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COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING: APPROACH, METHOD AND TECHNIQUE

Anyone interested in current trends in language teaching is aware of the fact that Communicative Language Teaching will be a trend for quite awhile. The reason for this is that CLT is not a trend at all but rather the culmination of all past trends in language teaching methodology. It is a culmination because, like other approaches to language teaching, it has sprung from discontent with results derived from previous approaches. In this approach, however, we have finally arrived at the reason for the poor results. CLT is an approach to syllabus design and claims that a syllabus for a language teaching program should be designed using communicative functions and notions as its basis rather than using grammatical forms. However, is CLT only an approach to syllabus design? Using Anthony's /1963/ definitions of Approach, Method, and Technique, it is possible to assess CLT and to decide whether it merely suggests a new approach to syllabus design or whether it is in itself an innovative methodology for language teaching.

To help methodologists and language teachers come to terms with the various innovations which regularly burst forth in the language teaching field, Anthony set down definitions for each of the three terms Approach, Method, and Technique. By making clear distinction between these terms and at the same time explaining how they interrelate, he has made it possible for language teaching specialists to analyze more carefully trends in language teaching and to do so with more consistency in the use of these terms. Therefore, in order to take a closer look at Communicative Language Teaching, its objectives, and its goals, it is particularly beneficial to fall back on Anthony's definitions; such an analysis will provide a more lucid understanding of what

exactly CLT is.

If CLT is to be considered an innovative methodology for language teaching, it must set out from the very start by proposing an approach to language and language teaching upon which its methods and techniques will be based. As Anthony suggests, an Approach consists of "... a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language and the nature of language teaching and learning. An approach is axiomatic. It describes the nature of the subject to be taught. It states a point of view, a philosophy, an article of faith..."¹ The "article of faith" which CLT is preaching for all those finally ready to see the light is that language is used for communication and that as it is presented, its character as such should be revealed. Accepting this, an understanding of the nature of communication becomes imperative. According to Canale, any form of communication is "a form of social interaction and, therefore, involves unpredictability and creativity in both form and message"². Canale also concludes that since communication takes place in discourse and in sociocultural contexts, it is important to consider "the constraints which these contexts place on appropriate language use as well as the clues which they provide for the correct interpretation of utterances"³. Finally, he states that communication involves purposive behavior; therefore, utterances are made for specific reasons founded in the communicative interaction.

In addition to these basic theories on the nature of communication and its character as the primary function of language, CLT includes in its assumptions about the nature of language the point of view that communicative competence is necessary for communication. However, CLT finds Chomsky's definition of competence inadequate and redefines the term, proposing a definition for communicative competence and communicative performance, which serves as the theoretical framework for CLT methodology. Criticizing Chomsky's /1965/ claim that competence can only be associated with rules of grammar, Hymes and Campbell and Wales suggest that a theory of competence should also include knowledge of the rules of language use⁴. They, therefore, extend the original definition of competence to include contextual or socio-

linguistic competence and call this communicative competence. They accept Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance where performance refers to actual use. Their definition of communicative performance, however, includes the realization of not only the knowledge of rules of grammar, but also the knowledge of rules of use and their "interaction in the actual production and comprehension of utterances"⁵.

Canale goes one step further by defining more accurately what is meant by "rules of use" and extends the definition of communicative competence to include four components: Grammatical Competence, Sociolinguistic Competence, Discourse Competence, and Strategic Competence. For him, grammatical competence refers to the mastery of the verbal or nonverbal form of the language code itself, and is therefore directly concerned with the "knowledge and skill required to understand and express accurately the literal meaning of utterances"⁶. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the mastery of sociocultural rules and consists of the ability to produce and understand utterances "appropriately in different social contexts dependent on contextual factors such as status of participants, purposes of the interaction, and norms or conventions of interaction"⁷. Canale goes on to explain discourse competence as the ability to provide unity in a spoken or written text by achieving cohesion of grammatical form and coherence in meaning. Finally, strategic competence is the component of communicative competence which, according to Canale, is concerned with verbal or nonverbal communication strategies which can compensate for breakdowns in communication. These breakdowns may be due to insufficient competence in one of the other three components of communicative competence or to conditions which limit actual communication such as memory or other psychological factors⁸.

