**Language teaching methods and approaches**

**Basic definitions**

'Technique', 'method' and 'approach' are terms which recur so often in the field of language teaching that they need to be defined in order to draw a distinction between them.

**Technique**

This is what actually goes on in the classroom as an implementation of a method, which in turn is an application of an approach. A technique refers to all the activities used by the teacher and performed by the pupils in the classroom. For example, audio-visual aids such as language labs, tape recorders, television set, slides, video recorders are techniques which are used to achieve an immediate objective. Some techniques are used with a variety of methods such as imitation and repetition.

**Method**

This is the application of the principles underlying a particular approach. A method consists of the use of a certain number of techniques in a systematic way in order to achieve the aim of language teaching. It includes decisions made about the objectives, the syllabus, the types of activities and tasks, the roles of teachers, the roles of students and instructional materials. All these components must be in harmony with the basic principles of the selected approach. A method is procedural in the sense that it shows accurately how a language should be taught as it deals with the practical side of foreign language instruction. A method is more general than a technique and more specific than an approach.

**Approach**

This term is relatively new compared to the term 'method'. An approach refers to the principles or assumptions underlying the process of language teaching and learning. It is also a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of the language teaching and learning. It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught.

Technique, method and approach are interdependent. They are arranged in the form of a hierarchy in which 'approach' is placed at the top followed by 'method' and then 'technique'.

**Teaching methods and approaches**

In language teaching, there are constant changes and developments of teaching methods and approaches. This can be attributed to the different focuses on different types of language skills either written or oral, to the realisation that a given method or approach carries certain limitations which render it unable to meet the needs of the learners for real communication or to the development of the need for communication especially after the Second World War. Each new method or approach is built on the limitations of the preceding one. The following are the most common language teaching methods and approaches and their shortcomings.

**Grammar-translation method**

A method of language teaching which was developed in Europe and dominant in the eighteenth till nineteenth century, the grammar-translation method was based on the method of studying Latin and Greek adopted by Europeans in the Middle Ages. The language teaching method emphasized the teaching of formal grammatical rules and translating foreign language written texts into one’s mother tongue with detailed grammatical analysis. It is the earliest and the most traditional method of foreign language teaching, employed mainly when studying and reading academic literature. It was initially called the Grammar method and could also be called the Translation method, Classical method and Traditional method.

The Grammar—translation method was first adopted by Europeans in the Middle Ages when Latin and Greek were learned and taught. In fact, Latin and Greek dominated the school curriculum at the time and this situation continued till the end of the eighteenth century. The actual purpose of language learning was to train the ‘faculties’ of the brain, and produce scholars. The learning of a foreign language was considered an intellectual discipline. People were of the opinion that Latin and Greek were the repositories of ancient civilization. A major part of the curriculum and time in schools were devoted solely to achieving the goals of Latin/Greek teaching/learning. It was considered a matter of prestige to know the two languages.

Because the so-called ‘superior’ languages like Latin and Greek were taught through the Grammar-translation method only, it became very natural that, when students began to learn a modern foreign language and when the teaching/ learning of a modern foreign language first became popular, the same language teaching method was imitated, since the basic goal was not communication but translation of the foreign language into the native language—or vice versa. Furthermore, there was no other foreign language teaching method generally known at the time. Textbooks were prepared to teach ‘modern languages’ on similar lines to those of Latin and Greek. In such books, grammar rules are introduced at the beginning, followed by written exercises and a bilingual vocabulary list. At the end of the vocabulary list, construction of sentences and later paradigm texts are taught with grammatical analysis, followed by translation. Each grammatical point is explained in detail and illustrations are given in plenty. The students are expected to memorize the rules of grammar (Rivers, 1972: 16).

The procedures of the Grammar-translation method typically involve:

* A summary of the main content of the text using the mother tongue so that learners can get a general idea of what they are going to learn. This is the first step of explaining, understanding, analyzing and translating the foreign language text.
* Explaining the language points and literal meaning of the difficult words and each sentence with grammatical analysis and translation into the mother tongue. Language teaching proceeds with rules of formal grammar, isolated vocabulary items (usually the new and difficult words and expressions), application of grammatical rules to the explanation, and analysis of the paradigm text and translation.
* Reading and translating the whole text into the mother tongue, and a final summary of the text also in the mother tongue.
* Questions and answers, reading and writing practice and exercises. These mainly focus on the application of grammatical rules, the translation of the new and difficult words and expressions and typical sentence patterns into the mother tongue and, at the advanced level, vice versa.
* In the whole process of using the method to teach a foreign language, the mother tongue has always been used as a medium of instruction, emphasizing the reading and writing aspects of the foreign language being taught without paying much attention to the speaking and listening (Richards and Rodgers, 1986:3–4).

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| **Content** | Linguistic notions: Rules and exceptions  Morphology of words  Syntax: Parts of the sentence  Simple and complex sentences |
| **Objectives** | The study of literary works is the ultimate goal  Extra-linguistic goal: mental gymnastics |
| **Materials** | The grammar book  The dictionary |
| **Procedures** | Explanations in the mother tongue by the teacher, who has a central role  Meta-language used for grammatical notions  Practice exercises to apply the notions in a deductive way  Memorization of long vocabulary lists  Reading comprehension and vocabulary exercises of a text  Translation of literary texts  Compositions |
| **Assessment** | Exams to evaluate the capacity to understand written texts and to translate sentences |

Criticisms of the Grammar-translation method by language teaching theorists focus on its emphasis of the mental, intellectual, disciplinary and memorisation orientation while ignoring the speaking and listening communication aspect of the foreign language being learned/ taught. In addition, this method was not based on any explicit psycholinguistic or sociolinguistic theory. Therefore, it did not concern itself with how learners learn the language or how they actually use it. Its main concern was purely linguistic. In the Grammar-translation method, little stress is laid on accurate pronunciation and intonation. Communication skills are neglected; there is a great deal of stress on knowing grammatical rules and exceptions, but little training in using the language actively to express one’s own meaning even in writing. The language learned is mostly of a literary type, and the vocabulary is detailed and sometimes esoteric. The average student has to work hard at what he considers laborious and monotonous core vocabulary learning, translation and endless written exercises, without much feeling of progress in the mastery of the language and with very little opportunity to express themselves through it.

