Communicative Language Teaching: State of the Art

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This paper looks briefly at the beginnings of what has come to be known as communicative language teaching (CLT), then discusses current issues and promising avenues of inquiry. The perspective is international. CLT is seen to be not a British, European, or U.S. phenomenon, but rather an international effort to respond to the needs of present-day language learners in many different contexts of learning.

Not long ago, when American structuralist linguistics and behaviorist psychology were the prevailing influences in language teaching methods and materials, second/foreign language teachers talked about communication in terms of language skills, seen to be four: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skill categories were widely accepted and provided a ready-made framework for methods manuals, learner course materials, and teacher education programs. They were collectively described as active skills, speaking and writing, and passive skills, reading and listening.

Today, listeners and readers are no longer regarded as passive. They are seen as active participants in the negotiation of meaning. Schemata, expectancies, and top-down/bottom-up processing are among the terms now used to capture the necessarily complex, interactive nature of this negotiation. Yet full and widespread understanding of communication as negotiation has been hindered by the terms that came to replace the earlier active/passive dichotomy. The skills needed to engage in speaking and writing activities were described subsequently as productive, whereas listening and reading skills were said to be receptive.

While certainly an improvement over the earlier active/passive representation, the terms productive and receptive fall short of capturing the interactive nature of communication. Lost in this productive/receptive, message sending/message receiving representation is the collaborative nature of meaning making. Meaning
appears fixed, rather, immutable, to be sent and received, not unlike a football in the hands of a team quarterback. The interest of a football game lies of course not in the football, but in the moves and strategies of the players as they fake, pass, and punt their way along the field. The interest of communication lies similarly in the moves and strategies of the participants. The terms that best represent the collaborative nature of what goes on are interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning. The communicative competence needed for participation includes not only grammatical competence, but pragmatic competence.

The inadequacy of a four skills model of language use is now recognized. And the shortcomings of audiolingual methodology are widely acknowledged. There is general acceptance of the complexity and interrelatedness of skills in both written and oral communication and of the need for learners to have the experience of communication, to participate in the negotiation of meaning. Newer, more comprehensive theories of language and language behavior have replaced those that looked for support to American structuralism and behaviorist psychology. The expanded, interactive view of language behavior they offer presents a number of challenges for teachers. Among them, how should form and function be integrated in an instructional sequence? What is an appropriate norm for learners? How is it determined? What is an error? And what, if anything, should be done when one occurs? How is language learning success to be measured? Acceptance of communicative criteria entails a commitment to address these admittedly complex issues.

Second language acquisition researchers face similar problems. Examination of the learning process from a communicative perspective has meant looking at language in context, analysis of learner expression and negotiation. Contrastive analysis (CA), the prediction of learner difficulties and potential sources of errors based on a contrastive analysis of two or more languages, seemed far more straightforward than do contemporary approaches to error analysis (EA), the analysis of learner language as an evolving, variable system. The focus of this analysis continues to broaden. An initial concern with sentence-level morphosyntactic features has expanded to include pragmatics, taking into account a host of cultural, gender, social, and other contextual variables. Researchers who confront the complexity of their task might well look back with nostalgia to an earlier time when the answers to improved language teaching seemed within reach.

By and large, however, the language teaching profession has responded well to the call for materials and programs to meet
learner communicative needs. Theory building continues. Communicative competence has shown itself to be a robust and challenging concept for teachers, researchers, and program developers alike. Communicative language teaching (CLT) has become a term for methods and curricula that embrace both the goals and the processes of classroom learning, for teaching practice that views competence in terms of social interaction and looks to further language acquisition research to account for its development. A look in retrospect at the issues which have brought us to our present understanding of CLT will help to identify what appear to be promising avenues of inquiry in the years ahead.

THE BEGINNINGS OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

From its introduction into discussions of language and language learning in the early 1970s, the term communicative competence has prompted reflection. Fortunately for the survival of communicative competence as a useful concept, perhaps, the term has not lent itself to simple reduction, and with it the risk of becoming yet another slogan. Rather, it continues to represent a concept that attracts researchers and curriculum developers, offering a sturdy framework for integrating linguistic theory, research, and teaching practice.

