of projects proposed by Henry[[29]](#footnote-29) (1994): Structured projects are determined, specified, and organized by the teacher in terms of topic, materials, methodology, and presentation; unstructured projects are defined largely by students themselves; and semi-structured projects are defined and organized in part by the teacher and in part by students.

Projects can be linked to real-world concerns (e.g., when Italian ESP students designed a leaflet for foreign travel agencies outside of Europe describing the advantages of the European Community's standardization of electrical systems as a step towards European unity.

This ESP project, titled "Connecting Europe with a New Plug," was designed by Italian instructors Laura Chiozzotto, Innocenza Giannasi, Laura Paperini, and Antonio Ragosa for students of electrotechnics and electronics.

Projects can also be linked to simulated real-world issues when EAP students staged a debate on the pros and cons of censorship as part of a content-based unit on censorship. Projects can also be tied to student interests, with or without real-world significance when general English students planned an elaborate field trip to an international airport where they conducted extensive interviews and videotaping of international travelers.

Projects can also differ in data collection techniques and sources of information as demonstrated by these project types. Research projects necessitate the gathering of information through library research. Similarly, text projects involve encounters with "texts" (e.g., literature, reports, news media, video and audio material, or computer-based information) rather than people. Correspondence projects require communication with individuals (or businesses, governmental agencies, schools, or chambers of commerce) to solicit information by means of letters, faxes, phone calls, or electronic mail. Survey projects entail creating a survey instrument and then collecting and analyzing data from "informants." Encounter projects result in face-to-face contact with guest speakers or individuals outside the classroom Projects may also differ in the ways that information is "reported" as part of a culminating activity. Production projects involve the creation of bulletin board displays, videos, radio programs, poster sessions, written reports, photo essays, letters, handbooks, brochures, banquet menus, travel itineraries, and so forth.

Whatever the configuration, projects can be carried out intensively over a short period of time or extended over a few weeks, or a full semester; they can be completed by students individually, in small groups, or as a class; and they can take place entirely within the confines of the classroom or can extend beyond the walls of the classroom into the community or with others via different forms of correspondence.

Project work, whether it is integrated into a content-based thematic unit or introduced as a special sequence of activities in a more traditional classroom, requires multiple stages of development to succeed. Fried-Booth (1986)[[30]](#footnote-30) proposes an easy-to-follow multiple-step process that can guide teachers in developing and sequencing project work for their classrooms. Similarly, Haines (1989) presents a straightforward and useful description of project work and the steps needed for successful implementation. Both the Fried-Booth and Haines volumes include detailed descriptions of projects that can be adapted for many language classroom settings. They also offer suggestions for introducing students to the idea of student-centered activity through bridging strategies (Fried-Booth 1986)2 and lead-in activities (Haines 1989), particularly useful if one's students are unfamiliar with project work and its emphasis on student initiative and autonomy.

The new 10-step sequence (see Figure 1) is described here in detail. The revised model gives easy-to-man-age structure to project work and guides teachers and students in developing meaningful projects that facilitate content learning and provide opportunities for explicit language instruction at critical moments in the project. These language "intervention" lessons will help students complete their projects successfully and will be appreciated by students because of their immediate applicability and relevance. The language intervention steps (IV, VI, and VIII) are optional in teacher education courses, depending on the language proficiency and needs of the teachers-in-training.

Developing a Project in a Language Classroom

Step I: Agree on a theme for the project

Step II: Determine the final outcome

Step III: Structure the project

Step IV:

Prepare students for

the language demands

of Step V

Step V:

Gather information

Step VI:

Prepare students for

the language demands

of Step VII

Step VII:

Compile and analyze information

Step VIII:

Prepare students for

the language demands

of Step IX

Step IX: Present final product

Step X: Evaluate the prodject.