In spite of vehement criticisms of the method, the very fact that it continued over a long period of time as a preferable way and is still being partly used by some foreign language teachers suggests that not only no alternative better than the Grammar-translation method was available to teachers, but it also has some valuable points we should learn from even today. It can increase reading comprehension and make the comparison of the differences between the foreign language being learned/ taught and the mother tongue. It has a less strict requirement of the qualifications and competencies of the teacher to enable them to teach the foreign language. Large-size foreign language classes can be taught with the method.

In the early nineteenth century, notions about the view of language, language learning and language teaching were moving towards reform. The Grammar-translation method, after a long period of domination, was challenged by the forces of reform at the end of the century, as a more rational and more practical approach. Foundations were laid for new approaches towards language teaching/learning methods. However, traces of the Grammar-translation method can still be found even today in some language teaching classes.

**The Reform Movement**

The Reform Movement, which is usually connected with the development of modern language teaching principles during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, has to be seen as a **reaction against the traditional grammar-translation** method. **Innovations** were worked out especially with respect to the teaching of **pronunciation** and **grammar** as well as to methods **and visual and aural materials**.

First hints, which can be regarded as preliminary remarks for the Reform Movement, can be found in the 1860s and 1870s. In prefaces to textbooks, for example, some authors supported the idea of modernizing foreign language teaching by a more natural and pupil-centered approach. The most important impetus, however, was given by the German teacher and scholar **Wilhelm VIËTOR**, who published a famous and partially sarcastic pamphlet in 1882 entitled ‘Language teaching must start afresh!’. ‘Viëtor’s appeal was heard all over Europe and also in America, especially after he started a review…that popularized the new approach’ (Titone, 1968:38). He denounced the defenders of the old grammar-translation method, which was connected with the teaching of Latin and had traditionally been transferred to the teaching of modern languages. The best-known innovation called for by Viëtor’s essay was that of a **monolingual principle** in foreign language teaching which led to the so-called direct method. Thus the foreign language as the normal means of classroom communication should provide the basis of instruction, and **oral skills** should enable the pupils to use the foreign language as a means of understanding and producing sentences in everyday situations.

Psychological principles of language acquisition were derived from the common-sense psychology of those days, which was combined with the idea that the process of learning languages depended on the **forming of associations**. On the one hand, pupils were supposed to acquire a foreign language **similarly to the process of learning one’s mother tongue**; on the other hand, the monolingual method was thought to help pupils to associate words and structures with their meanings in a **direct way**. Moreover, one could see the **first signs** that learner-oriented teaching had to deal with the fact that there were **different types of learners**, i.e. the visual, the aural, and the audio-visual type. A great number of the founders of the Reform Movement were linguists, who in the beginning gave **priority to phonetics**. The international phonetic association **(IPA)** was founded in 1886 by a group of Frenchmen under the leadership of **Paul Passy**, who was soon joined by Jesperson, Viëtor, and Sweet. The international phonetic alphabet provided the basis not only for research work but also for the **training of pronunciation** in foreign language classes. Special courses were designed for the first weeks of language learning. The pupils should train their ears, their organs of speech, and undertake phonetic transcriptions. As teachers had to be well trained in phonetics, too, they were expected to have travelled to the foreign countries, and native speakers were asked to assist in foreign language classes.

Great phoneticians have assisted in the improvement of FLT. The name of **Henry Sweet** (1845–1912) deserves to be mentioned in this connection. Besides a priority for phonetics Sweet repeatedly stresses the fact that **every language has its own structure, and can therefore not be forced into the straitjacket of Latin** **grammar**. The most significant change that was caused by the Reform Movement, however, was a **new attitude** towards the teaching of grammar. The reformers were convinced that there was a natural order in learning languages, namely listening, speaking, reading, writing and finally grammar. The **old deductive** way of learning grammar was now replaced by an **inductive or** **analytic** one. The basis for seeking, finding, describing and training rules was no longer single or disconnected sentences but texts that meant something. Gradually textbooks took a different pattern…The reading passages consisted mainly of simple modern prose designed to introduce the pupil to an understanding of the life and customs of the foreign people. Thus, texts were fundamental in a double sense: pupils should get a general education by the contents, and they should comprehend grammar rules by analyzing forms and functions. Written and oral dialogues and even **conversational exercises** became important for applying and transferring the findings. Since then foreign language teaching has always also been **direct language experience** and the transfer of semantic concepts into forms of language. The realistic approach to language learning led to a special use of **visual and aural media.** Wall pictures showing everyday scenes (e.g. in connection with the four seasons) were not only described in the foreign language classes but also exploited for the training of vocabulary, for the illustrating of grammar, and for inventing and constructing dialogues. From about 1905 onwards the production of special aural materials made it possible to use records for pronunciation exercises in foreign language classes. The particular advantage was the presentation of intonation patterns and literary scenes, which native speakers had recorded in studios.

It was obviously Viëtor’s pamphlet in 1882 which attracted the greatest attention at the beginning of the Reform Movement, and it was **Jespersen** who, in his booklet ‘How to Teach a Foreign Language’ (1904), summarized the practical implications of the movement for classroom teachers. Even though the ideas of the reformers were put forward by several conferences and numerous publications, mostly in new journals and periodicals, the aims and methods **were not always accepted peacefully**. Various reasons and experiences gave rise to controversy. Consequently it became evident in the first decade of the twentieth century that compromises had to be found. Finally a combination or a mixture of the direct approach and the traditional attitudes towards reading, learning grammar and translating developed. Nevertheless it was the reformers who were most often referred to in the years to come. Their principles of the **monolingual approach**, the **training of dialogues and conversation**, and of **pupil-centered activities** were usually (and still are) mentioned when so-called new ways of foreign language teaching were (or are being) designed.

**The Direct method**

The direct method of language teaching developed in Europe (mainly in France and Germany) in the late nineteenth century as a **result of the reform movement against the grammar-translation method**, and was dominant from the nineteenth century until World War Two. The direct method imitated the way that children learn their first language, emphasizing the avoidance of translation and the direct use of the foreign language as the medium of instruction in all situations. Everyday vocabulary and structure of the language were used as the primary need. The method insisted on the introduction of phonetics and the spoken variety of the language. Concrete meanings of linguistic items are introduced through lessons involving objects, and abstract meanings are introduced through the association of ideas. Natural method, oral method, phonetic method and psychological method were some of the substitute names of the direct method.