Based on this theoretical framework for communicative competence and on the assumptions about the nature of language as communication, CLT also states a very well-defined approach to language teaching. First of all, as Canale proposes, the primary goal of CLT is to prepare the learner to use the language in authentic situations and therefore it should be skill-oriented

as well as knowledge-oriented⁹. He relates to this the idea that knowledge of grammar and grammar skills was stressed in the past whereas in this approach the acquisition of communicative skills will be of primary concern. Also, because there is so much stress on language use in authentic situations, he claims that the learner should be exposed as much as possible to authentic language. This also requires that the learners be involved in classroom practice as well as testing where there is an optimal degree of meaningful communicative interaction with speakers who are highly competent¹⁰.

Another assumption about language teaching is that it must aim to integrate in the best way possible the different types of competence¹¹. There has been a certain amount of panic in the field because of the misunderstanding that CLT ignores the acquisition of grammatical competence; however, the misunderstanding has arisen only because CLT has shifted the importance from the acquisition of grammar skills to the acquisition of sociolinguistic skills. The important point here is that CLT is ideally working towards integration of these skills, not elimination of any one from consideration.

Another important principle which is included in the approach to language teaching is that learners' communication needs and interests must be the basis for the teaching¹². These needs change according to certain factors such as age and proficiency; therefore, a continual assessment of learner's needs is necessary.

Finally, CLT assumes a curriculum-wide approach which means, firstly, that in the process of teaching a second language, as much as possible should be drawn from the first language program and, secondly, that learners should be taught about the culture of the second language in the first language program¹³. This curriculum-wide approach will help to satisfy the objectives of teaching to provide optimal practice, experience, and information which will help satisfy the communication needs in the second language.

Having established the approach of CLT to language and language teaching, it is now possible to move on to a discussion of

Method and establish what methods CLT has devised and how they reflect this approach. According to Anthony's definition, Method is "an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic, a method is procedural"¹⁴. Anthony emphasizes that within one approach there can be several methods and that the particular order that is decided upon is dependent upon certain factors such as age of the learners, cultural background, the goal of the course, the place of English in the curriculum, and others.

In CLT most essential to the discussion of Method is syllabus design since the approach of CLT to language and language teaching dictates a move away from traditional syllabus design based on grammatical forms. A syllabus for CLT is based on communicative functions and notions. Therefore, selection of items to be included in the syllabus will require an analysis of the communicative needs of the learners. It will also require an understanding of what communicative acts the learner will have to be engaged in as a result of the situations he is apt to find himself in. Once the process of selection has been completed, grading of these communicative functions and notions will be done with a consideration of the natural order in which individual communicative acts combine to form a larger whole¹⁵.

For example, greeting—invitation—acceptance—parting. Syllabus design, then, as an important element in the Method of CLT, conforms to the approach to language as a vehicle for communication and therefore emphasizes communicative use of the language rather than grammatical form.

Another method which CLT employs might be termed "Drawing Attention". In this method the focus is on the communicative value of form rather than on form itself¹⁶. The learner's attention is drawn to the "process by which a certain piece of language is interpreted as discourse"¹⁷. A learner may be familiar with language forms which appear on the surface to comprise isolated sentences. However, this method attempts to point to "the value which these items take on in utterances occurring within a context of discourse"¹⁸. Therefore, the aim is to show the way

the language is used to communicate. This method reflects the assumption stated in the CLT approach to language that language takes place in discourse which provides clues to correct interpretations of utterances. The method is also an example of the attempt to integrate the different types of competence, developing grammatical competence hand in hand with discourse competence.