To understand the function of each proposed step, imagine a content-based EAP classroom focusing on American elections.(A parallel discussion could be developed for classrooms—general English, EAP, ESP, vocational English, and so forth—focusing on American institutions, demography, energy alternatives, farming safety, fashion design, health, the ideal automobile, insects, Native Americans, pollution, rain forests, the solar system, etc.). The thematic unit is structured so that the instructor and students can explore various topics: the branches of the U.S. government, the election process, political parties with their corresponding ideologies and platforms, and voting behaviors. Information on these topics is introduced by means of readings from books, newspapers, and news magazines; graphs and charts; videos; dicto-comps; teacher-generated lectures and note-taking activities; formal and informal class discussions and group work; guest speakers; and U.S. political party promotional materials. While exploring these topics and developing some level of expertise about American elections, students improve their listening and note-taking skills, reading proficiency, accuracy and fluency in speaking, writing abilities, study skills, and critical thinking skills. To frame this discussion, it should be noted that the thematic unit is embedded into an integrated-skills, content-based course with the following objectives:

1. To encourage students to use language to learn something new about topics of interest

2. To prepare students to learn subject matter through English

3. To expose students to content from a variety of informational sources to help stu dents improve their academic language and study skills

4. To provide students with contextualized resources for understanding language and content

5. To simulate the rigors of academic courses in a sheltered environment

6. To promote students' self-reliance and engagement with learning

After being introduced to the theme unit and its most fundamental vocabulary and concepts, the instructor introduces a semi-structured project to the class that will be woven into class lessons and that will span the length of the thematic unit. The teacher has already made some decisions about the project: Students will stage a simulated political debate that addresses contemporary political and social issues. To stimulate interest and a sense of ownership in the process, the instructor will work with the students to decide on the issues to be debated, the number and types of political parties represented in the debate, the format of the debate, and a means for judging the debate. To move from the initial conception of the project to the actual debate, the instructor and students follow 10 steps.

Step I: Students and instructor agree on a theme for the project

To set the stage, the instructor gives students an opportunity to shape the project and develop some sense of shared perspective and commitment. Even if the teacher has decided to pursue a structured project, for which most decisions are made by the instructor, students can be encouraged to fine-tune the project theme. While shaping the project together, students often find it useful to make reference to previous readings, videos, discussions, and classroom activities. During the initial stage of the American elections project, students brainstormed issues that might be featured in an American political debate. Through discussion and negotiation, students identified the following issues for consideration: taxes, crime, welfare, gun control, abortion, family leave, foreign policy, affirmative action, election reform, immigration, censorship, the environment, and environmental legislation. By pooling resources, information, ideas, and relevant experiences, students narrowed the scope of the debate by choosing select issues from within the larger set of brainstormed issues that were of special interest to the class and that were "researchable," meaning that resources were available or accessible for student research.

Step II: Students and instructor determine the final outcome whereas the first stage of project work involves establishing a starting point, the second step entails defining an end point, or the final outcome. Students and instructor consider the nature of the project, its objectives, and the most appropriate means to culminate the project. They can choose from a variety of options including a written report, letter, poster or bulletin board display, debate, oral presentation, information packet, handbook, scrapbook, brochure, newspaper, or video. In the case of the American elections project, the teacher had already decided that the final outcome would be a public debate between two fictitious political parties. In this second stage of the project, students took part in defining the nature and format of the debate and designating the intended audience. With the help of the instructor, it was decided that the class would divide itself into five topical teams, each one responsible for debating one of the issues previously identified; topical teams would generate debatable propositions on their designated issue and then divide into two subgroups so that each side of the issue could be represented in the debate. Students would also be grouped into two political parties, which they would name themselves, with one side of each issue represented in the political party; the issues and corresponding perspectives would form the party platform.

The class decided to invite English-speaking friends and graduate students enrolled in a TESL/TEFL program to serve as their audience and judges. It was decided that the audience would vote on which team presented the most persuasive arguments during the debate.

Step III: Students and instructor structure the project.