The teaching method adopted has the following axioms (Richards and Rodgers, 1986:9–10):

* Never translate: demonstrate
* Never explain: act
* Never make a speech: ask questions
* Never imitate mistakes: correct them
* Never speak with single words: use sentences
* Never speak too much: make students speak much
* Never use the book: use your lesson plan
* Never go too fast: keep the pace of the students
* Never speak slowly: speak normally
* Never speak too quickly: speak naturally
* Never speak too loudly: speak naturally
* Never be impatient: take it easy

The name of the direct method came from one of the official documentary papers issued by the Ministry of Education of the French government in 1901. However, before the name was put forward, by the end of the nineteenth century educationists had shared a common belief that pupils learn a language by listening to it and also by speaking it. According to those beliefs, a child could learn the foreign language in the same way as they acquired their first language. Scholars (mostly French and German scholars at the first stage) believed that the learning of a foreign language was similar to that of first language acquisition. Direct association of foreign words by connecting them with the concepts of the outside world was emphasized in the method. The writings of SWEET, Viétor and Passy, among several other reformists, explained how linguistic principles could be put into practice at the time of teaching a foreign language in a classroom situation. It was said that the impetus to the direct method can be partly attributed to practical unconventional teaching reformers who responded to the need for better language learning in a new world of industry and international trade and travel, such as Berlitz and GOUIN(Stern, 1984:457). As a result, various ‘oral’ and ‘natural’ methods developed in this sense. All these methods advocated the learning of a foreign language by the direct association of foreign words and phrases by avoiding the native language. In the following years, the influence of the direct method on theory and practice was deep-rooted and widespread. The method was first introduced in FRANCE and Germany by its supporters and later was recognized officially by the Governments of Germany, France and Belgium (1900–02). An international congress of modern language teachers was held in 1898 in Vienna and decided that the direct method should be used in all elementary teaching of foreign languages. Henness, Sauveur and Berlitz introduced the direct method in the United States where it was well received. In Great Britain, a compromise policy, i.e. to adopt the direct method’s emphasis on the spoken language and some other techniques, was recommended in the inter-war years. The procedures and main principles of the direct method typically involve:

* The use of the foreign language as a medium of instruction. Translation is totally avoided.
* Learning of a foreign language is similar to that of first language acquisition. Imitation and an artificial language environment are needed in the classroom.
* Language teaching is focused on the sentence level with vocabulary of daily routine, oral communication and grammar learnt by induction.
* Oral skills are built up in a carefully graded progression. They are organized around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students in small but intensive classes.
* New language points are to be introduced orally. Concrete vocabulary is taught through demonstration of objects and pictures; abstract vocabulary is taught through association of ideas and concepts.
* Both listening comprehension and speaking ability are encouraged. And correct pronunciation and inductively acquired grammatical knowledge are insisted upon.

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| **Content** | Spoken everyday language  Gradual sequence |
| **Objectives** | Capacity to ask questions and to answer  Listening and speaking skills |
| **Materials** | Posters, real objects, realia and texts |
| **Procedures** | Direct techniques with no use of L1  Questions and answers  Small groups and native speakers |
| **Assessment** | Conversation and interview exams |

There are several criticisms of the direct method:

1. It is argued that, because of the absence of translation, the method makes it very hard to convey the semantics or to teach grammar.
2. It is argued that the direct method can be practiced only in a classroom where the number of students is limited, because certain activities involved in the method are unlikely to be applicable to larger groups of learners.
3. The main drawback would be that for most of the time it is difficult to find a native speaker to teach the foreign language.

Other criticisms involved were as follows:

1. It was hard to believe that the learning conditions of the native language could be recreated in the foreign language classroom.
2. The method was only suitable for teaching younger pupils rather than adults.
3. The method was too much dependent on the qualification of the teacher.

Whatever the criticisms, the direct method remained the biggest force for reform and progress and the dominant widespread method in the history of foreign language teaching during the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, after the grammar-translation method. Its emphasis on the use of the foreign language as the medium of instruction, and on oral and listening skills, and the use of simple words and associations to explain difficult concepts challenged the more traditional grammar-translation method to undergo some changes. It also had great impact on the later audiolingual and audio-visual language teaching methods. It is still possible to find some of its traces in today’s foreign language teaching methods.

**The Situational Approach**

This approach emerged and dominated the language teaching field in Britain during the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's. It includes aspects of the Direct Method and of the emerging field of language pedagogy.

The characteristics of the Situational Approach are summarized as follows:

* The spoken language is primary.
* All language material is practiced orally before being presented in written form (reading and writing are taught only after an oral base in lexical and grammatical forms has been established.
* Only the target language should be used in the classroom.
* Efforts are made to ensure that the most general and useful lexical items are presented.
* Grammatical structures are graded from simple to complex.
* New items (lexical and grammatical) are introduced and practiced situationally (e.g. at the post-office, at the bank, at the dinner table…)

Another important feature of this method is the presentation of sentences in association with actions, mime, realia and visual aids (like the Direct Method). So the structres of the language are presented and practiced by the use of physical demonstration of notions and objects. Utterances are illustrated by simulation of actions, pictures and other real objects.

In this method, the teacher occupies a central role, for he takes on the responsibility for varying drills and tasks and choosing the appropriate situations to practice structures. Moreover, he acts as a model to be imitated by the pupils who are required to listen and repeat. Active verbal interaction between the teacher and the pupils is of vital importance in this method. In fact language learning is seen to be the direct result of this interaction.

**Shortcomings**

a) The situations that are created are pedagogic, bearing little resemblance to natural language use.

b) Learners are not shown how the use of a sructure in a particular situation can be generalized to another situation.

c) The situations are not graded, but selected at random to serve the purpose of the structures on which they are based.

d) It is not possible to enumerate all the situations that the learners are likely to meet in reality.

**The Audiolingual method**

A method of language teaching developed in the United States and dominant in the 1960s, based on structural linguistics and behaviorist psychology, audiolingual language teaching emphasized the learning of spoken language (it was initially called the aural-oral method) and the presentation of language in the order ‘hearing-speaking-reading-writing’. The A-L method was associated with the introduction of the language laboratory.

The origins of the A-L method are usually traced to the introduction of the Army Specialized Training Program’ from 1943 in the United States, in response to the need in the armed forces to communicate with the Allies and other foreign peoples. The American school system had provided very little foreign language teaching and had concentrated on introducing learners to written texts rather than spoken language. The ASTP called upon well-known linguists, such as Leonard Bloomfield (1942), who developed intensive courses in some fifteen languages taught to selected and highly motivated personnel in groups of ten over 9-month periods with fifteen hours of instruction a week. The methods used included, initially, twelve hours of oral work with native speakers and three hours of grammar work with professional linguists, with use of audio-visual aids. The success of ‘the American Army Method’, as it came to be known, cannot be attributed only to the methods involved, which were in any case eclectic, but rather to the conditions of learning and the nature of the learners, whose Motivation was high and who concentrated almost exclusively on language learning during the intensive period.

