

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL  
INSTITUTO DE LETRAS  
DEPARTAMENTO DE LÍNGUAS MODERNAS - INGLÊS

Communicative Language Teaching: an analysis of a teacher's beliefs and practice

Giuliana de Abreu Freitas Marques

PORTO ALEGRE

2012

GIULIANA DE ABREU FREITAS MARQUES

Communicative Language Teaching: an analysis of a teacher's beliefs and practice

Trabalho de conclusão de curso apresentado como requisito parcial para a obtenção do título de licenciado em Letras – Língua Inglesa e Literaturas de Língua Inglesa pelo Instituto de Letras da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.

Orientadora: Prof<sup>a</sup>. Dra<sup>a</sup>. Anamaria Kurtz de Souza Welp

Porto Alegre

2012

GIULIANA DE ABREU FREITAS MARQUES

Communicative Language Teaching: an analysis of a teacher's beliefs and practice

Trabalho de conclusão de curso apresentado como requisito parcial para a obtenção do título de licenciado em Letras – Língua Inglesa e Literaturas de Língua Inglesa pelo Instituto de Letras da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.

BANCA EXAMINADORA

---

Simone Sarmento

---

Daniela Doneda

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my parents, for their everlasting love and support, I am sorry for my absence during the development of this work;

To my advisor, Anamaria Welp, for her careful guidance, patience and understanding of my difficulties;

To my friend Paula Bohrer, a very special person who I met in the first semester of the course and I hope she will remain in my life forever;

To my dear Alexandre Melatte, thank you for your fondness and for listening to my anxieties during this last semester;

To my coworkers, as each of them has contributed with his/her skills to build myself as a teacher;

## RESUMO

Diante do fenômeno da globalização, a necessidade de comunicar-se em uma língua estrangeira tem aumentado significativamente, e, para atender a essa demanda, diversas técnicas de ensino têm sido utilizadas. O presente estudo tem como objetivo investigar técnicas de abordagem comunicativa utilizadas por uma professora de inglês em curso livre situado em Porto Alegre. Através de entrevista com a professora e duas horas e trinta minutos de observações de aula, o estudo observou como se dá o uso da linguagem em sala de aula e de que forma a experiência da professora como aluna se reflete em sua prática. Após transcrição e análise dos dados, concluiu-se que nas aulas observadas a língua inglesa não é utilizada como ferramenta para interação social.

## ABSTRACT

Given the phenomenon of globalization, the need of communicating in a foreign language has increased significantly, and, to attend this demand, several teaching techniques have been used. The present study aims to investigate communicative language teaching techniques used by a English teacher at a private English course located in Porto Alegre. Through an interview with the teacher and class observations, this research focused on observing how language is used in the classroom and how the teacher's experience as a student reflects on her practice. After transcription and data analysis, it was possible to conclude that in the observed classes the English language is not used as a tool for social interaction.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION .....	8
2. COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING .....	10
2.1 The development of CLT .....	10
2.2 Language Use .....	14
3. RESEARCH CONTEXT .....	15
3.1. The School .....	15
3.2. The Teacher .....	16
3.3. The Participants .....	17
3.4. Methodology .....	17
3.4.1 Objectives .....	18
3.4.2 Data collecting .....	18
3.4.3 Data Analysis .....	19
3.4.3.1 Class 1 .....	19
3.4.3.2 Class 2 .....	21
4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	23
5. REFERENCES .....	25
6. APPENDIX .....	26
6.1 Appendix 1 – Teacher’s authorization .....	26
6.2 Appendix 2 - Student’s authorization .....	27
6.3 Appendix 3 - Interview.....	28

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century our world has seen the phenomenon of globalization, which has certainly changed our lifestyle. This global movement has had a great impact in people's everyday life as they had never had so many possibilities of travelling to other countries or using telecommunication such as phones and the world wide web which connects people around the globe in a fast way through internet. The economy has had a chance to expand with a global trade market and cultural exchange that have been spreading brands and trends to every country, thus increasing sells. People have never had so many opportunities of interacting with others around the world and goods have never been so accessible.