After students have determined the starting and end points of the project, they need to structure the "body" of the project. Questions that students should consider are as follows: What information is needed to complete the project? How can that information be obtained (e.g., a library search, interviews, letters, faxes, e-mail, the World Wide Web, field trips, viewing of videos)? How will the information, once gathered, be compiled and analyzed? What role does each student play in the evolution of the project (i.e., Who does what?)? What time line will students follow to get from the starting point to the end point? The answers to many of these questions depend on the location of the language program and the types of information that are within easy reach (perhaps collected beforehand by the instructor) and those that must be solicited by "snail" mail, electronic mail, fax, or phone call. In this American elections project, it was decided that topical team members would work together to gather information that could be used by supporters and opponents of their proposition before actually taking sides. In this way, topical team members would share all their resources, later using it to take a stand and plan a rebuttal. Rather than keeping information secret, as might be done in a real debate setting, the idea was to establish a cooperative and collaborative working atmosphere. Topical team members would work as a group to compile gathered information (in the form of facts, opinions, and statistics) and then analyze it to determine what was most suitable to the sides supporting and opposing their proposition. At this point, students would subdivide into groups of supporters and opponents and then work separately (and with other party members) to prepare for the debate. At that time, students would decide on different roles: the spokespersons, the "artists" who would create visuals (charts and graphs) to be used during the debate, and so forth.

Step IV: Instructor prepares students for the language demands of information gathering

It is at this point that the instructor determines, perhaps in consultation with the students, the language demands of the information gathering stage (Step V). The instructor can then plan language instruction activities to prepare students for information gathering tasks. If, for example, students are going to collect information by means of interviews, the instructor might plan exercises on question formation, introduce conversational gambits, and set aside time for role-plays to provide feedback on pronunciation and to allow students to practice listening and note-taking or audio-taping. If, on the other hand, students are going to use a library to gather materials, the instructor might review steps for finding resources and practice skimming and note-taking with sample texts. The teacher may also help students devise a grid for organized data collection. If students will be writing letters to solicit information for their project, the teacher can introduce or review letter formatting conventions and audience considerations, including levels of formality and word choice. If students will be using the World Wide Web for information gathering, the instructor can review the efficient use of this technology.

Step V: Students gather information

Students, having practiced the language, skills, and strategies needed to gather information, are now ready to collect information and organize it so that others on their team can make sense of it. In the project highlighted here, students reread course readings in search for relevant materials, used the library to look for new support, wrote letters to political parties to determine their stand on the issue under consideration, looked into finding organizations supporting or opposing some aspect of their proposition (e.g., gun control groups) and solicited information that could possibly be used in the debate. During this data-gathering stage, the instructor, knowing the issues and propositions being researched, also brought in information that was potentially relevant, in the form of readings, videos, dicto-comps, and teacher-generated lectures, for student consideration.

Step VI: Instructor prepares students for the language demands of compiling and analyzing data

After successfully gathering information, students are then confronted with the challenges of organizing and synthesizing information that may have been collected from different sources and by different individuals.

The instructor can prepare students for the demands of the compilation and analysis stage by setting up sessions in which students organize sets of materials, and then evaluate, analyze, and interpret them with an eye towards determining which are most appropriate for the supporters and opponents of a given proposition. Introducing students to graphic representations (e.g., grids and charts) that might highlight relationships among ideas is particularly useful at this point.

Step VII: Students compile and analyze information

With the assistance of a variety of organizational techniques (including graphic organizers), students compile and analyze information to identify data that are particularly relevant to the project. Student teams weigh the value of the collected data, discarding some, because of their inappropriacy for the project, and keeping the rest. Students determine which information represents primary "evidence" for the supporters and opponents of their proposition. It is at this point that topical teams divide themselves into two groups and begin to work separately to build the strongest case for the debate.

