

THE PROBLEMATIC OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT) IN SENEGAL¹

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Abstract: During colonial time and even after independence, the most used methods of teaching English in Senegal were first the grammar translation method and then the audio-lingual method. It was in the late 1990s and early 2000s that the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method was introduced in the Senegalese teaching system. CLT then appeared as a brand new method, but implementation caused and is still causing some important problems. And these problems added to the already existing problems such as large class size (generally over 80 students per class), lack of training for many teachers, reluctance of a great number of teachers to give up the old method because they felt more at ease in it, lack of adequate teaching material etc...The objective of our work is to study the true impact of the implementation of CLT in a foreign language context like Senegal, to analyze the different problems it poses and to propose appropriate solutions. The methodology used is as follows: it starts setting the context and problematic, then it presents the literary review to better define the key concept, that is CLT and through questionnaires it gathers the opinions of the majors components of the educational system, teachers and learners; the data collected from the questionnaires are then studied and interpreted. Finally, conclusions are drawn from this interpretation and recommendations are made to the different stakeholders of the educational system: teachers, learners, parents and government

Keywords: CLT, Foreign Language context, Senegalese teaching system, implementation, method

Résumé : Pendant la période coloniale et même après les indépendances, les méthodes d'enseignement de l'anglais les plus utilisées au Sénégal ont d'abord été la méthode *Grammar Translation*, puis la méthode audio orale (MAO). C'est à la fin des années 1990 et au début des années 2000 que la méthode d'enseignement communicatif des langues (CLT) a été introduite dans le système d'enseignement sénégalais. La méthode CLT est alors apparue comme une toute nouvelle méthode, mais sa mise en œuvre a causé et continue de causer d'importants problèmes. Et ces problèmes se sont ajoutés à ceux déjà existants tels que la taille importante des classes (généralement plus de 80 étudiants par classe), le manque de formation de nombreux enseignants, la réticence d'un grand nombre d'enseignants à abandonner l'ancienne méthode parce qu'ils s'y sentaient plus à l'aise, le manque de matériel pédagogique adéquat, etc...L'objectif de notre travail est d'étudier l'impact réel de la mise en œuvre de la méthode CLT dans un contexte de langue étrangère comme c'est le cas au Sénégal, d'analyser les

¹La problématique de la mise en œuvre de l'Enseignement Communicatif des Langues (CLT) au Sénégal

différents problèmes qu'elle pose et de proposer des solutions appropriées. La méthodologie utilisée dans ce travail est la suivante : mise en contexte et la problématique, revue littéraire et définition du concept de CLT, collecte des opinions des principales composantes du système éducatif (enseignants et apprenants) à travers des questionnaires; analyse et interprétation des données recueillies à partir des questionnaires, conclusions de l'interprétation et recommandations aux différents acteurs du système éducatif.

Mots-clés : CLT, contexte des langues étrangères, système d'enseignement du Sénégal, mise en œuvre, méthode

Introduction

Communicative Language Teaching was in the 1970s a relatively brand new approach in the field of language teaching; so, in the Western world it is now regarded as a classic. However, its introduction in the Senegalese teaching system is rather recent. CLT theories are mainly based on ideas according to which:

to understand what somebody is saying, we must understand more than the surface meanings of the words; we have to understand the context as well... To grasp the words on a page we have to know a lot of information that isn't set down on the page.

Hirsch (1988, p.3)

Such a way of considering language has great implications in the field of foreign language teaching. In fact, to look at language from a communicative point of view is the realization that the context of an utterance has a vital importance in establishing its meaning. This new way is sometimes in direct contradiction with the approaches that are traditionally used to teach English in a foreign language context. Five factors contribute to the communicative nature of language teaching. These include:

- The contextualization of the items to be taught. Language does not consist of a number of decontextualized single words or sentences;
- the identification of a communicative purpose for carrying out activities;
- the identification of an audience to whom the communication is addressed;
- the focus on meaning rather than form of the language;
- The opportunity for the learner to create his own message and to produce discourses appropriate to a given context.

This approach, which is mainly learner-centered considerably, reduces the focus on the teacher in the classroom and introduces a fundamental change in the way the four main aspects of language – listening, speaking, reading and writing – are taught. The introduction of the communicative approach is differently appreciated by both teachers and learners who are the people directly involved in the field of English language teaching. This is quite natural,

for any proposed change will almost certainly have proponents and opponents. One person's good is another person's evil. The introduction of CLT raises a certain number of problems in a foreign context like Senegal. This added to the difficulties already existing and mainly caused by the over-reliance on outworn theoretical approaches and the confusion caused by a lack of uniformity in the teaching materials. The development of communicative skills is closely related to the problem of language acquisition. Communication does not only involve uttering words and using structures. A communication act is a series of complex mental operations which involve both discourse and pedagogical aspects. To develop communicative skills entails getting into the realm of communication, of error analysis, of communication strategies. Unavoidable questions will thus cross our mind when we are dealing with the so difficult task of teaching English in a communicative way in a foreign context. These can be summarized as the following: What should we focus on, accuracy, fluency or appropriateness? How should we develop communicative activities, through group-work, pair-work, information transfer etc.? What should be the roles of the teacher? Will he still act as the 'knower' or will he be willing to relinquish that role and take on those of an administrator or co-communicator?