To be able to enjoy all this innovation people felt the necessity of learning foreign languages in order to fill in jobs that started to demand bilingual employees, to access information, to travel, to communicate in general, and language teaching has followed this movement by developing a variety of methods to promote learning according to each person's goals. From this necessity of communicating in different contexts that the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged in the 1970s and have gained strength influencing approaches around the world. It has become a trend and as mentioned by Brown (2000) no one these days would admit a disbelief in principles of CLT without taking the risk of being marked as a heretic. This concept has left other approaches aside and teachers have been encouraged to implement CLT despite their training or beliefs.

When I started teaching, I used to expect to find a magic teaching methodology that would fit to all my students perfectly. Unfortunately it does not exist and choosing an effective and interesting method to approach language in class can be a hard task since there are some factors which influence the students' expectations towards the English subject, for instance the difference in interests and goals among age groups and learning style profiles. Additionally there is the socio economic background that builds the subject and his/her perception of the meaning of learning (DAYRELL, 1996). Independently of these factors, it is commonly agreed that, when students recognize significance in learning, it tends to flow better than when their only goal is a final exam. Coll (1994, p.10) states that



The significance of learning is directly linked to its functionality. That the knowledge learned – facts, concepts, ways or skills, values, attitudes, norms, etc – is functional, that is, that it can be used effectively when the circumstances in which the students is require so, should be a constant concern of school education. (my translation)<sup>1</sup>

Considering that students get motivated when they are able to recognize the functionality of learning and that it is the key to a profitable approach in class, CLT is in line with this assumption since it aims to provide the learner with communicative competence to his/her needs.

This study is a result from my interest in this so called approach and desire to learn more about it. The choice for observing classes was motivated by the premise that we are constantly learning and one way of doing so is to learn from people who surround us and, through their experience, to reflect about our own.

---

<sup>1</sup> A significância da aprendizagem está muito diretamente vinculada com a sua funcionalidade. Que os conhecimentos aprendidos - fatos, conceitos, jeitos ou habilidades, valores, atitudes, normas, etc - sejam funcionais, isto é, que possam ser efetivamente utilizados quando as circunstâncias nas quais o aluno se encontra assim o exigem, deve ser uma preocupação constante da educação escolar.

## 2. COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

This section is divided in two parts. First, I introduce the development of communicative language teaching. Next, the contemporary concept of language use is approached.

### 2.1 The Development of Communicative Language Teaching

What we now understand as communicative approach started to emerge at the time when the current practice was determined by Behaviorism, which hypothesized that listening to model dialogues, mimicry and memorization activities were the primary processes in language development. In the 60's, Behaviorism was confronted by American linguist Noam Chomsky and his Innatist theory, which is mainly concerned with first language acquisition and claims that people are born with a language acquisition device that contains the main rules for all possible languages, denominated Universal Grammar. According to Cowie (2008), Chomsky stated that children construct the set of grammar rules of their native language by hypotheses testing, in other words, by listening to others and creating sentences to test the rules.

In the 70's the American linguist Stephen Krashen relied on Chomsky's Innatist Perspective to develop "a monitor model of second language performance", which was described in five hypotheses (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2006) – the acquisition-learning distinction, which defines *acquisition* as a natural learning process and *learning* as a consequence of explicit elicitation of structures; the natural order hypothesis, which states that in the process of acquiring grammar, some structures are usually acquired earlier than others; the monitor hypothesis, which claims that, if under the conditions of time to think about the use, focus on form and knowledge of the rule, *acquisition* would initiate the utterance and *learning* would monitor its rules; the input hypothesis, which considers that input should be a little above of the learners competence so that he could advance; and the affective filter hypothesis, which recognizes that affective variables influence the process.

Also during that period of time, the anthropological linguist Dell Hymes questioned Chomsky's innatist theory by arguing that language acquisition and use not only required linguistic competence, but also sociolinguistic competence. Hymes

coined the term *communicative competence* meaning the combination of the knowledge about structures and rules to use language in different contexts (CELCE-MURCIA, 2007).

These innovative assumptions began a shift in the perception of language, which first was seen as a unitary system and, from that moment on, started to be described as a form of social activity, in other words, from what language “is” to what language “does” (ELLIS, 1981). It was a change in the focus from linguistic competence to communicative competence, which is not only to develop structural aspects of language, but most importantly to understand its functional aspect in a context.

Communicative Language Teaching for second language emerged from this new conception in which the goal of learning is to develop communicative competence in order to use the target language in realistic and meaningful ways, such as exchange of information or opinion (SCRIVENER, 2005).