Present understanding of CLT can be traced to concurrent developments on both sides of the Atlantic. In Europe, during the 1970s, the language needs of a rapidly increasing group of immigrants and guest workers, and a rich British linguistic tradition that included social as well as linguistic context in description of language behavior, led to the Council of Europe development of a syllabus for learners based on functional-notional concepts of language use. Derived from neo-Firthian systemic or functional linguistics that views language as meaning potential and maintains the centrality of context of situation in understanding language systems and how they work, a threshold level of language ability was described for each of the languages of Europe in terms of what learners should be able to do with the language (van Ek, 1975). Functions were based on assessment of learner needs and specified the end result, the product of an instructional program. The term communicative was used to describe programs that used a functional-notional syllabus based on needs assessment, and the language for specific purposes (LSP) movement was launched.

Concurrent development in Europe focused on the process of communicative classroom language learning. In Germany, for example, against a backdrop of social democratic concerns for
individual empowerment, articulated in the writings of contemporary philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1970, 1971), language teaching methodologists Candlin, Edelhoff, and Piepho, took the lead in the development of classroom materials that encouraged learner choice and increasing autonomy (Candlin, 1978). Their systematic collection of exercise types for communicatively oriented English teaching were used in teacher in-service courses and workshops to guide curriculum change. Exercises were designed to exploit the variety of social meanings contained within particular grammatical structures. A system of “chains” encouraged teachers and learners to define their own learning path through principled selection of relevant exercises. Similar exploratory projects were also being initiated by Candlin (1978) at his academic home, the University of Lancaster, England, and by Holec (1979) and his colleagues at the University of Nancy (CRAPEL), France.

Meanwhile, in the United States, Hymes (1971) had reacted to Chomsky’s characterization of the linguistic competence of the ideal native speaker and proposed the term communicative competence to represent the use of language in social context, the observance of sociolinguistic norms of appropriacy. His concern with speech communities and the integration of language, communication, and culture was not unlike that of Firth and Halliday in the British linguistic tradition (see Halliday, 1978). Hymes’ communicative competence may be seen as the equivalent of Halliday’s meaning potential. Similarly, his focus was not language learning but language as social behavior. In subsequent interpretations of the significance of Hymes’ views for learners, U.S. methodologists tended to focus on native-speaker cultural norms and the difficulty, if not impossibility, of authenticly representing them in a classroom of nonnative speakers. In light of this difficulty, the appropriateness of communicative competence as an instructional goal was questioned (e.g., Paulston, 1974).

At the same time, in a research project at the University of Illinois, Savignon (1972) used the term communicative competence to characterize the ability of language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning, as distinct from their ability to perform on discrete-point tests of grammatical knowledge. At a time when pattern practice and error avoidance were the rule in language teaching, this study of adult classroom acquisition of French looked at the effect of practice in the use of communication strategies as part of an instructional program. By encouraging students to ask for information, to seek clarification, to use circumlocution and whatever other linguistic and nonlinguistic resources they could muster to negotiate meaning, to stick to the communicative task at
hand, teachers were invariably encouraging learners to take risks, to speak in other than memorized patterns. When test results were compared at the end of the 18-week, 5-hour-per-week program, learners who had practiced communication in lieu of laboratory pattern drills for one hour a week performed with no less accuracy on discrete-point tests of structure. On the other hand, their communicative competence as measured in terms of fluency, comprehensibility, effort, and amount of communication in a series of four unrehearsed communicative tasks significantly surpassed that of learners who had had no such practice. Learner reactions to the test formats lent further support to the view that even beginners respond well to activities that let them focus on meaning as opposed to formal features. (A related finding had to do with learner motivation. Motivation to learn French correlated, not with initial attitudes toward French speakers or the French language, but with success in the instructional program.)

A collection of role plays, games, and other communicative classroom activities were developed subsequently for inclusion in the U.S. adaptation of the French CREDIF materials, *Voix et Visages de la France* (Coulombe, Barré, Fostle, Poulin, & Savignon, 1974). The accompanying guide (Savignon, 1974) described their purpose as that of involving learners in the experience of communication. Teachers were encouraged to provide learners with the French equivalent of expressions like “What’s the word for?” “Please repeat,” “I don’t understand,” expressions that would help them to participate in the negotiation of meaning. Not unlike the efforts of Candlin and his colleagues working in a European EFL context, the focus was on classroom process and learner autonomy. The use of games, role plays, pair and other small-group activities has gained acceptance and is now widely recommended for inclusion in language teaching programs.