Contextualizing presentation and practice is an essential rule of CLT. However, simply providing a situational context for language lessons organized around structures or functions may not be enough. As Cazden (1977, p.42) reminds us: "we must always remember that language is learned, not because we want to talk or read or write about the language, but because we want to talk, read and write about the world". It is, therefore, up to the teacher to introduce into her/his classroom activities that can transcend the often narrow limits of language teaching and more effectively link classroom activities to 'real life'. These activities should take an interactive, student-centered approach which provides opportunities for students to work together in pairs, small groups, or teams, pooling their knowledge and learning from one another: students work together, exchanging information, discussing real issues, solving problems or performing other specific tasks. In all, the teacher functions as a facilitator, guiding the class through the activities and encouraging the students to discover and learn together. Underlying this approach is that students learn to communicate better if they are presented with stimulating classroom activities in which they are personally involved.

This work is divided into eleven parts which are the following: The teaching of English as a foreign Language; The Problems of CLT in a Foreign Language Context; Statement of Purpose; Methodology; Communicative Language Teaching in an EFL Context; Sampling and data collection techniques; Data Presentation and Analysis; Data Observation; Summary of the results and Recommendations

0.1 The Teaching of English as a Foreign Language

Language is one of the most magnificent achievements of humankind. It is what mostly differentiates man from the animal world. It lays the

foundations of civilization, culture and progress. It is the vehicle of communication and speech. It conveys the hopes, aspirations, and thoughts of society that produces it. As a consequence, learning a foreign language provides a good opportunity to better understand foreign people, and to get a better insight of their culture and a deeper appreciation of their achievement. A foreign language is a good medium to get the students familiar with the civilization, history and geography of foreign people. The time allocated to the teaching of English in a foreign context is generally short. However, despite the brevity of the English course, the teaching techniques used may be adequate enough to lay the foundation on which students will later be able to build an ease and an ease in using the language in a communicative way when and where the need arises. When teaching English in a foreign context, it is essential for the teacher to bear in mind that the main objective is to help students acquire an additional medium of communication. This objective may be subdivided into general aims and specific aims. The general objectives are to equip the students with the knowledge and skills required for effective communication in English and to impart them an understanding of the English speaking world and its different cultures. As for the specific objectives they are twofold: linguistic aims and cultural aims. The linguistic aims include: the ability of the learners to understand the English language when it is spoken at normal speed to express ordinary, non technical subject matters; the ability of learners to speak English easily with acceptable standards of pronunciation and grammatical correctness; the ability of the learners to write in English with acceptable standards of correctness on topics within their experience.

The cultural objectives specifically aim at helping the learners to be able: to understand the everyday life of the English speaking people and to have a clear insight of their customs, family life, work and play, typical reactions; to know the main facts about the history and geography of the English speaking world as well as their economic development; to appreciate the English speaking world art, music, literature, and science, and their contribution to the development of the world civilization. To reach such objectives it is necessary to use an approach which not only takes into account the four main aspects of language - listening, speaking, reading, and writing -, but which also mainly ensures the learners the ability to communicate easily and freely in real life.

Communication must not be mixed up with oral practice. Communication involves the free, spontaneous discussion between two or more persons of any topic of common interest. Formerly it was a common belief that teaching English in a communicative way was too difficult, and even not feasible in traditional classes. These are some reasons people used to say that the speaking ability is the most difficult phase of the English language to teach and acquire and the least likely to be retained, for it depends on constant practice : that the ability to speak fluently is not acquired primarily in the classroom, but through additional practice outside; that real communication is difficult to achieve in classroom, the time to develop it being insufficient; Communicative competence depends essentially on an extensive vocabulary,

the memorization of numerous speech patterns, and the automatic control of the structures. Thus, the communicative approach appears as a reaction to all this set of false beliefs. It is an attempt to re-establish the primacy of communication in language acquisition. It puts a particular emphasis on the fact that a language is learnt by using it – and this means using it in situation and in a communicative way.

Decontextualized sounds, words, phrases and sentences, however wrapped up with rules, do not carry language learning far; although it is helpful up to a point to remove such elements and look at them closely, much as one examines components of a machine, before returning them into the intermingling stream of discourse.