"Task-oriented" activities comprise another method used by CLT. This method involves the learner in an activity which requires the completion of a task. The completion of the task demands meaningful use of the language which in turn determines success or failure judged on the basis of whether or not the tasks are performed correctly. These activities provide the learner with a reason for using the language, and the language therefore becomes a process which they readily activate in order to achieve a goal. Additional rationale for this method has been offered by Keith Johnson:

One way in which 'non-instrumental language teaching' /which divorces language from the contexts and settings it should serve/ fails is that it does not develop fluency in the processes involved in language use. We cannot expect listeners to approach interactions in a state of readiness, to learn how to scan for pragmatic information, unless we provide them with a reason for scanning; nor can we expect them to evaluate incoming information against a speaker aim, unless we provide them with a speaker aim /a communicative intent/. Finally, we cannot expect them to make appropriate selection from meaning potential unless they have an intention from which to derive meaning¹⁹.

This method reflects the assumption about language which states that language is used for communication and when an individual is involved in communication it is for a purpose.

Another method employed by CLT consists of "Information Gap" activities. These activities create situations where a learner must concentrate on getting meaning across - one of the functions of communication. In traditional methods used for getting meaning across there has been an emphasis on "commentary" which provides the learner with useful practice in the use of grammatical structures but does not involve the learner in communication²⁰. These methods failed because they usually bored the learners, and the result was a loss of interest in performing in such activities. In order for a communicative interaction to take place where a speaker is getting meaning across to a listener, there must exist an element of doubt. Communication then becomes the means by which this element of doubt is erased. In communication activities if the listener already knows the answer, he won't be trained to seek information and this will produce a false reaction time between one utterance and its response. Therefore, an information gap must be created to facilitate realistic opportunities for getting meaning across. This method demonstrates the assumption stated by CLT about language that it involves a high degree of unpredictability and creativity in form and message.

Finally, "Option-Selection" is a method related to the idea of information gaps but stresses the importance of selection. Selection is an essential consideration in the creation of information gaps but its importance goes far beyond its utility in this sense²¹. A learner must develop the skill to select from several options when involved in communicative interaction. Johnson cites Halliday's view of language as including "sets of options at various levels"²². Johnson continues by claiming that "the concept of selection, as choice from various sets of options, is thus basic to the concept of communication; and the process of selection in real time from various sets of options is basic to the process of fluent communication"²³. This method, then, provides the learner with "sets of options from which selection can be made"²⁴. The method also provides practice in "the process of selecting from these options within real time"²⁵. Teaching materials organized functionally facilitate option-selection since language is presented in units which are seman-

tically homogenous, and learners practice, therefore, interaction which centers upon related semantic areas, which is what happens in 'real' interactions²⁶. For example, one semantically-homogenous unit might be made up of functions such as inviting, accepting and declining. In the practice of the interaction, Student A will invite, choosing from the several exponents which have been provided. Student B will also select, first, whether to accept or decline, and secondly, from the various exponents, which choice would be textually appropriate to the choice made by Student A to invite. This method is based on the elements of creativity and unpredictability which CLT has claimed in its approach to language. The method also reflects the approach to language teaching which demands that learners be involved in authentic situations which are skill-oriented.

It is obvious from the descriptions of the methods which CLT has developed, that each method does indeed have a very firm basis in the approach of CLT to language and language teaching, although each has distinctive features. The final step in the analysis of CLT based on Anthony's definitions is to examine CLT Technique to discover whether it serves to implement the Method which is based on the Approach. Anthony defines Technique as "implementational- that which actually takes place in the classroom. It is a particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective. Techniques must be consistent with a Method, and therefore in harmony with an Approach as well"²⁷. One technique used in CLT which exemplifies the consistency in Approach, Method, and Technique is called a "Conversation Grid" /see Appendix 1/. In this technique the learner is guided by the grid through the steps necessary in completing a communicative interaction. For example, in the grid shown, the learners have already practised asking where something is and giving directions. One learner has a map of the town and the other a list of places. However, the learner must make choices at each step using what he hears to decide on an appropriate response²⁸. This technique implements the Option-Selection method as well as the Information Gap method and satisfies the objectives of both. It provides the learner with an element of doubt since he

doesn't know the answer to his questions and creates a situation where the learner is required to select a certain course to take and select what the realization of that choice in form will be.