Interest in changing language teaching in the general education system began to develop in the early 1950s (Rivers, 1964:3) but was given a major boost by the general response to the launching of the satellite Sputnik by the Soviet Union. This created a fear that the US education system was inadequate with respect to science and language teaching, and led to the National Defense Education Act which included the Language Development Program. The Army Method served as a model with respect to the emphasis on the spoken language, the use of mechanical aids, the analysis of language in structuralist terms, and the reference to behaviorist psychology for a theory of language learning. Language teaching theorists, such as Brooks (1960 and 1964), promoted what became known as the A-L method, arguing that language is behavior, that learning a language is learning how to behave rather than learning how to explain its grammar, that behavior is best learned through the formation of appropriate habits which can be ‘overlearned’ to the point of becoming automatic by frequent imitation of the teacher or a recorded voice and memorization of dialogues or key sentences. This was called the ‘mim-mem’ method. The language laboratory, being developed in the early 1960s, offered a useful means of providing ‘mimmem’ exercises. Dialogues and key sentences were chosen to represent significant syntactic structures of the language, and to anticipate the structures which contrastive analysis of the foreign language and the learner’s own had shown to be difficult because different.

The following are the assumptions on which this method is based:

* Langauge is speech not writing
* Language is a set of habits. This principle means that language is acquired by imitation and practice. Habits are established by stimulus, response and reinforcement.
* Teach the language, not about the language. This means that we must teach the pupils a set of habits, not a set of rules to enable them to talk in the language not to talk about the language.
* A language is what its native speakers say, not what someone thinks they ought to say, we should deal with language as it is and not prescribe what other people say.

The procedures of the A-L method typically involve (Brooks, 1964; Rivers, 1964):

* the presentation of a short text, usually a dialogue, with a parallel text in the learners’ language; this text is modeled by the teacher and repeated by the learners until memorized;
* learners are presented with drill exercises or ‘pattern practice’, consisting of a number of sentences with the same grammatical structure but different lexical items, and they are required to repeat and modify these sentences, receiving immediately the correct version against which to compare their suggestion. These drills are often provided in the language laboratory;
* learners are provided with a substitution table where they can see the parallels in the sentences they have drilled and the underlying grammatical structure involved. This may also provide grammatical terminology;
* learners are invited to role-play dialogues similar to the original one, but they are required to modify the language they have memorized according to the circumstances of the role-play;
* exercises in reading and writing are introduced using the same grammatical constructions and lexis as they have been using in the spoken mode.

Criticisms of the A-L method by language teaching theorists focused on its psychological foundations. Rivers published a review in 1964 which, whilst not rejecting the A-L method, argued against too much reliance on the behaviorism of B.F. Skinner.

A much stronger criticism of behaviorism as represented by Skinner came from Noam Chomsky at a large meeting of language teachers in 1965, in which he dismissed the theories of language learning on which the A-L method was founded (Chomsky, 1966). Chomsky argued that behaviorist theory, with its explanation of language acquisition in terms of habit formation through stimulus from children’s linguistic environment and reinforcement of correct response, could not possibly account for the ability to generate an infinite number of utterances from a finite grammatical competence. Behaviorism could not account for the ‘creativity’ of human language.

Other criticisms of a more pragmatic nature were put forward: learners became bored with drills and pattern practice; the move from repetition and closely guided re-use of learned structures to spontaneous re-use of those same structures was not clearly specified; contrastive analysis did not anticipate and eradicate all the errors learners made; Materials and the method itself appeared to provide only for the first few years of learning, and not for intermediate and advanced learners.

The decline of the A-L method and of A-L textbooks can be traced to the attacks on its psychological base in the mid-1960s, and the development of communicative language teaching from the 1970s. The lasting influence of the A-L method can be traced, like that of other methods, in the rules-of-thumb handed down in the teaching profession, such as the order of presentation of new language, but no systematic use of the method is to be found any longer.

**Communicative language teaching**

The origins of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are to be found in the changes in the British language teaching tradition dating from the late 1960s. Until then, Situational Language Teaching represented the major British approach to teaching English as a foreign language. But just as the linguistic theory underlying Audiolingualism was rejected in the United States in the mid-1960s, British applied linguists began to call into question the theoretical assumption underlying Situational Language Teaching .Their dissatisfaction led to the discovery of another fundamental dimension of language that was inadequately addressed in current approaches to language teaching at that time - the functional and communicative potential of language.

In the 1970s, the Council of Europe considered the need to articulate and develop alternative methods of language teaching a high priority. D.A. Wilkins (1972) proposed a functional or communicative definition of language that served as a basis for developing communicative syllabuses for language teaching. Wilkinss contribution was an analysis of the communicative meanings that a language learner needs to understand and express. Rather than describe the core of language through traditional concepts of grammar and vocabulary, Wilkins attempted to demonstrate the systems of meanings that lay behind the communicative uses of language.

Through the initiative of the Council of Europe and the writings of Wilkins and other notable British applied linguists on the theoretical basis for a communicative or functional approach to language teaching, there was a rapid acceptance of what came to be referred to as the Communicative Approach, or Communicative Language Teaching (The terms notional-functional approach and functional approach are also sometimes used.) by textbook writers, teaching specialists, curriculum development centers, and even the government.

**Theory of Language**

1. Communicative

The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as communicative competence. Hymes coined this term in order to contrast a communicative view of language and Chomsky’s theory of competence. Chomsky (1965) held that linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitation, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors in applying his knowledge. Hymes’ theory of communicative competence was a definition of what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community. In addition, Hymes held that linguistic theory needed to be seen as part of a more general theory incorporating communication and culture.

1. Functional

According to Halliday (1970), 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 components of meaning, brought into focus. Learning a language is acquiring the linguistic means to perform different kinds of functions. Thus, CLT makes use of a **Notional-Functional** syllabus which specified the semantic-grammatical categories (e.g., frequency, motion, location) and the categories of communicative functions that learners need to express.

1. Sociocultural

Firth stressed that language needed to be studied in the broader sociocultural context of its use, which included participants, their behavior and beliefs, the objects of linguistic discussion and word choice.