Step VIII: Instructor prepares students for the language demands of the culminating activity

At this point in the development of the project, instructors can bring in language improvement activities to help students succeed with the presentation of their final products. This might entail practicing oral presentation skills and receiving feedback on voice projection, pronunciation, organization of ideas, and eye contact. It may involve editing and revising written reports, letters, or bulletin board display text. In the case of the American elections debate project, the instructor focused on conversational gambits to be used during the debate to indicate polite disagreement and to offer divergent perspectives (see Mach, Stoller, and Tardy 1997)[[31]](#footnote-31). Students practiced their oral presentations and tried to hypothesize the questions that they would be asked by opponents. They timed each other and gave each other feedback on content, word choice, persuasiveness, and intonation. Students also worked with the "artists" in their groups to finalize visual displays, to make sure they were grammatically correct and easily interpretable by the audience. Students also created a flyer announcing the debate (see appendix), which served as an invitation to and reminder for audience members.

Step IX: Students present final product

Students are now ready to present the final outcome of their projects. In the American elections project, students staged their debate in front of an audience, following the format previously agreed upon. The audience voted on the persuasiveness of each political party, and a winner was declared. In the case described here, the debate was videotaped so that students could later review their debate performances and receive feedback from the instructor and their peers.

Step X: Students evaluate the project

Although students and instructors, alike, often view the presentation of the final product as the very last stage in the project work process, it is worthwhile to ask students to reflect on the experience as the last and final step. Students can reflect on the language that they mastered to complete the project, the content that they learned about the targeted theme (in the case highlighted here that would be American elections, party platforms, and the role of debate in the election process), the steps that they followed to complete the project, and the effectiveness of their final product. Students can be asked how they might proceed differently the next time or what suggestions they have for future project work endeavors. Through these reflective activities, students realize how much they have learned and the teacher benefits from students' insights for future classroom projects.

Content-based instruction and project work provide two means for making English language classrooms more vibrant environments for learning and collaboration. Project work, however, need not be limited to content-based language classes. Language teachers in more traditional classrooms can diversify instruction with an occasional project. Similarly, teacher educators can integrate projects into their courses to reinforce important pedagogical issues and provide trainees with hands-on experience, a process that may be integrated into future classrooms of their own.

Whether a project centers around American elections, demography, peace their high school results (matriculation).

**Conclusion:**

**Some Practical Techniques for Language Teaching**

The English Teacher Working with Groups Groups have to have adequate time to prepare to succeed. This time includes time for all to study the material and time for a modeling activity by the teacher. Then the teacher should give a grade to the group and to the individual. Otherwise the A' students carry the work load to keep their semester grades up and everyone gets an equal grade.

Groups are chosen by a variety of methods. The most common methods are to either let students choose their own groups or to group them according to ability. Allowing students to choose their own groups may result in some people being left out and those who don't relate well to any group being left to work together. Grouping by ability so that there are some capable students in each group usually works well. If you choose the groups, you may unknowing place those students with past relationship problems together. You may then expect them to learn to work together, but be aware that you may not be able to leave the room with such groupings, or even put your attention somewhere else. You may also select the groups by drawing names, numbers, etc. Most students accept the fairness of a random selection, especially if a student draws the choices, but dysfunctional groups may result. In my experience, I wait until I know the class and the individual students before I begin group work and then I select the groups. And I keep a record of the groups and which groupings were most successful. However groups are chosen, don't allow members of one group to talk to members of another group or your group dynamics will be considerably less effective.

Groups where students each do work in their established skill areas may accomplish a good project, may demonstrate good collaborative skills, may gain recognition for the students, but may not accomplish much growth in students' abilities. A class which is totally project oriented may result in a student spending a semester without broadening academic or other desirable skills. An art student may only draw, a music student may only supply the sound, etc.

If the entire class can not work profitably doing group work, then cease that activity. If only one or two groups are not working profitably, then decide whether the other groups are benefitting enough to have the two unproductive groups continue in their actions.

The English Teacher Designing Lessons and Units In developing a class, interlock lessons and units to build and develop skills and to maintain skills and knowledge. Don't teach something that you drop and never teach any part of again.... or never use the knowledge of any part again. If you do totally drop material, you are teaching the student to forget and/or are confirming the concept that it is ok to forget -and/or- that what you are teaching is not important enough to remember.