Lee (1981, p.12)

The situations which bring a foreign language to life are provided by gestures, by handling and touching things, by incidents and activities, by pictures, by dramatization, by interesting spoken or written stories, by contests and games. In these language is linked with action and is no longer a decontextualized thing. It is through experience of communication in the language they are learning that language learners' best know how to communicate in it.

0.2 The Problems of CLT in a Foreign Language Context

Communicative Language Teaching is often presented as a reaction against former approaches and as a reinforcement and justification for new teaching procedures. Its main objective is communication-oriented teaching. Despite the efforts made to ensure its implementation in a foreign context like Senegal, there still exists a wide range of teachers who are reluctant to embrace the new trend. The reasons for teachers' reluctance to conform to the change of teaching approach are multifold: some teachers reject CLT simply because it is new and threatens to change their old teaching habits; some teachers think that it brings about disorganization into the materials they traditionally use; other teachers refuse simply because they feel more at ease and more secure with the teaching techniques they have been practicing so far; others may be willing to use the new communicative syllabus, but unfortunately, their failure to understand the purpose of the new strategies adopted in the design of this syllabus and in the techniques of implementation often leads them to adopt the structural approach to use it in their classes. Furthermore, the communicative language teacher in a foreign context faces acute problems that are perceived as: scarcity of adequate instructional materials and the lack of uniformity in the textbooks used. Even teachers who intend to be eclectic by using authentic materials – newspapers, magazines, films etc. – face the problem of duplication like photocopiers and audiovisual materials (television, video etc.) and the difficulty to carry out in an appropriate way some communicative activities such as pair-work or group-

work because of the number of students in large classes and the inadequate classroom arrangement; inappropriate attitudes to learning.

Classroom language constitutes much of the learners' experience in using English to communicate. The English teacher and course textbooks are most often their only contact with the language. The time allocated to language classes in school curricula is too limited and the instrumental aspects of the language are neglected. Weak pronunciation, stress, and rhythm patterns pose problems. The learners' exposure to language has for long been restricted to a deliberately slow, formal style of pronunciation, foreigner's talk. They have, therefore, little awareness of the difficulties their pronunciation may cause to the native speakers. They feel prisoners of the language that seems to shape their thoughts rather than their thoughts determining the language. This causes a feeling of clumsiness and leads to awkward communication; an inability to follow with ease what speakers – especially native speakers – say when they are in conversational situation and to perform very simple everyday transactions – for example, give and ask information, state one's identity, etc. – without frequent breakdown in communication.

0.3 Statement of Purpose

There is no denying that the implementation of CLT poses a great deal of problems in a foreign language context like Senegal. Most of the teachers are still clinging strongly on their ancient teaching habits: some of them because they are trained in former approaches; others because they have received no training at all. Consequently, they still see themselves as the centre of the teaching and learning process, as the providers of knowledge. They usually over-emphasize the importance of accuracy to the detriment of fluency. Furthermore, most of them are too authoritarian, and this simply, to hide their weaknesses. This authority is often asserted over difficult classes by adopting a testing approach rather than a teaching language approach to language learning. Their power lies then in the distribution of marks – most of the time bad marks – and the penalization of errors. This privilege of power may lessen the sense of insecurity in the teacher; yet, it can raise anxiety, hostility to the foreign language and even rebellion in the class. Our purpose in this study is twofold: To show our colleagues what the communicative approach is essentially about. This seems essential to us, for as Widdowson said:

No matter how concerned teachers may be with the immediate practicalities of the classroom, their techniques are based on some principle or other which is accountable to theory.... We have the responsibility of representing teaching as a challenging intellectual enterprise... If... adherence to formulae is unnatural, stultifying, and an enemy of incentive, in teaching as in other human activity, then an over-emphasis on technique in teacher training, without indicating its link with theory, will be ultimately self-defeating.

Widdowson (1984, p.87)

Our aim here is to draw our colleagues' attention to a crucial element: the attitude of the individual teacher towards the reform and his/her role in this innovative mode of teaching. Widdowson (1984, p.87) argues that "Language teachers have the responsibility to mediate changes in pedagogic practice so as to increase the effectiveness of language teaching". And he adds: "Such mediation depends on understanding the relationship between theoretical principle and practical technique". In other words, the new type of teaching materials, as well as the new classroom procedures introduced by CLT call for an alert type of teacher whose role includes far more than merely following blindly syllabuses without prior understanding and analysis, or using obsolete methodologies. To give them a practical example to show them that: the teacher's role is still important, but he must no longer see himself as the focus of the language learning and teaching process; this process is no longer unidirectional, top-down; the teacher must be now a manager, a model, a monitor, a counselor, an informant, a facilitator, a social worker, a friend, a participant, a lesson planner, for the profile of the teacher as the knowledge provider and the students as the passive learners, which used to prevail, is no longer valid. And to understand this, teachers have to read recent literature in EFL. For, as Ahallal said:

Unless teachers try to keep abreast with the literature on second/foreign language teaching, they will not be able to understand the rationale of recent and changing classroom practices, nor will they be able to mediate between theory and practice, in order to design and evaluate their own lessons.