1. Interactional

Language is a vehicle for establishing interpersonal relations and for performing social transactions between individuals. Language learning takes place mostly through student-to-student, student-to- teacher, and teacher-to-student interaction especially during the implementation of CLT-based activities.

CLT thus can be seen to derive from a multidisciplinary perspective that includes, at least, linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology and educational research. The focus has been the elaboration and implementation of programs and methodologies that promote the development of functional language ability through learner participation in communicative events.

**Theory of Learning**

In contrast to the amount that has been written in Communicative Language Teaching literature about communicative dimensions of language, little has been written about learning theory. However, certain elements of an underlying learning theory can be discerned in some CLT practices.

1. Communication Principle - Activities that involve real communication promote learning.

2. Task Principle - Activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning.

3. Meaningfulness Principle - Language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process. Learning activities are consequently selected according to how well they engage the learner in meaningful and authentic language use (rather than merely mechanical practice of language patterns).

**Principles and characteristics**

The basic principles underlying the communicative approach are as follows:

a) Language aquisition is seen as a creative process, not as habit formation. The idea of language learning by a stimulus response process is rejected. Thus language is a system for the expression of meaning. Its primary function is for interaction and communication.

b) Communicative competence implies knowledge of the grammatical system of the language as well as performance. Such competence includes both the usage and use of the language. Therefore, the approach does not deny the importance of mastering grammatical forms, so long as they are taught as a means of carrying out meaningful communication. The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.Thus, grammar is taught as a language tool rather than a language aim.In other words, the primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse.

c) Unlike the audio-lingual method, the communicative approach gives priority to the semantic content of language learning. That is, pupils learn the grammatical form through meaning, and not the other way round.

d) One aspect of communication is the interaction between speakers. This approach provides communicative functions (uses) and notions (semantic themes and language items). These functions reflect more closely real life use of the language as they are usually connected with real life situations and with pupils' needs and interests.

e) The approach sets realistic learning tasks and activities that create situations in which questions must be asked, information recorded, knowledge exchanged, emotions and attitudes expressed, in which the student plays the roles of both participant and observer.

f) Such procedures and techniques will help pupils, who become the centre of the learning process, to develop their communicative competence as they provide them with the potential ability and motivation to discover the answers for themselves in groups, pairs and individually.

g) Since the primary aim of the approach is to prepare learners for meaningful communication, errors are tolerated.

h) The teacher is no more the centre of the classroom activities. Instead, the focus is shifted to the pupils and their interests, abilities and everyday life concerns. In other words, communicative methodology is learner- centered.

**Shortcomings**

In spite of the merits which characterize the Communicative Approach, it has been subjected to many criticisms such as the following:

The approach relies extensively on the Functional-Notional syllabus which places heavy demands on the pupils. This is especially true at the first stages because of their lack of speaking rules and cultural insights.

The various categories of language functions are overlapping and not systematically graded like the structures of the language. This creates some confusion and makes it difficult to teach the functions properly.

A major principle underlying the communicative approach is its emphasis on pupils' needs and interests. This implies that every teacher should modify the syllabus to correspond to the needs of his pupils. This is not possible to implement as it requires the teacher to write a separate syllabus for each pupil in the class. Such a goal is very ambitious and impossible to realise.

A major requirement for the successful application of the approach is the availability of a classroom that can allow for group work activities or for pupil-pupil interaction and for teaching aids and materials. Such a classroom is desirable but unfortunately not available in most schools.

**Task Based Language Teaching TBLT**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

What is task?

A task is any activity that learners engage in to process of learning a language. (Williams and Burden, 1997:168)

A task is a range of learning activities from the simple and brief exercises to more complex and lengthy activities such as group problem-solving or simulations and decision-making. (Breen, 1987:23)

“Tasks are activities that call for primarily meaning-focused language use. In contrast, exercises are activities that call for primarily form-focused language use. (Ellis, 2003)

An activity which required learners to an outcome from given information through some process of thought and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process was regarded as a task. (Prabhu , 1987:24)

' ... a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right.' Nunan.D.1988.

'...a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Thus, examples of tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation.... In other words, by "task" is meant a hundred and one things people do in everyday life.' Long.M.H.1985.

'.....an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language (i.e. as a response). For example, drawing a map while listening to an instruction and performing a command... A task usually requires the teacher to specify what will be regarded as successful completion of the task.' Richards.J, T.Platt & H.Weber.1985.

'....an activity in which meaning is primary (...)there is some relationship to the real world (...) task completion has some priority (...) and the assessment of task performance is in terms of task outcome.' Skehan.P.1996.

**What is Task Based Language Teaching**?

Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an approach which offers students opportunities to actively engage in communication in order to achieve a goal or complete a task.

It was first developed by N. Prabhu in Bangladore, Southern India. Prabhu believed that students may learn more effectively when their minds are focused on the task, rather than on the language they are using. (Prabhu, 1987; as cited in Littlewood, 2004)

On the other hand, using tasks for teaching first appeared in the vocational training practice of the 1950’s.Task focused here first derived from training design concerns of the military regarding new military occupational specialities of the period. Task analysis initially focused on solo psychomotor tasks for which little communication or collaboration was involved. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:225)

TBLT makes the performance of meaningful tasks central to the learning process. Instead of a language structure or function to be learnt, students are presented with a task they have to perform or a problem they have to solve. (Harmer, 2007:71)

**Examples**

• Preparing a meal • Ordering food in a cafe • Talking to someone on the phone •Solving a problem • Designing a brochure.•

TBLT constitutes a strong version of Communicative Language Teaching. (Skehan, 2003b) It can be seen as both a refinement of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and a reaction to the use of PPP. (Ellis, 2003: ix)

**Why do we use a task-based approach?**

Tasks can be easily related to students’ real-life language needs

• They create contexts that facilitate second language acquisition.

• Tasks create opportunities for focusing on form

• Students are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation in a task-based approach.

• A task-based approach enables teachers to see if students are developing the ability to communicate in an L2.

**APPROACH**

**THEORY OF LANGUAGE**

1. Language is primarily a means of making meaning

2. Multiple models of language inform task based instruction. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 226-228) Advocates of task basd-instruction draws on structural, functional and interactional models of language. Structural criteria are employed by Skehan , for example, when determining the linguistic complexity of tasks.

