

FROM GRAMMAR TO COMMUNICATION:  
A MODERATE VIEWPOINT  
IN THE TEACHING OF EFL ADULT LEARNERS IN VIETNAM

by

Nguyen Hanh Dung

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## ABSTRACT

This Study is concerned with the problems arising from the application of new ideas in communicative language teaching for EFL adult learners in Vietnam, and the solutions to these problems.

The Study argues that to learn to communicate effectively in a foreign language does not mean merely to master the linguistic forms of the language, but also to be able to use them in an appropriate way: to acquire what is called communicative competence. The Study also suggests that in Vietnam, the structural system of the language cannot be neglected if teaching/learning is to be successful. Accordingly, the Study attempts to search for an appropriate approach to develop communicative competence in the EFL adult learners of Vietnam.

In order to achieve this aim, the Study enters into consideration of the relevant literature with reference to the development of the concept of communicative competence, and communicative language teaching. Then the Study makes a survey of some communicative-approach-based textbooks pointing out the practical values of different syllabus design models and teaching strategies discussed in the literature.

Finally the Study proposes a communicative-structural approach to syllabus design for the target group, the teaching strategies as well as some techniques and activities associated with the suggested approach.

Abbreviation

CC: Communicative Competence

EFL : English as Foreign Language.

ESL : English as Second Language.

L1 : The first language - mother tongue.

L2 : The second language : "a language learnt after the basics of a first or primary language have been acquired; foreign language; target language"

(Savignon, 1983:309)

Terms Used in this Study:

Approach : "A set of assumptions about the nature of language and the nature of language teaching and learning; a philosophy or point of view"

(Savignon, 1983:301)

Audiolingual Approach: "Based directly on behaviourist learning theory, this approach assumes that language learning can be broken down into a series of individual habits, which can be formed (habit formation) by reinforcement of correct response. In practice, this approach gives rise to methods consisting largely of repetition and pattern drilling. The approach also places emphasis on the ordering of the skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing - and the need for maximum error prevention."

(Hubbard, et. al, 1984:325)

Communicative Approach: "The communicative approach to language teaching takes as its starting point the use or communicative purpose of language. This approach therefore strongly advocates careful attention to use rather than merely form/meaning. It would also favour functional/notional organization of teaching materials. It might tend to support a 'deep-end' approach to presentation of new language, in which students are first to cope with the communication task as best as possible before being given the new, necessary form".

(Hubbard, et. al, 1984:326)

Form : 'The actual words (written) or sounds (spoken) used to express something in language, as opposed to meaning or use.

(Hubbard,et.al, 1984:327)

Grammar-Translation method: The traditional deductive method of language teaching, based on classical studies of dead languages, which consisted of giving rules, paradigms, and vocabulary, and getting the students to apply this new knowledge to translation (to and from L1) and to grammatical analysis.

(Hubbard,et.al, 1984:328)

Meaning:"The conventional or literal meaning of a particular form"

(Hubbard, et al,1984:332)

Method: "A language teaching method is a set of techniques or procedures. These usually follow a systematic scheme. Unlike an approach, a method need not be tied to any particular theory about language or learning, but may simply be claimed as successful in practice.

(Hubbard,et.al, 1984:329)

Situational Syllabus: " ...organizes language content according to situations or settings"

(Savignon,1983:309)

Strategy: "A particular method of approaching a problem or task; a mode of operation for achieving a particular goal".

(Savignon,183:310)

Structural Syllabus: "Organizes instructional material according to discrete structural, or formal, features of language."

(Savignon,1983:310)

Structuralism:"An approach for the analysis and description of language; emphasizes the procedures by which linguistic items can be described as structures and systems."

(Savignon,1983:310)

Technique: "A particular device, strategy, activity used to accomplish an immediate goal."

(Savignon,1983:310)

Text: "A 'piece' of language relevant to a specific context; language in setting; transactions of various kinds such as tasks, games, discussions, etc.; a spoken or written passage that forms a unified whole."

(Savignon, 1983:311)

Usage: "Refers to examples of language that are correct grammatically and have meaning, but which have no communicative value."

(Hubbard, et al, 1984:332)

Use: "The way in which a speaker uses a particular language form to communicate on a particular occasion. The use of a form may be described in terms of its function or communicative purpose."

(Hubbard, et. al, 1984:332)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ABBREVIATION AND TERMINOLOGY	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER	
1 THE BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	5
1.1 Introduction	5
1.2 The Teaching/Learning Situations	5
1.3 The Learner's Needs	9
1.4 Some Psychological Features	11
1.4.1 Age	11
1.4.2 The Learners' View of Language Learning	12
1.4.3 Learning Style	13
1.4.4 Learning Strategies	15
1.5 Summary	18
2 COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (CC)	20
2.1 Introduction	20
2.2 Hymes	22
2.3 Habermas	25
2.4 Campbell and Wales	26
2.5 Halliday	27
2.6 Murrell Saville Troike	31
2.7 Cooley and Roach	33
2.8 The Four Components of CC	39
2.9 Conclusion	43
3 INTERPRETATION OF CC WITH REFERENCE TO GRAMMAR AND COMMUNICATION IN LANGUAGE TEACHING	45
3.1 Introduction	45
3.2 From Form to Use	47
3.2.1 Rivers	47
3.2.2 Paulston	52



3.2.3	Valette and Disick	55
3.2.4	Littlewood	56
3.3	From Meaning and Use to Form	58
3.4	Specification of Content	65
3.4.1	Overview	65
3.4.2	Notional Syllabus (Notional Approach)	68
3.4.3	Variations of Model	71
	(i) Purely Functional Model	72
	(ii) Functional/Structural Model	73
	(iii) Thematic Area Model	74
	(iv) Oblique Functionalism	76
	(v) Structures and Functions Model	77
	(vi) Structural/Functional Model	79
3.5	Comments and Conclusion	80
4	A SURVEY OF SOME TEXTBOOKS FOR COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING	84
4.1	The Purpose of the Survey	84
4.2	The Focus of the Survey	84
4.3	The Selection of Textbooks for the Survey	85
4.4	The Findings of the Survey	86
4.4.1	The Popularity in Application of Functional versus Structural Approaches in English Textbooks	86
4.4.2	Function-Based versus Structure- Based in Terms of Selection and Sequence	88
4.4.3	The Structural/Functional Model	96
4.4.4	The Thematic Area Model in Mainline Beginners A/B	102
4.4.5	The Oblique Functionalism - Kernel One	107
4.5	Conclusion	110
5	SUGGESTED APPROACH - A MODERATE VIEWPOINT	120
5.1	Introduction	120
5.2	Communicative Competence - A Moderate Viewpoint	120
5.3	The Approach for Syllabus Design	123
5.3.1	Considerations	123
5.3.2	Communicative Structural Approach	125
5.3.2.1	How Structural Syllabus Could Be Made Communicative	126

5.3.2.2	Suggested Framework for Needs Analysis in the Communicative Structural Syllabus	129
5.4	The Question of Authenticity	132
5.5	Methodology	135
5.5.1	Focus on Form and Focus on Use	136
5.5.2	The Role of Structural Practice	138
5.5.3	Suggestions for Making Structural Practice Communicative	139
	(i) Six Groups of Oral Exercises	140
	(ii) Relating Structure to Communicative Function	141
	(iii) Relating Language to Specific Meanings	141
	(iv) Relating Language to Social Context	142
5.5.4	Information Gap	144
5.5.5	Role-Play and Simulation	149
5.6	Conclusion	153
	CONCLUSION	154
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	156
	LIST OF FIGURES	
Figure 2.1	Hymes' notion of CC	24
Figure 2.2	The components of CC	42
Figure 3.2	Model for language teaching	53
Figure 3.3	The part-whole relationship between linguistic competence and CC	64
Figure 3.4	The two language teaching strategies	65
Figure 3.5	The analytic approach versus the synthetic approach	68
Figure 3.6	Three-stage activity from grammar to communication	75
Figure 3.7	The structure-function syllabus model	78
Figure 4.1	Syllabus model range in theory and in practice	111
Figure 4.2	Unit organization type 1	114
Figure 4.3	Unit organization type 2	114
Figure 5.1	The balanced system in a two-year course for the EFL adult beginners under consideration	122

Figure 5.2	Needs analysis framework	130
Figure 5.3	Control - creativity continuum of activities	151

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	The difference in organization of the language content in 'Starting Strategies' and in 'English Alive 1'	92
Table 2	List of textbooks under survey	117
Table 3	Examination of five textbooks for beginners level - Representatives of five syllabus models	119

## INTRODUCTION

The development of language teaching theories in the world has resulted in a swing away from conventional approaches to a communicative approach, which takes as its starting point the use or communicative purpose of language. The concept of knowing a language is no longer considered as simply the mastery of language forms, but as the acquisition of what is called "communicative competence", that is, 'knowing not only the language code but also what to say to whom, how to say it appropriately in any given situation' (Saville-Troike, 1982:22).

The shift in focus from Grammar to Communication in language teaching can be seen in the recent introduction of functional/notional syllabuses and new teaching techniques which enable communicative activities to take place right from the start in the classroom.

However, two current issues of controversy have emerged from the new trend. The first one concerns syllabus design: what kind of balance should exist, at different stages of learning, between structural grading and organization according to communicative functions or notions, in order to help the learners not only to acquire the structural system but also to learn how these structures are used

for communicative purposes. The second issue of controversy at the methodological level is whether communicative language teaching should retain old techniques but adapt them to reflect the functional nature of language more clearly, so the learning process will go systematically from form to use. Or should new techniques be developed to complement the old, with more emphasis on use as soon as possible ?

In the development of the new trend of communicative language teaching in Vietnam, these issues of controversy have become more critical because of the particular teaching and learning situations in that country. Vietnamese teachers have faced newly emerging conflicts in the application of these new teaching ideas. These are the conflicts between the new approach and the Vietnamese adult learners' characteristics, their learning attitude, learning style and strategy; between the new approach and the teaching situations, including the teachers' ability, teaching facilities, and above all, the English learning environment.

These conflicts have resulted in two extremes among language teachers. At one extreme are those who have been used to the conventional way of teaching and therefore feel more reluctant to try new teaching materials and methods because of the newly arising problems. At the other are those who are often obsessed by the belief that

the 'new' must be the 'best'; since the communicative approach and functional syllabuses are world-wide, they must be effective. Hence, controversy is taking place.

When new ideas achieve rather sudden popularity, there is the danger of exaggerated claims being made for them. The tendency in the development of communicative language teaching in Vietnam recently has reflected this problem. The problem is extremism. If this can be avoided, there is a very fruitful way in which concern with communicative competence can be put to the best use in the general interests of improving EFL teaching in Vietnam.

In view of the controversies referred to, this Study attempts to elaborate on the development of the concept of communicative competence and communicative language teaching, with special consideration for problematic areas and misapprehensions that the communicative approach and the functional/notional syllabuses are likely to pose for EFL teaching in Vietnam, in order to find out a solution to the problems.

Although the Study is mainly concerned with the teaching of a particular Vietnamese target group (described in Chapter 1 ), it also takes into account the teaching of adult learners as a whole, with the hope that it could give help and insight for similar teaching situations.

Description of the Study

The Report consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 gives a basis background to the study, and includes the EFL teaching situation for adult learners in Vietnam, the description of the target group, their needs and psychological problems. Chapter 2 deals with a historical overview of the literature of communicative competence and the specification of the four components of communicative competence. Chapter 3 is concerned with how communicative competence is interpreted in foreign language teaching, both in methodology and syllabus design. Two main trends of communicative methodology and the development of various syllabus models are fully discussed in this Chapter. Chapter 4 attempts to survey some textbooks which are communicative approach-based, with special consideration of the practical value of the syllabus models mentioned in Chapter 3. The first four chapters serve as bases for the discussion in Chapter 5. The moderate viewpoint of the Study is presented in Chapter 5, which proposes a communicative structural approach to syllabus design as the solution of the study, and poses some methodological considerations for the teaching situation in Vietnam.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter will deal with the teaching/learning situations, the learner's need and some psychological features typical of the Vietnamese adult learners, which serves as a basis for the discussions in the next chapters. However, much of the information presented in this chapter is based on personal experience as an English teacher and has been confirmed by Vietnamese colleagues presently studying at the Canberra College of Advanced Education ( CCAE ).

#### 1.2 The Teaching/Learning Situations

Evening and part-time classes used to be very unpopular until recently when the need to study foreign languages has become greater. In those courses the traditional methods of teaching were common. Teaching materials were mainly self-produced and poorly designed: too grammatically-based, the language was artificial and they lacked social and cultural background. During the 1970s, only a few foreign textbooks were available and used; the common ones were 'Present-day English', 'New



Concept English', 'English 900', and some supplementary materials. They are essentially structure-based.

Recently, there have been notable changes in the teaching of English in Vietnam. Because of the increasing importance of the English language due to the economic development, greater attention has been paid to the teaching of English for adults. A considerable amount of foreign aid is spent on teaching materials, equipment and expertise. Thus, new materials and teaching methods have been introduced, and the teacher training programmes have been improved. More teacher trainers have studied abroad and the syllabuses for teacher training programmes have been revised.

The introduction of new materials and teaching methods has greatly facilitated teaching and learning. Yet, it has raised new problems : the application and use of these materials and methods. At present, there is a tendency to search for communicative teaching materials and methods. This is understandable and justified, because traditional methods and materials did not always enable the learners to use the language for communication. Moreover, communicative teaching and functional syllabuses are popular in the field of language teaching and have proved to be very successful in many English courses in many parts of the world. So, among educational advisors, decision-

makers and course designers, there is a movement to advocate a communicative approach and functional/notional syllabuses in the teaching of EFL adult learners. More and more recent communicatively based materials written by English or American authors are introduced into different language centres in Hanoi ( see Table 2, page 118 )

. The use of these new materials reflects a kind of attitude which could be put as the 'new'-means-the-'best' attitude. One evidence for this is that recently language centres in Hanoi have tried to gain their popularity and 'compete' with others by using up-to-date and fashionable teaching materials in their courses without any consideration of appropriateness or teachability.

With respect to methodology, while searching for good methods to develop the learner's ability to communicate, teachers tend to believe that communicative language teaching should not focus too much on grammar and structure. The students should try to talk and speak as much as possible, and the grammar could implicitly be acquired. Thus, there tends to be an attitude to avoid or eliminate traditional techniques such as grammar explanations, rule formation or structural practice. But in many cases, this would seem indispensable for Vietnamese adult learners.

As a result, after more than five years of trial and error with new methods and new materials, the teaching

of English for adults as a working language has revealed some problems. These could be summed up as following :

(i) The materials used in the course often fail to meet the objectives of the course, because the language content and language activities are irrelevant, even though they can be very authentic (see Chapter 4).

(ii) The approach, methods and techniques used in the materials do not always suit the learners because they are either psychologically offending or inappropriate in terms of learning style and learning strategy. (This will be discussed in section 1.4 ).

(iii) The materials and methods and the teaching situations are not in harmony. The equipment and materials are sometimes not enough to carry out the programme as it should be. For example, there is not a complete set of materials for the course book (e.g., only student's books, no work books; or no teacher's books; or only books, no tapes, etc. ); or there are not enough cassette-recorders for listening materials, no photocopiers to do the photocopying needed for exercises. The teachers are not qualified to teach the material because of inadequacies in either their English proficiency or their social/cultural knowledge of the country whose language they are teaching. Thus, the programme of the course is distorted; and the result is even worse than traditional language courses.

(iv) The Vietnamese physical setting, which is different from the European setting, does not seem suitable for communicative activities such as games, simulation and role-plays which appear to be widely applied in communicative language teaching in the world (see section 5.5.4 ).

### 1.3 The Learner's Needs

As has been said earlier, cooperation between Vietnam and other countries in the world has increased dramatically. There is a great demand for English as a working language among those involved in their fields of cooperation. While the need for communication is so great, interpreters and translators are not adequate, or in many cases, not very helpful, because they do not have professional knowledge about the topic. People working with international organizations are, therefore, required to learn English so that they can not only work with foreigners without interpreters, but also, hopefully, act as interpreters or translators when necessary.

As a result, the learners are expected to use English to communicate with English speaking foreigners of different nationalities such as English, American, Australian, Dutch, Swedish, Indian, Japanese, etc. These foreigners are often official members of different

international organizations or companies. Using Munby's terminology (1978), the social relationships can be classified into the categories below :

- (i) Native to non-native ;
- (ii) Host to guest ;
- (iii) Stranger to stranger ;
- (iv) Friend to friend ;
- (v) Adult to adult ; and
- (vi) Colleague to colleague.

As can be seen, these situations have a variety of style ranging from formal to informal and friendly. Both spoken and written media are involved in communication. The learners need not only to interact with foreigners but also to read and understand documents, reports , correspondence in their job. Moreover , they are also required to write simple business letters, notes, minutes, or reports in English. Specifically, the learners should be able to :

- (i) interact socially at work;
- (ii) receive and entertain foreign visitors ;
- (iii) discuss and negotiate with their partners ;
- (iv) talk on the phone ;
- (v) read manuals, reports, correspondence, documents;
- (vi) understand discussions and speeches at formal meetings ;

- (vii) take notes at meetings or conferences; and
- (viii) write business letters, meeting minutes and reports.

With such working positions and scope of language communication, obviously the learners are required not merely to master a passive knowledge of English, but also use it communicatively; not merely to be able to get a message across, but to get it across accurately, usually in a rather formal way. Put in another way, ungrammatical and/or pidgin-like English is not acceptable. This particular type of communicative competence will be important for considering the types of teaching strategy, the syllabus and the material for this target group.

#### 1.4 Some Psychological Features

On the basis of personal teaching experience and also experience of other colleagues at 5 tertiary institutions ( the College of Foreign Trade, the College of Foreign Affairs, the Foreign Languages College, the Teachers' Training College and the University of Hanoi ), the following sketch of adult Vietnamese learners is presented.

##### 1.4.1 Age

One primary factor that should be taken into account is the age of the learners. It is obvious that adult

learners are very different from young students. Ranging from 30 to 45, these adult learners have some advantages and disadvantages in learning a foreign language. On the one hand, older learners do not always react as quickly as they did earlier in life, but compared to young people, adults appear to be often able to work more accurately, and they frequently seem to have a better long-term memory. Adult learners, unlike children, have a wide social experience based on their mother tongue. They tend to transfer what they have learnt to different situations and contexts. On the other hand, adults find it increasingly difficult both to hear new sounds and to imitate them. A high requirement of phonetic accuracy in adult learners, therefore, does not seem appropriate. As their logical mind has been developed, they want to say things meaningfully and creatively. This often results in conflicts between what they want to express in the new language and the limited ability to use the language. To understand further the adult learners' characteristics, it is useful to look at some other psychological factors that characterize the learners of this type.

#### 1.4.2 The Learners' View of Language Learning

Most of the learners in this age range have been

taught by traditional methods of teaching. In Vietnam, these are the Grammar-Translation methods and Cognitive Methods with variation . Therefore many have fixed ideas about what it is to learn a language. Views of language learning which are dominant among the majority can be summed up in the following points :

(i) Learning consists of acquiring a body of knowledge and it is the role of the teacher to impart this knowledge to the learner through such activities as explanations, examples, writing and doing exercises.

(ii) Learning must follow some system or programme which is exemplified in textbooks. Things outside textbooks do not seem important to them.

(iii) Activities in the classroom without any new piece of 'knowledge' given by the teacher are not 'serious learning', and thus time wasting.

(iv) Mistakes must be corrected by the teachers; learning is almost impossible without the teacher's correction or guidance.

Because of these views on language learning, they often have particular expectations about what should happen in a language class, and would be disappointed if it did not go the way they imagined.

#### 1.4.3 Learning Style

The typical learning style of adult learners is



cognitive. In considering the cognitive style, it is useful to distinguish what psychologists call "field-dependence" and "field-independence" describing two poles of cognitive functioning. Field-independence versus field-dependence refers to a consistent mode of approaching the environment in analytical as opposed to global terms.

Field-independent people, therefore, are usually characterized as having a more developed sense of separate identity than field-dependent people. There are positive and negative characteristics to both field-independence and field-dependence. Field-independent people tend to be guided more by their own thought and feelings than by those of other people in their environment, thus, they are likely to have an impersonal or theoretical orientation. By contrast, field-dependent people rely on others for self-definition. Both types: field-independent and field-dependent are important in language learning. The literature on field independence-dependence has shown that field-independent people give evidence of greater skill in cognitive analysis and restructuring than field-dependent people, but show less sensitivity, less interest in others. Field-dependent people give evidence of greater social sensitivity and social skills, but are less competent in cognitive analysis and restructuring.

In general, Vietnamese adult learners are more

field-independent and tend to follow the cognitive style which involves more rules analysing, exercises on language forms, and they study the language thoughtfully. They need to form a concept of a structure in their consciousness in order to master the language properly. Because they follow a cognitive process in learning, purely mechanical learning is difficult. They find it easier to learn and remember what they have learned, if these are in a meaningful context. Moreover, they feel more reluctant to take part in classroom interaction or other communicative activities.