CLT thus can be seen to derive from a multidisciplinary perspective that includes, at least, linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and educational research. The focus has been the elaboration and implementation of programs and methodologies that promote the development of functional language ability through learner participation in communicative events. Central to CLT is the understanding of language learning as both an educational and a political issue. Language teaching is inextricably tied to language policy. Viewed from a multicultural intranational as well as international perspective, diverse sociopolitical contexts mandate not only a diverse set of language learning goals, but a diverse set of teaching strategies. Program design and implementation depend on negotiation between policy
makers, linguists, researchers, and teachers. And evaluation of program success requires a similar collaborative effort. The selection of methods and materials appropriate to both the goals and context of teaching begins with an analysis of both learner needs and styles of learning.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EXISTING PROGRAMS

In this connection, the implications of CLT for existing programs merit brief discussion. By definition, CLT puts the focus on the learner. Learner communicative needs provide a framework for elaborating program goals in terms of functional competence. This implies global, qualitative evaluation of learner achievement as opposed to quantitative assessment of discrete linguistic features. Controversy over appropriate language testing persists, and many a curricular innovation has been undone by failure to make corresponding changes in evaluation. The attraction for many of a multiple-choice test with single right answers that a machine can translate into a score is undeniable. Qualitative evaluation of written and oral expression is time-consuming and not so straightforward. Language programs are not alone in this respect. U.S. educators, in particular, continue to feel frustration at the domination of curricula by large-scale, standardized, multiple-choice tests. Teachers, under pressure to make their students do well on such tests, often devote valuable class time to teaching test-taking skills, drilling students on multiple-choice items about writing, for example, rather than allowing them practice in writing. Current efforts at educational reform include the recommendation to return to essay writing and other more holistic assessments of learner ability. Some programs have initiated portfolio assessment, the collection and evaluation of learner poems, reports, stories, and other projects, in an effort to better represent and encourage learner achievement.

Depending upon their own preparation and experience, teachers themselves differ in their reactions to CLT. Some feel understandable frustration at the seeming ambiguity in discussions of communicative ability. Negotiation of meaning is well and good, but this view of language behavior lacks precision and does not provide a universal scale for assessment of individual learners. Ability is viewed, rather, as variable and highly dependent upon context and purpose. Other teachers welcome the opportunity to select and/or develop their own materials, providing learners with a range of communicative tasks. And they are comfortable relying on more global, integrative judgments of learner progress.
An additional source of frustration for some teachers are second language acquisition research findings that show the route, if not the rate, of language acquisition to be largely unaffected by classroom instruction. (For a review of second language acquisition research, see Larsen-Freeman in this issue of the TESOL Quarterly.) First language cross-linguistic studies of developmental universals initiated in the 1970s were soon followed by second language studies. Acquisition, assessed on the basis of expression in unrehearsed, oral communicative contexts seemed to follow a similar morphosyntactic sequence regardless of learner age or context of learning. Structural practice of the “skill getting” variety was seen to have little influence on self expression, or “skill using.” Although they served to bear out the informal observations of teachers, namely that textbook presentation and drill do not insure learner use of these same structures in their own spontaneous expression, the findings were nonetheless disconcerting. They contradicted both grammar-translation and audiolingual precepts that placed the burden of acquisition on teacher explanation of grammar and controlled practice with insistence on learner accuracy. They were further at odds with textbooks that promise “mastery” of “basic” French, English, Spanish, etc. Teacher rejection of research findings, renewed insistence on standardized tests, and even exclusive reliance on the learners’ native or first language, where possible, to be sure they “get the grammar,” have been in some cases reactions to the frustration of teaching for communication.

Moreover, the language acquisition research paradigm itself, with its emphasis on sentence-level grammatical features, has served to bolster a structural focus, obscuring pragmatic and sociolinguistic issues in language acquisition. In her discussion of the contexts of competence, Berns (1990) stresses that the definition of a communicative competence appropriate for learners requires an understanding of the sociocultural contexts of language use. In addition, the selection of a methodology appropriate to the attainment of communicative competence requires an understanding of sociocultural differences in styles of learning. Curricular innovation is best advanced by the development of local materials which, in turn, rests on the involvement of classroom teachers.