There is no official definition of what CLT is exactly because it is not a method since it does not have determined syllabus and procedure, instead it follows principles that aim to facilitate rather than prescript how to communicate. In *Teaching by Principles* (2000), Douglas Brown states that if there is a currently recognized approach that is generally accepted in the field it would be the communicative approach, mainly because of the innumerable ways of defining and interpreting it, and lists six characteristics of a communicative approach:

1. Classroom goals are focused on all the components (grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic) of communicative competence. Goals therefore must intertwine the organizational aspects of language with the pragmatic;
2. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus, but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes;
3. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more

importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use;

4. Students in a communicative class ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom. Classroom tasks must therefore equip students with the skills necessary for communication in those contexts;
5. Students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an understanding of their own styles of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning;
6. The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide, not an all-knowing bestower of knowledge. Students are therefore encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with others.

In *Communicative Language Teaching Today*, Richards (2006, p. 22) also considers CLT a set of principles that can be applied in different ways, depending on the teaching context, the age of the learners, their level and their learning goals. He lists ten core assumptions that underlie the practice of CLT:

1. Second language learning is facilitated when learners are engaged in interaction and meaningful communication.
2. Effective classroom learning tasks and exercises provide opportunities for students to negotiate meaning, expand their language resources, notice how language is used, and take part in meaningful interpersonal exchange.
3. Meaningful communication results from students processing content that is relevant, purposeful, interesting, and engaging.
4. Communication is a holistic process that often calls upon the use of several language skills or modalities.
5. Language learning is facilitated both by activities that involve inductive or discovery learning of underlying rules of language use and organization, as well as by those involving language analysis and reflection.
6. Language learning is a gradual process that involves creative use of language, and trial and error. Although errors are a normal product of

learning, the ultimate goal of learning is to be able to use the new language both accurately and fluently.

7. Learners develop their own routes to language learning, progress at different rates, and have different needs and motivations for language learning.
8. Successful language learning involves the use of effective learning and communication strategies.
9. The role of the teacher in the language classroom is that of a facilitator, who creates a classroom climate conducive to language learning and provides opportunities for students to use and practice the language and to reflect on language use and language learning.
10. The classroom is a community where learners learn through collaboration and sharing.

Richards (2006, p. 3) mentions what the goals of CLT should be:

- Knowing how to vary our use of language according to the settings and participants (e.g., knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication);
- Knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts (e.g., narratives, reports, interviews, conversations);
- Knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge (e.g., through using different kinds of communication strategies).

CLT has brought different settings to the classroom, such as the roles of teachers, who no longer are the center of the class but are now expected to be monitors and guiders, and students who have to change the expectation of being filled with information to a more responsible action for their own learning. There are also different class activities to practice useful language and exchange information, such as role plays, information-gap and opinion-sharing activities, emphasis on pair and group work.

## 2.2 LANGUAGE USE

Every day language is used to do things in the world, such as instructing, planning an event, gossiping, acting in a play, dealing with business, in other words, we use it to interact with our reality. This concept of language for teaching approach based on interaction is brought up in the Curricular References of Rio Grande do Sul (2009), concerning mother language and additional language teaching, arts and physical education, which are subjects that integrate the area of languages and codes. Each of these subjects represents a language code and according to the document the aim of school should be to enable the learner to interact and express him/herself in different contexts of society using these codes. This proposal to adopt a sociolinguistic perspective towards second language teaching is in accordance with the principles of CLT and the concept of language and social practice.

According to Clark (1996), languages would not exist if it were not for the social activities of which they are instruments, and the use of a language implies that someone is trying to say something to someone else who is capable of understanding the message. Schlatter et al. (2004) points out that the use of language is characterized by serving to the purposes of the participants, even if the utterances are not well-formed. Based on these statements it is possible to say that the use of language is a joint action built by the participants who are engaged in interacting through language. This interaction may take place through conversations, signs or the understanding of the instructions of a manual on how to operate a machine.

Clark (1996) develops six propositions regarding language use. He states that language is a tool that is used in order to do something and it requires a minimum of two agents, either individuals or institutions, to perform language use. These two involved components must be able to understand the signs used in the interaction. Face to face conversation is considered the basic scenario for language use, as it is the most common one, and from it there are several derivations. Using language as a tool can also have different layers, such as when the speaker is telling a story or acting but he/she is not the one who is responsible for the statements. Lastly, Clark asserts that the language

should be studied both as a cognitive and a social science, since to understand the phenomenon of communication it is necessary to analyze not only the individual action but also how it works in conjunction with other.