3. Lexical units are central in language use and language learning.

4. “Conversation” is the central focus of language and the keystone of language acquisition. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 227-228)

**THEORY OF LEARNING**

1. Tasks provide both the input and output processing necessary for language acquisition.

2. Task activity and achievement are motivational.

3. Learning difficulty can be negotiated and fine-tuned for particular pedagogical purpose. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 228-229) Tasks can be designed along a cline of difficulty so that learners can work on tasks that enable them to develop both fluency and an awareness of language forms.

**Principles**

1. Making errors is natural and is considered as a part of the process in acquiring the target language

.2. Exposure to comprehensible input is crucial.

3. Learning tasks facilitating learners to engage in interactions are essential. (Priyana, 2006)

4. Learners need to be encouraged to produce the target language as producing the target language facilitates learning.

5. Although language production may be encouraged from the early stage in the learning process, it is reasonable to allow a silent period.

6. Focus on form is necessary. (Priyana, 2006)

7. Second language teaching and learning pace should be made reasonable for both learners with higher and lower aptitude

. 8. Language learning tasks should be varied to cater for the needs for both extrovert and introvert learners

9. Learning tasks should encourage learners to attend to both meaning and form and be varied in order to accommodate learners with different learning strategy preferences. (Priyana, 2006)

10. Teaching and learning processes should foster motivation and minimize learner anxiety.

11. The choice of teaching and learning tasks and content should be based on learner age.

12. Learning tasks should arouse and maintain learners’ learning motivation. (Priyana, 2006)

**DESIGN**

**Objectives**

• to facilitate students’ language learning by engaging them in a variety of tasks that have a clear outcome. (Larsen-Freeman, 2001: 156)

• to give learners confidence in trying out whatever language they know,

• to give learners experience of spontaneous interaction,

• to give learners the chance to benefit from noticing how others express similar meanings,

• to give learners chances for negotiating turns to speak, (Willis, 1996: 35–6)

• to engage learners in using language purposefully and cooperatively,

• to make learners participate in a complete interaction,

• to give learners chances to try out communication strategies,

• to develop learners’ confidence that they can achieve communicative goals. (Willis, 1996: 35–6)

**Syllabus**

The syllabus is more concerned with the process dimensions of learning than with the specific content and skills that might be acquired through the use of these processes. A TBLT syllabus specifies the tasks that should be carried out by learners within a program. Nunan (1989) suggests a syllabus with two types of tasks: • Real world tasks: designed to practice or rehearse those tasks that are found to be important and useful in the real world (Example: booking a flight) • Pedagogical tasks: they have a psycholinguistic basis in SLA theory and research but do not necessarily reflect real world tasks. (Example: information gap task)

**Types of learning and teaching activities**

LISTING: Brainstorming, fact-finding.

ORDERING AND SORTING: Sequencing, ranking, categorizing, classifying.

COMPARING: Matching, finding similarities, finding differences.

PROBLEM SOLVING: reasoning, and decision making.

SHARING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES: Narrating, describing, exploring and explaining : attitudes, opinions, reactions.

CREATIVE TASKS: comparing, problem solving and many others (Willis 1996).

**LEARNER ROLES**

1.Group Participant 2.Monitor 3.Risk-Taker and Innovator

**TEACHER ROLES**

1. Selector and Sequencer Of Tasks 2. Preparing Learners For Tasks 3. Consciousness-Raising

**INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS**

-Books -Newspaper -Magazine -Radio programs -CDs -TV -Internet -Board -Worksheets

**The framework for TBL instruction**

Pre-task Task Cycle Post-task

**Pre-task** • Use materials such as picture/text/song etc. to lead into the topic. • Brainstorming, comparing ideas, sharing experiences. • Provide elicit vocabulary. • Provide a model, exploit role-play. • Do a similar task • Allow the students time to plan.

**Task Cycle** • Pair work and small group work versus the whole class. • Introduce a surprise element. • Set a time for completing the task. • Vary the number of participants. • Tell students they will have to present a report to the whole class.

**Post-task** • Students give a report. • Repeat the task (e.g. students switch groups) • Consciousness-raising activities. • Students listen to a recording or watch a clip of fluent speakers doing the same task, and compare their tasks with theirs. • Teacher gives feedback and evaluates the success of the task.

**Advantages**

• TBLT is applicable and suitable for students of all ages and backgrounds. • Students will have a much more varied exposure to language with TBLT. • Students are free to use whatever vocabulary and grammar they know, rather than just the target language of the lesson. • TBLT helps students pay close attention to the relationship between form and meaning

• TBLT allows meaningful communication. • Students will be exposed to a whole range of lexical phrases, collocations and patterns as well as language forms. • Encourages students to be more ambitious in the language they use. • The psychological dynamics of the group which works together to complete a task will have a great influence on the success.

**Disadvantages**

• TBLT requires a high level of creativity and initiative on the part of the task. • There is a risk for learners to achieve fluency at the expense of accuracy. • TBLT requires resources beyond the textbooks and related materials usually found in language classrooms.

• Task-based instruction is not teacher-centered and it requires individual and group responsibility and commitment on the part of students. If students are notably lacking in these qualities, task-based instruction may, indeed, be difficult to implement. • Evaluation of task-based learning can be difficult. The nature of task-based learning prevents it from being measurable by some of the more restricted and traditional tests. (Krahne, 1987)

• While Task-Based Instruction may fruitfully develop learners’ authority of what is known, it is significantly less effective for the systematic teaching of new language. This is especially so where time is limited and out-of-class exposure is unavailable

**Conclusion**

TBLT is based on the principle that language learning will progress most successfully if teaching aims simply to create contexts in which the learner’s natural language learning capacity can be nurtured rather than making a systematic attempt to teach the language bit by bit. (Ellis, 2009:222)

TBLT may help to encourage students to use the target language actively and meaningfully. But still, many aspects of TBLT have to be justified such as task type, task sequencing and evaluation of task performance.

The basic assumption of TBLT -that it provides for a more effective basis for teaching than other language teaching approaches- remains in the domain of ideology rather than fact. It depends on tasks as the primary source of pedagogical input in teaching, but the absence of a systematic grammatical syllabus entails current versions of TBLT.

**Activity**

Work with three other students. You are on a ship that is sinking. You have to swim to a nearby island. You have a water proof container, but can only carry 20 kilos of items in it. Decide which of the following items you will take. (Remember, you can’t take more than 20 kilos with you.)