Ahallal (1993, p.42)

0.4 Methodology

To reach the objectives set in the previous part this study is divided into eleven parts. After the context of this study has been described, the various problems posed by the implementation of CLT in a foreign context listed, and our purposes clearly stated in parts 01, 02, and 03, it has been decided to do a review of the ESL/EFL literature in the part 04 so as to better see what researches have been already carried out about the communicative approach and its implementation in a foreign language context. This will help us better understand the CLT theories and have a clearer insight of their use in classes. This will also help us better grasp what a communicative class is and what roles a teacher plays in such a context. In parts 05 and 06 the theories about developing Communicative Competence in an EFL Context are presented and discussed. In the part 07, 08, 09, and 10 questionnaires are designed and given out to both teachers and learners. In these questionnaires, important issues about CLT are raised and the data collected allow us to have an exact insight of what teachers and learners think about this new trend. The data collected from these questionnaires and the observation data are presented and interpreted. Then, all the results of the data collected are summed up and in

part11 recommendations given to people involved in the educational field: teachers, learners, educational authorities and parents.

1. Communicative Language Teaching in an EFL Context

The communicative approach is no longer seen as a revolution in foreign language teaching, for it is now widely used in a great deal of schools and countries. However, it is important to notice that it has brought about significant changes in the field of EFL teaching. Most of the traditional language teaching methods give too much importance to language forms. What is required from the teacher is to follow the textbooks and to provide the students with a wide range of lexical and structural materials they need to know. Success in learning resides mainly in students' ability to demonstrate their mastery of vocabulary items and structures they have been taught. Failure is simply seen as the result of truancy, laziness, or low intelligence. These teaching methods are largely based on the behaviorist theories according to which language is mainly acquired through habit formation. With the introduction of CLT the focus shifted from a merely structural approach to language to a notional/functional one.

However, it is advisable to notice that teaching approaches - such as Situational Language Teaching or the audio-lingual method - are largely underlain by the basic idea that communicative ability is the main objective of foreign language learning. For Brumfit (1979, p.3) the communicative approach is a "reaction against the view of language as a set of structures; it is a reaction towards a view of language as communication, a view in which meaning and the uses to which language is put play a central part". As for Nunan:

It has been accepted that language is more than simply a system of rules. Language is now generally seen as a dynamic resource for the creation of meaning. In terms of learning, it is generally accepted that we need to distinguish between 'learning that' and 'learning how'. In other words, we need to distinguish between knowing various grammatical rules and being able to use the rules effectively and appropriately when communicating".

Nunan (1992, p.12)

Littlewood (1989, p.117) states that the main change introduced by the communicative approach lies in the fact that it explores more thoroughly and explicitly the idea of the primacy of communicative ability in foreign language teaching. In such circumstances, language is no longer simply considered in terms of its structures - grammar and vocabulary - but also in terms of the communicative functions that it performs. In other words, the emphasis is not only put on the language forms, but on what people do with these forms when they are in real communication situation. For Widdowson:

The ability to compose sentences is not the only ability we need to communicate. Communication only takes place when we make use of

different acts of an essentially social nature. Thus we do not communicate by composing sentences, but by using sentences to make statements of different kinds, to describe, to record, to classify and so on, or to ask questions, to make requests, to give orders. Knowing what is involved in putting sentences together correctly is only one part of what we mean by knowing a language, and it has very little value in itself; it has to be supplemented by a knowledge of what sentences count as in their normal use as a means of communicating.

Widdowson (1979, p.118)

The implication of such an approach is that it allows the combination of the newer functional view of language with the traditional structural view, in order to achieve a more complete communicative perspective. Besides, it enables the teacher to give a fuller account of what students need to learn to be able to use language as a means of communication. It also introduces an alternative basis for selecting and organizing the language items s/he needs to teach.