Having noticed some common CLT principles in different literature (RICHARDS, 2006; BROWN, 2000; ELLIS, 1981), this paper will consider these assumptions as the core of a communicative approach:

1. English language is used for social practice;
2. Emphasis on the communicative situation more than on the correct structure;
3. Teacher as a facilitator, not the center of the class;
4. Use of techniques to promote contextualized, purposeful and interesting communication.

Language use will be considered every natural interaction among the participants to effectively act in the world.

The next section presents the research context and is divided in four parts that outline the characteristics of the school, participants and methodology involved in the work.

### 3 RESEARCH CONTEXT

#### 3.1 The School

The research was conducted in a franchise of a private English course that has been in the market for 28 years, with 16 units in Rio Grande do Sul. It is located in the south zone of Porto Alegre, RS. It has seven classrooms, all equipped with a stereo. Among these classrooms, there is an internet room with three computers, an e-board room, a DVD room and a kitchen. Most students in this

course come from private schools of the neighborhood and all of them have to take a placement test to be designated to a level according to their knowledge and age, in which text books are used.

The course claims to apply different teaching methodologies in order to embrace the multiple intelligences theory proposed by the American psychologist Howard Gardner in 1993<sup>2</sup>. Teachers meet once a week to update and adapt lesson plans according to their groups. Having worked with these plans for almost two years I have noticed that most activities follow the principles of the CLT, aiming at more dynamic and meaningful tasks. I believe that most of these activities are in accordance with the communicative needs of students, however I wonder if teachers apply the principles of CLT to their classroom management. As a consequence the tasks might not be as successful as they could.

In this study two classes of a beginner level group were observed. This level adopts the text book *American Inspiration for Teens 2* published by Macmillan. In its introduction the publisher claims to provide a broad range of materials to give the opportunity to cross-curricular and cross-cultural work so that the students learn about life and world through English. It states that the prose texts and dialogues are focused on topics of interest and relevance of the students' lives.

### 3.2 The Teacher

The teacher, who at the time of this research had been at the current job for six years, started teaching in 1998 and obtained a degree in languages in 2001 at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. During the interview she defined CLT as a way of teaching that emphasizes interaction among students and considers it helpful to create real situations to use the language. Regarding her experience as a student, it was reported that interaction among students was rare and classes were based on a grammar book, as well as reading and listening activities. She mentioned that speaking activities were basically repeating model dialogues extracted from the

---

<sup>2</sup> In his book *Multiple Intelligences – The Theory in Practice* (1993), Gardner states that there are eight intelligence profiles – spatial-visual, logical-mathematical, linguistic, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalistic. According to this theory, in order to achieve successful learning, different approaches should be worked to stimulate all profiles.



book, which sometimes were recorded in order to listen to their own voices, recognize mistakes and try to improve pronunciation.

### 3.3 The Participants

The group observed was at a beginner level and had classes twice a week at 8:30 to 09:45. It is composed by four students, two male and two female. Student 1, male, is seventeen years old. Student 2, female, is thirteen years old. For both students 1 and 2 it was their first semester in the English course. Student 3, male, and 4, female, are fourteen years old and it was their second semester studying English. Since they are under age, it was necessary to collect authorization from their parents (appendix 2, page 27).

### 3.4 Methodology

The following questions guided my investigation:

- What are this teacher's knowledge and beliefs regarding communicative language teaching?
- What communicative techniques does she implement in class?
- Are any of the previous learning experiences reported by her during the interview observed in her teaching practice?

In order to answer these questions, an interview composed by six questions (appendix 3, page 28) was conducted with the teacher subject in the second semester of 2012. After that I attended two classes with duration of one hour and fifteen minutes each that resulted in two hours and thirty minutes of class observation. Both classes were audio recorded. Next, some relevant excerpts of the audio recording were transcribed. According to Richards (1998, *apud* PIROVANO, 2001), teachers carry beliefs built through time, educational background, personality

and studies, and with all these in mind he/she develops his/her classes. Sadalla (1998, *apud* MULIK, 2009) states that our beliefs and experiences build our reality. Therefore the teacher subject in this investigation was interviewed before the class observation in order to collect personal data about her educational background and to have an authorization to use the data collected (appendix 1, page 26). The questions of the interview aimed to know her teaching experience and her knowledge concerning CLT. I believe this information is important to know her impressions on CLT and to observe if her previous experience reflects on her classroom practice.