• Waterproof sheets of fabric (3 kilos each.)• Notebook computer (3.5 kilos)• Rope (6 kilos).• Fire lighting kits (500 grams each)• Portable CD player and CDs (4 kilos.)• Short-wave radio (12 kilos)• Medical kit (2 kilos.)• Bottles of water (1.5 kilos each)• Packets of sugar, flour, rice, powdered milk, coffee, tea. (Each packet weighs 500 grams)• Cans of food (500 grams each)• Box of novels and magazines (3 kilos)• Axe (8 kilos)

**Competency – Based Language Teaching (CBLT)**

**Historical Background**

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001) “Competency – Based Language Teaching (CBLT) is an application of the principles of Competency- Based Education in language teaching” In Competency Based Education (CBE) the focus is on the “outcomes or outputs of education” This approach emerged in the United States by the end of 1970

Competency Based Language Teaching was mostly used in “Work-related and survival –oriented language teaching programs for adults”. (Richards and Rodgers,2001). Since 1990, CBLT has been seen as “that state of the art approach to adult ESL” (Auerbach, 1986) so that any refugee in the Unites States who wished to receive Federal assistance had to attend a competency based program ( Auerbach,1986) in which they learned a set of language skills “that are necessary for individuals to function proficiently in the society in which they live” ( Gronget &Crandall,1982)

**What is a competency?**

Competencies consist of a description of the essential skills, knowledge and behaviours required for effective performance of a real world task or activity. Successful completion of each specific task involves a set of skills and knowledge which must be accurately applied. Classes must be student-centered with a focus on what student can do. The ability to recite grammar rules or identify errors in a written practice is not sufficient to measure competence. Students must demonstrate that they can accomplish specific tasks that are likely to be encountered in the real-world using the target language. CBLT seeks to teach the skills needed to perform real-world tasks.

According to Docking (1994), CBLT is designed not around the notion of subject knowledge but around the notion of competency. In CBLT, students learn to use the language in authentic situations likely to be encountered outside the classroom. Although students must practice in order to become competent, competencies are not practice activities, but competencies are practical application of language in content.

**Language theory**

The major basis of CBLT is the “functional and interactional perspective on the nature of language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 143) which means that language learning always needs to be connected to the social context it is used in. Therefore, language is seen as “a medium of interaction and communication between people” who want to achieve “specific goals and purposes” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.143). This especially applies to situations in which the learner has to fulfill a particular role with language skills which can be predicted or determined for the relevant context. All these aspects together show that CBLT is in some respects similar to Communicative Language Teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p.143)

**Learning theory**

The theories related to the Competency-Based Approach are:

**Behaviourism**

According to Richards and Rodgers, CBLT “shares with behaviourist views of learning the notion that language form can be inferred from language function; that is, certain life encounters call for certain kinds of language” (p. 143). Another key aspect of both language and learning theory is the so called “mosaic approach to language learning” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.143), which assumes that language can be divided into appropriate parts and subparts. Communicative competence is then constructed from these subparts put together in the correct order (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.143).

**Bloom’s taxonomy**

The Competency-Based Approach is a cognitive approach that is indebted to Bloom’s taxonomy. Bloom has claimed that all educational objectives can be classified as ‘cognitive’ (related to information) and ‘affective’ (related to attitudes, values and emotions) or ‘psychomotor’ (related to bodily movements). He said that cognitive objectives form a hierarchy by which the learner must achieve lower order objectives before s/he can achieve higher ones. (Bloom, 1964, p. 7)

|  |
| --- |
| Higher order |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Evaluation | Learner sets a value on the new information |
| Synthesis | Learner builds new knowledge from diverse elements |
| Analysis | Learner analyses information by separating information into parts for better understanding |
| Application | Learner applies knowledge to new situations |
| Comprehension | Learner understands information |
| Knowledge | Learner recalls knowledge |

|  |
| --- |
| Lower order |

Bloom’s hierarchical model of cognitive thinking is illustrated in the importance that the Competency –Based Approach gives to the mobilization of knowledge and skills, their gradual integration at higher levels (from level 1 to level 2 in the table above), their application to new situations of learning or use, the generation of new knowledge and skills and finally the evaluation of the process and product of thinking. This is the ideal route towards the acquisition of the competency of know-how-to-act. For instance, a learner will need to know a principle before s/he can apply it. S/he should be able to cut it into smaller fragments and relate it to other principles (analysis) before s/he can summarize it and draw conclusions, and thus evaluate it.

The affective domain is equally important in the achievement of competency. Bloom organizes the learner’s affections in a hierarchical order illustrated in the table below:

|  |
| --- |
| Higher order |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Internalizing values | Learner makes his/her own consistent system |
| Organization | Learner organizes information |
| Valuing | Learner attaches values to particular objects and behaviours |
| Responding | Learner participates actively in classroom activities |
| Receiving | Learner shows willingness to attend to classroom activities |

|  |
| --- |
| Lower order |

The importance the affective domain appears more clearly in the adoption of **the pedagogy of the project**. The realization of the project together with the psychomotor domain lead to the internalization of such values as autonomy, creativity, initiative and responsibility.

**Constructivism**

This theory is based on the central notion that as learners we construct our own understanding of the world around us based on experience as we live and grow. We select and transform information from past and current knowledge and experience into new personal knowledge and understanding (Pitchards & Woollard, 2010, p. 2).

**Social Constructivism**

The CBA regards learning as occurring through social interaction with other people. In other words, learning is not conceived of as the transmission of predetermined knowledge and know-how to be reproduced in-vitro (i.e., only within the pages of the copybook or the walls of the classroom), but as a creative use of newly-constructed knowledge through the process of social interaction with other learners.

**Objectives**

The competency-based approach relies on three fundamental objectives:

Focusing on the competencies that the student must master, rather than what the teacher must teach.

Showing the student what everything he learns at school serves, i.e. teaching them to continuously relate their learning to situations that make sense to them and to use their acquisitions in these situations.

Verifying and validating the student's achievements in terms of resolving concrete situations, not in terms of the sum of knowledge and know-how that the learner often hastens to forget, and which he does not know how to use in real life (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p.106)

**Language competences and supporting competencies**

**Language competence**

Language involves three basic competencies:

**a-Interactive competency:** it is the ability to use language orally to interact with others in order to create social relations.

**b-Interpretive competency:** it is the ability to understand written language through reading or spoken language through listening and interpreting it .

**c- Productive competency:** it is the ability to produce coherence and appropriate and relevant message in writing and speaking

**Supporting competencies**

In order to develop language competencies, learners also need to develop supporting competencies:

**a – Linguistic competency:** includes learning vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar needed in a given context.