In foreign language learning, it would be best if a person can be both field-independent and field-dependent so that he can invoke either of the two styles depending on the requirement of the task of learning. A good understanding of the learner's learning style is valuable in that the teacher can not only adjust his teaching methods and make them more flexible for the learners, but also help them to invoke the appropriate style for the context.

#### 1.4.4 Learning Strategies

Another aspect with respect to the learners is their learning strategies. A learning strategy is a "method of perceiving and storing particular items for later recall" (Brown, 1980 : 83). This discussion is concerned with three main problems : transfer, interference, and

generalization. Transfer, according to Brown, is a "general term describing the carry over of previous performance or knowledge to subsequent learning " (1980:84). Positive transfer occurs when prior knowledge benefits the learning task. Negative transfer occurs when the previous performance disrupts the performance on a second task. The latter is referred to as interference. The distinction between positive transfer and negative transfer is also referred to as 'facility' and 'interference' by Corder (1975) to mean the mother tongue positive and negative interferences in second language learning.

The Vietnamese learners, *for example*, tend to make use of whatever previous knowledge experience they have had and apply it to learning the new language. This involves either the mother tongue or both the mother tongue and the first foreign language they have learnt. It is notable that these learners have learnt their language ( or languages) in a systematic way. They tend to be very much aware of the language system. This awareness of the language system results in a kind of learning strategy which invokes conscious attention more to forms than to functions. They tend to refer to the first language structures and work out for themselves the rules in the new language. For these people, structures and rules help them master the language quick and more

thoroughly . But on the other hand, there might be constraints because of this form-centred attention. An awareness of their characteristics will help the teacher to make use of the advantageous side while limiting the disadvantageous and find the proper methods and techniques for teaching these learners.

The last problem in discussion here is generalization. " To generalize means to infer or derive a law, rule or conclusion, usually from the observation of particular instances". ( Brown, 1980:86). Much of human learning involves generalization. The generalization process involves inductive and deductive reasoning. People who reason inductively use a number of specific instances to deduce a general rule or conclusion. People who reason deductively start from a generalization and move to specific instances. On the basis of personal teaching experience and other colleagues' experience in Vietnam, it would seem that Vietnamese adult learners from the occupation background discussed here tend to be more adept at deductive thinking than at inductive thinking. For example, they find it more logical and easier to learn the grammatical rules and to have a general picture of the phenomenon before they are required to supply instances of the rules through exercises and practice, because this is the way they have learnt other subjects before. In many cases, deductive thinking

can lead to a kind of overgeneralization, that is, the incorrect application of previously learned foreign language rules to a present foreign language context.

This habit of deductive thinking in Vietnamese adult learners has led to some psychological problems in language learning :

- (i) They find it hard to learn a foreign language without the grammatical rules or system.
- (ii) They feel bewildered when having to repeat or produce an utterance without seeing it in the written form or without understanding the rules underlying the utterance.

These psychological characteristics have distinguished this target group of learners not only from young learners, but also from adult learners in other parts of the world. In fact, adult learners are not all alike. Each type will have particular features of its own. These cannot be ignored when considering the approach and methods for teaching.

### 1.5 Summary

To summarize this chapter, it can be said that the Vietnamese teaching/learning situation and the target group of learners is different from other teaching/learning

situations and other learners. The discussions in the next chapter will be directed towards this teaching/learning situation and this target group.

## CHAPTER 2

### COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

#### 2.1 Introduction

According to James C. McCroskey (1984), our current concern with communicative competence only "represent a continuation of centuries-old tradition . What is new is the term communicative competence" (1984:261). Historically, linguists were interested in the notion of competence and performance just because of their relevance to an understanding of the nature of language and the ways in which linguists may successfully study language concepts. Social scientists, recently, have developed an interest in their relevance to communicative issues. The study of competence is now exposed to more dimensions, in view of sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, socio- semantics, discourse analysis, ethnography and so on. Saville-Troike remarks, the concept of communicative competence becomes "one of the most powerful organizing tools to emerge in the social sciences in recent years" ( 1982:22).

However, it is notable that the study of communicative competence owes a lot to Noam Chomsky's famous dichotomy

between 'competence' and 'performance', the notion of competence being formulated as "the ideal speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language" ( Chomsky, 1965 : 4 ). In Cooley and A. Roach's view, Chomsky's conceptualizations of competence and performance "not only have shaped much of linguistic theory for nearly two decades, but also have had a tremendous impact on social scientists who were interested in language phenomena" ( 1984:16).

As Chomsky's notion of competence is restricted to the ideal speaker-hearer's knowledge of language, it omits almost everything of socio-cultural significance. It is for this concern of socio-cultural features of language that new definitional statements on communicative competence have been put forward. In this review, the main focus is on those definitions of competence in the field of communication only. Notions of competence from a purely linguistic point of view will not be discussed here.

The term 'communicative competence' (henceforth CC) was first used by Habermas (1970), and Hymes (1971), who reformulated Chomsky's notion of competence and performance with new meanings. The notion has been, then, reinforced and developed by people like Halliday, Jakobovits, Widdowson, Campbell and Wales, Cooper, Saviile-Troike, Cooley & Roach and others. The most notable ideas of all are those of Hymes, Halliday whose theoretical propositions have got



important pedagogic significance; and most recently of Ralph E. Cooley and Deborah A. Roach who offer a conceptual framework for a theory of competence/performance that can support both research and practice. Their works and other related viewpoints are discussed in the following sections.

## 2.2 Hymes

In contrast to Chomsky's more narrow notion of grammatical competence, Hymes proposes a new theory of competence which integrates linguistic theory with a more general theory of communication and culture. He argues that Chomsky's category of competence simply means knowledge of the language system. For him, members of a community will behave and interpret the behaviour of others according to the knowledge of the communicative systems they have available to them. This knowledge includes, but it is not limited to, the formal possibilities of the linguistic code. In Hymes's view, an adequate theory of competence must be sufficiently general to account for all forms of communication. He states :

If an adequate theory of language users and language use is to be developed, it seems that judgements must be recognized to be in fact not of two kinds but of four. And if linguistic theory is to be integrated with theory of communication and culture, this four-fold distinction must be stated in a sufficiently generalized way.

( Hymes, 1981:18 )

Hymes proposes four parameters to the systems of rules that underline communicative behaviour: grammaticality, feasibility, appropriateness to context and de facto:

- 1) Whether (and to what extent) something is formally possible;
- 2) Whether (and to what extent) something is feasible ;
- 3) Whether (and to what extent) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful ) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated;
- 4) Whether (and to what extent) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what its doing entails.

( Hymes, 1981:18)

Included in his concept of competence is both tacit knowledge and ability for use. At this point, it may be helpful to classify Hymes's use of the terms competence, knowledge and ability for use. He says :

I should take competence as the most general term for the capabilities of a person.... Competence is dependent upon both (tacit) knowledge and (ability for) use. Knowledge is distinct, then, both from competence (as its part), and from systemic possibility (to which its relation is an empirical matter). [...] Knowledge also is to be understood as subtending all four parameters of communication just noted. There is knowledge of each. Ability for use also may relate to all four parameters. Certainly, it may be the case that individuals differ with regard to ability to use knowledge of each: to interpret, differentiate, etc. The specification of ability for use as part of competence allows for the role of non-cognitive factors, such as motivation, as partly determining competence.

( Hymes, 1981:19-20)

Hymes's notion of C.C. can be summed up in a diagram as follows :

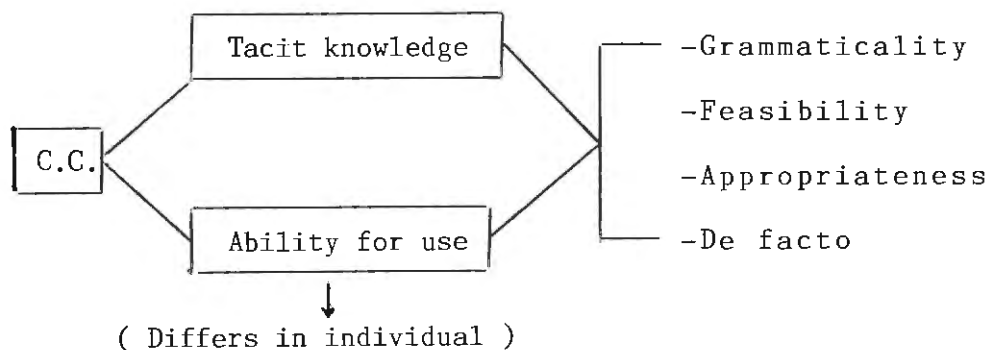


Figure 2.1 Hymes' s notion of C.C.

As regards performance, Hymes refers it to "actual use and actual events with certain reminders and provisors", (1972 :283).

In his discussion on CC above, Hymes has broadened Chomsky's competence to include psychological, sociocultural and de facto knowledge, while keeping grammaticality as one of the four parameters. In the view of Cooley and Roach, 'Hymes's formulation allowed for the inclusion of cognitive, social, and other non-cognitive factors as explicit, constitutive feature of competence' (1984:18).

In short, Hymes's main contributions are the inclusion of social and other non-cognitive features as constitutive of competence and the idea that ability for use is part of competence and not of performance.

### 2.3 Habermas

A different conception of CC can be found in Habermas, a leading social theorist interested in sociolinguistics.

Habermas agrees with Chomsky's distinction of competence as a monological capacity, because (a) it provides an inadequate basis for the development of general semantics, and (b) it fails to take account of the essential dimension of communication in a highly idealized sense. According to him, "...In order to participate in normal discourse, the speaker must have - in addition to his linguistic competence - basic qualifications of speech and of symbolic interaction (role-behaviour) at his disposal, which we may call communicative competence. Thus, communicative competence means the mastery of an ideal speech situation, " (1970:138).

Habermas's concept of competence is considered as being at a more idealized level of theorizing than Chomsky's. For him, CC, 'above all' relates to an 'ideal speech situation in the same way that linguistic competence relates to the abstract system of linguistic rules', and '...CC is defined by the ideal speaker's mastery of dialogue-constitutive universals irrespective of the actual restrictions under empirical condition' (1970:160-161).

Habermas's notion of CC comprises knowledge of the universal formal features of language which make mutual understanding possible. His view is remarked as most idealized by people such as Munby (1978), Roberts (1982), and Hellgmen (1982). Thus, it is of little practical use. However, Habermas' initial ideas for a theory of CC will provide the necessary basis for developing general semantics, and he himself is also concerned with the possible applications of the theory of CC for social analysis.

#### 2.4 Campbell and Wales

Campbell and Wales are two cognitive psycholinguists who regard CC as central in their study of language acquisition. They found Chomsky's notion of competence only 'a restricted sort of competence' because 'the most important linguistic ability has been omitted', that is, 'the ability to produce or understand utterances... appropriate to the context in which they are made' (Campbell & Wales, 1970:247).

Being aware of this deficiency, Campbell and Wales emphasize the importance of environmental factors in the psychology of language. For them, 'an adequate psychology of language must take account not only of

the creative aspects of language use, but also of the important role played by contextual factors'(1970:248), So CC, in their notion, is ' the nature of those human abilities that are specific to language', which is distinguished from Chomsky's notion of grammatical competence ('competence 3'in their term) (1970). Campbell and Wales argued that this kind of definition of CC could importantly help to make the assumption that linguistic capacity is theoretically separable from othe cognitive capacities.

To sum up, Campbell and Wales's definition of CC involves linguistic, psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic conditions. Their view is similar to that of Hymes in taking account of environmental factors of language, but differs in emphasis. While Hymes looks at these factors mainly from social cultural aspects, Campbell and Wales consider them from the language acquisition point of view.

## 2.5 Halliday

Halliday's work adds another perspective to the theory of CC, that of the functions of language.

His concern is towards a synthesis of structural and functional approaches in the study of language.

Linguistics is concerned...with the description of speech acts or texts, since only through the study of language in use are all the functions of language, and therefore all the components of meaning, brought into focus.

( Halliday,1970:145 )

Halliday defines three basic functions of language:

- Ideational function,i.e., expressing the speaker's experience of the real world including the inner world of his own consciousness.
- Interpersonal function, i.e., establishing and maintaining social relations.
- The textual function,i.e., making links with language itself and with features of the situation in which it is used.

(Halliday, 1970:143)

As Sinclair et. al.(1972) pointed out, these language functions, defined in terms of formal features of language which enable communication to take place, enable the most abstract theoretical universals of Habermas's CC to be expressed. In this sense, Halliday's language functions relate to Habermas's CC; and the approach is at the same very high level of idealization. But, as Munby pointed out (1978:12), his approach is not always so idealized. He is also concerned with the very low level when describing the grammar of the clause.

In his subsequent work, Halliday has developed a sociosemantic approach to language and the speaker's

use of language with the notion of 'Meaning Potential' as the central idea. That is the sets of options in meaning available to the speaker/hearer. Halliday points out :

The more we are able to relate the options in grammatical system to meaning potential in the social contexts and behavioural settings, the more insights we shall gain into the nature of the language system; since it is in the service of such contexts and settings that language has involved.

(1981:38)

Halliday is concerned with three levels of analysis and the relationship between them. Each level contains a set of choices that the individual can take :

- The level of behaviour : behavioural potential.  
(choices as to what the individual can do.)
- The level of semantics : meaning potential.  
( choices as to what he can mean );
- The level of grammar : linguistic potential.  
( choices as to what syntactical structures he can form )

These choices represent the various ways the language system provides for expressing meaning. This concept of meaning potential is, as pointed out by Halliday himself, 'not unlike Dell Hymes's notion of CC; except that Hymes defines this in terms of competence in the Chomskian sense of what the speaker knows, whereas we are talking of a potential - what can one do - in the special



linguistic sense of what can one mean - and avoiding the additional complication between doing and knowing'. (Halliday, 1971). However, it is noted by Munby that Hymes's notion of CC by no means retains what Halliday remarks as 'additional complications between doing and knowing', for Hymes has recast Chomsky's competence to include much more than Chomsky's 'know' (Munby, 1978:13).

So, having the same concern with language in social setting, Halliday goes further than Hymes in his rejection of Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance. Whereas Hymes defines competence to include ability for use, Halliday rejects the distinction itself as either unnecessary or misleading.

It is unnecessary if it is just another name for the distinction between what we have been able to describe in the grammar and what we have not, and misleading in any other interpretation.

(Halliday, 1970:145)

The rejection of this distinction between competence and performance is also an important difference between Halliday's approach to the question of language user's competence and the others mentioned in this chapter. However, as it is argued by Munby, 'one may agree with the reason he gives for rejecting such a dichotomy as unnecessary, but it is difficult to see that any other interpretation should be misleading' (Munby, 1978:12).

The above has shown that Halliday's notions of 'meaning potential' and functions have clear pedagogic possibilities. He himself indicates the relationship with communicative language teaching :

The semantic networks constitute a stratum that is intermediate between the social system and the grammatical system. The former is wholly outside language, the latter is wholly within language. The semantic networks, which describe the range of alternative meanings available to the speaker in given social contexts and settings form a bridge between the two.[...]. Grammar and phonology...are inner strata of the linguistic system - the core of the language...they do not relate directly outside language. But they are in turn contingent on other systems which do relate outside language...we can understand the nature of the inner strata language system of language only if we do attempt to relate language to extra-linguistic phenomena.

(Halliday,1981:44)

The view which relates language to extra-linguistic phenomena is common in Halliday's and Hymes' s work. For them, we can only understand language if we view it in this way. In other words, we can only really teach language if we present and practise it in relation to its uses as a communication means.

## 2.6 Muriel Saville Troike

From the point of view of ethnography of communication, Saville Troike entirely supports Hymes's view of CC.

She agreed that ' CC involves knowing not only the language code, but also what to say to whom, and how to say it appropriately in any given situation. It deals with the social and cultural knowledge speakers are presumed to have to enable them to use and interpret linguistic forms' (Troike, 1982:22). She further pointed out that the concept of CC must be embedded in the notion of cultural competence, or the total set of knowledge and skills which speakers bring into a situation.

Language is one of the symbolic systems of culture. Interpreting the meaning of linguistic behaviour requires knowing the meaning in which it is embedded'.

(Troike,1982:22)

For her, the phonology, grammar and lexicon which are the target of traditional linguistic description constitute only a part of the elements in the code used for communication. Thus, she proposes the components of communication from the ethnographer's perspective as follows:

- 1) Linguistic knowledge
- (a) Verbal elements
  - (b) Non-verbal elements
  - (c) Patterns of elements in particular speech events
  - (d) Range of possible variants (in all elements and their organization)
  - (e) Meaning of variants in particular situations

- 2) Interaction skills
- (a) Perception of salient features in communicative situations
  - (b) Selection and interpretation of forms appropriate to specific situations, roles and relationships (rules for the use of speech)
  - (c) Norms of interaction and interpretation
  - (d) Strategies for achieving goals.

- 3) Cultural knowledge
- (a) Social culture
  - (b) Values and attitudes.
  - (c) Cognitive map/schema.
  - (d) Enculturation processes (transmission of knowledge and skills)

( Saville-Troike, 1982:25-26 )

The above outline has shown the broad range of shared knowledge that speakers must have in order to communicate appropriately. It should be noted that in Saville-Troike's view of CC, cultural factors are strongly emphasized. This has developed a new dimension to the concept of CC - the ethnography of communication. The concern with cultural phenomena brings us to another recent work on CC, that of Cooley and Roach, who put forward a conceptual framework for a theory of competence/performance. It is discussed in the next section.

## 2.7 Cooley and Roach

The most recent work on CC is that of Cooley and Roach, who propose cross-cultural aspects to a theory of competence.

Communication behaviours that are the reflection of an individual's competence are culturally specific and hence, bound by the culture in which they are acted out.

(Cooley and Roach, 1984:13)

Like others, Cooley and Roach criticized Chomsky's formulation of competence as insufficient in specifying the components of linguistic competence. They also find other current conceptions of CC inadequate for the lack of a clear theoretically founded description of competence. They find Hymes's concept of CC incomplete because it fails to give 'both detail and specific statements of its relation to performance', therefore lacking 'explanatory power at either the general or specific level'. They also criticize Hymes's formulation as failing to yield theoretically based assessment instruments. For them, Hymes's formulation, like Chomsky's, is 'no more a definition than a statement of theory' (1984:21).

In short, they review current conceptions of competence as 'theoretically weak, their boundaries are undefined, and their relation to other relevant concepts is unstated' (1984:23).

Cooley and Roach argue that such a notion must be defined carefully and clearly in terms of boundary and content, must explicitly include cross-cultural phenomena and must contain an explicit statement of the relation

between competence and performance. They then propose three criteria for a theory of competence. They state that any theory of CC that intends to account for behaviour in everyday life must :

- (1) include social constructs ( situations, norms, values, beliefs, attitudes) as constitutive features of competence.
- (2) specify the relationship between the constructs it contains.
- (3) account for communication behaviour in the entire range of situations in which humans ordinarily find themselves.

(Cooley and Roach, 1984:24-25).

With the insights of these criteria, they formulate their own definition of competence in both general and specific senses.

In a general sense, competence is 'the knowledge of appropriate communication patterns in a given situation and the ability to use the knowledge'. In a specific sense competence is 'composed of individual, physiological and psychological abilities and social/cultural knowledge. Social/cultural knowledge serve as data and context for the individual's psychological abilities, which also operate in the context of his or her physiological abilities', (Cooley and Roach, 1984:25).

In their general definition of competence, concepts like Communication Patterns, Appropriateness, Situation,

and the Ability to Use are very much culture-bound. This is how they define these concepts :

Communication Pattern : is meant to encompass the entire range of communication behaviour : language structure from below sentence level to larger levels of discourse, turn-taking, and the like, and the nonverbal behaviour accompanying them.

Appropriateness : is defined in terms of cultural determination. Each culture sets forth rules that determine which of the many possible communication patterns are acceptable and appropriate for any given situation. Further, the culture sets forth a set of rules that supply meanings in that situation for each of the possible communication patterns that a member may use. [ Hymes (1972 :60) calls these rule sets norms for interaction and norms for interpretation ] .

Situation : 'can only be understood through its relation to culture. A situation is defined to be an event having physical, psychological and interactional features that make it distinguishable from other situations and that, somewhat redundantly, render it significant to the participant'.

Cooley and Roach also pointed out the complication of definition because in their view, what counts as a situation

is determined by the culture and will differ from culture to culture.

Ability to Use: For Cooley and Roach, 'the ability to use' has somewhat broader scope than Hymes's notion of the term, though it is still separate from performance. The term is used here to mean those individual factors for which psychological constructs account, such as intelligence, motivation, personality, empathy, and the like that enable a member to process, retain, and use social/cultural knowledge to produce situation. Ability to use that knowledge is demonstrated in regular levels of performance, but is not itself performance (1984:26,27).

For Cooley and Roach, their definition recognizes two things : the central role of culture and the role of the individual. Knowledge is social property; ability to use it is the property of the individual.

On the relationship between competence and performance, Cooley and Roach claim that their conceptual framework does in fact separate the two conceptually. Like Hymes, they include ability for use as a component of competence. However, they go further than Hymes by specifying the hypothetical nature of the competence constructs as opposed to the concrete nature of the performance construct. The relationship between competence and performance is that performance supplies the data from which perceptions of



competence are formed. They point out that this conceptualization of competence, though far from complete, does satisfy all the three criteria they propose above.