When you design a lesson, it usually takes two or three times presenting it to a class to work out all the problems. [In my first Methods class we were asked to design a poetry lesson for 11th graders without any prior class instruction in how to accomplish this. Then all the faults of our presentations were pointed out. It was a potentially discouraging experience... leaving the class with the impression that new lessons had to be perfect, without flaws. In the real world, a perfect first lesson rarely happens.] Don't give up the idea of creating some lessons of your own and instead rely solely on 'canned' lessons because of one or two imperfect first results.

It can take two or three years to develop a class. The first time you give a test, if you designed the test, it is the test that is being tested. If it is a test someone else designed, then the first time that you give it, your teaching is being tested. The Teaching Literature page has examples of some test designs as does Teaching Media.

The English Teacher Using Transition Time Activities Transition activities are "halfway" activities to help students make the transition from whatever is distracting them from learning at the beginning of class to full attention on the day's lesson. In our school 9th graders do daily reading. 10th graders do basic writing forms and 11th graders do advanced writing forms for the average 9th grade class it is easier to start a lesson if the class has already made a partial transition. For college preparation level classes this activity may not be as productive, since they may be able to get to work right away, and are already reading regularly. To begin daily reading, have a box that they can put their reading books into so that when they come to class the next day [or when you announce reading time] they can get their books.

When you begin this activity, have the first student in each row get a book [from an assortment of paperbacks that you get from your librarian] for each person in their row. The student lets the 2nd student in the row have first choice; the third student has the next choice, and so forth until all have chosen. The student who selected all the books for the row gets the book that is left after the others have chosen. No one complains, because the first student after all had the total choice and the students in the row won't complain about another student's selections, particularly if that student has the book remaining after every one else has chosen. [NOTE: If you as a teacher tell the class to "get a book" from the book rack, then you will have a lot of talking, complaining about there being no interesting books, etc. Plus there will be conversations around the books, and return trips for students that may never be satisfied with their choices.] They have to read that book until the end of the first reading time.

At the end of the first reading time, the student can either put the book into the box to reserve books for that class, or they can return it to the student who chose them. This procedure is repeated as many times as necessary, usually less than four to five days. By that time most will have books, or the few that don't can make their own choices. For the loud complainers over this system and the book choices available, simply tell them that they can bring their own books the next day, and then they can either bring them each day, or put them in that class's reading box with the others being read.

Later, when students get involved with their reading, they will read after tests and other activities when they finish before others. Then others follow their actions and you are not telling students to be quiet until the others finish their tests, etc.. This involvement with reading reduces your stress -and- the students' stress.

**Language teaching is teaching language**

Language is a system which needs to be understood and internalized. Language is a habit which requires repetition and intensive oral practice. Language is a set of conventions, customs which the students needs to learn as well as the structures. Language is a means of communication which is used to accomplish different tasks and purposes. Language is a means to an end and is not used for its own sake. Language is a natural activity, not an academic exercise.

**Language is what, how and why**

Knowing a language is muvh more than knowing the structure. Vocabulary and grammar is *what* is said. Prononciation, stress and intonation are *how* it is said.

**Knowing the language is not eonugh**

Classroom activities should be planned so that they have a real, natural communicative purpose. It is better to present the language in a text which is studied for a purpose other than language itself (reading a bus shedule to find out what a bus goes form one place to another). Students need to use languge for a real purpose.

**Interesting communicative tasks increase motivation**

Teachers need to give students tasks which develop the skills necessary to communicate in the new language. These tasks should be similar to things that native speakersw do with the language. Some examples: a) listening to public announcments (at an airport)

1. drawing a picture from spoken instructions;
2. describing what a person looks like
3. conducting interviews or questionaries
4. reading brochures, menus,or schedules
5. following written instructions;

g) writing a note to a classmate

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