This technique is also in harmony with the Approach since first of all, it requires communication. Also, the communication involved in this activity makes creativity imperative and is, at the same time, unpredictable in its form and message. The technique also provides a sociocultural context which in turn determines appropriate language use and clues to correct interpretation of utterances. In addition, this technique is skill-oriented as well as knowledge-oriented. The student must practice a skill which he has acquired, in this case asking for and giving directions. He also must know what forms can be used in the realization of these communicative functions. In this sense, the technique is fulfilling the major objective of the CLT approach which is to integrate the different areas of competence. The learner must know what utterances are appropriate in asking for directions from a stranger, for example, and therefore must depend on his sociolinguistic competence. He must use his grammatical competence to supply the correct grammatical forms for asking such a question and if he forgets rules for question-formation, he must use his strategic competence to come up with a communication strategy to get through the breakdown in grammatical competence. Finally, he must use his discourse competence to provide utterances that fit together with the communicative functions and grammatical forms being uttered by the other speaker involved in the interaction.

Another example of a CLT technique is a listening task such as the one that Geddes suggests²⁹. The learners listen to a tape recording of a weather forecast but previous to the actual listening the teacher sets the following task: "Today is 10th July. You live in London. Tomorrow you plan to visit Brighton on the south coast. Listen to the weather forecast and decide if you should take your raincoat with you to Brighton"³⁰. The learners then listen to the text concentrating on certain details which

will serve the purpose of the task. This technique conforms to the Task-Oriented method since meaning is essential in the successful completion of this task. Whether the message is interpreted correctly will determine whether the student will get wet on his trip to Brighton. This technique is also consistent with the Approach since language is being presented in a sociocultural context as discourse and is therefore providing clues to the correct interpretation of the utterances which make up the discourse.

It is important to note that the methods which CLT has developed are implemented in techniques which develop all four skills. For each skill there are techniques which conform to the methods mentioned here, which are in turn in harmony with the Approach. In addition, CLT has emphasized the integration of skills which is in itself carrying out the objectives of the Approach since in no social interaction do we depend on only one skill without at least one other. Furthermore, the aim of CLT is to integrate skills in as natural a way as possible so that the integration is a reflection of how skills are interdependent in communicative interaction³¹. This is unlike the traditional pattern of emphasizing, first, speaking and listening and then moving to reading and writing activities. As Byrne claims, this order does not "get to grips with the problem of how one skill may be actively and meaningfully exercised in order to facilitate and further learning through one or more of the other skills. Nor, as a rule, does it integrate language skills in such a way that the contexts for practising and using all the four skills are established naturally"³². This idea relates to the claim by CLT that language teaching should provide realistic situations where learners can be involved in meaningful communicative interactions. In a realistic situation an individual may, as Byrne suggests, "read an ad for a job in the newspaper, ... discuss it with someone /and perhaps leave it at that/ or ... ring up and enquire about the job ... then write a letter of application for the job, which will in turn lead onto somebody else's reading the letter and replying to it"³³. In this case there is a chain of events in which different language skills are being

activated in no predetermined order, and at each step in the chain there is a reason for using the particular skill. Such natural chains of events are built into CLT teaching materials to give learners a reason to activate all four skills and to teach the learners in what situations it is appropriate to use which skills³⁴. /See appendix for excerpt from such materials/. In this attempt at natural skill integration CLT is going one step further in assuring consistency in Approach, Method, and Technique.

It can be concluded from this analysis of CLT according to Approach, Method, and Technique, that CLT is certainly more than a mere approach to syllabus design. It does rather satisfy all the requirements necessary to be classified as a Methodology and perhaps what will prove to be the most successful Methodology yet. Brumfit³⁵ affirms that CLT does in fact demonstrate not only a reorganization of syllabus objectives but a reversal of traditional methodological emphases. He presents the following diagram to demonstrate the reversal³⁶:

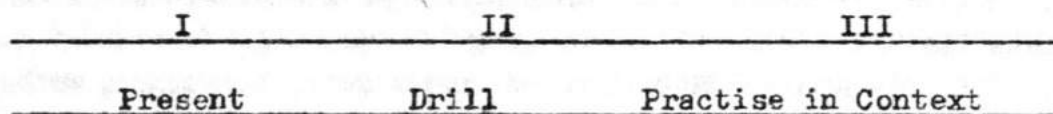


figure /i/

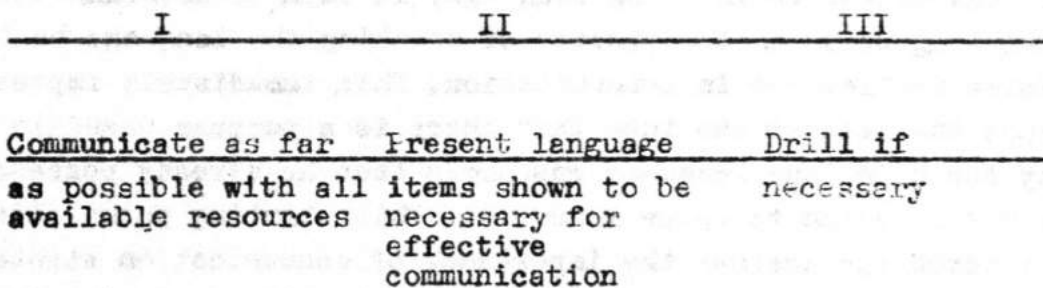


figure /ii/

Traditionally, as Brumfit shows in figure i, language forms have been presented, then drilled, and, finally, practised in context. In CLT, as he exemplifies in figure ii, the first step is communication. Only after the learner has attempted to communicate

will language items which were necessary for that communication to succeed be presented, and, finally, drilling will be done if necessary.

This reversal in traditional methodological emphases is the final example of how consistent CLT is in its Approach, Method, and Technique. Since the approach of CLT to language and language teaching emphasizes communication and demands that learners be placed in realistic situations requiring meaningful communicative interaction, the objectives in carrying out this approach would be defeated if learners were first introduced to language forms without being able to identify with how those language forms are used by speakers in communicative interactions. Although in traditional methodology this first step, as shown in figure 1 of Brumfit's diagram, often involves presentation of a grammatical form in the context of a dialogue, emphasis is on the form itself, using the dialogue only as an instrument for displaying the form in a larger sample of language. In step II, the learners deal with the grammatical form in isolation, learning how to manipulate surface forms of the language in order to form habits. In step III, the form is practiced in context, but again emphasizing the language form rather than the communication that is providing the context.

Considering that the CLT Approach states that communication is the objective in using language, it is only natural that the starting point in the process of teaching the language be to involve the learner in communication. This immediately impresses upon the learner the idea that there is a purpose based in reality for using the language resources that he already possesses and for adding to those resources. This starting point also helps to teach the learner the importance of communication strategies since he will automatically be placed in situations forcing him to act and react communicatively and to compensate, therefore for communication breakdowns. Once the learner has been given an opportunity to communicate in a given situation, the language items necessary to effectively communicate in that situation will be presented in Step II, thereby demonstrating how grammatical forms and communicative functions combine to satisfy the purpose