Cooley and Roach's conceptual framework is considerable as it goes beyond current formulations in scope and detail. It offers more guidelines for further development of communicative competence theory.

The above has considered conceptualizations of CC that have an impact on the literature on competence. There are other related viewpoints from other writers such as Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), Widdowson (1977) who are concerned with discourse as a central factor in competence for use; Jakobovits (1970), Di Pietro (1975) who, like Campbell and Wales, study language from the viewpoint of the individual in the reality of communication, taking contextual factors into consideration ; and those recent writers like Munby (1978), Brumfit (1978), Paul Helligmen (1982), Jack C. Richard (1982), Savignon (1983) and so on, who all discuss the sociocultural phenomena in language use. Because of the restriction of time and space, a thorough and detailed review is impossible in this chapter. However, some conclusions can be drawn. Though no complete definition of what it is to use a language effectively has yet been produced, those researches and discussions of CC have resulted in considerable insights.

The most important one may be the awareness of the complexity and subtlety of language use. As it is remarked by Saville-Troike , ' Awareness of the complex nature of communicative competence and the potential negative consequences of misjudgements is leading to major changes in procedures and instruments for language assessment' (Saville-Troike 1982 :27).

### 2.8 The Four Components of CC

So far, various views on definition of CC have been discussed. It is worth mentioning, at this point, the four communicative components proposed by Canale and Swaine (1980), as they bring together the various views of CC we have considered and puts linguistic competence into a proper perspective within the larger construct of CC. The four components of CC are : Grammatical Competence, Sociolinguistic Competence, Discourse Competence and Strategic Competence.

#### (1) Grammatical Competence:

Grammatical competence is linguistic competence in the restricted sense of the term as it has been used by Chomsky and most other linguists. Grammatical competence is mastery of the linguistic code, the ability to recognize the lexical, morphological, syntactic and phonological features of a language and to manipulate these features to form words

and sentences. Grammatical competence is not linked to any single theory of grammar, nor does it assume the ability to make explicit the rules of usage. A person demonstrates Grammatical competence by using rules not by stating rules.

## 2) Sociolinguistic Competence

Sociolinguistic competence requires an understanding of the social context in which language is used: the roles of the participants, the information they share, the functions of the interaction, so that judgements can be made on the appropriateness of a particular utterance in Hymes's term. Judgements of appropriateness involve more than knowing what to say in a situation and how to say it. They also involve when to remain silent or, in fact, 'when to appear incompetent'. This understanding is considered very important to a theory of sociolinguistic competence.

## 3) Discourse Competence

Discourse competence is the ability to interpret a series of sentences or utterances in order to form a meaningful whole and to achieve coherent texts that are relevant to a given context. It is the subject of interdisciplinary inquiry. The theory and analysis of discourse bring together many disciplines, for example, linguistics,

literary criticism, psychology, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, print and broadcast media. Discourse competence is dependent on the knowledge shared by the writer/speaker and the reader/hearer – knowledge of the real world, knowledge of the linguistic code, knowledge of the discourse structure and knowledge of the social setting.

#### 4) Strategic Competence

Strategic competence is the strategies that one uses to compensate for imperfect knowledge of rules, or limiting factors in their application such as fatigue, distraction, inattention. ( Similar to the need for coping or survival strategies identified in Savignon, 1972 ). The strategies used to sustain communication include paraphrase, circumlocution, repetition, hesitation, avoidance, and guessing, as well as shifts in register and style.

Strategic competence is important for CC in all contexts and considered to be an essential component in a descriptive framework for CC.

The diagram presented by Savignon below presents a possible relationship between the four components as overall CC increases.

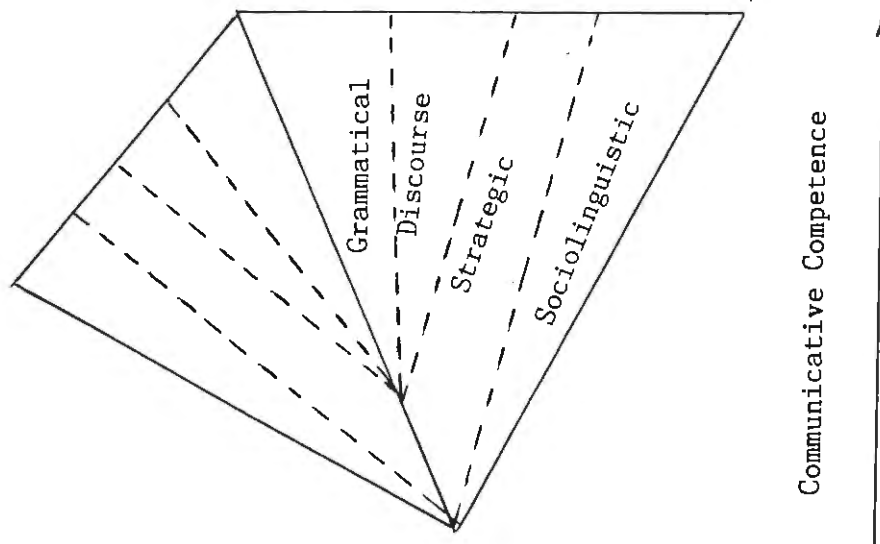


Figure 2.2 The components of Communicative  
Competence

( Savignon, 1983 : 46 )

As Savignon explains in her diagram the proportions drawn have no empirical basis, and are intended to illustrate that CC is greater than grammatical competence, and that one does not go from one to the other in turn. Rather, an increase in one component interacts with the other components to produce a corresponding increase in overall CC.

It is shown in the diagram how a measure of sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence allows a measure of CC even before the acquisition of any grammatical competence. ( when getting meaning across is done by means of universal rules of social interaction, or body language like gestures, facial expression, etc.)

The pyramid diagram shows how CC develops in correspondence with the increase of grammatical, sociolinguistic and discourse competence. Strategic competence is present at all levels of proficiency although its importance in relation to the other components decreases as knowledge of grammatical, sociolinguistic and discourse rules increase. The inclusion of the strategic competence as a component of CC is important because, as Savignon puts it, ' it demonstrates that " one never knows all a language", 'regardless of experience and level of proficiency' (1983:46). Savignon also points out, ' Whatever the relative importance of the various components at any given level of overall proficiency, it is important to keep in mind the interactive nature of their relationships. The whole of CC is always something other than the simple sum of its parts' (Savignon, 1983 : 46 ).

## 2.9 Conclusion

From what has been discussed above, it is obvious that communicative competence is a complex thing which involves more than the grammatical and lexical knowledge of a language. While this concept is more and more studied in the field of language teaching, the question of how to achieve CC as a goal in a language course

is still a hot topic for discussion. There is, actually, no direct transfer from the theoretical issues raised to teaching methodology. It is valid to talk about the four components mentioned above as that which constitutes communicative competence. But how much of each and which particular components could and should be under the teacher's control and guidance is not at all a simple answer. Types of CC vary depending on the type of the learners, their purposes as well as the situation of teaching and learning. Thus, learning methods and strategies vary accordingly. It is the teachers' concern to convert theoretical discussions into learning practice that suits their own situations. As Brumfit and Johnson have put it, ' the concern of methodology is not knowledge but effective performance' (Brumfit and Johnson, 1981 : 206 ). There will be many ways to achieve the same goal of communication. These various ways and views to achieve communication in language teaching will be discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### INTERPRETATION OF CC WITH REFERENCE TO GRAMMAR AND COMMUNICATION IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

#### 3.1 Introduction

Since Hymes's formulation of CC, the term CC has been seen most notably in the language teaching literature. Rivers remarks :

'Although the term CC was at first batted around as though it meant 'creative language use', an understanding of Hymes's concepts soon began to permeate second language teaching circles'

( 1983 : 15 )

There have been many interpretations of its meaning. The term is used to describe different methodologies , including those that have remained essentially audiolingual in practice.

According to Savignon, these interpretations have, in fact, focused on 'a philosophy of language' rather than a method; and these reflect the evolution in theory and in practice of that philosophy.

'Methodologists have tended to focus on one or another facet of what can be best called 'a philosophy of language rather than a method,



which brings an unintended but inevitable confusion to those who are unfamiliar with the evolution in theory and in practice of that philosophy'

(Savignon, 1983 :24)

It is noted by Savignon that most discussions of CC in language programs appear to reflect one of the three general interpretations which 'have had a widely felt influence on our present understanding of the concept' ( 1983 :24 ). The first two involve explicit discussions of learning strategies, while the third interpretation involves discussions on syllabus content. In the first interpretation, language learning is seen as going from surface grammatical structures to meaning and use. Communicative activities are something to be added to existing programs.

In the second interpretation, language acquisition is seen as proceeding from use/meaning to surface structure. Grammar should not be the initial focus at all. One first learns how to convey meaning, how to participate in speech events. The experience of communication may lead, in turn, to a structural or functional analysis of the language, but this experience is not dependent on prior analysis.

The third interpretation focuses on syllabus content. It is proposed that communicative syllabus should be

based on an analysis of language in terms of the situations or settings in which it is used, and of the meanings or functions it serves in these settings. The inclusion of specific structures depends on the specification of context within which the learner will use the L2.

Savignon's classification of the numerous interpretations of CC into three general ones reflects a true and clear overall picture of current trends in language teaching literature. This way of classification will, therefore, be used for the review of various discussions on CC in language teaching below.

### 3.2 From Form to Use

Communicative language teaching discussions which have advocated this form-to-use strategy can be seen notably in the works of Rivers (1972 - 1983), Paulston (1974), Valette & Disick (1977), and Littlewood (1981-1982). Their work will be dealt with in this section.

#### 3.2.1 Rivers

In her discussion of communicating naturally in a second language (1983), Rivers expressed her view on CC for a L2 learner :

To be able to communicate naturally, students must know the forms of the language native speakers normally use in all kinds of circumstances. In other words, they must possess linguistic skills they can use to express their own intentions and feelings and understand those of others whose cultural background and ways of conveying meanings may be very different.

(Rivers, 1983:viii)

The language learning process, according to her, is seen as going from what she calls skill getting to skill using, which is presented in a schema as follows:

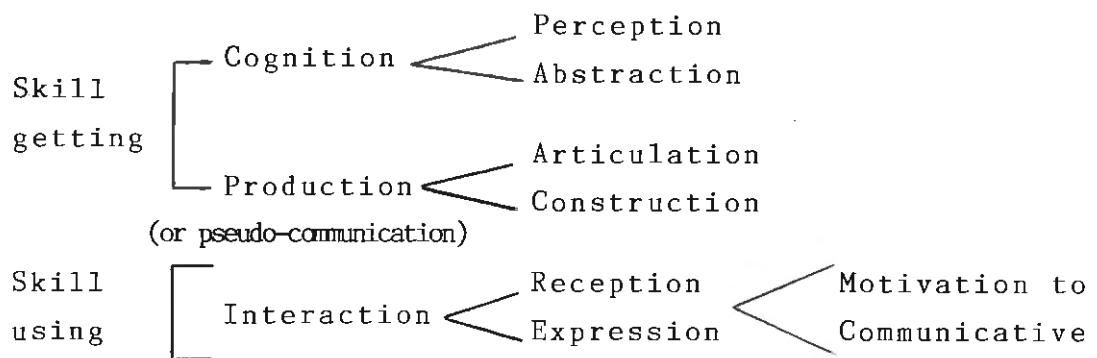


Figure 3.1. The language learning process

(Rivers & Temperley, 1978:4)

Her view is in the 'middle position' between 'the immediate communicative view' and 'the progressive development view' (Rivers & Temperley, 1978:6). The former holds that 'speaking skill is developed from the first contact with the language'; the latter, 'ability to speak

the language derives from the systematic study of grammar, phonology and lexicon' (1978:6). Rivers' 'middle position' view advocates that 'the students will be encouraged to express themselves freely in the language from the beginning through experiences and games which provide them with a framework for spontaneous communicative creations while presupposing they will use what they have been learning through an orderly progression of study and practice' (Rivers & Temperley, 1978:6 - 7).

The implication of all her discussions concerning communicative language teaching has reflected a view of language acquisition as going from surface structure to meaning and use. (Rivers, 1972, 1978, 1982, 1983).

In a description of the Defence Language Institute Program in 1972, she reflected this view when she stated:

'After basic patterns and structures are mastered, the students can proceed to more and more controlled substitution and eventually to free conversation'

(TESOL Quarterly, 1972 :71 - 81)

The place of grammatical competence is again emphasized in her discussion of essential processes in learning to communicate:

'Ability to communicate, to interact verbally, presumes some knowledge (cognition) both in the perception of units, categories, and

functions. I am not concerned here with how this knowledge is acquired, and I am willing to concede the validity...of a variety of approaches to this acquisition. Linguistic knowledge must, however, be acquired.'

(Rivers, 1983:42, 43)

This progression from controlled structure practice to creative use of language for communication is similar to the one she proposed in her discussion of L2 methodology in 1968, when her point of view was more audiolingual. What is different lies in the question of time : How much and how soon. In 1968, she stated :

'It is only at advanced stage, where so many more features of the language are familiar, that the teacher may begin to allow the student to listen to material unrelated to what he has been studying, in which he must deduce meanings from context in a very rapid mental process of association. This process is possible only when the effort involved in retention has become considerably reduced by almost automatic recognition of language patterns'

(Rivers, 1968:147)

In the discussions of communicating naturally in a L2 in her later works (1972, 1978, 1983), Rivers emphasizes the need for practice in interaction from the earliest stage, and proposes a number of activities that involve spontaneous use of language. She also makes proposals for a smooth and natural transition from production to interaction.

'Skill-using activities should not be supplemental, but should spring naturally and inevitably from the types of activities engaged in for skill-getting'

(1983 :56)

She pointed out that 'we must not feel that interaction is somehow 'wasting time' when there is 'so much to learn'. For her, much time should be spent on the types of communicative drills which relate the content of drill to the students' own interests.

'The more the student is interested in an activity in the foreign language, the more he feels the desire to communicate in the language, and this is the first and the most vital step in learning to use language forms spontaneously'

(Rivers, 1972:24)

In addition to these basic viewpoints, Rivers lays emphasis on cultural factors in language learning. According to her, 'language cannot be separated completely from the culture in which it is deeply embedded' (1982:315). She states that ' Mere fluency in the production of utterances in a new language without any awareness of their cultural implications or of their appropriate situational use, or the reading of texts without a realization of the values and assumptions underlying them - these so-called skills are of little use even on a practical level (1982:315).

In this sense, Rivers has emphasized the elaboration

of the social rules of language use by people like Hymes, Saville-Troike, and others, while maintaining the same view of language acquisition from structural practice to communication.

### 3.2.2 Paulston

The concern for cultural context in language learning is more notable in Paulston's discussion of the implications of the concept of communicative competence for L2 programs. 'Communicative competence is the social rules of language use' (Paulston, 1974:350). Paulston (1976) pointed out that "many" communicative activities" in language classrooms, though they provide useful practice in the manipulation of linguistic forms, are short of "social meaning" in the sense that they are not an accurate reflection of L2 culture. She argued that interaction activities like problem-solving, role-playing, and games could be done with no knowledge of the L2 rules of social use. In her opinion, role-playing that is culturally situated may be useful in developing CC only if the teacher gives attention to the appropriateness in the second culture of alternative responses. If not, these activities do nothing to reveal the cultural biases of the learners and may, in fact, strengthen them.

In view of language acquisition, Paulston, like Rivers, persisted in emphasizing the process of mechanical-meaningful-

communicative kinds of exercises (Paulston, 1970). She reaffirmed this view in 1974 : " I am more convinced than ever... of the necessity of the initial stage of acquiring basic skills through habituation, just as I remain convinced of the need for the communicative drills in order to internalize the rules" ( Paulston, 1974:352). Paulston presented a model for language teaching as a framework for the discussion of strategies and techniques in the teaching process.

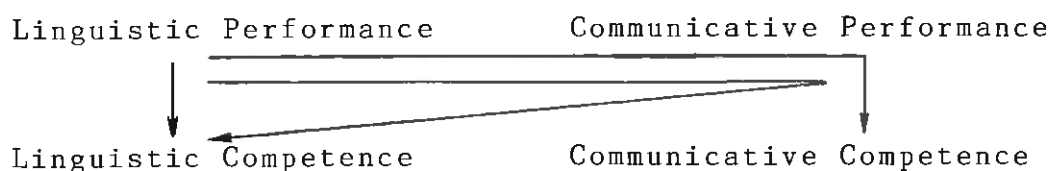


Figure 3.2 Model for Language Teaching

(Paulston, 1974 :350)

In this diagram, Paulston is using the term 'Linguistic Competence' in Chomsky's sense: competence means the native speaker's knowledge of his own language, the system of internalized rules about the language enabling him to create new grammatical sentences and to understand sentences; performance is the actual utterance, what the speaker actually says. 'Communicative Competence' is used in Hymes's sense which refers to the social rules of language use. Paulston added the notion of 'Communicative Performance' to mean Communication which 'carries no distinctive social significance' (1974 :350) only



happening in classroom situations. She explained that there are communicative activities 'which lack specific deep structures of social meaning' (1974:350), and these are what she called 'Communicative Performance', which is not in keeping with Hymes's framework.

Thus, Paulston discussed three strategies in language learning as shown in the model. Strategy 1 goes from Linguistic Performance to Linguistic Competence, i.e., there is merely practice in the rules and utterances of a language, which is not likely to produce fluent speakers. And this reflects the Grammar-Translation Method and classic audiolingual methods. Strategy 2 combines 'skill-getting' exercises (Linguistic Performance) with 'skill-using' activities (Communicative Performance) to get 'Linguistic Competence'. This reflects situations of language teaching when language teachers 'tend to equate CC with the ability to carry out linguistic interaction in the target language'. In Paulston's opinion, 'Rivers is a good example of this approach'. But 'efficient communication also requires that speakers share the social meaning of the linguistic forms, that they have the same social rules for language use' (Paulston & Bruder, 1976:56). Thus, Paulston argued for Strategy 3, which, she believed, would result in the most efficient language teaching, because it includes, besides those exercises in Strategy 2, activities for developing CC. By the distinction between

what she called 'Communicative Performance' and 'Communicative Competence', Paulston draws our attention to the distinction between two kinds of communicative interaction activities. In her words, 'in one kind of exercise, the teaching point is simply to get meaning across, to be able to communicate some referential meaning in the target language...They are excellent and necessary for developing linguistic competence. In the other type of exercise, the teaching point is getting meaning across in a socially acceptable way, and typically these exercises contain culturally relevant information - social interaction rules' (Paulston & Bruder, 1976:59). Only the second type of exercise is called an activity for developing CC. Hence, Paulston is very much concerned with authenticity in the classroom in order to develop L2 culture (Paulston & Bruder, 1976). As Savignon has put it, 'Paulston's concern for cultural context ' strikes a proper note of caution in a discussion of the implications of the concept of CC for L2 program... Considerations of social meaning are not only important, they are at the very heart...of a definition of CC' (Savignon, 1983 :25).

### 3.2.3 Valette & Disick

Another similar view of CC and its acquisition can be seen in Valette and Disick's discussion. When

classifying language goals and objectives, Valette and Disick propose a 'subject matter taxonomy' called 'Valette-Disick subject-matter taxonomy' that shows five stages of learning, and objectives from the simplest behaviours to the most complex from stage 1 to stage 5. The taxonomy is summarized in the following :

- 1- Mechanical Skills : The student performs via rote memory rather than by understanding.
- 2- Knowledge : The student demonstrates knowledge of facts, rules and data related to foreign language learning.
- 3- Transfer : The student uses his knowledge in new situations.
- 4- Communication : The student uses the foreign language and culture as natural vehicles for communication.
- 5- Criticism : The student analyzes or evaluates the foreign language or carries out original research.

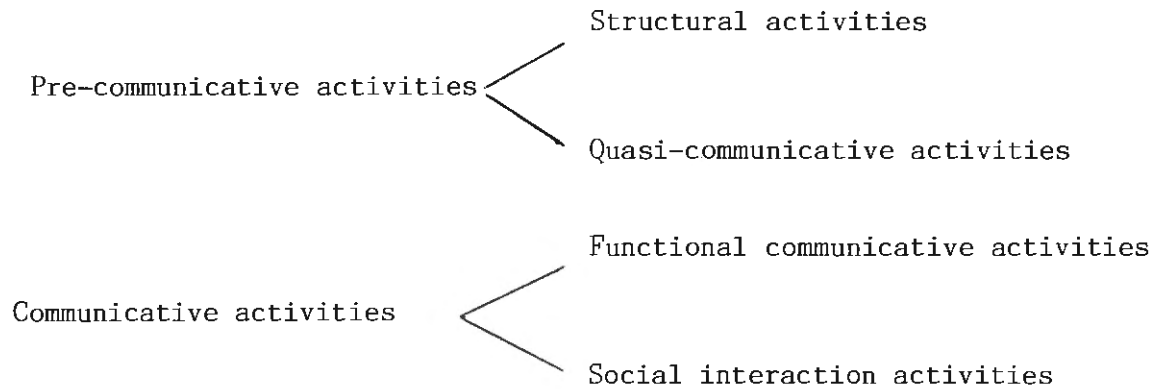
(Valette, 1977 : 20 )

This taxonomy is very much similar to Rivers' s schema on language learning process as going from ' skill getting' to 'skill using'

#### 3.2.4 Littlewood

Having similar viewpoint on communicative language teaching, Littlewood advocates a methodological framework

with two distinctive phases in a diagram as follows:



(Littlewood, 1982:86)

Through pre-communicative activities, 'the teacher isolates specific elements of knowledge or skill which compose communicative ability, and provides the learners with opportunities to practise them separately' (Littlewood, 1982:85). The main purpose is to produce language which is acceptable rather than to communicate meanings effectively.