Moreover, the communicative approach makes the foreign language teacher more fully aware that he has not only to teach students how to manipulate the foreign language, but also to develop strategies which will allow them to relate these forms to the communicative functions currently used in real life situations. Therefore, it is up to the teacher to provide students with great opportunities to use the language themselves for communicative purposes. The ultimate aim of EFL is to develop students' ability to take part successfully in the communicative process rather than to master perfectly individual structures - though this may still be a necessary step towards the wider objective. Consequently, the role of the communicative teacher in a foreign context is no longer to teach simply a system of rules. As Tarone and Yule state: "the language user, unlike the automaton, uses and manipulates linguistic form to convey intended meanings For the human, language is a functional system in which linguistic form serves a primarily communicative purpose" (1989, p.13). Thus, the introduction of CLT in the field of EFL teaching raises serious problems. In fact, the transition from "one view of the language as a generally rigid, categorically organized and fairly restricted set of data, to an alternative view in which the language is flexible, non-categorical, functionally oriented and rich system of expression" (Tarone and Yule 1989:17) is very difficult for both teachers and students. For some teachers such a transition can only take place outside and not inside the classroom. For Tarone and Yule the whole goal of an EFL classroom instruction is :

to provide a sufficient sample of language experience in a supportive environment, to prepare the learners to take place in the language-using community outside the class. Grammatical competence involves knowledge about the phonological and grammatical structure, or form of the language, and the ability to produce and understand those forms in speech and writing. Sociolinguistic competence involves the ability to

produce and understand language which is appropriate to specific situations and conforms to the politeness conventions of those situations. Strategic competence is the ability to successfully transmit information in the language – as, for example, the ability to describe a referent so that a hearer can correctly identify it. Strategic competence is directly tied to the ability to use communication strategies to cope with difficulties that arise in the course of getting one's message across to particular listeners.

Tarone and Yule (1989, p.17)

2. Developing Communicative Competence in an EFL Context

In the previous section CLT has been presented as an innovating approach in so far as it introduces a major shift in perspective in the EFL teaching field. Tarone and Yule state that with the communicative approach,

There have been a change of emphasis from presenting language as a set of forms (grammatical, phonological, lexical) which have to be learned and practiced, to presenting language as a functional system which is used to fulfill a range of communicative purposes. This shift in emphasis has largely taken place as the result of fairly convincing arguments, mainly from ethnographers and others who study language in its context of use, that the ability to use a language should be described as communicative competence.

Tarone and Yule (1989, p.17)

Key components of communicative competence, as presented by Tarone and Yule, are grammatical competence, sociological competence, and strategic competence. If we consider well this definition of communicative competence, we realize that most of the traditional approaches used in the field of foreign language teaching are merely interested in grammatical competence. The syllabuses and textbooks based on these methods present the grammar, the lexicon and the phonology of the language as a set of forms and rules to be learned. Consequently, the successful learners are those who are able to produce grammatically and phonologically accurate sentences in the language. There is no denying that developing a certain level of grammatical competence is very important, but it should not be taken as an aim in itself but rather as a means to achieve fluency. When teaching language in a communicative way, the foreign language teachers must bear in mind that the communicative functions cannot be isolated from the socio-cultural context. Rivers describes the language learners' need for sociolinguistic competence as the "need to understand how language is used in relation to the structure of society and its patterns of inner and outer relationships, if they are to avoid clashes, misunderstandings and hurt" (1983, p.25).

The strategic competence also needs to be developed in class. To foster such a competence, the foreign language teacher needs to develop classroom activities which will not only aim at promoting the overall skill of the learner in successfully performing communicative acts, but also at promoting the learner's ability to use communication strategies when problems are encountered. CLT

theories state that a language learning environment that encourages students to “engage in pragmatic authentic functional use of language for meaningful purpose” (Brown 2001, p.43) facilitates development of communicative competence. Therefore, teachers are expected to replicate this environment in their classrooms. In other words, students are to be encouraged to interact with each other freely through activities that are motivating and resemble the language used outside the classroom.

3. Sampling and data collection techniques

To carry out research in the field, it has been decided to use questionnaires as a data collection instrument. The reason is that they are easy to administer and data can be collected in a relatively short time. The target group being teachers and students, it has been decided to select different schools in different areas. The teachers’ questionnaires are then distributed to teachers in service in the public and private schools in Dakar and in the suburbs – Thiaroye² and Yeumbeul³. Other important factors are also taken into account in the distribution of the questionnaires: they are intended for veteran teachers as well as relatively young teachers and even trainee-teachers. The objective is to see if teachers in different areas and sectors and of different generations are given equal training opportunities in CLT. As for the learners’ questionnaires, they are distributed to students in the upper 6th form in different schools and areas. Here, the objective is mainly to see the similarities and differences of view of students of the same level and taking the same national examination. It is also to see if these students are taught with the same approach and are thus given equal chance when sitting for their examination.