The group that participated in this investigation was selected according to my own availability of time to attend the classes and to the agreement of the pedagogical coordinator and of the observed teacher.

#### 3.4.1 Objectives

The present paper aims to investigate the comprehension and beliefs of an English language teacher at a private course regarding communicative language teaching by analyzing her practice and the communicative techniques implemented in classroom by her.

#### 3.4.2 Data Collection

The information about the teacher was collected in an interview guided by six questions (appendix 3, page 28). Two classes were attended in order to collect data through audio recording and field notes. The first class was attended by all students, but Student 2 missed the second day. Both classes had as a grammar topic the future with “going to”, which was completely new to this group.

### 3.4.3 Data Analysis

The teacher subject demonstrated enthusiasm by arriving earlier in both days to prepare the materials she would need and smiling to the students. She was also very sympathetic to me, answering all my questions promptly. Through the interview it was possible to notice that she is aware of the main principles of CLT, possibly because of her formal teaching education and experience, and it was also possible to observe that she recognizes that the goal of learning a language is to interact in real life situations.

Having attended two classes, I chose to gather some significant excerpts of speech formulated by teacher and students which expressed opinion or illustrated a situation. The conversations and activities performed in class were analyzed under the CLT perspective, however I am aware that a teaching practice is not shallow; it is shaped by a teacher's own understanding, beliefs, style and level of experience (LARSEN-FREEMAN, 2000), consequently it can be permeated by a variety of principles rooted in previous experiences and the teacher may have her reasons to use these approaches instead of CLT or others. For reasons of time constraint, this research attended only two classes, therefore the observations about it can not be generalized.

#### 3.4.3.1 Class 1 – October, 22<sup>nd</sup>

The teacher speaks a great amount of English in class greeting and giving instructions, but students hardly ever produce language if it is not a restricted practice, such as reading the answer of an exercise, without real communicative intention. By some situations, it was possible to infer that the target language is not seen as a vehicle for class communication, instead it seems to be perceived as an object of study only, perhaps because the communicative aim of the activities was not clear to the students. To illustrate, observe these two excerpts:

EXCERPT 1

T: who starts?

S1: eu deixo vocês começarem.

S2: Não, começa vocês...  
S3: Precisa escrever ou não?  
T: No, just say. What do you want? You and S2.  
S2: o do meio  
T: this one?  
S2: é.

#### EXCERPT 2

T: ok guys, olhem aqui.  
S4: posso ir no banheiro?  
T: bem rápido, five minutes. Guys, you have here 'go to the mall'...

In E1 the group was going to start playing a tic tac toe game. The teacher had drawn a grid on the board and placed some cards of verbs in the base form which have irregular past form facing down. She performed all the instructions in the target language and students were able to understand it but they only communicated in their native language. E2 is an example of a probable frequent situation in class, but neither of the participants used English, even though basic classroom communication structures could be required at this level.

According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), CLT permits the use of a reasonable amount of the native language, however in both situations teacher and students had an opportunity to negotiate meaning or were even able to produce simple sentences. It is relevant to observe that the teacher uses English for every enunciation that is linked to what is being taught, such as instructions and eliciting words, but it does not apply to further conversation.

It was possible to notice that although there is not much real communication in the target language, the teacher values students' interaction when it comes to help each other about topics they already know. The following excerpt was extracted from students' conversation while playing the irregular verbs game, which has already been mentioned. S1 could not remember a past form and his sister, who was from the opponent group, encouraged him to remember the word by giving him tips.

S1: Como é que é o *have* mesmo?  
S2: Tu não lembra?  
S1: Tá não sei.  
S2: Do exercício lá da outra aula.  
S1: Sei lá.  
S2: Ai mano eu não acredito que tu não lembra.  
T: People, you have to work together (T tries to include S4 because she is S1's pair in the task)  
S2: Tu lembra sim que eu sei.

Even though there is no real communication in the target language in this situation, letting students negotiate meaning and stimulate each other is still a positive attitude since it enables students' autonomy and also promotes cooperative learning. Learners tend to feel more comfortable when helped by their peers and the one who helps develops confidence in his/her knowledge.