In communicative activities, 'the learner has to activate and integrate his pre-communicative knowledge and skills, in order to use them for the communication of meanings' (1982 :86). At this stage, the learner is engaged in 'practising the total skill of communication' (1982:86). So, pre-communicative 'will lead into communicative work' (1982:87). As Littlewood has put it, 'this is the familiar progression from "controlled practice" to "creative language use" (1982:87).

However, the diagram above shows the methodological relationship between different types of activity; it does not necessarily show the temporal sequencing of such activities within a teaching unit. It is indicated by Littlewood that within a teaching unit, the order from controlled practice to creative use can be reversed; that is, the teacher may begin a teaching unit with a communicative activity. However, he also points out that the second procedure may be helpful and suitable for intermediate and more advanced learners.

At the level of lesson or unit sequence, the teacher's decision has to take account not only of methodological considerations, but also of 'situation-specific factors which lie outside the scope of the present discussion' (1982:88).

The second alternative of teaching procedure in Littlewood's discussion, to some extent, reflects the view on learning strategy which goes from use to form. This view will be presented in the next section.

### 3.3 From Meaning and Use to Form

A very different interpretation of CC can be observed in H.G. Widdowson - a British applied linguist. In Widdowson's view, the initial focus of L2 learning must be the interpretation of discourse. He argued that 'If we are

to teach language in use, we have to shift our attention from sentences in isolation to the manner in which they combine in text on the one hand, and to the manner in which they are used to perform communicative acts in discourse on the other', (Widdowson, 1973:53). For Widdowson, CC is the ability to interpret discourse, whether the emphasis is on productive or receptive behaviour (Widdowson, 1978: 144).

Widdowson makes a distinction between 'linguistic skills' and 'communicative abilities'. Linguistic skills, in his notion, are those skills which are defined with reference to medium (speaking, hearing, composing, comprehending). They refer to the way in which the language system is manifested as usage - the extent to which the language user demonstrates his knowledge of linguistic rules.

'Communicative abilities' refer to those skills which are defined with reference to the manner and mode in which the system is realized as use - the extent to which the language user demonstrates his ability to use his knowledge or linguistic rules for effective communication.

Communicative abilities embrace linguistic skills but not the reverse (Widdowson, 1978).

Widdowson points out that as discourse differences

are essentially cultural rather than linguistic, linguistic skills do not ensure the acquisition of communicative abilities. On the contrary, an overemphasis on drills and exercises for the production and reception of sentences tends to inhibit the development of communicative abilities (Widdowson,1978:67).

The interpretation of discourse, in his discussion, is the starting point for L2 learning, and should relate directly to the needs and existing knowledge of the learner. In other words, he suggested 'to represent foreign language learning not as the acquisition of abilities which are new but as the transference of the abilities that have already been acquired into a different means of expression'; to interpret meaning within a new linguistic code. Linguistic skills and communicative abilities, or usage and use, should never be treated in isolation from each other. He, thus, proposes an integrated approach which 'brings linguistic skills and communicative abilities in close association with each other' (Widdowson,1978:144). In this sense, language learning strategy is using skills to develop skills, communicating to learn to communicate, or going from communicative competence to linguistic competence. It is only when we have 'motivation to communicate' and the experience of communication' that structures and vocabulary are in demand. The need for these structures and vocabulary will come from experience in interpreting meaning in both

spoken and written discourse. Thus, linguistic or formal exercises are seen as of most use when they accompany or follow rather than precede communicative experiences. This approach to language teaching is, as Savignon has remarked, 'the rejection of an atomistic or sequential view of language learning. The use of contrastive terms like code-getting and code-using; or skill-getting and skill-using is seen as a distortion of the learning process', (Savignon,1983:31).

Similar views can be seen in other discussions of communicative language teaching. Piepho (1981), when defining learning goals and procedures as communicative activity stated :

'Our present concern in establishing sequences of language skills is to concentrate on particular domains of communicative activity... The question of which linguistic means the learner has at his disposal and at his command to realize these communicative intentions becomes a secondary rather than primary pedagogic matter'

(Piepho, 1981:10)

Although he considers borrowings into pedagogy from linguistic psychology and sociology as 'an inappropriate introduction of subject jargon', Piepho makes use of Habermas and Wunderlich's analysis of human CC. In his view, 'it is both clear and useful for our own pedagogic decisions'. He discusses two levels of CC. The basic one is 'the function of communicative activity'. In terms



of language learning, this means the conventional modes of communicating in the learner's immediate environment among his fellow learners and his teachers. These 'Primary instrumental utterances' ought to be taught within the first weeks of English language learning. The next level of competence is the ability to use discourse or 'discoursal competence'. Piepho uses 'Habermas' notion of discourse, which is put as 'a coherent pattern of speech acts in context' (Piepho,1981:18). The learner's capacity to handle discourse in English implies his being able to select those particular linguistic realizations which he requires in order to communicate his own particular point of view; this, in turn, 'makes corresponding demands on his stock of language'. This level of competence is only accessible when the learner has the opportunity of hearing examples of appropriate communication, of analysing them and progressively imitating them and making them his own.

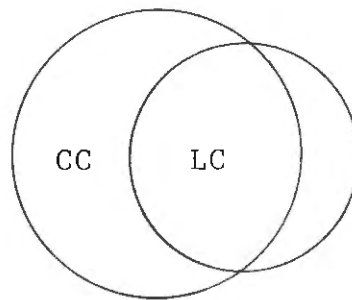
So, Piepho's discussion, again, reflects the view on language acquisition that linguistic knowledge is in demand only when there is a need to communicate, and hence, will either accompany or follow communicative activities; and that communicative competence is gained only through experience in communicating.

Piepho makes use of Habermas' discussion on communicative acts to put forward some practical proposals

in language teaching. According to Habermas, communicative acts depend on particular interpersonal relationships, a particular social reality which does not exist but can be, in some sense, conceived of. Thus, in Piepho's opinion, the content of language teaching in textbooks and ways of presenting them should reflect these phenomena. It is necessary 'to look at the roles and relationships behind human behaviour...to see much of what we offer learners as a stylized, idealized representation of society, and to examine if these cannot be replaced by a more honest attempt to involve learners in emancipated communication with those above them and with their partners'. Piepho argues against texts which 'merely present information to be swallowed and digested uncritically'. He suggests that content and expression should be presented in such a way that it can be rapidly understood, and weaknesses and gaps in the argument quickly revealed and made the subject of critical debate' (1981 :21). In his opinion, 'the communicative teaching is marked by an atmosphere of using and working with the target language and the target culture' (Piepho,1981:21).

Richard Allwright expresses a similar view in his discussion of language learning through communicative practice (1981). He stated, 'A case can be made for reorienting language teaching towards communication practice, not just because the eventual product aimed at

is communication, but because communication practice can be expected to develop linguistic skills' (Allwright, 1981:70). When discussing the question : are we teaching language (for communication) or are we teaching communication (via language), he presented a diagram that shows the part-whole relationship between Linguistic Competence and CC.



CC = Communicative Competence

LC = Linguistic Competence

Figure 3.3. The part-whole relationship between Linguistic Competence and CC.(1981:168)

He came to the conclusion that 'we are advised to focus on communicative skills, in the knowledge that this will necessarily involve developing most areas of linguistic competence as an essential part of the product rather than focus on linguistic skills and risk failing to deal with a major part of whatever constitutes CC' (Allwright, 1981:168).

It would be best at this point to use Brumfit's schema (1981) to sum up this second view on language teaching strategy as compared with traditional methodology as follows :

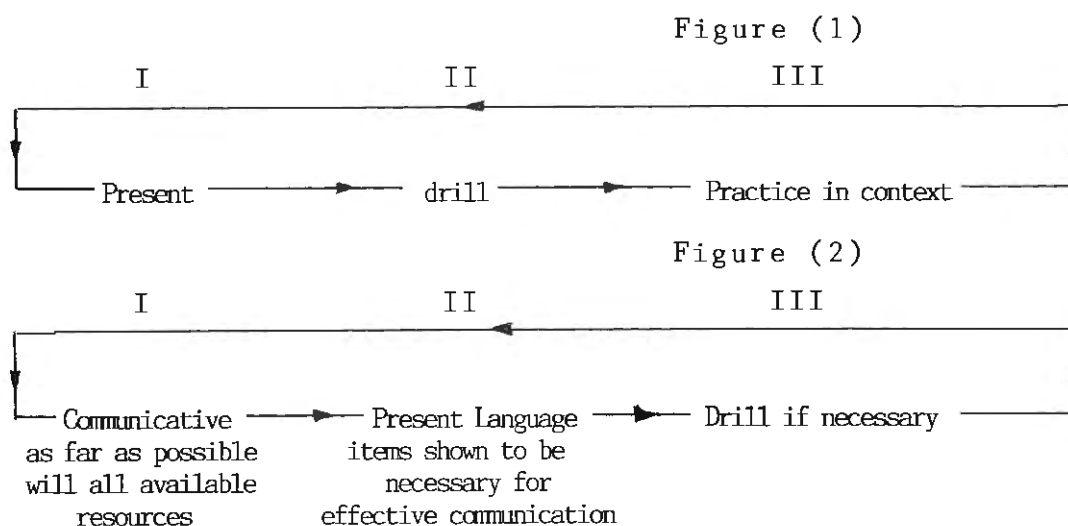


Figure 3.4. Two language teaching strategies.

(Brumfit, 1981:183).

### 3.4 Specification of Content

#### 3.4.1 Overview

The third general perspective in communicative language teaching is to do with the selection of the language to be taught. The question for discussion is that the texts we teach are not exemplification of 'real language'. There should be a 'Communicative approach' in specifying the language content in textbooks. Savignon (1983) criticizes most language textbooks based on grammatical or structural criteria, as, 'in fact, grammar books'. 'They are not texts; they are, after all, pretexts for displaying grammar' (Savignon, 1983:33).

With the same concern for social meaning and discourse, Yalden (1983) sees the lack of meaning in social context in language teaching based on grammatical and structural syllabuses. He states, 'meaning has been taught, of course, but it has been primarily the meaning of words and sentences as isolates, and not their meanings within stretches of discourse' (1983:27). Christopher Candlin (1981) discusses communicative language to be taught in terms of functions. In his view, the basic problem concerning language teaching material is the confusion of form and function. As he puts it, 'Many language teaching materials rest on the potential misinterpretation of the nature of language contained in double perspective. Firstly in that form rather than function interrelated with form is made the sole content of the curriculum; and secondly, that there is only system to be found in form, and not in function. Language as behaviour is no less governed by rule than are the tactics of phonological and syntactic organisation, and it is equally part of our overall CC' (Candlin, 1981:24).

Candlin views the shift towards a balance between form and function as having 'important methodological effects'. According to him, 'if we see language as one part of wider social interaction and behaviour... then we are compelled to introduce the process of interaction into the classroom.' (1981:25).

Another point has been made in criticism of grammatical

approaches in syllabus design; that is the failure to take the learner's needs into account. Wilkins pointed out, 'One danger in basing a course on a systematic presentation of the elements of linguistic structure is that forms will tend to be taught because they are there, rather than for the value which they have for the learner' (Wilkins,1976:8). Savignon also considers that 'grammar-based textbooks often pursue a paradigm for the sake of completeness, regardless of its usefulness for the communicative needs of the learner' (1983:34).

Attempts, then, have been made towards a type of communicative syllabus as an alternative to the grammatical one. The most notable works in this field are Wilkins' Notional Syllabus (1974,1976), which serves as a framework for listing meanings for the purposes of syllabus design; the works and documents of the Council of Europe: Trim's recognition of five levels of language proficiency, the lowest level being named the Threshold Level ; Van Ek's Syllabus Specification of the Threshold Level for the adult learner (1975), and for the secondary school student (1978); Van Ek and Alexander's Waystage (1977) - a specification for a level below the Threshold Level (when the Threshold Level was found to be too high as 'the lowest level'); And later, Munby's framework (1978), a further model

for generating a fully notional syllabus for ESP learners whose purposes are very particular and essentially narrow. In this section, only Wilkins's work and the Threshold Level of the Council of Europe are mentioned as they serve as some inspiration for other subsequent models of syllabus design to develop. These various models are also included here.

### 3.4.2 Notional Syllabus (Notional approach)

Wilkins describes the notional approach as an analytic approach as versus the synthetic approach, which produces a grammatical syllabus. The two approaches can be seen in the following schema :

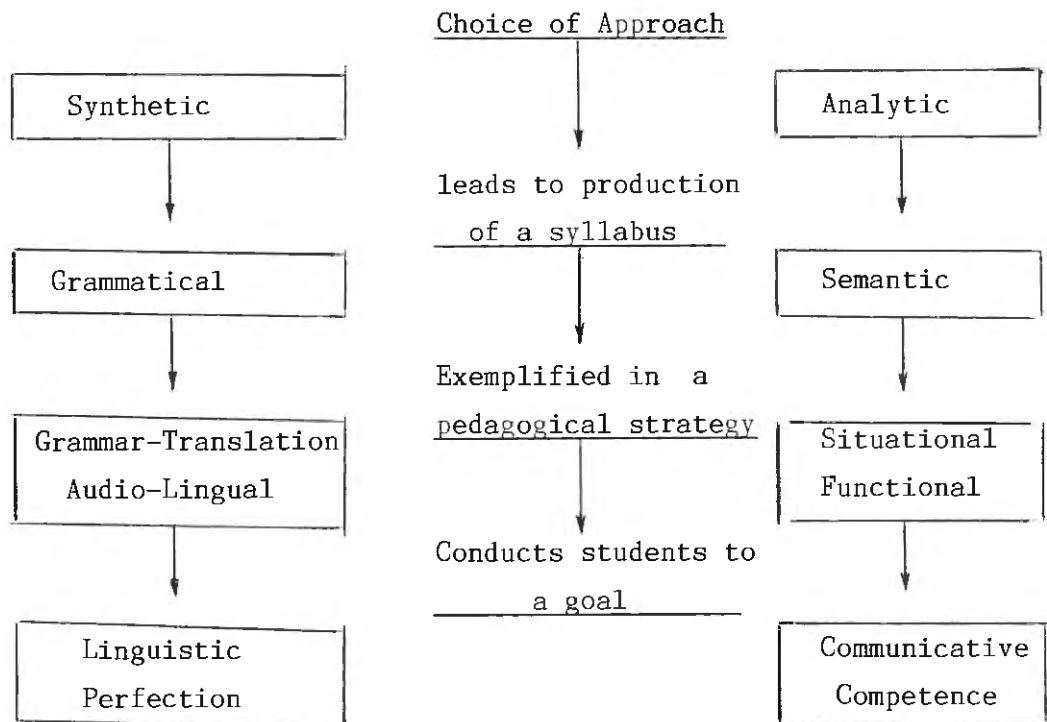


Figure 3.5. The analytic approach versus the synthetic approach (After Wilkins, 1976)

Thus, the analytic approach will produce a semantic or notional syllabus which is based on notions and language functions to lead (via various pedagogical strategies) to communicative competence. A notional syllabus, as Wilkins puts it, 'is any strategy of language learning that derives the context of learning from an initial analysis of the learner's needs to express such meanings' (Wilkins, 1976:73). So the language to be taught will begin with the specification of the learner's needs to define the notions and functions of language; grammatical and lexical items come last. Wilkins explains that the notional syllabus contrasts with the grammatical and situational types, since it takes the desired 'communicative capacity' as the starting point (1976:18). Language teaching is thus organized in terms of the context rather than the form of the target language. The term 'notional' is borrowed from linguistics where it is used in describing grammars based on semantic rather than formal criteria. In Wilkins's notional approach, three categories are presented, all concerned with general aspects of meaning and use. The first category is labeled semantico-grammatical meaning. It is expressed through grammatical system in different languages. The second type - modal meaning, or modality, expresses the attitude of the speaker towards his perceptions, his experience. This kind of meaning can be expressed by many linguistic devices :



grammatical, lexical and phonological. The third category - called communicative function - refers to the role of the sentence in relation to other utterances that have been produced.

Van Ek, on the other hand, specifies a somewhat different set of syllabus components in his 'Threshold Level' of language proficiency (1975). The 'Threshold Level' has these following components :

- 1- The situation in which the L2 will be used, including the topics which will be dealt with.
- 2- The language activities in which the learner will engage.
- 3- The language functions which the learner will fulfil.
- 4- What the learner will be able to do with respect to each topic.
- 5- The general notions which the learner will be able to handle.
- 6- The specific (topic-related) notions which the learner will be able to handle.
- 7- The language forms which the learner will be able to use.
- 8- The degree of skill which the learner will be able to perform.

(Van Ek & Alexander, 1975:8).

Van Ek's 'situations' comprise 'the complex of extralinguistic conditions which determine the nature

of language acts'. These include subcomponents of settings, social and psychological roles as well as topics. 'Language activities' are what may be called the combinations of the four skills required. Van Ek's 'functions' resemble Wilkins's 'Communicative functions', but he includes modality while Wilkins treats it as a separate kind of meaning. Van Ek's 'general notions' resemble Wilkins's semantico-grammatical category. 'Specific notions', not treated by Wilkins, are more strictly related to topics. [ As far as terminology is concerned, the term 'notion' and 'notional syllabus' may cause some ambiguity. In the first terminology, a 'notion' lists semantico-grammatical categories only; in the second terminology, it lists functional as well as semantico-grammatical categories. For this reason, the term Functional, Notional is often used to refer to the work of the Council of Europe, while Notional syllabus refers only to Wilkins's work. And the term Semantic syllabus is used as an umbrella term to refer to a syllabus which, in contrast to the structural syllabus, uses notions and functions as its starting point (Keith Johnson, 1982:39)].

### 3.4.3 Variations of Model

Specifications like the 'Threshold Level' of the Council of Europe are not syllabuses, however. They are 'syllabus inventories'; that is, 'the initial unordered

list of what should be included in a language course' (Keith Johnson, 1981:8). It is not an easy task to convert a syllabus inventory into a pedagogical syllabus; i.e., the grading and combining of the elements listed in the syllabus inventory into sequences of teaching. The main difficulty revealed so far has been about whether it is possible, and how to include consideration of socially appropriate and communicative use of language as well as linguistic structure and general usage. In other words, how to teach the students to do things through a language, while at the same time enabling them to master new grammatical structures in a systematic way. Different course design approaches have emerged. These approaches can be seen as variations of the functional/notional approach initiated by the Council of Europe. These variations, ranging from purely functionally-based to more structurally-based, can be categorized in the following models:

- (i) Purely functional.
- (ii) Functional/Structural.
- (iii) 'Thematic Area'.
- (iv) Oblique functionalism.
- (v) Structures/Functions.
- (vi) Structural/Functional.

(i) Purely Functional Model

This is a form of organization based purely on function.

In this approach the objectives determine the functions needed, and the functions determine the selection and sequencing of grammatical materials. Courses based on this approach are often criticized for providing 'phrase-book language', or for teaching only 'language-like behaviour' rather than developing CC. However, a purely functional course design may be admirable at a level which is often defined as 'survival' where rapid progress to a highly functional variety of the target language is essential. This kind of method has already been applied in the 'Survival in...' series (Alexander, et. al., Longman, 1980) for the acquisition of minimal French, German, Italian, and Spanish for English speakers.

(ii) Functional/Structural Model

In this approach, functional objectives would predominate, and the structural implications would be subsequently taught. This is said to be difficult at the zero level because the grammatical range is too great. There is the problem of grading functions and selecting linguistic items (see Chapter 4). However, this model is found suitable at higher levels. Examples of materials which make use of this model are Mainline Skills A & B (Alexander, et. al., Longman, 1975/76).