Numerous such regional projects have been documented. The English language activity types elaborated by Candlin and others for use in German classrooms (Candlin, 1978) are one example. The modular, thematic French units developed for use in Ontario, Canada public schools offer another example; they began with surveys of learners and involved teachers at all stages of revision.
The task types elaborated by Prabhu for use in teaching English in Bangalore, India (Prabhu, 1987) are a similar example. The national modern language curriculum revision project in Finland (Takala, 1984), and the revision of the English for academic purposes course offerings in the University of Michigan English Language Institute, to better meet the needs of a growing population of international faculty and students (Morley, in press), are but two of many other examples of successful substantive reforms that involved theorists and practitioners working together. These are illustrations not of language for specific purposes in the traditional sense of the term, but, rather, of communicative approaches that have resulted from task-related, project-centered collaboration between researchers, administrators, teachers, and curriculum developers. The benefits have been two-fold: Teams of researchers and practitioners with expertise in both linguistics and language teaching have made contributions to both language teaching and language acquisition research.

WHAT ABOUT GRAMMAR?

Discussions of CLT not infrequently lead to questions of grammatical or formal accuracy. The perceived displacement of attention to morphosyntactic features in learner expression in favor of a focus on meaning has led in some cases to the impression that grammar is not important, or that proponents of CLT favor learner self-expression without regard for form.

While involvement in communicative events is seen as central to language development, this involvement necessarily requires attention to form. Communication cannot take place in the absence of structure, or grammar, a set of shared assumptions about how language works, along with a willingness of participants to cooperate in the negotiation of meaning. In their carefully researched and widely cited paper proposing components of communicative competence, Canale and Swain (1980) did not suggest that grammar was unimportant. They sought rather to situate grammatical competence within a more broadly defined communicative competence. Similarly, the findings of the Savignon (1972) study did not suggest that teachers forsake the teaching of grammar. Rather, the replacement of language laboratory structure drills with meaning-focused self-expression was found to be a more effective way to develop communicative ability with no loss of morphosyntactic accuracy. And learner performance on tests of discrete morphosyntactic features was not a good predictor of their performance on a series of integrative communicative tasks.
The nature of the contribution to language development of both form-focused and meaning-focused classroom activity remains a question in ongoing research. The optimum combination of these activities in any given instructional setting depends no doubt on learner age, nature and length of instructional sequence, opportunities for language contact outside the classroom, teacher preparation, and other factors. However, for the development of communicative ability, research findings overwhelmingly support the integration of form-focused exercises with meaning-focused experience. Grammar is important; and learners seem to focus best on grammar when it relates to their communicative needs and experiences. Nor should explicit attention to form be perceived as limited to sentence-level morphosyntactic features. Broader features of discourse, sociolinguistic rules of appropriacy, and communication strategies themselves may be included. (For further discussion and illustration, see Savignon, 1983).

In an effort to represent a distinction between meaning and form in oral expression, some methodologists have made use of the terms fluency and accuracy. This dichotomy is misleading, however, on at least two counts. It suggests that the form of a message is somehow unrelated to its meaning, and then implicitly proposes an absolute grammatical norm for learners. Accuracy in this instance is measured in terms of discrete features of phonology, morphology, and syntax, and thus fails to take into account the context-relevant, collaborative nature of self-expression. Fluency, on the other hand, suggests speed or ease of self-expression, which may or may not enhance communicative effectiveness.

PROMISING AVENUES OF INQUIRY

Turning now to promising avenues of inquiry in the years ahead, numerous sociolinguistic issues await attention. Variation in the speech community and its relationship to language change are central to sociolinguistic inquiry. Sociolinguistic perspectives on variability and change highlight the folly of describing native-speaker competence, let alone nonnative-speaker competence, in terms of "mastery" or "command" of a system. All language systems show instability and variation. Learner language systems show even greater instability and variability in terms of both the amount and rate of change. Sociolinguistic concerns with identity and accommodation help to explain the construction by bilinguals of a "variation space" which is different from that of a native speaker. It may include retention of any number of features of a previously acquired system of phonology, syntax, discourse, communication
strategies, and so on. The phenomenon may be individual or, in those settings where there is a community of learners, general.

In response to a homework question which asked whether retention of a native accent was an example of communicative competence, a native French speaker wrote "Yes. A friend of mine who has been in the U.S. now for several years says he has kept his French accent because he noticed that women like it." His observation parallels those of sociolinguists who have documented the role of noncognitive factors such as motivation and self-identity in first language acquisition (e.g., Hymes, 1971). Self-identity is central to differential competence and the heterogeneity of speech communities. To assume that sheer quantity of exposure shapes children's speech is simplistic. Identification and motivation are what matter. Similarly, in second language acquisition, learner identification and motivation interact with opportunities and contexts of language use to influence the development of competence. In classrooms, which, as social contexts, provide settings for symbolic variation, nonnative-like features may be maintained to exhibit "learner" status (Preston, 1989).