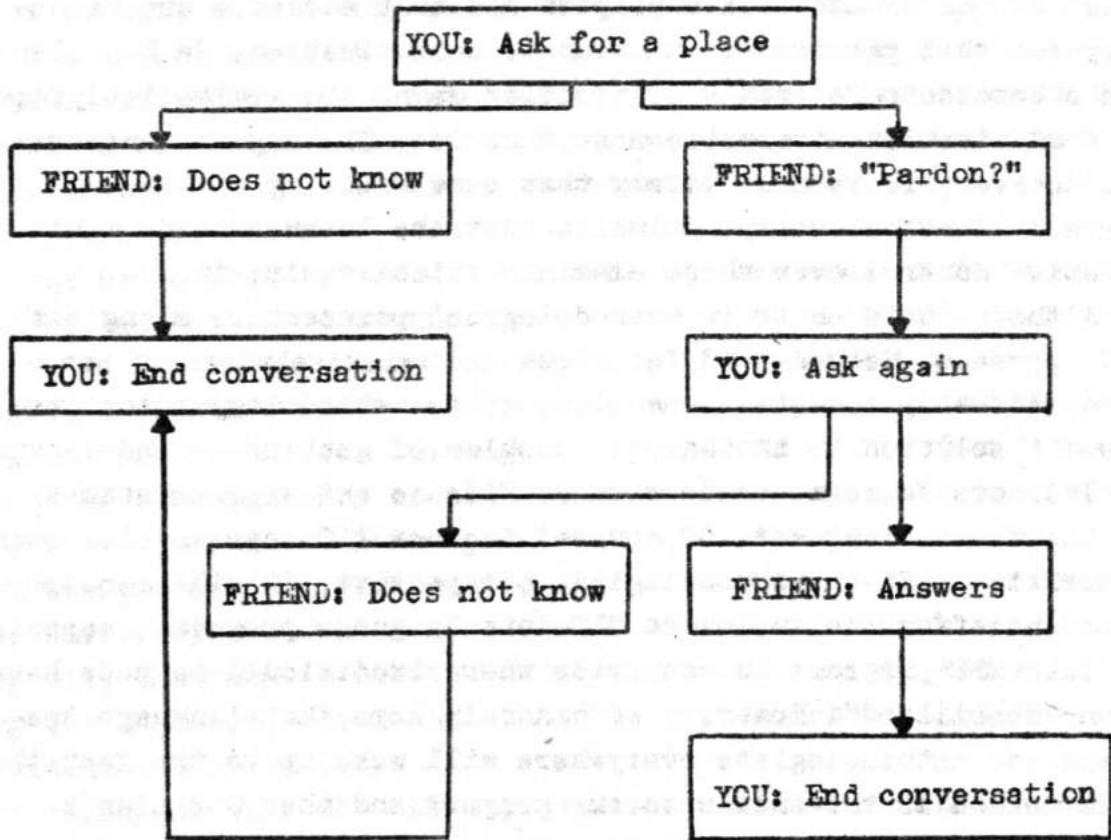
which the learner already has been made aware of. The method of "Drawing Attention" would be used at this stage to help present these language items by focusing on their communicative value. By the time the learner has reached Stage III he is already well aware of the communicative purpose and what elements are necessary for that particular function of communication. He has also had a considerable amount of practice using the grammatical forms in communicative interactions so that Step III may be unnecessary. However, it is most likely that some drilling of language forms will be necessary to insure that the learner gains manipulative control over those elements which require it.

Although this shift in methodological perspective along with CLT Approach, Method, and Technique is relatively new, it has been generally accepted as an innovative methodology which promises a solution to the age-old problem of getting second language learners to communicate with confidence and appropriateness in the second language. Of course, because CLT does involve such a drastic shift in methodological perspective, it will require time and effort to implement CLT into language programs, especially into EFL programs in countries where traditional methods have been "fossilized". However, we can only hope that language teachers and methodologists everywhere will wake up to the fact that this method is the answer to our prayers and that God didn't create the world in a day.



APPENDIX 1

An example of a Conversation Grid:



Appendix 2

The following is an excerpt from language teaching materials which are written using CLT Approach, Method, and Technique as a basis, keeping in mind the attempt to integrate skills.

Exercise 5. Text 1 describes two kinds of routine: the routine of Des and Val Coates, and the routine of "The Gun". Text 2 concentrates on a personal routine. It also tells us about the tastes and habits of the subject of the text, Erin Pizzey. Erin Pizzey is the founder of the Chiswick refuge for battered women. You will read more about her and the refuge in Unit 2.

a/ quickly read Text 2, concentrating on Erin Pizzey's daily routine. Look for sequencers such as:

about seven

at a quarter to nine

b/ make up a timetable of her daily routine, using the sequencers as a basis. Your timetable will look something like this:

7:00 a.m. She wakes up

She makes her coffee

Notice that the verbs in the text are usually Base form, e.g. wake up, while in your timetable they should be Base + s /wakes up/ because of the change in number and person of the Subject of the sentence.