(iii) 'Thematic Area' Model

This approach takes as its starting point a number of broader themes, some purely functional, some notional, and some topical which are basic aspects of everyday life and social communication. In a course based on this approach, each thematic area is seen as a major objective and is broken down into smaller objectives, which are carefully labeled so that the learner is made aware of, at every stage, exactly what he is to achieve. Conventional structural grading occurs within each thematic area in such a way that the structures are not taught for their own sake but for their communicative validity and relevance in that particular thematic area. Mastery of such thematic areas would involve not only gaining grammatical control of structures necessary for the purpose, but also a great variety of skills. In Alexander's view, this approach attempts to solve the biggest problem of all at the beginner level: teaching the students to do things through language while at the same time enabling them to assimilate new grammatical structures in a systematic fashion' (Alexander, 1981). This type of course design has been applied in 'Mainline Beginner A & B, (Alexander, Longman, 1978-79), and has provided the basis for the multi-media course 'Follow Me'. The value of this approach will be discussed in Chapter 4 and 5. Alexander also suggests methodological implications for

this type of course design: that is the method of three-stage activity from Grammar to Communication:

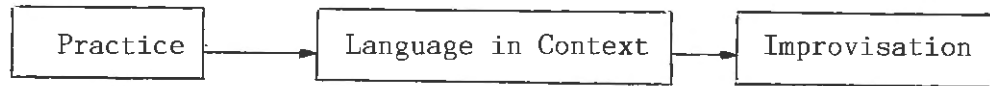


Figure 3.6 Three-stage activity from Grammar to Communication.

Alexander states that under 'Practice', the emphasis is on grammatical forms, often out of context, to develop fluency in the learner. 'Language in Context' involves the practice of forms in a controlled setting which provide examples of how, when and where, etc... the language being practised is used. The last stage 'Improvisation' involves more open-ended communicative activities. This is essential, as 'it is the stage where the student is invited to communicate and then to recall and recombine in entirely new situations, items previously learnt' (Alexander, 1981:19). 'Improvisation' takes two forms :actual transfer, in which the students give true information about themselves; and simulated transfer, in which pseudo-communication takes place.

This methodology suggested by Alexander is actually not unlike the type of methodology which views language learning as going from surface structure to meaning mentioned in the earlier section in this chapter.

(iv) Oblique Functionalism

In the oblique functionalism model, Robert O'Neill (1981) sees the ability to use language for communication as the terminal objective, not as the strategy for attaining this. It does not insist that every step in a language course should be clearly labeled in functional terms, although the final aim is CC, relevant to the learner's needs. In O'Neill's discussion, this model includes not only a core syllabus of function, but also a core syllabus of language structures which can be used to realize them. He gives several solutions to the case when an essential function is identified that requires language outside the core structural syllabus:

- a) Realizing it below the generative-structure level.  
(it may be a phrase or formulae, which can be learned globally).
- b) Dealing it only in self-study or tutoring sections for those who really need it.

O'Neill also states that his approach involves the concept of spiral in classifying the syllabus, but in a 'slightly new way'. He explains his approach as follows:

'The core structures are rotated at intervals with the core function' (1982:27). For example, 'can' may first be introduced to express ability or possibility. Later,

as a request form, then as a means of asking permission. Each time, the structure is linked to a core function. O'Neill believes that each rotation allows the learner another chance to master the basic structure and to apply it in a particular communicative setting. In this way, not only is the structure revised within all the functions it has been used, but also the functional repertoire is reviewed.

In short, Oblique functionalism, according to Robert O'Neill, does not select structural items because they are part of the whole grammatical system, but because they are essential for specific functional goals. It recognizes the fact that there are limits to what a particular individual can learn in certain time. It deliberately uses the structural techniques of selection, progression and concentricity in order to develop the learner's generative repertoire with the language. It differs from other structural syllabuses in that it uses selection and progression but subordinates them to clearly-defined functional objectives (O'Neill, 1981).

This model will be examined further in Chapter 4.

(v) Structures and Functions Model

This model represents a structural progression in a communicative framework. This approach to syllabus



design is proposed by Brumfit, who argues that 'whatever criteria we use [in syllabus design]...principles of organization must be answerable to a view of how language is learnt'. So, 'it is on the basis of a view of language learning that systematizability and motivation are seen as an important criterion for the selection and ordering of items' (Brumfit,1981:91). In Brumfit's view, since cultural and linguistic meaning is customarily negotiated between users of a language, it is more sensible to provide them directly with the tools for this negotiation (the linguistic system) rather than teaching them what to do with the tools. His solution, then, is to retain form (grammar and pronunciation) as the organizing principle. This view is shared by Paulston (1981), and Valdman (1980). Brumfit describes his model as follows :

'The simplest proposal is to use the grammatical system as the core of the syllabus in a ladder-like series of stages and to be prepared to relate all other essential material to this series. Thus, notional, functional, and situational specifications can be conceived of as a spiral round a basically grammatical core'.

(Brumfit,1980:5)

He presents his model in the following diagram:

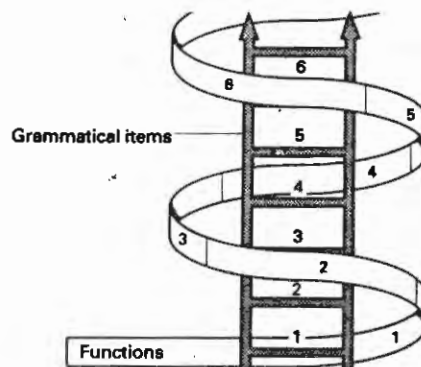


Figure 3.7 The Structures/Functions Syllabus model

Brumfit's model of syllabus design is also concerned with both accuracy and fluency. He advocates developments of communicative methodology to help develop fluency as well as accuracy, while maintaining structural progression as to the organizing principle of the syllabus.

Brumfit's model seems consistent and complete. It takes into consideration the systematizability in language learning. In theory, this model would seem suitable for general language courses, chiefly at beginning levels. In practice, however, it seems not explicit enough for course writers to realize in material writing (see Chapter 4).

Nevertheless, Brumfit's discussion on syllabus design above will give beneficial implications and insights for the design of communicative syllabus for general purposes. This idea will be referred to and developed in Chapter 5.

(vi) Structural/Functional Model

This model is a form of organization in which the conventional sequencing of structure is given a functional rather than a purely structural connotation. This is said to be 'the easiest solution to the problem of communicative syllabus design' (Yalden, 1983:110)., as it will

simultaneously meet the need for some kind of orderly progression and grading in terms of difficulty and the broader requirement of a functional/notional syllabus. Nevertheless, as Alexander puts it, 'This kind of organization has an immediate appeal, but it is actually very difficult to apply successfully, because the structural sequencing tends to predominate so that the end product is little more than a structural course by another name, and functional connotation is forced to fit that particular mould' (Alexander, 1981). According to Alexander, this model can only be described as 'pseudo-functional' (Alexander, 1981).

The structural/functional model and the structures & functions model, though both use form as the organizing principle, are not the same. In the latter, all the components of meaning are included right from the start, together with the grammatical system; in the former, functional connotation is treated as some additional element to the grammatical core of the syllabus. In practice, syllabuses based on this model are not much unlike structure-based syllabuses.

### 3.5 Comments and Conclusion

So far, various discussions on communicative language teaching have been presented, on both methodology and syllabus design. In particular, various views on the

specification of language content have been discussed.

In examining syllabus types, we began with Wilkins's original definition of the distinction between an 'analytic' and a 'synthetic' approach to syllabus design. The analytic approach can generate a number of possible syllabus types. Among them, two broad categories are presented in Wilkins's schema: the situational and the functional. The latter includes a number of subcategories as seen from the discussions above. These discussions, again, reflect one crucial question of grammar-communication relationship; that is the relationship between language functions and the grammatical forms that realize them.

Candlin is right in arguing that system can be found in both form and function. (He views the rejection of the idea as some misinterpretation of the nature of language, see section 3.4.1 ). However, the major problem now does not seem to be in the recognition of the two elements in language teaching; but rather in their organization. This can be seen in the arguments of the six models of syllabus design presented above. In language course design, when one element is carefully organized, other elements are inevitably disorganized. The functional syllabuses have such a problem, chiefly when they are applied for beginner level. The question is how to reconcile the components in such a way that they can go well together.

It is not only necessary to teach students to do things through language. They also need to master the grammatical structure necessary for this purpose. In this respect, model (iii) - Alexander's Thematic Area model - and model (v) - Brumfit's Structures/Functions model - seem, in theory, to be the best solutions of all. They will be considered in Chapter 5.

Another aspect related to the form-use relationship is the question of authenticity. It is valid to argue for the need of social meaning and discourse in language teaching content. However, it is not really convincing to say all language textbooks should include 'texts' for the sake of communicative language teaching. Savignon criticizes most language textbooks as only 'pretexts' (see section 3.4.1). But most of the exemplifications of language taught in the classroom are pretexts by their pedagogical nature. The search for authentic texts is perhaps more valid and easier to achieve in an ESL situation like America, for instance. In EFL situations like Vietnam, this should be given more consideration. The question of authenticity in EFL situations will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

The question of form-meaning relationship seems to be primarily a matter of syllabus design. In fact, it is central to how language is taught as well ; for it affects crucially the way we view the language, the teaching/

learning strategic level. There are reasons to argue either for the strategy that goes from form to use, or for the one that goes from use to form (see section 3.2 & 3.3). Nevertheless, the one that goes from form to use seems to be more suitable for the target group under consideration (sections 1.2 & 1.3 ). The arguments, however, are basically theoretical. The practical value of the syllabus models and teaching strategies discussed in this chapter will be further considered at the textbook level in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### A SURVEY OF SOME POPULAR TEXTBOOKS FOR COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

#### 4.1 The Purpose of the Survey

In the previous chapter, a lot of arguments on theoretical background have been made about how language teaching should be adjusted to achieve the aims of language learning : communication. In the light of what has been discussed earlier, this chapter attempts to make a survey of some contemporary English materials which are communicative approach -based, with the hope that it will make clearer the practical value of the different models for syllabus design and learning strategies given in Chapter 3. It is also hoped that the survey will serve as a supporting argument for the solution proposed in the next chapter.

#### 4.2 The Focus of the Survey

Because the purpose of this textbook survey is limited to the way the textbook is designed, and to the methodology which it reflects, there will be no evaluation of teaching based on these books in actual class situations. However, the findings and comments are also based on personal experience in dealing with textbooks for teaching adult

learners in Vietnam, and also on consultation of other colleagues' experience in the subject. The survey is also done with reference to the target group of learners given in Chapter 1.

The survey will focus on the following points :

- (i) The tendency of implementation or adoption of a functional versus a structural syllabus in textbooks recently. (Which approach has been applied most in practice ? For what purposes and levels?).
- (ii) Their degree of effectiveness in solving the form-function relationship in language organization chiefly in the general course at beginners ' level. (How do they facilitate the acquisition of the language system?).
- (iii) A close examination of different models of syllabus in a general course for beginners' levels.
- (iv) The methodology adopted in these books and how they are related to the syllabus model.

#### 4.3 The Selection of Textbooks for the Survey

Having the above points in focus, the selection will be based on the following criteria :

- (i) Textbooks for adult learners which have been published since 1974 (after the publication of Wilkins's functional/notional syllabus).
- (ii) Textbooks which are claimed to aim at communication.



- (iii) Textbooks which are popular. That is, either widely available, advertised extensively, referred to frequently in the literature, used commonly in EFL classes, available in specialist bookshops, or so popular that numerous editions have been produced, like the Kernel Series, (9th edition).
- (iv) Special priority is given to those which are representative of the models and methodological views mentioned in Chapter 3; and those which are available and commonly used in Vietnam.

However, due to the unavailability of all the necessary textbooks and the pressure of time, the survey will limit itself to the 37 textbooks shown in Table 2 at the end of this chapter.

#### 4.4 The Findings of the Survey

##### 4.4.1 The Popularity in Application of Functional versus Structural Approaches in English Textbooks

The first observation of the textbooks listed shows that the function-based syllabuses (that is, those which are developed along the functional progression) are, in practice, supplementary materials rather than core materials. For example, 'Impact', 'Feelings', 'Communicate 1/2', 'Up and Away', etc.

Most of the core materials are structure-based (that is, designed along the structural progression). For example, 'English for Adults' , 'English Alive' , ' Streamline English' , 'Kernel' , etc.

Those core materials which are designed along the function-based syllabuses are mostly for levels higher than the beginners' level. For example, 'Meanings into Words', 'Mainline Skills A/B' (except 'Starting Strategies' and 'Mainline Beginner A/B) ( for detail of all the textbooks, see Table 2 ). In short, the function-based syllabuses tend to be applied for those courses which can be used either to supplement a full language course (as 'Up and Away'), or for people who want to learn English to visit Britain, with settings which are mostly British background based. For example, 'Up and Away', 'Strategies' series, 'Feeling'; or for people who have already mastered the English structural system fairly well, and want to improve their communicative competence ( 'Feeling', 'Functions of English' , 'Notions of English').

This tendency perhaps coincides with the original intention of the functional/notional approach as Wilkins (1974) views that notional-functional consideration might be regarded as simply providing another dimension to existing grammatical and situational syllabus components. The new dimension could be valuable in a general course

where the aim was remedial, i.e., beyond the beginners' level.

It would seem that up to now, in publication, there are only two sets of core materials starting from the beginners' level up to post intermediate which are function-based. These are the 'Mainline' series (1978-1980) and the 'Strategies' series (1977-1980). The two-book course 'Meanings into Words' - a very recent EFL course (1983) - is also function-based, but starts from an intermediate level of English to a post-intermediate level.

#### 4.4.2 Function-Based versus Structure-Based in Terms of Selection and Sequence

In order to compare how the two main approaches serve the problem of form and function in the organization of language content in a course book, two representative course books are chosen for close examination. They are 'Starting Strategies' - a function-based textbook for the beginners' level, and 'English Alive 1' - structure-based, also for beginners' level. 'Starting Strategies' is considered to be representative of the functional/structural model as it takes basic communication needs as its priority, and thus, the function is used as the unit of organization. A unit outline is seen like this:

Unit 3 : Hello and Good\_bye !

Set 1: Introduce people(1) and greet informally.  
Set 2: Ask and say what somebody's job is (1)  
Set 3: Ask and say somebody's name.

'English Alive 1' is considered to be representative of the structural/functional model because it takes grammatical items as the focus for each unit while paying attention to the student's needs for communication. A unit outline, thus, is seen like this:

Unit 2 : Where are you from ?

Present simple tense of the verb to be  
Affirmative statements in the first person  
singular.

Practice

Are you English ? No, I'm not.

Present simple of the verb to be - inverted  
questions and short answers, positive  
and negative.

The two books are chosen for comparison because: a) both are for beginners of English; b) both are general courses, having the same aims for communication : 'Starting Strategies' claims that the emphasis is on 'authenticity and communicative needs', while 'English Alive 1' 'sets out to impart CC in English as well as to provide a firm structural base in the language' (1979:ix) ; c) both are for courses of similar length and have a similar number of units: 'Starting Strategies': 19 units and

'English Alive 1' : 20 units; d) both serve as the first book of the complete set which ultimately leads to intermediate or post-intermediate levels of English proficiency.

### Findings

The examination of the two books reveals differences in structural selection and organization as follows :

- a) Structural items which are included in 'English Alive 1' but excluded in 'Starting Strategies'
- |    |                               |           |
|----|-------------------------------|-----------|
| 1- | What colour is this           | (Unit 3)  |
| 2- | These/Those                   | (Unit 5)  |
| 3- | Present Continuous.           | (Unit 6)  |
| 4- | Imperative.                   | (Unit 16) |
| 5- | 'Going to' form of the future | (Unit 18) |
- b) Structural items which are included in 'Starting Strategies' but excluded in 'English Alive 1'
- |    |                               |           |
|----|-------------------------------|-----------|
| 1- | Would you like (a cup of tea) | (Unit 10) |
| 2- | I think + clause.             |           |
|    | e.g. I think she's all right  | (Unit 11) |
| 3- | Exclamative sentence.         |           |
|    | e.g. What a lovely film       |           |
|    | What lovely people            | (Unit 15) |
| 4- | Let's... e.g. Let's go to the |           |
|    | cinema.                       | (Unit 15) |
| 5- | Past tense.                   | (Unit 16) |

The items in (a) can be easily recognized as common grammatical items often included in a conventional course following a conventional grammatical progression. In contrast, the items in (b) can be seen as ones which often appear in common social interactions, but the structures are often delayed in a conventional language course, (the past tense, for example).

Obviously, when the function is taken as the starting point for the selection of the language content, the structure list, then, is likely to include those items, like in (a), that serve the communicative needs, which probably differ from the conventional list of the language system.

However, those different items in the two books are not significant. Items like (1), (3), (4) in (b) can be learnt as set-expressions or formulae, as all functional textbooks claim. The examination of structural selection in other textbooks of similar level ('English for Adults 1', 'Mainline Beginners A', 'Kernel 1', etc..) reflect this similarity in structural selection. This finding is also noticed by some writers in ELT, for example, O'Neill ('Kernel 2', 1982:ix) remarks 'many other beginners' books written within the last 5 or 10 years are very similar in structural and functional content even though they may be very different in style and presentation'. Keith Johnson, while viewing this similarity in the way

the structures are selected, said, 'This is not really surprising. Though the language system may be used to generate an infinite number of sentences, it is in itself a finite construct. So lists of structural items comprising the system will be extremely similar, by whatever criteria they are drawn up' (1982:108).

What actually makes the two books different is the way the structures are listed. In other words, function-based syllabus and structure-based syllabus differ mainly in the grading. The following shows how differently organized the content of the language in 'Starting Strategies' is, as compared with 'English Alive 1'.

Table 1: The difference in organization of the language content in 'Starting Strategies' and 'English Alive 1'

Language Items	Functional Grading in Starting Strategies	Structural Grading in English Alive 1
Auxiliary DO in		
-What do you do ?	Unit 2	Unit 14 + 15
-Where do you live ?	Unit 8	
-Yes, no question and DOES with the 3rd singular person	Unit 11+12	
-How much ?	Unit 9	Unit 14
-Can (permission)	Unit 10	Unit 17
-Can (ability)	Unit 14	Unit 17
-I'd like	Unit 14	Unit 11
-What time does it start ?	Unit 13	Unit 16
-Tag-question	Unit 14	Unit 9
-How long does it take ? (time)	Unit 18	Unit 14

The most notable difference can be seen in the way the present simple tense with the auxiliary DO to form negative sentences, questions and short answers are taught. 'What do you do' is first introduced in Unit 2 as a formula to ask for people's job. Thus, the learners will be expected to learn by heart the formulae:

What do you do ?	I'm a journalist
What does he do ?	He's a film director.
	etc.

From the communicative point of view, this is really promising. Right from the first lesson, the learners know how to perform the act of asking what somebody's job is or saying somebody's job is. Yet, from the learning point of view, there are probably problems. Learning would not go smoothly if after these first formulae (How do you do?, What do you do ? What does he do ? etc...), there are more similar phrases to learn by heart without knowing the rules or system operating those phrases.

After 'What do you do ?, What does he do ? ' in Unit 2; 'Where do you/they live ?' is introduced in Unit 8, also as 'set-expression' ; the 'formal' teaching of the present tense with the auxiliary DO/DOES and its formation are not taught until Unit 11. Actually, in Unit 11, the auxiliary DO/DOES in questions are only linked with the



question pattern 'Do you like (tea with lemon)?' to serve the function in set 2: 'ask what people like', 'say what you like', and the answer 'Yes, I do/No, I don't'; or 'he's all right', 'they're all right', 'it's all right'. Towards Unit 13, the third personal singular form of the verb in the present simple tense is introduced. Again, this is practised in connection with time: ask and talk about fixed time : 'What time does it start/leave/arrive/close/finish...?' etc.

Unless some explanation of the grammatical features and rules of forming the interrogative, negative and so on concerning the present simple are given, the learners would have to learn all these in a very uncertain way. It could be very difficult for them to make sense from what they have learnt in fragments (actually they are fragments), to work out for themselves 'rules' so that they can reproduce what they have learnt in a creative way, that is, to use these grammatical structures in situations and functions other than those in Unit 2, Unit 8, Unit 11 or Unit 12. Even if they could succeed in practising correctly those pattern-in-context exercises given (as in these units), this does not always guarantee that they could say, for example 'I don't speak French' or 'Sorry, I don't understand you'. This is not to mention the possible problem of over-generalization that could easily occur in an adult learner's course. This

over-generalization would produce errors like 'Where do he live ?' or the answer 'I'm live in London' as the result of inducing from the previous pattern:

- What do you do ?
- I'm a journalist.

It can be argued that it does not matter whether the learners master the language system or not, as long as they can use the language appropriately in communication, because the ultimate goal is to communicate. Yet, the point to be made here is not whether one has to know the language system in order to communicate, but that: it is the failure in mastering the language system that may hinder the development of communicative competence. In the case of the Vietnamese adult learners described in this paper, this is true. These learners, who are more field-independent and used to the cognitive style of learning, often find it puzzling when following lessons like those in Strategies. Experience of teaching these courses in Vietnam shows that teachers of these learners often find themselves in situations where they have to answer a lot of questions concerning the rules underlying what is being taught. Due to the uncertain knowledge of the language system, the learners tend to make grammatical mistakes when producing their own sentences or utterances which may hinder communication, although in some cases they may react rather quickly in interaction. Hence, there

is the conflict between fluency and accuracy.