Sociolinguistic perspectives have been important in understanding the implications of norm, appropriacy, and variability for CLT and continue to suggest avenues of inquiry for further research and materials development. Use of authentic language data has underscored the importance of context—setting, roles, genre, etc.—in interpreting the meaning of a text. A range of both oral and written texts in context provides learners with a variety of language experiences, experiences they need to construct their own "variation space," to make determinations of appropriacy in their own expression of meaning. Competent in this instance is not necessarily synonymous with native-like. Negotiation in CLT highlights the need for cross-linguistic, that is, cross-cultural, awareness on the part of all involved. Better understanding of the strategies used in the negotiation of meaning offers a potential for improving classroom practice of the needed skills.

Along with other sociolinguistic issues in language acquisition, the classroom itself as a social context for learning has been neglected. Classroom language learning was the focus of a number of research studies in the 1960s and early 1970s (e.g., Scherer & Wertheimer, 1964; Savignon, 1972; Smith, 1970). However, language classrooms were not a major interest of the second language acquisition (SLA) research that rapidly gathered momentum in the years that followed. The full range of variables present in educational settings was an obvious deterrent. Other difficulties included the lack of well-defined classroom processes to serve as variables and lack of
agreement as to what constituted learning success. Confusion of form-focused drill with meaning-focused communication persisted in many of the textbook exercises and language test prototypes that directly or indirectly shaped curricula. Not surprisingly, researchers eager to establish SLA as a worthy field of inquiry turned their attention to more narrow, quantitative studies of the acquisition of selected morphosyntactic features.

With the realization that SLA research findings to date, while of value, do not begin to address the larger issues of language development, attention once again has turned to the classroom. The year 1988 alone saw the publication of at least five books on the topic of classroom language learning (Allwright, 1988; Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1988; Peck, 1988; van Lier, 1988). A recent initiative, supportive of CLT, is the analysis of activity or task-based curricula. Researchers are looking at classroom language events, breaking them down into units of analysis with a view to establishing a typology of tasks that teachers frequently use. Since tasks determine the opportunities for language use, for the interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning, their systematic description constitutes the first step in establishing a relationship between task and learning outcomes. No researcher today would dispute that language learning results from participation in communicative events. Despite any claims to the contrary, however, the nature of this learning remains undefined.

An early study of foreign language teacher talk was conducted by Guthrie (1984) who found persistent form/meaning focus confusion even when teachers felt they were providing an optimal classroom acquisition environment by speaking only in the language being learned. Transcriptions of teacher/learner dialogue revealed the unnaturalness, that is, incoherence, of much of the discourse. There have been similar reports with respect to ESL teaching in both the United States and Britain. A recent study by Nunan suggests that even when teachers are committed to the concept of a communicative approach, opportunities for genuine communicative interaction may be rare. Even when all lessons ostensibly focus on functional aspects of language use, patterns of classroom interaction provide little genuine communication between teacher and learner or, for that matter, between learner and learner.

A study by Kinginger (1990; see also Kinginger & Savignon, 1991) has examined the nature of learner/learner talk associated with a variety of task types involving small-group or pair work. Conversations representing four distinct task types were observed in two different college-level French programs. The conversations were examined with respect to (a) turn-taking and topic
management, with generalizations regarding the degree of learner participation and initiative, and (b) negotiation and repair strategies. Data showed that when learners are constrained by formal considerations or provided with a structure-embedded "text" as a basis for "conversation," their talk had many of the same characteristics as form-focused teacher talk. Analyses of the interactions resulting from other, meaning-focused task types showed them to differ with respect to both quality and quantity of language use. They included examples of ways in which communicative experience can be provided in classroom settings.

Classroom teacher talk and opportunities for learner self-expression are but two features of classroom learning. Broader issues of teacher understanding, preparation, and practice await exploration. Contexts of teaching vary widely. Community attitudes, use and/or perceived usefulness of the language being taught, and differences and similarities with respect to previously learned languages are among the more obvious variables. In these respects, the experience of a teacher of English in San Juan clearly differs from that of a teacher in Osaka, Cairo, or Bonn. And these experiences differ, in turn, from those of teachers in Sydney, Houston, or Bath. But while considerable attention has been directed to linguistic variables in contexts of teaching as well as to comparative/contrastive analyses of languages themselves, surprisingly little systematic inquiry has been conducted into the instructional perceptions and practices of teachers themselves. In our efforts to improve language teaching, we have overlooked the language teacher.