The teachers’ questionnaire contains fifteen questions and the learners’ questionnaire fourteen. The questions are destined to give a clear idea of teachers and learners’ perception of the teaching and learning process. They can also give an insight of the various problems they encounter in the implementation of CLT in a foreign context like Senegal. The aim of these questions is mainly to collect concrete data that can provide a sound ground to appropriate recommendations to people involved in the field of education: teachers, students, educational authorities and parents. The results of the data collected with these two questionnaires will be presented, treated and interpreted in parts 08, 09 and 10. Twenty teachers’ questionnaires and eighty learners’ questionnaires are distributed and all of them are answered and collected.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

An analysis of the teachers’ questionnaires reveals that 90% of the students who answer our questions claim to be using the communicative approach as a teaching methodology in their classes. And a great deal of them

² A district in the suburb of Dakar, capital of Senegal

³A district in the suburb of Dakar, capital of Senegal

see themselves as facilitators, managers, motivators, monitors, instructors and even 30% claim to be playing the role of a social worker. They almost all claim to be using pair-work and group-work in their classes to develop their students' communicative competence. 85% of them declare to teach very often their students through these two modes. Between 80% and 90% think that students' communicative competence can be developed through activities such as problem-solving, information transfer and debates whereas only between 5% and 30% think that drilling grammar, memorizing vocabulary items and answering questions are essential factors in the development of communicative competence. As far as instructional materials are concerned, 85% of the teachers claim to be using available textbooks and to be resorting to authentic materials; only 20% declare to be designing their own materials. That is surely for this reason that only a few of them say to be facing problems of teaching materials. However, almost all of them acknowledge having problems in designing and implementing of communicative activities and tests. Among the 90% who declare to design their tests through communicative principles, between 80% and 90% say they face class size problems, and between 20% and 50% face problems of time, students' level and seating arrangement. The data collected with the learners' questionnaires are as revealing as those collected with the teachers' questionnaires. 80% of the students affirm to learn English because they need it, only 7,5% of them say that they like it. The majority of them - 77% - see themselves as active learners of the English language, but 47.5% of them still see their teacher as the one who is at the centre of the teaching and learning process. Only 45% see her/him as a facilitator in the class and 7.5% as an error corrector. There is a contradiction of view here, for, in the teachers' questionnaires 85% of them say they behave in their classes as facilitators of learning. Besides, these data show that a great deal of the students - 42.5% - think that the good English is the one who teaches a lot of grammar. However, 47% of them think that the English teacher should get them involved in communication. The answers to questions 5 show another contradiction between what teachers claim and what their students declare about the organization of pair-work and group-work in class. In fact, if 85% of the teachers claim to be organizing very often pair and group work in their classes, 45% of the students maintain that they only occasionally work through these two modes and 47% say that they never work in pairs or groups. Yet, the answers to question 6 show that the majority of the students like to be involved in pair and group work. In fact, 57.5% of them maintain that they like these modes very much and 35% affirm to like them fairly much; only 7.5% say they do not enjoy getting involved in them.

The answers to questions 7 reveal another contradiction between what teachers think can help develop students' communicative competence and what students themselves think can help them be communicative in English. In fact, if 55% of the students think activities like discussion can be helpful, between 52% and 62.5% of them still think that memorizing grammar and vocabulary rules are essential activities for developing communicative skills in them. In

spite of this, 50% think that their teachers can help them be fluent by involving them in interactive activities whereas only 42.5% of them think this can only be achieved through teaching a lot of grammar patterns and vocabulary items. Another important thing is that 65% of the students expect their teachers to help them learn. Only 15% of them maintain to expect their teachers to teach them everything. The data in questions 11, 12 and 13 show that 80% of the students never listen to radio broadcasts or watch TV programs in English; 87,5% maintain that they never use English outside school. In other words, the only contact the majority of the students have with the language is their English teachers and the textbooks they work within their classes.

5. Data Observation

As the data collected with the teachers' questionnaires and the learners' questionnaires, the observation data are also very revealing. The trialing lesson was intended to give a concrete example of what a communicative lesson should look like. In this respect, all the tasks that were designed were all based on communicative principles. The data collected during the feedback with the students are very interesting. All the students find the lesson exciting and interesting. For about 45% of them, the most interesting of all the activities is the discussion, but all the other activities interest a varied number of students. What they find a bit difficult is the diagram filling that is why about 80% of them propose to change it if the unit is to be re-taught. Besides, 80% of the students maintain that the communicative tasks we carried out in the implementation of the unit are more interesting than the pedagogic tasks such as true or false and multiple choice exercises that are over-used in our classes.

6. Summary of the results

The analysis of the data collected with the teachers' questionnaires and the learners' questionnaires as well as the data observation has revealed that the communicative approach is gaining considerable ground in the field of teaching in Senegal. Teachers are getting increasingly familiar with the CLT principles and resort to them when designing and implementing teaching and testing activities. They are using all the teaching modes - individual, pair-work, group-work, whole-class - though most of them insist on interaction through pair and group work to provide opportunities for students to act as listeners and speakers. Through these two modes, they are spurring their students to greater effort by training them to acquire the ability to sustain long conversations that duplicate real speech. In this way, they give students the feeling and the assurance that English is a vehicle of communication that serves the same purpose as does their native tongue. Besides, they are starting to see themselves as facilitators, motivators, managers, supervisors and even social workers. However, they are aware that they still have a paramount role to play as instructors and that they are more important than any method and any material, for it is what they do with these methods and materials which determine their effectiveness in helping their students learn.