Another problem that may hinder learning in the EFL situation in Vietnam is the authentic way of language presentation. The listening tape which presents the dialogues and texts in Starting Strategies is utterly authentic, that is, the language is spoken exactly as in real situations without any adaptation. It contains not only the real accent, intonation, stress, assimilation but also a lot of redundancy pauses or new language items which have to be taken for granted as new words or phrases (see examples in Unit 5, page 29; Unit 7, page 40;etc.) As a matter of fact, many pieces of language turn out to be 'unnatural' because they are idiolects rather than common or 'standard' English: the speech is very often too quick; not all native speakers speak that quickly; and many pieces are too difficult even for foreign teachers to understand without tapescripts. The question of authenticity in a language course will be discussed in Chapter 5.

#### 4.4.3 The Structural/Functional Model

In order to have a clear idea of how the structural/functional model works in materials for beginners of English, two books 'English for Adults 1' and 'English Alive 1' are taken for examination. Both materials are designed around grammatical progression and both claim

to be linked to a functional approach.

In 'English for Adults 1', the functional side is said to be covered by the nature of exercises in which the practised structures reflect 'real' language and the functions in situations outside the classroom. (Introduction, teacher's book). The exercises, as it is stated in the aim of the course, are practice situations in which the language material can be used communicatively. However, the examination of the material indicates that the exercises are not very unlike those in conventional structural or situational materials. (Unit 5, A1 - A10 are typical exercises). Exercises are mainly pattern drills in meaningful contexts, most of them meaningful sentences in isolation. The situations given often fail to involve all or necessary factors in communication, like settings, functions or roles. The dialogues are often rather long (Unit 2.B, Unit 5.B, Unit 11.B). So 'communicative exercises' here actually seem more like meaningful exercises in common structural books, while the language structures are presented either situationally (Unit 3.A4; 4.B; 6.A3, A6) or, to some extent, communicatively (Unit 1, 2; 2.B).

The functions are not very well fitted into the course. Unit 4 is an example. The topic of the unit is 'shopping'. Yet, the language and functions needed for 'going-shopping' seem not well treated here. Most of the

content of the unit includes items like the following:

- In the first shop, you can buy jeans and T shirts.

It's a fashion shop.

- What can you buy in /the first /shop ?  
/the second/

- In the sixth shop they sell posters. It's a poster shop.

- Can you | get | posters in the ..... shop ?  
| buy |

etc.

or	First		I	must	go		to the fashion shop ;
	then		you				to the shoe shop
			Peter				
			she				
			etc				

(section C2, p.34)

Probably, the students would not very often have to ask questions like those in section A7 or C2 when going shopping. Instead, they would need to know how to converse with shop assistants when buying things or getting necessary information relevant to shopping. The dialogues in section B (p.44), again, fail to meet this communicative need. What seems most relevant to shopping in this unit is only some of the vocabulary : names of shops, names of goods and the pattern 'How much is this (shirt), please ? The unit is more form-oriented .

'English Alive 1' follows a grammatical sequence but is designed in a different way. As it is stated in its introduction, 'it is structural in that grammatical items form the focus for each unit; situational in that the structures are presented as they would occur in natural situations; and functional in that attention is paid to the language the student needs in order to communicate'. And in fact, the presentation of language keeps 'structural', 'situational', and 'functional' in this way throughout all the units. However, from time to time the situation does not give enough clues for the use of the presented structures. For example, Unit 3 has the following dialogue:

Driver : Is that your mother, Mike ?  
 Mike : Where ? There ? No, this is my mother.  
 Driver : Where ?  
 Mike : Here, behind you. Mum, this is Jim.  
 Driver : Hello, Mrs. Wilson.  
 Mrs. Wilson: Hello, Jim.  
 Mike : A cup of tea, Mum ?  
 Mrs. Wilson : Lovely.

The functions being taught in this unit are 'making and responding to informal introductions and greetings', 'offering and accepting things'. So, the factors involved in the situation that characterizes the type of language of greeting, offering and accepting in here are not clear: What is the relationship between the characters in the dialogue ? Why does Mike offer his mother tea this way ? Why can Jim, who seems to meet Mrs Wilson the first time



Referring back to the common criticism of the structural/functional syllabus mentioned in section 3.3, that says ' the structural sequencing tends to predominate so that the end product is little more than a structural course by another name, and functional connotation are forced to fit that particular mould', we can see that this criticism is true to some extent (as in the case of Unit 4 in 'English for Adults'). But what should be noted is that it is not *so much* the structural sequence that makes the structures unrelated to meanings and use. Rather, it is the way of presentation of the structures and the way the practice of the language is carried out that make the difference. There is no reason why the language in Unit 4 in 'English for Adults' cannot be presented in different situations, nor convey functions related to shopping activities, while keeping the same grammatical forms in this unit. In the same way, there is no reason why the setting and role relationship in situations of Unit 3 in 'English Alive 1' cannot be introduced. And, obviously, communication-oriented exercises in both units can be produced.

The examination and the findings in these two books (and others ) indicate that structural/functional materials can be improved to be communicative, while still keeping the grammatical progression in the course.



Of course, the question of how to design such material and what should be improved is not simple. Before any conclusion can be made, other models upon which materials have been written will be examined in the next section.

#### 4.4.4 The Thematic Area Model in 'Mainline Beginners A/B'

'Mainline Beginners A/B' by Alexander is the reflection of his thematic area model.

In 'Mainline Beginners A/B', the way of sequencing, in principle, is not unlike the sequencing in functional/structural model-based books, like 'Starting Strategies'. It takes into account the situation, which, in Alexander's term, means the sum total of all aspects of communication: functions, notions, settings, social and psychological roles of the speaker. (Teacher's Book, p.12). What is different in 'Mainline Beginners' from 'Starting Strategies' is the way of organising all the functions and the exponents under thematic areas chosen as starting points ( there are 12 unit themes in A to be recycled in B ). Within each thematic area, there are smaller objective areas which are carefully labelled in the course. The following is how the unit is organized :

Unit 4 . Finding the Way.

- Direction (location/existence): out of doors, short distances.
- Imperative : out of doors, short distances.

- Landmarks.
- Location/existence : indoors.
- Imperative and landmarks : indoors.
- Out of doors : longer distances.
- Modes of transport.
- Distance.

These are 'small-scale objectives' that the learners have to master if they want to cope with each thematic area. The components of the task are analyzed and sequenced while, at the same time, the grammatical structures necessary to perform the task are carefully graded.

So, within a thematic area, the structural sequencing will conform with the accepted ideas about easy-to-difficult structural progression, in a conventional structure-based course. This is as what has been stated in Alexander's model in Chapter 3 : within each thematic area, the grammatical items are carefully graded in order of difficulty. This does not, in any way, mean that the carefully graded sum of grammatical items in a unit can go harmoniously with others in a smooth, manageable sequencing of structural progression throughout the course. So, 'Mainline Beginners' seems to fall into the same problem of function-form organisation as the functional/structural model. Some items which are conventionally regarded as difficult are often first taught as formulae or fixed expressions to be learnt by heart. For example, 'What do you do' is taught in A1.30 long before any practice in the use of the simple present is provided; the third person of the

simple present tense is introduced in A2.17 long before formal practice is possible; the past tense which is generally delayed in structural courses is introduced as a 'formula' in A6.19, A6.20, A7.15, A7.16, A7.17, A7.32, A7.33, A7.34, A9.26, and A9.30 before it is formally introduced in 11.15.

The argument for the early inclusion of the past tense or the introduction of difficult items as formulae long before their formal introduction is taught can be justified in a functional/structural course. The focus of teaching is on what the learners really need for their communicative purpose. 'The structures are taught not for their own sake, but for their communicative validity and relevance in this particular thematic area', (Teacher's Book, page 5). However, from the point of view of language learning, this can be difficult for language learners who need to master the grammatical forms before they can understand further or produce any pieces of language for their own purpose, like the group of learners described in Chapter 1.

In 'Mainline Beginner A/B', there is a Grammar and Writing section (at the end of the book), which is supposed to accompany the units, unit by unit, to provide grammatical explanations and rules as well as more structural exercises for application of rules. Let us

take an example and see how this section is supposed to help the learning of the language system. In A6.19, the past tense form is first introduced :

Student 1 : I can't find Bob. Where's he gone (to) ?  
 Student 2 : Well, he WAS here, but (I think) he's gone to the lounge. He's in the lounge now.  
           or : Well, he WAS here a moment ago. Perhaps he's gone into the bar.

So, there are two new grammatical forms here :  
 HAVE GONE TO and WAS.

HAVE GONE TO is supposed (as seen in the book) to be learnt as a formula in the theme 'Where People Have Gone To' in 6.2 with presentation provided this way :

- Bob's gone to a party.	
- Bob hasn't gone to a party.	
- Has Bob gone to a party ?	Yes, he has/No, He hasn't.
- Where's Bob gone to ?	He's gone to a party.

This is repeated in 6.11. This presentation of the forms can be puzzling enough for query to arise (Why 'has gone' ? What is the meaning of 'has' and 'gone'? etc). Yet, the learners are supposed to have to know and use this formula well enough to continue with the practice of a new form : WAS in 'He WAS here a moment ago' as an answer. To help the learner to solve this puzzling problem, the 'Grammar Study' sections are given (pp.99-100). This kind of assistance is actually explanations for the use of the definite and zero article which goes with

the pattern HE'S GONE TO + place ( see page 99 of the Student's book ). The 'Grammar Study' section for 6.19 provides all the necessary forms of the verb TO BE in the past with rules for question and answer forms. This section is supposed to be done as homework or self-study. Some comments could be made here : whether officially or unofficially, some kind of grammar explanation (such as, 'Grammar Study' 6.19) is inevitable. Even if the explanation or rule learning task is treated as homework or self-study, class time must be needed for the checking of the learners' acquisition of these forms, or for explanation or correction. In EFL courses for adults in Vietnam, grammatical points like these would probably cause some trouble to the teacher who would confront a lot of queries from students whose learning experience has been rule-based. Some explanations would have to be given before any practice could go further. Moreover, such an amount of grammatical knowledge as in 6.19 may need even a full class hour of learning. In the case of in-service learners in Vietnam, this is more likely to happen, because a homework system can hardly be applied for these learners, who have little time for home-work or self-study.

With respect to communicative use, 'Mainline Beginners' would appear to be fairly successful. The situations given have presented the structures which are not only linked with functions, but also with social roles and relationships,

with stress and intonation to convey emotion and attitude of the speakers. In spite of all the goods points in 'Mainline Beginners A/B' for teaching language use, it is still doubtful to say the thematic area model is any better than others in solving 'the biggest problem of all at the beginners' level : teaching the students to do things through language while at the same time enabling them to assimilate new grammatical structures in a systematic fashion' as Alexander claims.

#### 4.4.5 The Oblique Functionalism Model - Kernel One

'Kernel One' by Robert O'Neill is representative of the Oblique Functionalism Model, and chooses grammar as the unit of organization while taking into account the communicative aim of the language. As is claimed, this material is based on the concept that :

'Learners have to learn things in such a way that they can make independent, creative use of them...They have to acquire things also in a structured grammatical way... But the things they learn in this way must also be useful and be presented in such a way that they are seen to be useful'

(O'Neill, 1979:Introduction)

The examination of the book has shown that with respect to the language organization of the course, 'Kernel One' is not different from other structure-based materials such as 'English for Adults 1' or 'English Alive 1'

There are only some slight differences. For example, about the teaching of tenses: the past tense in 'Kernel One' is introduced towards the end of the course ( units 12, 14, 15, 16 ); and 'English for Adults' (unit 12 - the last but one ); whereas no past tense is taught in 'English Alive 1'. The future tense is carefully taught in 'English for Adults' ( unit 11); whereas only the GOING TO form is taught in 'English Alive 1' (unit 18), and in 'Kernel One' (unit 17). All the three structure-based books introduce the present continuous after the present simple of the verbs TO BE and TO HAVE ('Kernel One', unit 5 ; 'English for Adult 1', unit 6 ; 'English Alive 1',unit 7 ). As far as structural selection and sequence are concerned, 'Kernel One' and 'English for Adults 1' are most similar; whereas 'English Alive 1' follows the conventional grammatical sequence more strictly.

Although the model is supposed to involve 'a core syllabus structure and a core syllabus function' ( see O'Neill's Oblique Functionalism in Chapter 3 ), the structures in 'Kernel One' seem to dominate still, and the functions are not always introduced and practised. For example, functions in unit 3 ( offering things, ordering things), and in unit 9 ( introducing people to each other, expressing certainty) do not seem to be elaborately practised or taught in the unit, although

they are included in the functional content of the course ( Teacher's Book, pp. 245 - 246).

One of the main concepts behind the organization of the language content in the Oblique Functionalism model is stated to be the idea of spiral, (and this seems to be greatly emphasized by O'Neill). However, 'Kernel One' does not seem to reflect this idea any more distinctively than others. The 'Mainline Series', for example, seems to show this clearly in its language organization.

What makes this material different from other structural books may be the way the structures and functions are presented: that is the way of organizing the book as a kind of a loose story; and the topics, situations and settings, where structures and functions are introduced, differ. This kind of difference is not only found in 'Kernel One'. When it comes to matters of style and use, textbooks can vary a lot, no matter whether they adopt functional or structural organizations. Even when the functions are similar, the situations, the topics and the settings can differ still. The functions 'agreeing/ disagreeing', for example, are presented in 'Kernel One' (unit 12) quite differently from the way the same functions are presented in 'Starting Strategies' (unit 15 ). The most common function 'introducing people' can vary a great deal in various materials for the beginners' level.



However, the view of 'learning in a grammar structured way' and 'learning useful things' in 'Kernel One' is evident: not only in the way the language is organized, in the way the language is presented (with focus on forms), but also in the way it is practised: from the mastery of the language forms to the practice of use in communicative situations.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

In the light of what has been discussed about the models given in Chapter 3, the examination of the textbooks has indicated some notable points with reference to course book design:

(i) - In theory, there are at least five or six distinctive syllabus models for course book design (as seen in section 3.3). But in practice, there are only two distinctive types in terms of selection and sequence: functional type and structural type. This choice of either a functional or structural type will affect the language progression in the course (and the acquisition of the language system accordingly). The following diagram shows the theoretical range of models - from purely function-based to purely structure-based - as compared with the practical range of models after the survey:

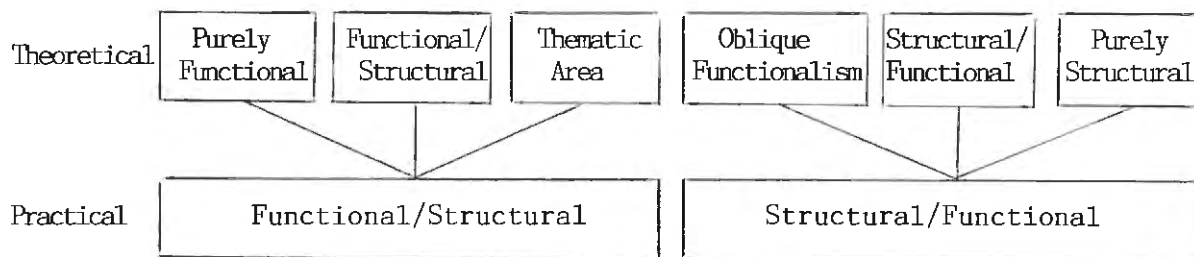


Figure 4.1 Syllabus model range in theory and in practice

(ii) - With the increasing awareness of use in language teaching, the so-called purely structural model seems no longer to be adopted in recent course-books. The so-called purely functional model which is often criticized as a phrase-like book is actually not reflected in those function-based core material, but only in some supplementary materials whose purposes are not to focus on the forms of the language but on the communicative use, such as 'Impact', 'Functions of English', 'Notions of English'. The purely functional model leads to supplementary materials of this kind.

(iii)- The functional/structural model in practice does reveal more or less the problem which has been under criticism : the possibility of structural sequence disorganization that may cause difficulty for language system learning at the beginners' level.

(iv) - The thematic area model, though claimed to be distinguished from other function-based models, is, in fact,

similar in principle to them. It faces the same problems that other function-based models have. However, the way of selecting and organising the language content under unit themes in 'Mainline Beginners' helps to specify more explicitly the language exponents, and to relate them more successfully to use. If the teaching of the language system in the course could be improved, then the model would be a promising one for adult beginners whose purpose of learning is communication but whose learning style needs more instruction on forms.

(v) - The three structure-based coursebooks for adult beginners ('English for Adults 1', 'English Alive 1 and 'Kernel One') although providing good materials for the mastery of the language system at the beginners' level seem to neglect functions and use in one way or another, either because the language presentation does not take into account all aspects necessary for communication, or because the exercises are not well linked to actual use. Nevertheless, these shortcomings can be seen as avoidable without changing the grammatical progression of the course.

(vi) - As regards communicative use, it is found that, whether a set of materials is communicatively effective or not, in fact, depends more on the nature of language presentation and the strategy of practising it in each unit, and throughout the course, rather than on the

approach to selection and sequence (which seems to have been the main concern and the main topic for syllabus design discussion in literature). The former will depend on the specification of situations and all aspects involved in those communicative situations, and is more relevant to the sociolinguistic and discourse views in coursebook writing. Therefore, a functional consideration in coursebook writing is not enough for course material to be communicative. . . . Any course material, either structure-based or function-based could be a failure or a success in this respect. In connection with this view, there is the question of authenticity. The type of language presentation like the one in the 'Strategies' series, in the experience of the teachers included in this study, seems to be too difficult for EFL adult learners in Vietnam, whereas the 'Kernel' series seem more appropriate for them ( a further discussion on authenticity will be given in section 5.4). The strategy of practising the language in a course is related to the question of methodology.

(vii) - Concerning methodology, the survey shows that the methodological views discussed in literature (section 3.2) are actually manifested in materials in three ways :

a/ In the unit organization: ~~as~~ it has been found in the materials under survey, the form-to-meaning-and-use strategy is often exemplified in this way :

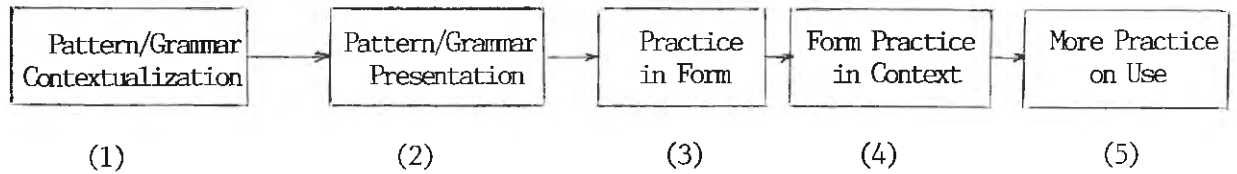


Figure 4.2 Unit organization - type 1

(Note: Step (5) is either included or excluded)

This kind of organization can be seen in 'English for Adults', 'English Alive', 'Kernel One'.

The strategy from use/communication to form has been found as not always existing in the exact sequence viewed by Brumfit (section 3.2). Rather, it exists in its variations. The common type in many textbooks (for example, 'Starting Strategy', 'Up and Away', 'Communicate 1/2', 'Feelings') is in the following way :

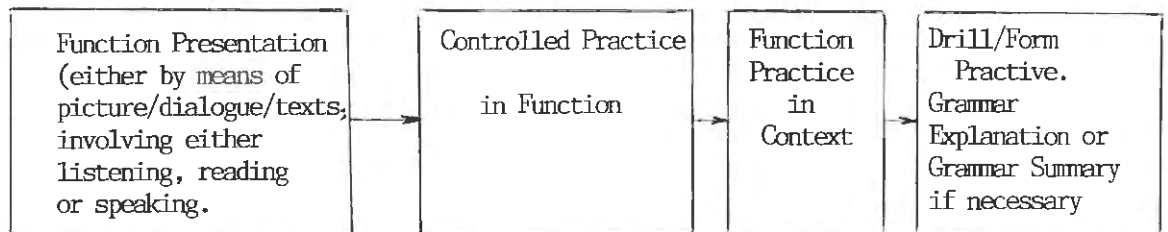


Figure 4.3 Unit organization - type 2.

The presentation and practice are always included in either strategy, but the nature and the focus of these activities are different. 'Mainline Beginners', for example, organizes the language in the sequence : practice - language in context - improvisation, which seems to be

similar to form - use sequence, but the nature of these exercises is closely related to use. The focus of the practice is on use rather than on form. Drills only come last ( in 'Grammar Study' section of the book ). In type 2, the presentation and function practice can sometimes be interwoven , not always in sequencing order.

b/ In the nature of the Practice: this involves not only the question of the subject matter of the practice, on form or on function (as in (a)); but also the question of how much the practice is related to language use. If some 'functions' are practised in isolation, the nature of the practice is no longer related to use, but rather meaningful practice on forms, and the methodological view underlying the practice is , again, focused more on form. If the practice is spent on all exercises of this type, then it is hard to say the methods being used could ensure the development of CC, because all that has been done through these exercises is to develop linguistic competence.

c/ In the guidance given to teachers : the methods and techniques provided for teachers who carry out the lessons are parts of the methodological aspect of the material, and are very often associated with its syllabus design approach. However, as far as the focus of this survey is concerned, this area will not be further explored and discussed in this study.

The above has examined three methodological manifestations in the materials under survey. This, to some extent, will help the teachers towards a more thorough way of evaluating or understanding the methodological aspect of a textbook when using it.