Exercise 6. a/ read Text 2 again.

b/ make a list of details of Erin Pizzey's family, her house and her possessions, e.g.

Husband: Jack /lives separately in same house/

Children: Cleo

Etc., etc.

- c/ make a list of Erin Pizzey's likes and dislikes /her tastes and preferences/ and her habits, e.g. She likes to use Femme bath oil in her bath.
- d/ use all this information to write two paragraphs describing Erin Pizzey's routine, family, tastes, and habits.

Use the Present Simple tense and the BASE + s verb form. When you have finished writing, compare your description with the information in your lists, and check each sentence for correct verb forms.

Exercise 7. Text 1 was an edited version of an INTERVIEW with Erin Pizzey. To obtain the information needed for the interview, a "Sunday Times" reporter probably asked Mrs. Pizzey a number of questions.

- a/ refer back to the answers you gave in Exercises 5 and 6.
- b/ use this information to write a list of questions to ask Mrs. Pizzey about her routine, possessions, tastes and habits.
- c/ use the same list of questions to interview a fellow student.
- d/ use the results of your interview to write a description of your interviewee's routine, habits and tastes. Your description is for inclusion in a magazine article describing everyday life in your country.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Edward Anthony, "Approach, Method, and Technique", Teaching English as a Second Language: A Book of Readings, H.B. Allen and R.N. Campbell, eds. /McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1965/, p.5
- ² Michael Canale, "From Communicative Competence to Language Pedagogy", Language and Communication, Jack Richards and Richard W. Schmidt, eds. /Longman, 1983/, p.5
- ³ Ibidem
- ⁴ Michael Canale and Merrill Swain, "Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing", Applied Linguistics, Vol. I, No. 1, 1980, p.4
- ⁵ Ibidem, p.6
- ⁶ Canale, p.7
- ⁷ Ibidem
- ⁸ Ibidem, pp. 10-11
- ⁹ Ibidem, pp. 14-15
- ¹⁰ Ibidem
- ¹¹ Ibidem, p.18
- ¹² Ibidem
- ¹³ Ibidem, p.19
- ¹⁴ Anthony, p.5
- ¹⁵ Canale and Swain, p.32
- ¹⁶ J.F.B. Allen and H.G. Widdowson, "Teaching the Communicative Use of English", The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching, C.J. Brumfit and K. Johnson, eds. /Oxford, 1979/, p.128
- ¹⁷ Ibidem, p.127
- ¹⁸ Ibidem
- ¹⁹ Keith Johnson, "Communicative Approaches and Communicative Processes", in Brumfit and Johnson, p.200

- ²⁰Ibidem, pp. 200-201
- ²¹Ibidem, p.202
- ²²Ibidem
- ²³Ibidem
- ²⁴Ibidem
- ²⁵Ibidem
- ²⁶Ibidem
- ²⁷Anthony, p.7
- ²⁸Roger Scott, "Speaking", Communication in the Classroom,
Keith Johnson and Keith Morrow, eds. /Longman, 1981/ p.76
- ²⁹Marion Geddes, "Listening", in Johnson and Morrow, p.81
- ³⁰Ibidem
- ³¹Donn Byrne, "Integrating Skills", in Johnson and Morrow,
p.108
- ³²Ibidem
- ³³Ibidem
- ³⁴Ibidem, p.109
- ³⁵Christopher Brumfit, "Communicative Language Teaching: An
Educational Perspective, "in Brumfit and Johnson, p.183
- ³⁶Ibidem

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PODEJŚCIE KOMUNIKATYWNE - PODEJŚCIE, METODA I TECHNIKA

Streszczenie

Artykuł omawia Podejście Komunikatywne /Communicative Language Teaching - CLT/ jako koncepcję glottodydaktyczną. Punktem wyjścia dyskusji jest rozróżnienie E.Anthony'ego dzielące każdą koncepcję glottodydaktyczną na trzy poziomy - podejście, metodę i technikę.

Opis Podejścia Komunikatywnego zilustrowany jest przykładami technik nauczania.