As for the learners, they seem to enjoy working in pairs and groups though they deplore the fact that their teachers rarely or never get them involved in these two interactive modes. However, a great deal of them think that memorizing grammar patterns and vocabulary items is essential for them to be communicative learners, and most of them still see their teachers as the centre of the instructional process. Furthermore, the majority sees English as a subject matter imposed on them and they only need to pass their examinations. The fact that only 5% of them say that they listen to radio broadcast or watch TV programs in English is very revealing. In fact, it shows that, outside the classroom, students have little or no contact with the English language. They rarely listen to it through radio and TV broadcasts and hardly ever communicate in it once they leave school. It also appears throughout the data collected that the teachers face problems related to class size, time, classroom arrangement and materials. In some areas, mainly in the suburbs of Dakar, classes are over-crowded. This is a considerable hindrance for teachers to organize group-work. In these conditions, getting every individual student involved in the communicative activities seems too difficult. A great deal of teachers who are in such a situation just limit themselves to the use of the whole-class mode and gear their lessons to the “stronger” students.

7. Recommendations

7.1 To the teachers

It has been demonstrated how demanding CLT is for teachers. Since the communicative approach is rather recently introduced in Senegal, teachers should develop strategies to adopt it to their classes. We are not born good teachers, we become good teachers. With good training and effective classroom practices, teachers can develop professionally. Every lesson should be a planned lesson. The objectives should be clearly defined and the communicative activities properly designed. Tasks should be chosen which best suit the students, the subject and the occasion. The teacher should show to her/his students that English is as much needed to pass exams as to succeed in real life. Therefore, s/he should stimulate his/her students to read English books for enjoyment after class, listen to BBC and VOA broadcasts, and take an active part in the activities of an English club of which s/he is the supervisor. Of course, these activities added to the classroom activities are to be viewed not as conflicting occupations but as a continuum of the teaching and the learning process. Activities in the classroom should be made as authentic as possible. Lively, improved, spontaneous activities are preferable to certain exercises in textbook. From the methodological point of view; teachers using these authentic materials should adopt strategies and techniques different from the ones embraced under structural approaches. The new techniques should reflect such principles as the information-gap principle and the information-transfer principle, to mention but two.

Students should be involved in debating groups such as interactive group-work and pair-work, or English club. In fact, being a member of a

debating group provides excellent training in oral communication. The purpose of such activity is to furnish suitable opportunities for students who are keen to engage in open discussion on a variety of topics. It enables the learner to gain experience in public speaking and offers opportunities for the enjoyment of social and intellectual intercourse. For Brumfit (1985, p.87) the greatest value of such group-work lies in its ability to stimulate natural language activity in discussion and conversation. "Once the teacher has set the debate, she/he should not talk at all, unless the activity fails completely. She/he should let the students discuss freely. They do all the talking, and the rule is, they have to cope by themselves". Experience has shown that this kind of communicative behavior within specific contexts can increase the amount and intensity of practice in interactive communication. In such contexts, the teacher is nothing but a facilitator of communication, an organizer, a counselor, and a group manager. In other words, the teacher is a guide or consultant. The development of this trend in English language teaching is a result of the general tendency to move away from the teacher-centered approach to language teaching, to turn one's attention to the other participants of the language teaching process, the learners.

7.2 To learners

The introduction of CLT is mainly intended to give learners a more active role in the language acquisition process. In fact, it is a learner-centered approach in which the instructional process is no longer centered on the teacher as it used to be in the traditional approaches, but rather on the learners. Therefore, students should be aware of this shift of position and of the attitude they have to take in their class. They should maintain an attitude of interest as far as classroom activities are concerned if they are intended to get them involved in communication. They should not only participate in the classroom, but also play a paramount role. The teacher is to initiate, stimulate, guide, correct, and criticize the activities. He is to be the director, the stage manager, the prompter, the guide and helper - not the doer. Participation in class should be natural, voluntary and spontaneous. An attitude of mutual helpfulness should be maintained towards fellow-students during pair-work or group-work activities. Learners should be aware now that learning should be a reciprocal dependence of investment of effort on students and teachers part, a spirit of a joint venture that makes the whole process more meaningful. The tasks of learners and teachers being interdependent, the responsibility should lie in both sides. This is the healthiest attitude to adopt: the effort toward progress should be a joint one, based on the learners' needs, necessities or even wants. There should be the willingness to involve in pair-work and group-work. Involvement in group-work enables students to create, to negotiate, and to share. Group interaction establishes a framework in which individual learning process can develop. Moreover, the sharing of learning processes in teams not only strengthens the language skills that students are to learn, but it also exposes them to important social skills. English should not be looked at as

a subject matter imposed on students, but as a means of communication which can help communicate with other people and have insight of other cultures.