A study of Kleinsasser (1989; see also Kleinsasser & Savignon, in press), based on classroom observations and conversations with foreign language teachers in U.S. secondary schools, identified two distinct technical cultures in operation. One technical culture is uncertain and routine. Teachers are uncertain about their ability to promote learning, but routine or predictable in their day-to-day approach to teaching. The other culture is certain and nonroutine. Teachers are confident that learners will learn and tend to support variety and innovation in their instructional practice. Among the other characteristics of certain/nonroutine cultures are discussion and collaboration among teachers. In contrast, heavy reliance on the textbook and nonexistent or infrequent opportunities for spontaneous, communicative language interaction are classroom characteristics of those teachers with an uncertain and routine culture. Discussions with colleagues related to instructional matters are infrequent or nonexistent.

The broader cultural environment is a potential factor in influencing the technical culture of an individual school or other
instructional setting. Replication of the Kleinsasser study in other contexts, not only on different levels of instruction within the U.S. but around the world, would serve to clarify and perhaps expand the range of factors that merit inclusion. As new approaches to language teaching are elaborated, exploration of the technical cultures operating in instructional settings, of teachers' perceptions of what they do and why they do it, holds promise for understanding the frequently noted discrepancies between theoretical understanding of second/foreign language acquisition and classroom practice. Innovation in teaching methods and materials is most likely to occur in cultures that are certain and nonroutine.

CONCLUSION

We have much yet to learn about the nature of language and language development. The quest for principles and parameters has only just begun. Yet few would deny that our understanding of the collaborative nature of meaning making is far richer today than it was a quarter of a century ago. The study of language, that is, linguistics, continues to broaden. As questions of situated language use continue to be raised, specially trained ethnographers have come to replace the native speakers who were once the authorities on how language worked. And applied linguistics has emerged as a young and dynamic field of inquiry.

Drawing on current understanding of language use as social behavior, purposeful, and always in context, proponents of communicative language teaching offer a view of the language learner as a partner in learning; they encourage learner participation in communicative events and self-assessment of progress. In keeping with second language acquisition theory, methodologists advise learners to take communicative risks and to focus on the development of learning strategies. A tradition of abstraction in linguistic inquiry has contributed to the neglect of social context in both language teaching and language acquisition research, hindering understanding and acceptance of communicative competence as a goal for learners. When language use is viewed as social behavior, learner identity and motivation are seen to interact with language status, use, and contexts of learning to influence the development of competence. The description and explanation of the differential competence that invariably results must include an account of this interaction.

Valued as are the reasoned proposals of linguists, applied linguists, and second/foreign language teaching methodologists, however, exploration of the potential of communicative language
teaching cannot proceed without the involvement of classroom teachers. The constraints of language classrooms are real. Tradition, learner attitudes, teacher preparation and expectations, and the instructional environment in general all contribute to and support teachers' technical cultures. Recommendations for methods and materials must take into account this reality. For them to do so, researchers, curriculum developers, and teachers will have to work together. Teamwork between linguists, methodologists and classroom teachers offers the best hope for the elaboration and diffusion of language teaching methods and materials that work, that encourage and support learners in the development of their communicative competence.

In this connection, the full potential of content-based and task-based curricula remains to be exploited. Through the variety of language activities that they can offer, content-based and task-based programs are ideally suited to a focus on communication, to the development of needed language skills through the interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning. As interest in communicative language teaching grows, more traditional programs will undoubtedly find ways to involve both learners and teachers in the definition of goals and the selection of meaning-focused interpretive and expressive tasks designed to meet those goals. Focus on form will then be related to these communicative experiences.

The opportunity for professional growth has never been greater. Current demand around the world for quality programs and language professionals to design and staff them offers unprecedented opportunities for research initiatives. Responding to this demand will require teamwork, a sharing of perspectives and insights. Researchers need to look to teachers to define researchable questions. Teachers, in turn, need to participate in the interpretation of findings for materials and classroom practice. Elaboration of appropriate methods and materials for a particular language teaching program will result only from the cooperation of all concerned.
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