(viii) - The relationship between the approach to course-book design and the methodological view in coursebooks: it is found that those materials which are structure-based tend to adopt the type of methodology which goes from form to meaning (as in type 1) ( ' English for Adults', 'English Alive'. 'Kernel One' etc.). But a function-based material does not necessarily follow type 2 of the teaching strategy ( 'Meaning into Words' is an example: function-based, but following type 1 of methodology). Judging from the way the methodological view and the approach of coursebook design work together, one can say that methodological views will possibly affect course-design (as in (a) and (b) ). However, the approach to course design does not necessarily determine the methodology for the course. It is also notable that coursebook design involves not only the specification of content but also the methodological view that characterizes the way the content is presented and taught. Failure to consider both these aspects may lead to an inadequate outcome.

Table 2: List of textbooks under survey

Ordinal No.	Author	Title	Approach		Level	Core Material	Supplementary Material	Used in Vietnam
			Functional	Structural				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Abbs, B. et.al, 1977	Starting Strategies	✓		Elementary	✓		✓
2	ibid	Building Strategies	✓		Intermediate	✓		✓
3	ibid	Developing Strategies	✓		Post-Intermediate	✓		✓
4	ibid	Studying Strategies	✓		Advanced	✓		✓
5	Alexander, L.G, 1979	Mainline Beginners A	✓		Elementary	✓		✓
6	ibid	Mainline Beginners B	✓		Elementary	✓		✓
7	ibid, 1973	Mainline Progress A	✓		Intermediate	✓		✓
8	ibid	Mainline Progress B	✓		Intermediate	✓		✓
9	ibid	Mainline Skill A	✓		Advanced	✓		✓
10	ibid	Mainline Skill B	✓		Advanced	✓		✓
11	Bliemel, W. et.al, 1976	English for Adults 1		✓	Elementary	✓		✓
12	ibid	English for Adults 2		✓	Intermediate	✓		
13	ibid	English for Adults 3		✓	Advanced	✓		
14	Chapman, J. 1978	Adult English		✓	Elementary to Intermediate	✓		
15	Doff, A. & Jones, C. 1980	Feelings	✓		Post-Intermediate and Advanced		✓	
16	Doff, A. et.al, 1983	Meanings into Words (Intermediate)	✓		Intermediate	✓		✓
17	ibid	Meanings into Words (Upper-Intermediate)	✓		Post-Intermediate	✓		✓
18	Granger, C. & Hicks, T. 1977	Contact English 1		✓	Elementary to Intermediate	✓		



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
19	Gray, J. 1981	Starting English	✓		Elementary	✓		
20	Hartley, B. & Viney, P. 1979	Streamline English: Departure		✓	Elementary	✓		✓
21	ibid	Streamline English: Connection		✓	Pre-intermediate	✓		✓
22	ibid	Streamline English: Destination		✓	Intermediate	✓		✓
23	Jones, L. 1977	Functions of English	✓		Upper-intermediate and Advanced		✓	✓
24	Meredith-Parry & Weller, 1980	Getting Through	✓		From Elementary to Advanced		✓	
25	Morrow, K. & Johnson, K. 1980	Communicate 1	✓		Elementary		✓	✓
26	ibid	Communicate 2	✓		Pre-intermediate		✓	✓
27	Nicholls, S. et al. 1978	English Alive 1		✓	Elementary	✓		
28	ibid	English Alive 2		✓	Pre-intermediate	✓		
29	ibid	English Alive 3		✓	Intermediate	✓		
30	O'Neill, R. 1979	Kernel One		✓	Elementary	✓		
31	ibid	Kernel Two		✓	Pre-intermediate	✓		✓
32	ibid	Kernel Three			Intermediate	✓		✓
33	O'Neill, R. et al. 1971	Kernel Lessons Intermedi- ate		✓	Post-intermediate	✓		✓
34	ibid	Kernel Lessons Plus		✓	Advanced	✓		✓
35	Potter, M. et al. 1980	Up and Away	✓		pre-intermediate and Intermediate		✓	✓
36	Potter, P.A. & Sharp, A.W. 1977	Active English		✓	From Elementary to Intermediate	✓		
37	Walcyn, O. & Jones, P.	Impact	✓		Intermediate		✓	✓

Table 3: Examination of five textbooks for beginners level.  
 Representatives of five syllabus models.  
 (using five-point scale)

Title	Syllabus Model	Texts (presentation)					Exercises (practice)			
		Focus on Form	Focus on Function	Progression	Authenticity	Suitability	Focus on Form	Focus on Function	Rigour	Authenticity
English Alive 1	Structural-Functional	4	2	4	3	3	4	2	3	3
English for Adults 1	Structural-Functional	4	2	4	2	3	4	2	3	2
Kernel One	Oblique-Functionalism	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	3
Mainline Beginners A	Thematic Area	2	5	2	3	3	3	5	4	4
Starting Strategies	Functional-Structural	2	5	2	5	2	2	5	4	5

Key :

5: very high  
 4: high  
 3: average  
 2: low  
 1: very low

Texts

Progression: Extent to which structures are graded in the conventional easy-to-difficult way.  
 Authenticity: Proportion of authentic texts  
 Suitability: Extent to which the social contexts and settings are relevant to the target group.

Exercises

Rigour: Extent to which text features, skills, etc. are explored/practised.  
 Authenticity: Extent to which exercises simulate real-life tasks.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUGGESTED APPROACH - A MODERATE VIEWPOINT

#### 5.1 Introduction

The approach suggested in this chapter reflects a moderate viewpoint in communicative language teaching as shifting from the focus on grammar to the focus on communication in the background of ELT for the target group we looked at in Chapter 1. The viewpoint underlying the approach is said to be moderate because :

- (i) it proposes a balanced system to the development of CC in a language course with priority given to form;
- (ii) it advocates a communicative structural approach to syllabus design rather than a functional one; and
- (iii) it suggests a moderate methodology which is in accordance with the teaching strategy as going from form to meaning and use versus the use-to-form strategy.

What follows will make explicit this moderate viewpoint in the listed areas above.

#### 5.2 Communicative Competence - A Moderate Viewpoint

In talking of communicative language teaching, perhaps the first and foremost question that should be asked

concerns the explicit aim of language teaching : what type of communicative competence should be taught in a language course ? The discussions in previous chapters make clear the concept of communicative competence, which, in sum, involves not only the grammatical knowledge of the language but also the sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences. This is the type of CC that a fluent language speaker possesses. Our concern here is the learner's CC. By the pedagogical nature of language learning, it might be too desirable and even unreasonable to expect an EFL course to produce totally competent users of English . Anita Pincas has put it :

'Even if the goal is effective real-life communication, it does not follow that this can or must be learned in the classroom'

(1978 : 31).

What a language course could do and should do is to prepare the ground for future application of English in the real world of communication, rather than to teach the application itself.

The practical value of this view on the type of CC in the classroom is to avoid extremes in the focus on use or functions in teaching, and to have moderate judgements about the ratio of the grammatical component versus the other three components of CC in an EFL situation as in Vietnam.

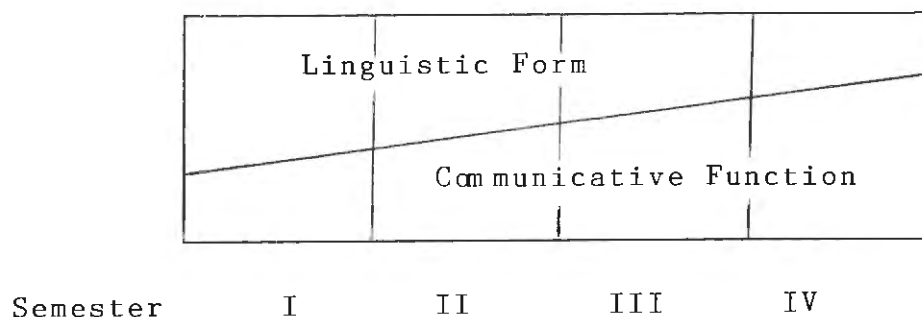


Figure 5.1 The balanced system in a two-year course for the EFL adult beginners under consideration

( adapted from the Proportional Approach, Yalden, 1983: 121 )

Figure 5.1 illustrates the balance which could be adopted for an EFL two-year course for adult beginners of the target group under consideration. As can be seen from the balanced system, the study of grammar would remain in sharper focus throughout the first level of the two years, than would the study of functions and discourse skills. The introduction of language functions and discourse skills gains increasing prominence as the course progresses (through stage 2, 3), but the teaching of grammar also occupies an important place. At the last stage, work on communicative functions of language predominates, and linguistic form could be considered when the need arises. However, time division between form and function is by no means clear-cut. The stress on form at the beginning does not mean the total exclusion of function. Rather, simple communicative use can be included

right from the first lessons. During the entire learning process, form and function will be always interwoven so as to allow communication to take place as soon as possible. This balanced system will be made explicit in the designing of the syllabus and the methodological implications in the following sections of this chapter.

### 5.3 The Approach for Syllabus Design

#### 5.3.1 Considerations

As has been discussed in the previous chapters, chiefly through the survey of textbooks in Chapter 4, it becomes clear that, although grammatical practice may be given within a functional framework, it is difficult to focus attention on structural concerns in a principled or comprehensive way. Functional syllabuses may be beneficial for students of higher levels rather than beginner levels. For these students, the focus on use afforded by a functional syllabus may enrich their previous language learning. But at the beginner level, it is a case of initial introduction of grammar structures. Essentially, a degree of attention should be paid to structural consideration. This cannot easily be given within the framework of a functional syllabus.

Some efforts have been made to reconcile functional organization with structural grading. Among them there is

Brumfit's structure - function model, Alexander's Thematic Area model and O'Neill's Oblique Functionalism. As is shown in chapters 3 and 4, Brumfit's model and O'Neill's model are similar in that both advocate a basically grammatical core while adding functional dimension around it. However, Brumfit's model is not explicit enough about how functions are selected and graded along the grammatical core. The concept of a functional spiral, actually, does not convey anything clearer in this respect. Similarly, O'Neill's model proposes two core syllabuses : a core syllabus of structures and a core syllabus of functions. But no explicit suggestion is made about how these two are related in the syllabus. The spiral concept in organizing structures and functions discussed in the model is actually not very unlike the conventional concept of spiral in many other syllabuses. Alexander's Thematic Area model, on the other hand, is explicit in the way functions and structures are selected and organized. It is successful in specifying explicitly the objectives under each unit theme, thus, relating successfully the language forms with the functions and situations that the learners will encounter in the target language. However, it has common deficiencies of function-based syllabuses (see section 4.4.4 ).

For these reasons, the three models are not adopted for syllabus design in this course. But they will be

considered for the approach suggested in this chapter.

### 5.3.2 Communicative Structural Approach

The above having been considered, the approach suggested for the target group in this study will be a communicative structural approach. This approach agrees in principle with Brumfit and O'Neill's view on syllabus design for communicative language teaching which emphasizes the importance of systematizability as an essential criterion for the selection and sequence of items, and the need of developing the learner's generative repertoire in a language course ( see Brumfit's and O'Neill's models, Chapter 3). This approach is also in accordance with Paulston, who stated:

'Clearly, the curriculum must be so organized that it structures its activities into communication, but I see no valid argument for eliminating a formal linguistic axis for the organization of language content'

( 1981:94 )

Moreover, this approach is justified because functional syllabuses, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, seem to have disadvantages in teaching the language system at the beginner level of English. Structural syllabuses, on the other hand, could be improved to be communicative. Johnson argues that 'structural syllabuses in the past may have had disadvantages, therefore we have to try and improve



them' (1982:107). The approach presented hereafter, thus, will be based mainly on Johnson's argument for a communicative structural syllabus, then modified and made explicit showing how a structural syllabus could be made communicative. In this respect, Alexander's Thematic Area model is taken for consideration.

#### 5.3.2.1 How Structural Syllabuses Could be Made Communicative

The common argument against structural syllabuses as 'lacking the practical applications of the language to real life' is summed up by Johnson to show the following deficiencies :

- (i) The selection of the language items to teach does not always meet the language needs of the learners.
- (ii) Although the right items may be taught, they are often introduced in the wrong situation, 'situationally or functionally dishonest' (Johnson, 1982 : 109 )
- (iii) The approach often fails to draw the application of language to the student's attention in an explicit way.
- (iv) The approach often fails to differentiate between structures of high and low frequency in two ways : in the amount of time devoted to them ( for example, in structural materials, as much time may be spent on teaching the past tense as on teaching the passive); and in the point at which they are introduced. By following a graded

grammatical progression, the structural syllabus may neglect or delay the introduction of communicatively more important structures.

As has been pointed out by Johnson, all these weak points can be improved without changing the orientation of the syllabus design from structural to semantic.

Deficiency (i) could be improved by omitting communicatively irrelevant items in the selected list of language content to be taught. Actually the extent to which the criterion of communicative utility is likely to change the structural content of language courses is not much. This is shown by the textbook examination in Chapter 4. An explicit way of selecting and sequencing will be presented later in this chapter.

The solution to situational and functional dishonesty referred to in deficiency (ii) is not difficult. As is discussed by Johnson, 'since these structures do have applications in real life, it should take no effort to find situations in which they can be used with absolute appropriateness (1982:109). So it is with functions. 'There are plenty of situations in which we can introduce the present continuous [for example] used in functionally appropriate way'. According to Johnson, 'it seems reasonable to expect our structural courses to exemplify language being used to correct purpose in appropriate situations' (1982:109).

Point (iv) of the criticism involves two things which should be discussed here. The first one is the question of time devoted to teaching items. Johnson is right to argue that the criteria used to decide how much time to spend on an item should not be its frequency of occurrence.

'Infrequency of occurrence with reference to the students' language needs may be a criterion for omitting a structure from a teaching program, but once the decision to include a structure has been made, then supposed difficulty of acquisition seems a more valid criterion for deciding how much time should be spent on teaching it'.

(1982 :110)

The second point refers to the question of grading. There is justifiable reason to delay the introduction of communicatively more important language items in a structural course, because structural grading seems (through the survey in Chapter 4) to be necessary for the acquisition of the language system in an EFL environment. 'The haste for communicative competence will result in pedagogic incompetence', ( Johnson, 1982:111). This point has been fully discussed in Chapter 4. However, there are cases when the reason for delay is unjustifiable. This happens when the course writers are following the order found in the work of a descriptive linguist. 'They smack of a taxonomic linguistic description made without regard for either communicative needs or structural complexity (Johnson, 1982:111). In this respect, the functional syllabus designer

can make the same mistake. The solution for this error, suggested by Johnson, is ' to look again at our structural lists and move forward any communicatively important items which can be taught early without destroying the structural progression necessary for acquisition to take place in the most cost-effective way' (1982:111). This idea will be made explicit in the framework presented below.

#### 5.3.2.2 The Suggested Framework for Needs Analysis in the Communicative Structural Syllabus

In order to have a selection of communicatively useful language content, and to reconcile the forms and functions in the syllabus, the framework for needs analysis will be as follows. (This is based on the Thematic Area model with modification).

First, we begin with the specification of the learners' objectives (work-oriented) to define the thematic area that the learners are supposed to deal with in the target language. These will be major objectives in the syllabus. Then, small objectives within each major theme are specified in terms of settings, topics, roles, functions and notions. These components will be analysed and sequenced, while at the same time the grammatical structures

necessary to perform these tasks are specified and graded. This will produce two simultaneous lists: one of functions/ notions, and one of structures. The vocabulary list will come last after the topics and situations are specified. This procedure will be presented in the following schema:

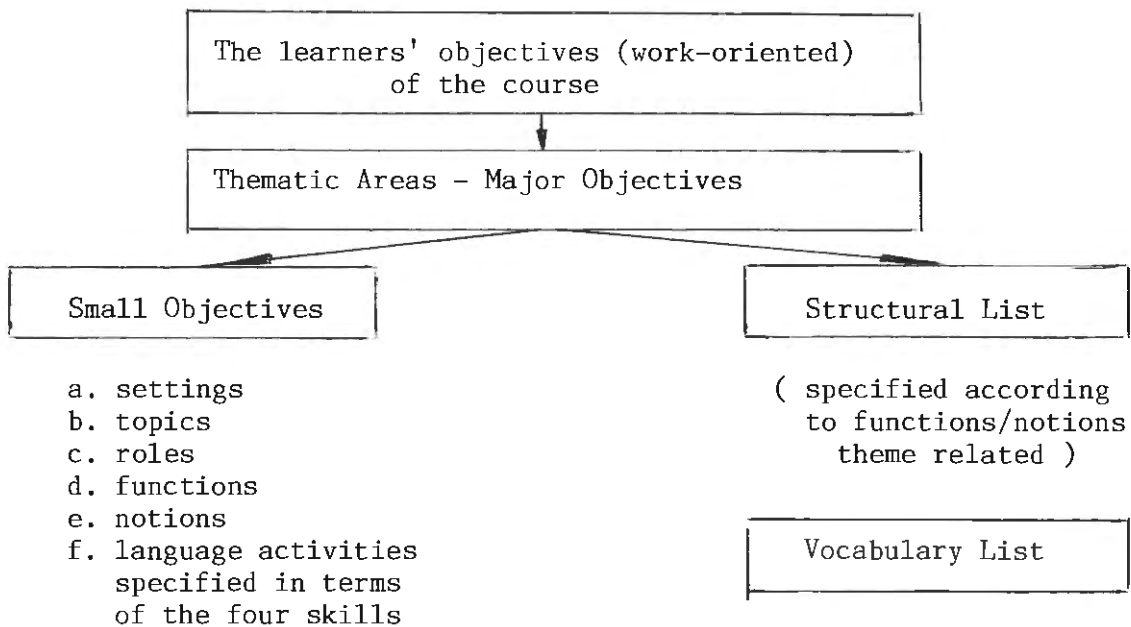


Figure 5.2 Needs Analysis Framework.

The needs analysis having been done, the structural items included in the structural list will be chosen as the core syllabus. The sequencing of the structures would follow the conventional linguistic concept about easy-to-difficult structural progression which might apply in a conventional structural course. However, there may be cases where there should be some reconciliation between structural progression and theme-oriented task. Probably, this will not cause much conflict while organizing the

syllabus, because the selected structural list is already communicatively useful and theme-oriented. In the literature, there has not been any thorough research on the optimal psycholinguistic progression of structures in a communicative syllabus. The present study attempts only to propose a syllabus model on which the actual syllabus design can be based. Therefore, it does not discuss explicitly the sequence of structures in the suggested syllabus. It is hoped that the work 'Syntactic and Morphological Progression in Learner English' to be published in 1985/1986 by Malcolm Johnston, which focuses on psycholinguistic ease and difficulty of acquisition of certain structural items, may give more suggestions on how structures should be sequenced.

In the present study, the communicative structural model can be said to be structure-based, but developed within a semantic syllabus inventory. As in the thematic area model, the structures, functions as well as the settings and situations are communicatively useful, (according to the specification, which is determined by the objectives of the course), and well-related throughout the course. But unlike the thematic area model, in which functions are the focus of each unit theme, this communicative structural model advocates the structure as the focus of each unit. In other words, the unit of organization in this syllabus is structural, while in the thematic area

model, it is functional or thematic. (The terms 'unit of organization' is used after Johnson,1982:55). This way of organizing the language content will remain the strong point in the Thematic Area model; thus, it could improve the deficiency found in common structural syllabuses discussed earlier. Moreover, it is an improvement as compared with the thematic area model in that it can teach the structural system of the language more explicitly and comprehensively.

#### 5.4 The Question of Authenticity

After the organization of the language content comes the presentation of the language. As was found in the survey of textbooks in Chapter 4, what will affect the materials most is 'the uses to which the structures introduced are put, the settings they are introduced in, and the topics they are used to talk about' (Johnson,1982:113). This relates to the view on sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences towards CC as a whole. The extent to which uses, topics and settings are communicatively useful can be measured by the analysis of language needs (discussed in section 5.3.2.2). This section will be concerned with the question : to what extent the language that is taught should exemplify the language of the real world.

Associated with communicative language teaching, there is a tendency to advocate the use of authentic texts. The emphasis of socio-cultural factors in language learning also encourages and reinforces the belief in authentic texts. However, authenticity does not always work the way we expect it should. Authenticity may cause problems in language learning. First of all, authentic materials can be irrelevant to the content of teaching. Morrow (1977) argues against the 'blind use of authentic texts'. He says that every text has a 'topic, function, channel and audience', which are particular to it. Each of these must be matched with the target situation. Texts are often selected on the grounds of topic only, so that while being authentic, they are not relevant, at least on the ground of function, channel and audience.

The problem with authentic language as seen in 'Starting Strategies' - a textbook supposedly for beginners - is that authenticity may hinder learning, because the language presented is too difficult to comprehend. This kind of authenticity is really not beneficial for learning at all. On authenticity in language teaching, Widdowson argues that if the students cannot fully understand the language they are exposed to, if communication fails because of the students' imperfect knowledge of the language, then, the language in question is not authentic at all. Thus, to present the student on a language course with a sample



of the language use he is expected to cope with at the end of the course, and to expect him to grapple with it at the beginning is to misuse authenticity.