7.3 To educational authorities

CLT has been introduced in Senegal to replace teaching approaches like the audio-lingual method. But, so far, no assessment has been officially published to show how successful or unsuccessful these traditional approaches were. CLT should not be used without any short term or long term assessment. A systematic, large-scale evaluation of the use of this new approach should be conducted after a number of years of regular implementation, and its reliability should be examined on a continuous basis with periodical random sample in all the district of the country. Important variations persist between teachers and no systematic action has been officially taken on the basis of clearly defined criteria to generalized CLT. More efforts should be made to generalize the communicative approach to avoid disparities in students' language acquisition when they sit for the BFEM or BAC examinations. More funds should be made available to develop in-service training and the provision of course materials. A great part of the staff has been trained to use forms rather than use and have little idea of how to stimulate oral communication in the classroom. These teachers should be offered intensive training in CLT or extensive training in more effective teaching of communicative skills in the classroom. Physical environment and class size sometimes militate against effective oral communication. In fact, in some areas such as the suburbs of Dakar - Pikine⁴, Thiaroye, Yeumbeul etc. - the number of students in the first cycle is between 80 and 120, and in the second cycle, it is between 50 and 60. Besides, the physical setting of the classrooms makes the possibility of having a communicative or interactive environment difficult. Very often, the desks cannot be reconfigured easily for group-work. This makes interactive and collaborative activities virtually impossible.

Language laboratories similar to scientific laboratories should be built in every secondary school throughout the country. However, in the short-term, language blocks similar to the scientific blocks could be built to polarize all the secondary schools of each department. CLT has been used in many countries long before its implementation in Senegal. Educational experts should be sent to these countries to familiarize with their experience, for familiarity with experience elsewhere and particularly those who are in similar difficult situations shortens the march and prevent us having to reinvent the whole wheel.

7.4 To parents

As important partners in the educational system parents should invest more in the education of their children by providing them with all the necessary instructional materials: textbooks, activity books and any other materials that

⁴A district in the suburb of Dakar, capital of Senegal

can help them enhance and facilitate their language acquisition. They should supervise their children's work at home and if necessary find an English language monitor for them. The time allocated to English at school being insufficient, parents should help their children have more opportunities to practice language outside the classroom. They should be aware of the importance of English throughout the world and help their children acquire it so that they can communicate with people all over the world.

Conclusion

At the end of our study, it appears quite clear that the use of CLT as a teaching approach is rapidly gaining ground in Senegal. The teachers start to see it now as an asset that can help them develop their students' communicative competence. The implementation of CLT in a foreign context like Senegal undoubtedly poses some problems, but they should be faced and tackled by all the people involved in the educational system - teachers, learners, administrative authorities and parents. A huge nationwide effort should be made to generalize the use of the communicative approach and thus, as soon as possible to avoid discrepancies of knowledge between students taking the same national examination - BFEM and BAC. Teachers have a paramount role to play in this national effort. In their manners and attitudes, they can have an impressive impact on students and this can greatly contribute to the success or failure of the use of CLT throughout the country. Furthermore, they have to be courteous, friendly and cheerful when they get students carry out communicative activities in their classes; they have to exemplify the ideals of tolerance, and fairness to make their students feel at ease in the communicative class. They have also to endeavor to maintain a spirit of good fellowship with the students without, however, descending to undue familiarity or cheap humor. Excessive talking, the weakness of many a good teacher has to be avoided. In short, the CLT teacher with ideals has to consider himself primarily as an educator and only secondarily a teacher of a specific language. This involves keeping constantly in mind the incidental learning, the intangibles, and the outcome of the educational process as a whole. It means giving one's best to the students, endeavoring daily to be an inspiring leader and a sympathetic guide. It means cultivating vigor of thought and expression, self-confidence, good judgment, cheerfulness, a sense of humor and tact. It also means aiming to develop in the students' habits of observation and discrimination, sustained effort and application. It implies inculcating ideals of open-mindedness and tolerance, emphasizing the beautiful and the noble. Moreover, the communicative teacher who can give each student the feeling that s/he is an important part of a group; that s/he is capable of learning; and that s/he can achieve success; the teacher who demonstrates an understanding of conflict - both environmental and linguistic; the teacher who, through his enthusiasm, his art, and his skill, makes language learning a subject to be looked forward to - will in the final analysis be the one who will forge ahead his less perceptive colleagues in promoting the desirable habits and attitudes

needed for language learning. The communicative teacher who embodies the personal and professional characteristics we have outlined can but push aside the language barriers which impede communication among men and will be not merely a teacher of English, but a true educator and a rich personality, contributing towards a better world.

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