**b- Language strategies:** they are ways to help learners to acquire, remember, organise ,and use information .

**Syllabus**

Rather than being organized around specific language topics,

CBLT courses are developed around competencies and the skills necessary for mastery. Each unit focuses on the skills necessary to move students along the path toward mastery.

Syllabi must include performance activities that allow the student to practice the requisite skills (Griffith & Lim, 2010; Richards & Rogers, 2001; Wong, 2008).

This may require a shift in both thinking and organization.

In many traditional classes, lessons are likely to be organized by structures such as present tense, past tense, irregular past tense, future tense with be going to, and so on. While these structures will still be taught, they will not drive the lesson nor will they be the focus.

Instead, if a specific competency requires a student to use the past tense, then teachers will introduce that form and the vocabulary necessary for the specific task. The tense would be taught as an integral part of the lesson, along with relevant vocabulary, register, pronunciation, and so on

**Learning activities**

The activities in the CBLT's classroom can be described as systematically designed in order to achieve a certain competency .The CBA bases its activities on the idea of interaction between the students and among teachers and learners than traditional teaching settings. Pair work and group work are used to generate communication in activities as problem solving or filling information gaps; for example, in one type of information gaps exercise, the learner is asked to find someone with the same information he or she has. Moreover, various activities of this approach allow the learner to personalize the learning experience, to meet his/her needs, and let them to take responsibility for their studies such as: making conversations or dialogues, discussing about past times experiences. The CBA's activities can be designed in order to give the learner control over the learning process and encourage independence and autonomy. Students are more likely to stay motivated and engaged when CBA'S tasks are directly impact their abilities and accomplish competencies as sharing ideas with classmates in discussions and conversations. The CBLT's activities are relevant to the field of work and to social survival-to any domain of life- for instance: job application, job interviews for example between an employer and the director of the company and work schedules, since all these areas collect sequences of competencies as specific knowledge, thinking process, attitudes, team work, communication, responsibility, decision making. Moreover, each task should be developed around a real-world situations requiring the use of some or all the components of the specified competency for example if the competency is giving personal information; then tasks must require students to use knowledge about self to produce such personal information, that students might practice by creating a family tree, talking about favorite past times or experiences. the CBLT's meaningful activities and tasks support the learner to communicate ideas and meaning in and out of class such as producing essays and letters, listening to a plan message or to an audio track, understanding and practicing dialogues, describing pictures, using the data show for watching videos and asking the learners to perform some tasks

**Role of the teacher**

In CBLT, the role of teacher is not only to transmit the knowledge, but instead is to facilitate

it. His role is to engage students in tasks and to help them to improve and develop learning

strategies for a successful learning. Being a facilitator does not mean that the teacher no

longer gives information to the students, but instead he teaches them the competencies

through giving information in different ways. Also, his role is to provide positive feedback in

order to help the students to improve their skills. The teacher must identify the students’

needs in order to adjust the activities and to design the syllabus. In addition to that, being

aware of the students’ needs will make them feel welcome in the class. Finally, the instructions and explanations must be clear so the students will be able to understand the tasks that they are going to deal with.

**Role of learner**

Student's role also have to change .students will no longer be able to rely only on the teacher

as source of information instead they have to be active inside and outside the classroom in

terms of collecting information and participate in classroom .students moved toward

autonomous learners .They learn to think critically and be able to adapt and transfer

knowledge from one setting to another .Furthermore, students have to perform the skills

taught and must know how to use the competency in appropriate way.

**Role of instructional materials**

The competency based approach is a rich source of materials and teaching ideas. The CBLT's teachers choose mainly the materials that are related to the competency such as sample Texts

and assessment tasks in which the teacher provides examples of texts and assessment tasks. There are also other teaching useful tools help the learner to improve their abilities and different competencies in and out of the classroom as: maps, diagrams, audio track, videos, flashcards, data show, pictures, books...etc. since all these materials provide the students with the significant skills as knowledge, attitudes, behaviours which are required for effective performance of a real-world tasks or activities.

**What is project work, and how does it fit in the Competency-Based Approach?**

One of the most distinctive features of the competency-Based Approach is integration of project work as part of learning strategy. This approach seeks to make the attainment of objectives visible, i.e., concrete through the realization of projects in selected domains of instruction. In fact, fixing specific learning competencies will remain a far reaching dream (as in the case of the traditional objective-based approaches) if the outcome is not visible and measurable.

Project work makes learning more meaningful. It also makes co-operative learning a concrete reality and opens up entirely new avenues for action, interaction and the construction of new knowledge. In short, it is only through carrying out project work that the basic principles of the Competency-Based Approach can be made concrete.

**The advantages of doing projects**

* Projects encourage cooperation and sharing
* They promote learner independence
* They involve research
* They lead to a presentation
* They involve different skills
* They may be very creative and include artwork
* They cater for different learning styles and personalities
* They require the use of all language skills

**Advantages**

CBLT is considered as a powerful approach which has brought great attention over the years.

Proponents have identified a number of strengths in the competency-based learning approach: Flexibility: The focus of CBLT is on the learners' needs. Courses and activities are planned

and materials are chosen according to the progress of learners while learning and developing

their skills in order to achieve the desired level and mastery of competencies . In other words,

competencies are precise, useful and connected to what students really need and to what is appealing to them. One of the key benefits of CBLT is that it focuses on real world skills and competency development. It directs learners to use the language appropriately in different parts of their lives because it provides them with the necessary means to communicate effectively in real situations. Consequently, the learning outcomes are more long-term because the learner already understands the purposes .

Engaging: In CBLT, learners engage in the learning process, guide it and control their pacing as they wish. They can monitor their learning, so they become aware of what they have learned and what still need to be learned to achieve the desired level. Therefore, CBLT allows learners to judge relevant and useful competencies.

What is unique about CBLT is that it focuses on what students learn and not on the time spent

in the classroom. In addition, it focuses on the success of each learner.

**Disadvantages**

Some have criticized this approach saying it may be impossible to identify every necessary

competency for specific situations. This is because it is very difficult to make lists of

competencies that would be used in real world putting into consideration that there are almost

endless areas to be covered.

CBLT also has been criticized of being a reductionist approach. Some argue that it is not

enough to divide an activity in terms of a set of different competencies in order to deal with

the complexity of the activity as a whole (Richards & Rodgers , 2001, p.148).

Competency-based learning styles may not fit the preferred approach and style of many students.

Teachers have to deal with it, and be properly trained.

It requires students to be self disciplined, self motivated and able to plan and work independently, which might not be possible for all students.