'It is probably better to consider authenticity not as a quality residing in instances of language but as a quality which is bestowed upon it, created by the response of the receiver. Authenticity in this view is a function of the interaction between the reader/hearer and the writer/speaker. We do not recognize authenticity as something there waiting to be noticed; realized it in the act of interpretation.'

( Widdowson, 1976 )

Widdowson then advocates the construction of reading texts which are within the competence of the students concerned; because constructed texts will achieve true communication with the students.

Widdowson's view on authenticity is reasonable. However, one should also be aware of the fact that if language learning depends solely on constructed texts, then, there would be a gap between such constructed texts and the texts of the real world. The point to be made here is not to eliminate authentic texts, but to avoid the blind use of them. To be moderate in the use of authentic texts, authentic language should be gradually introduced alongside constructed texts, within the language competence of the learners. The language in 'Kernel One' is an example of a moderate use of authenticity, while 'Starting Strategies' is too difficult for comprehension at the zero beginner level of English.

### 5.5 Methodology

There is a considerable difference between stating what the communicative language course should be and actually enabling the learners to achieve CC in the end. After all, the teaching process is not controlled by the syllabus or the material, but by the teacher. It is very likely that communication-based material may be subject to grammar-translation treatment, just as an old grammar-translation book may be taught in a 'communicative' way, whatever 'communicative way' may mean. In order to teach language for communicative purposes successfully, one should not only be concerned with syllabus design, but with methodology as well.

As has been shown in the discussions in the previous chapters, two main methodological approaches have been developed. The first one views the teaching strategy as going from form to use, persisting in old techniques and adapting them so that they reflect more communicative dimensions. The other approach views the teaching strategy as going from use to form, and thus, focuses more on communicative activities with which the learners practise using language in meaning-oriented activities where their choices are determined not by the teacher's guidance, but by his own communicative needs and intentions within a specific situation. (Techniques related to this approach

can be seen in information-gaps and role-playing ).

After having considered the various views on methodology, and the teaching/learning situations in Vietnam, it would seem that the form-to-meaning approach advocated by Rivers (1978), Paulston (1974), and Littlewood (1978) ( see section 3.2 ) would be the most appropriate one in teaching EFL adult learners in Vietnam. A full discussion of this approach has been presented in section 3.2. The approach has also been partly reflected in the discussion on the organization and presentation of the language content in section 5.3. This section will deal more explicitly with some methodological principles related to the treatment of form and function or use, and some appropriate techniques and activities to develop CC for Vietnamese adult learners in this study.

#### 5.5.1 Focus on Form and Focus on Use

The methodological frameworks for communicative language teaching discussed by Paulston (1974), Rivers (1978), and Littlewood (1981), (section 3.2 ), show the learning process from linguistic competence to communicative competence, and also the relationship between them. While the emphasis of the aim is on communicative competence, the emphasis on form in the process to achieve that aim is necessary. The relationship between CC and linguistic

competence is seen by Littlewood as follows :

'The learner must distinguish between forms which he has mastered as part of his linguistic competence, and the communicative functions that they perform, In other words, items mastered as part of a linguistic system must also be understood as part of a communicative system'

( Littlewood, 1978:6 )

At the first stage of learning, the 'skill-getting' (Rivers, 1978) or 'pre-communicative activities' (Littlewood, 1981), the focus is more on form. The overall purpose is to prepare the learner for later communicative activities by providing necessary linguistic competence and necessary links between form and function. At the second stage, the 'skill-using', or 'communicative activities', the production of linguistic form becomes subordinate to higher-level decisions, related to the communication of meanings. The focus is now more on meaning and use.

However, the two stages in the framework are not sequential but parallel , in the sense that they are 'continually proceeding hand in hand' (Rivers, 1978:4). The balance between form and use is a matter of degree, not an 'all-or-nothing affair' (Littlewood, 1981:16). The balance will vary in different activities and practice. There are points of grammar which need to be drilled in isolation before the students can be motivated to do anything communicatively with them. There are others which

can be learnt by including them directly in communicative exchanges. We should say, language teaching should be communicative at some points and structural at others. Therefore, the notions of form and use should not be thought of in terms of a clear-cut distinction, but in terms of differences of emphasis. Rivers's schema of 'skill-getting' and 'skill-using', or Littlewood's framework of 'pre-communicative activities' and 'communicative activities' should be considered in this light.

#### 5.5.2 The Role of Structural Practice

When the inclusion of form ( or grammar ) is found necessary and important as 'part of a communicative system', then structural practice should be seen as useful. Conventional techniques such as pattern drill , often linked with the audio-lingual methodology ( where the focus is exclusively on the performance of structural operation ), should not be considered as irrelevant and ineffective in communicative language teaching. As Littlewood has put it :

'Many teachers now exclude purely structural practice from their repertoire, in favour of the other forms[more related to communicative function or social contexts]. Nonetheless, we are still too ignorant about the basic process of language learning to be able to state dogmatically what can and what cannot contribute to them. Structural practice may still be a useful tool,

especially when the teacher wishes to focus attention sharply and unambiguously on an important feature of the structural system'.

(1981:9-10)

The question now is how to make use of these structural practices and improve them to serve the communicative purpose.

### 5.5.3 Suggestions for Making Structural Practice Communicative

A lot of suggestions have been made about how to develop linguistic competence and CC for the learners. The most suitable ones for the target group in this study can be seen in Paulston ( 1970, 1974 ), Rivers (1978,1983), Littlewood (1981), Hubbard, et. al. (1984). Paulston has developed the communicative drill concept to include three groups of drill: mechanical drills, meaningful drills and communicative drills. Rivers enumerates essential processes in learning to communicate, and gives types of exercises to cover all these processes, including practice in autonomous interaction in the language program, and guidelines for bridging the gap between intensive practice exercises to pseudo-communication, and then to autonomous interaction. Littlewood has discussed ways in which old techniques for controlled practice can be adapted so that the learner is helped to relate forms to their potential functional and/or social meaning. Littlewood also proposes functional communication activities of four groups to follow up structural practice or pre-communicative exercises, and four main ways to exploit the classroom environment as a social context for foreign language use.

Hubbard, et. al. (1984:187-204) have suggested ways to go from controlled to free practice ( using Donn Byrne's term to mean from controlled practice to production, 1981). Particular suggestions have been made about how certain classroom techniques and activities that have been developed following recent trends in EFL methodology can be adapted to fit the production stage in a structural syllabus, ( Hubbard, et. al, 1984 : 202 ). The followings will sum up useful and relevant techniques from the above authors . These techniques may not be new to EFL teaching in Vietnam. However, the emphasis here is to reaffirm the role and place of the techniques in the process of learning for communicative competence for the target group under consideration.

(i) Six groups of oral exercises :

- 1/ Repetition drills.
- 2/ Substitution drill.
- 3/ Conversions (transformations, combinations, restatement).
- 4/ Sentence modifications (expansions, deletions, completions).
- 5/ Response practice.
- 6/ Translation exercises.

The advantages and use of these exercises are fully discussed by Rivers, (1978, 126-148). It is important to see that the amount of practice, the choice of exercise type and the language content to be practised in these exercises will depend on the level of instruction, the

level of the students and the intensiveness of the course. Overuse of these drills may lead to ineffective teaching: adult learners of this target group would soon feel tired of mechanical drilling, and they would wish to learn the language in a more creative way.

(ii) Relating structure to communicative function

Communicative function is closely bound up with situational context. In providing links between structure and function, the language can be contextualized so that the learners will practise responses which would be (a) realistic ways of performing useful communicative acts in (b) situations they might expect to encounter at some time. For example :

Your friend makes a lot of suggestions, but you feel too tired to do anything.

Prompt : Shall we go to the cinema ?

Response : Oh no, I don't feel like going to the cinema.

Prompt : Shall we have a swim ? ( or What about a swim, then ? )

Response : Oh no, I don't feel like having a swim.

Although the practice is still of a purely structural nature, the learners are learning to relate language to its communicative function (making and rejecting suggestions).

(iii) Relating language to specific meanings



A further step could be made to relate form to meaning in a less controlled way. The learners are asked to adapt their language so that it reflects some aspect of non-linguistic reality, such as a concrete situation, a picture, personal knowledge. For example, the same practice in 2.2; the learners may be instructed to respond to the suggestions in accordance with their own likes and dislikes :

a/ Prompt : Shall we go to the cinema ?

Response : Oh no, I don't feel like going to the cinema.  
(or : The cinema ? Yes, that's a good idea.)

b/ Alternatively, the practice could be done with picture cues which indicate which preference the learners should express.

( The learners see a picture of a park)

Prompt : Shall we go to the cinema ?

Response : No, I'd rather go to the park.

c/ Practice could be done with cues provided by the learners' general knowledge. For example :

Contradict or agree with the speaker.

Prompt: London is the capital of Australia.

Response : No, it isn't. It's the capital of England

Prompt : The Mekong river flows through Hanoi.

Response : No, it doesn't. It flows through Ho Chi Minh City.

etc.

(iv) Relating language to social context.

The activities that relate language to the social

meanings help to increase the learners' sense of performing in a meaningful social context, rather than simply responding to prompts. In activities like this, the learners begin to interact as equal partners in an exchange rather than merely acting to stimuli. The most effective techniques for doing this will be (a) pairwork practice, where the learners are asked to obtain information to complete a questionnaire (such as asking for information about one's hobbies, one's likes and dislikes; information about a town, an office, or one's working time-table, etc.). (b) open-dialogue, where the learners are asked to form some particular social role, in order to create whole responses during a piece of social interaction. For example:

You're visiting a friend, Peter.

Peter : Let's have a drink. What would you like, tea or coffee ?

You :

Peter: I'll put a record on first. Do you like jazz ?

You:

Peter: What do you feel like doing afterwards ?

You:

Peter: All right. Well, I'll go and make the tea/coffee.

By relating the structural practice to meaning and social context in these ways, the language practice becomes less controlled and proceeds more to the stage of free production.

More communication-related activities could be effectively carried out with the help of the information-gap techniques and role-playing and simulation, which will be dealt with in the next section.

#### 5.5.4 Information-Gap

Recently, in communicative language teaching, the concept of information gap has been discussed a lot in literature, and considered to be important in communicative teaching. This section will discuss how to apply the technique appropriately to the teaching situation in Vietnam.

In classroom terms, an information-gap exercise means that one student must be in a position to tell another something that the second student does not know. This information gap is the essence of communication.

'In real life, communication takes place between two (or more) people, one of whom knows something that is unknown to the other(s). The purpose of the communication is to bridge this information gap'

(Morrow, 1981:62)

In Morrow's view, this concept of information gap seems to be one of the most fundamental in the whole area of communicative teaching. The teacher should set up situations where information gaps exist and motivate the students to bridge them in an appropriate way.

Examples of information-gap exercises, which are useful and suitable in the teaching situations in Vietnam are information-getting exercises, like getting to know each other's hobbies, asking the way, etc. However, it should be noted that, while the idea of creating information

gap in communicative language teaching is valid, not all activities based on this technique are effective and suitable for the EFL adult learner teaching in Vietnam. One should be cautious when using information-gap pairwork exercises. Complicated settings and situations set in information-gap pairwork exercises can cause problems. There are cases when the given instructions for the task are so complicated that the learner does not have enough time to absorb the 'role' he is supposed to act. What he could do, then, would be to read out some information as the answer to the questions from his partner (often not fluently at all). Hence, the 'task' or 'interview' or 'survey' that the activity is supposed to create would turn out to be not unlike a comprehensive question-and-answer practice. By being given details of what he is supposed to be or to do (as it often happens in pairwork exercises), the learner is put into a very passive position, which may, to a great extent, affect what he would say. The exercise below is an example of an inappropriate information-gap pairwork activity, because, as will be readily seen, its setting is much too complicated and detailed.

#### NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW (2)

Your name is Antonio Arpeggio/Antonia Arpeggio.

You are a film director. Last week, your film LUCKY won no less than five Oscars, including the 'Best picture of the year' and the 'Best director' awards. The film, written

by you, only cost \$300,000 to make and is the story of a poor black boy called Lucky Leroy who rises from the slums of New York to become President of the U.S.A.

You wrote the film over seven years ago but it took a long time to get the money to make it. (None of the major film companies were interested. They called it 'rubbish'.)

You thought it was a good film but are surprised at how well it has gone down with the public. So far the film has made over \$1 million. You think people like it because it has very little violence and is the story of the 'little man' making good - the old 'American dream'.

You have agreed to be interviewed by a reporter from the magazine THE CINEMA TODAY. Student B is the reporter.

When you answer his/her question, try to use your own words as much as possible.

( Peter Watcyn - Jones, 1981 : 32 )

Pairwork activities like the one above may be effective and suitable for other learners of English, in Europe for instance. In Vietnam, they seem inappropriate. From personal experience and by consultation with other Vietnamese colleagues studying at CCAE, it can be said that the information gap pairwork technique can be used more successfully either:

- a) in more structure-oriented exercises at the 'skill-getting' phase; that is when instructions for doing the task are not necessarily complicated, (see example on page 144 ); or
- b) in communicative activities at the 'skill-using' phase only where the learner is given more chances to say what he wants to. Guides and cues can be given, but not in a rigid way as seen in the example above.

The use of information-gap pairwork exercises like

the one above can also be impractical in terms of teaching facility. Either there must be enough pair-books for each student (A and B), or there must be a photocopier to have the task (A and B) copied for each student. Neither of these seem to be available in the teaching situation in Vietnam at the present time.

Nevertheless, one should see clearly that activities associated with the information-gap technique (as was discussed above) may be inappropriate, the technique itself is useful for teaching. Like pairwork, the information-gap technique can be used effectively as long as it is used creatively.

Actually, information-gaps can be created in everyday teaching situations. The following is an example of how a conventional practice could be converted into an information-gap exercise.

Asking and giving information at a station.

- A. Excuse me, when's the next train to.....?
- B. At.....
- A. How much is a ..... ticket ?
- B. ....
- A. And which platform does it leave from ?
- B. ....
- A. Thank you.

This is a skeleton dialogue for practice in pairs. If the practice is done in the conventional way, the dialogue is put on the blackboard. Students are given a simple

railway time-table like the following (taken from 'Kernel One' by Robert O'Neill, 1980: 10):

Destination	Platform	Time	Fare
London	7	6.40	£12.00
Leeds	5	7.15	£ 4.40
Bristol	2	7.20	£ 9.10
Manchester	6	7.30	£ 2.50

and they practise asking and giving information at a station using the information supplied for this purpose. But the practice could be improved to create information gap in this way : the same practice is done, but the time-table is given to only one partner of each pair, the other is provided only with the requirements for information-getting (asking information about the train to four places: London, Leeds, Bristol, Manchester in turn). This could be given as class instruction before the practice is done in pairs. By so doing, the same teaching point is practised, but the practice becomes more communicative, because the learners are now bridging the information gap to get what they want to know. More motivation is added to the practice as well: that is, the 'need' to ask for information is created (so that the learners can report to the class what information they obtained through asking).

In short, the information gap technique is really useful for communicative language teaching in the classroom environment, since the classroom teacher can create an

information-gap appropriate to the teaching situation he is in. Used creatively, information-gap exercises may be truly 'the most fundamental in the whole area of communicative language teaching' as Morrow has evaluated it.

#### 5.5.5 Role-Play and Simulation

Role-play is a classroom activity which gives the learner the opportunities to practise not only the language, and aspects of the role behaviour (such as formality, register, function or attitude, acceptability and appropriateness), but also the actual role he may need outside the classroom. Gill Sturtridge evaluates role-play and simulation as 'rating highly as suitable vehicles to use in a communicative approach to language teaching' (1981:124).

Simulation is different from role-play. In a simulation, the learner will bring his own personality, experience and opinion to do the task in an imagining situation, with some essential 'facts' provided, but not invented by the learner. By Ken Jones' definition 'simulation is reality of function in a simulated and structural environment' (1982:5). But in a role-play exercise, the learner is not only given a role (as in simulated exercises), but also particular information about his role, which he must take into consideration



when doing the task ( after Livingstone, 1983). So, some activities can involve simultaneously both role-playing and simulation.

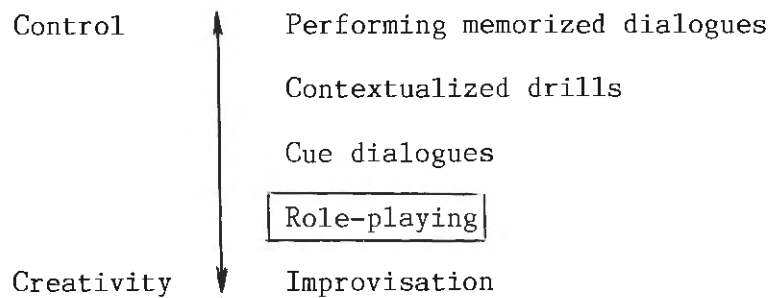
The terms role-play and simulation have been interpreted in many different ways by teachers and textbook writers. Among those who have discussed role-play and simulation in language teaching are Rivers (1981), Sturtridge (1981), Littlewood (1982), Ken Jones (1982), Livingstone (1983).

However, Littlewood's interpretation of these two techniques would seem to be the most explicit and appropriate one for the teaching of the target group under consideration. According to Littlewood, the situation for these techniques 'could be anything from a simple occurrence like meeting a friend in the street, to a much more complex event such as a series of business negotiations' (1981:49). The roles the learners are asked to act could be themselves in some cases, and a simulated identity in other cases. The techniques could be used both for pre-communicative activities and communicative activities. As he puts it :

'Simulation and role-playing are well-established as techniques for organizing controlled, pre-communicative language practice...[and] can be extended into the field of communicative activities.'

(1981:49)

In the second phase of communicative language learning, Littlewood suggests 5 types of role playing exercise to follow up the pre-communicative activities. In other words, Littlewood sees role-play and simulation as parts of the same continuum, which link pre-communicative and communicative activities :



(Littlewood,1981:50)

Figure 5.3 Control - Creativity continuum of activities.

The five types of role playing exercises are :

- (i) Role-playing controlled through cued dialogues.
- (ii) Role-playing controlled through cues and information.
- (iii) Role-playing through situations and goals.
- (iv) Role-playing in the form of debate and discussion.
- (v) Large-scale simulation activities.

(Littlewood,1981:49-59)

Among these types, the first four could be well used for the teaching of the target group, while the last one does not seem to be appropriate until the later stage

of study which is not the focus of this study. Among the first four types, the first three could be used extensively in classroom practice, while the fourth should be used with more consideration for the learners' level.

Like all teaching techniques or activities, role-play and simulation can only be effective when used appropriately. Used well, role-play and simulation can reduce the artificiality of the classroom, provide a reason for talking, and allow the learners to talk meaningfully to each other in the classroom. The misuse of techniques may end up in failure, as time wasting and ineffective. One of the solutions for role-play to be of maximum effectiveness is what Livingstone recommends as 'long term preparation' (1983 :48). That is, 'the replacing of mechanical stimulus/response drills with exercises which more closely resemble real communication' (1983:32). This includes formal oral practice of language items, dialogue work, conversational techniques and group work.

The above are some methodological considerations which focus mainly on the most controversial areas in communicative language teaching in Vietnam. The overall view discussed in this section can be summed up as follows : in order to teach language for communication successfully in Vietnam, the teacher should focus on both form and use while following the teaching process as going from form to use, promoting a systematic learning of the language . In doing

so, the teacher should resort to a combination of all techniques, old and new, and use them creatively in the actual teaching situations he is in.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has suggested a communicative structural approach as the solution to EFL teaching for adult learners in Vietnam. It has considered a desirable ratio of language form versus language use in a two-year general course for EFL adult learners in Vietnam, with more emphasis on form as the starting point. It has also proposed a communicative structural syllabus with a framework of needs analysis for the target group under consideration. And finally, the chapter has presented some methodological considerations, techniques and activities associated with the proposed communicative structural approach. The solution has reflected a moderate viewpoint, and an attempt to reconcile the two aspects of language learning : language form and language use, to suit the teaching and learning situations in Vietnam at the present time.

CONCLUSION

This study has been mainly concerned with the problems arising from the application of new ideas to communicative language teaching for adult learners in Vietnam. Thus, it has attempted to study the developments in communicative language teaching, and search for a reconciliation between form and use in a communicative syllabus. Finally, it has proposed a communicative structural approach as a solution to the problems discussed.

This solution represents a moderate viewpoint, for it has tried to keep the balance between language form and language function in the process of developing communicative competence to suit the teaching and learning situation in Vietnam. It is hoped the discussions on communicative language teaching and the suggested solution will be useful and appropriate for EFL teaching to adult learners in Vietnam.

While discussing language teaching methodology in general, this study has focused particularly on those areas of EFL teaching in Vietnam which are most controversial. Naturally, there are a number of areas which would benefit from further study.

The discussions of the Vietnamese EFL learners' styles and strategies (Chapter 1), and the evaluation

of the different syllabus models and methods (Chapters 3 and 4) are mainly based on theory, personal experience, observation and consultation, without any experimental or research data. Such research would surely be of value in confirming or contradicting the conclusions we have reached.

This study, therefore, is offered as a basis for further research.

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