Next the teacher introduced the grammar topic future using "going to". After eliciting the grammar structure on the board and having worked with restricted practice in a book activity, students had to ask each other about their plans for the weekend and after that they had to report it to the other classmates. As the teacher finished explaining, S3 asked the following:

S3: tem que gravar o que falar ou não?

T: se tu prestar atenção no que ela disser tu vai lembrar né. Ok?

S3: mas nem é importante.

T: como assim? Uma information. Tá guys, vamos lá.

Even though the activity aimed at exchanging information, it was not real language use as it followed a book script and did not meet the students' interest, which can be noticed when S3 did not see any purpose on remembering the information. It made me reflect on how challenging it is to plan classes according to students' interests as these topics may be unpredictable.

#### 3.4.3.2 Class 2 – October, 24<sup>th</sup>

The second class started with a pronunciation exercise in which the teacher gave the students four signs numbered one to four. She explained that they would listen to a word and then raise one of the signs according to the number of syllables of this word. After each word, she wrote it on the board, separated syllables and asked the students where the stressed one was, which was also answered by raising a sign, followed by group repetition. Some traits of the speaking exercises reported by the teacher about her education can be perceived since it aimed at improvement of pronunciation only, using random words out of context. This exercise seems to be based on audio-lingual method, which, unlike CLT, works with several

drills and immediate correction of grammar or pronunciation mistakes in order to avoid the formation of bad habits (LARSEN-FREEMAN, 2000).

Next, a grammar practice exercise from the book composed by isolated sentences was assigned to be completed using *going to*. There were eight sentences, divided in affirmative, negative and interrogative forms, as the following example:

1 They/ have a barbecue

2 We/not/be late

3 She/talk to him?

During the correction, the teacher called students to read their answers to the group and form was strongly emphasized:

S4: We not going to be late.

T: Something missing... o que que faltou?

[...]

T: People, we can't forget the verb to be.

I believe that these kinds of activities, that clearly have no communicative aim, may contribute very little to language acquisition since students may not comprehend the real use of this structure as it is decontextualized. Additionally, it is hard to tell if students understand the vocabulary exposed as it does not have a context from which students could infer meanings.

It is possible to notice that both classes strictly followed the grammatical sequence proposed by the book. This is still a common practice which is based on a concept of language as it is something steady and abstract.

#### 4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This investigation aimed at observing an English teacher's practice under the light of Communicative Language Teaching in order to identify the communicative techniques she implemented in class and to verify how much her beliefs regarding CLT and previous learning experiences influenced her practice. The data collected were analyzed based on CLT principles, which claims that language teaching should aim at communicative competence in order to have students use the target language in realistic and meaningful situations, and the concept of language and social practice brought up in the Curricular References of Rio Grande do Sul (2009), which consider the language a tool to be used in social practice. Both references value sociolinguistic competence, in other words, the ability to interact with other speakers and the world by communicating and understanding.

After the analysis it is possible to infer that the teacher subject in this investigation does not privilege sociolinguistic competence in her classes, although in the interview that preceded the class observation she had recognized the importance of a communicative approach in order to prepare students to real situations. This situation may be generated by the current syllabus strictly connected to the text book which can restrict the teacher's practice in order to cover the demands. She effectively uses language when she speaks most of the time in English to give instructions, but this principle does not guide other class activities. According to Clark (1996), we use language as a tool to perform social activities, but in the group observed, every time there was an opportunity to express needs or opinions, the target language was not used. This posture may be related to her previous experiences as a learner as she reported that her English classes were based on repeating model dialogues and activities on the book with no significant interaction among students.

During the observations several times I recognized actions that I have been doing, such as not demanding students to communicate as much as possible in the target language and giving more importance to grammar rules, as if it were an

important preparation for later real language use. Having read more about language use and the different scenarios in which it takes place (CLARK, 1996 *apud* AZEVEDO; GARCEZ, 2000; REFERENCIAIS CURRICULARES DO RS, 2009), I also noticed the need for working with different genres, not only speech. Although no writing, reading or listening activity was observed in the classes mentioned in this paper, I have noticed the need for practicing these skills since several times students have difficulties in recognizing the difference between a newspaper article and a literary narrative text, which impairs a full comprehension of it. This investigation made me reflect on my own practice developing greater awareness of the importance of providing students with situations to interact with both speakers and different types of texts using language as a tool to exchange information or perform actions rather than focusing on correct grammar structures with no immediate aim. Another observed issue is the challenge of adapting lessons for students' interests and needs, which was commented in Class 1 when a student was not motivated to use the language to exchange information about plans for the weekend.



## REFERENCES

BROWN, Douglas. Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy. 2nd ed. White Plains, NY: Longman. 2000. p. 39-54.

CELCE-MURCIA, M. "Rethinking the role of communicative competence in language teaching". In: SOLER, E. A. & JORDÁ, M. P. S. (eds.). Intercultural Language Use and Language Learning. Dordrecht: Springer, 2007, p. 41-57.

CLARK, Herbert. O Uso da Linguagem. In: Cadernos de Tradução, Porto Alegre, n 9, janeiro-março, 2000, p. 55-80.

COWIE, Fiona. Innateness and Language. Disponível em <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/innateness-language>> Acesso em: 9 Dez 2012

ELLIS, Rod. Informal and formal approaches to communicative language teaching. 1982

LIGHTBOWN, P.M; SPADA, N. Chapter 2: Explaining Second Language Learning. In: How languages are learned. Third Edition. OUP. 2006. p. 29-49.

RICHARDS, Jack. Communicative Language Teaching Today. Cambridge University Press. 2006.

RIO GRANDE DO SUL, Secretaria do Estado da Educação. Departamento pedagógico. (Org.). Referencial Curricular Lições do Rio Grande: Linguagens, Códigos e suas Tecnologias – Língua Portuguesa, Literatura e Língua Estrangeira Moderna. 1ed. Porto Alegre: Secretaria de Estado da Educação do Rio Grande do Sul, 2009, v.1., p. 37-44.

SCHLATTER, Margarete; GARCEZ, Pedro de M.; SCARAMUCCI, Matilde V. R. (2004) O papel da interação na pesquisa sobre aquisição e uso de língua estrangeira: implicações para o ensino e para a avaliação. Letras de Hoje, 39 (3): 345-378.

SCRIVENER, J. Chapter 7: Speaking. In. Learning Teaching: a guidebook for English teachers. Second Edition. Macmillan, 2005. p. 146-163.

## APPENDIX 1 – TEACHER'S AUTHORIZATION

### TERMO DE CONSENTIMENTO INFORMADO E ESCLARECIDO

Eu, \_\_\_\_\_, declaro por meio deste termo que AUTORIZO a utilização das informações por mim fornecidas para fins de coleta de dados para uso em Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso de Graduação em Letras, realizado pela aluna Giuliana Marques sob a orientação da Prof<sup>a</sup> Dr. Anamaria Kurtz de Souza Welp da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.

Declaro que fui informado que o objetivo desta pesquisa é realizar uma reflexão sobre a prática da abordagem comunicativa no ensino da língua inglesa, e que os dados coletados serão, posteriormente, organizados e analisados, preservando a identidade do participante.

Porto Alegre, \_\_\_\_ de \_\_\_\_ de 2012.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assinatura do Pesquisador

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assinatura do Pesquisado

## APPENDIX 2 – STUDENT'S AUTHORIZATION

### TERMO DE CONSENTIMENTO INFORMADO E ESCLARECIDO

Eu, \_\_\_\_\_, declaro por meio deste termo que AUTORIZO a utilização das informações fornecidas por meu filho/filha \_\_\_\_\_ para fins de coleta de dados para uso em Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso de Graduação em Letras, realizado pela aluna Giuliana Marques sob a orientação da Prof<sup>a</sup> Dr. Anamaria Kurtz de Souza Welp da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.

Declaro que fui informado que o objetivo desta pesquisa é realizar uma reflexão sobre a prática da abordagem comunicativa no ensino da língua inglesa, e que os dados coletados serão, posteriormente, organizados e analisados, preservando a identidade do participante.

Porto Alegre, \_\_\_\_ de \_\_\_\_ de 2012.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assinatura do Pesquisador

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assinatura do Pesquisado

### APPENDIX 3 – INTERVIEW

1. Do you have a degree in Languages?
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. How long have you been teaching in this school?
4. What were your English classes like when you were a student? Do you remember any of the activities you used to do in class as a student?
5. What do you know about communicative language teaching?
6. What is your opinion/impression concerning communicative approach?