



**University of Sistan and Baluchestan  
Faculty of Humanities  
Department of English Language and Literature**

**Focus on Communication in Iranian High School  
Language Classes:  
A Study of the Role of Teaching Materials in  
Changing the Focus onto Communication  
in Language Classes**

**M.A. Thesis**

**Submitted to the English Department of the Faculty of Humanities,  
University of Sistan and Baluchestan, in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the M.A. Degree in Teaching English as a Foreign  
Language**

**Supervisor: Dr. Esmaeel Nourmohammadi**

**Advisor: Dr. Mohammad Reza Anani Sarab**

**By: Azin Nasseh**

**Zahedan, Iran  
September, 2012**

**In the Name of God**



**University of Sistan and Baluchestan**  
**Faculty of Humanities**  
**Department of English Language and Literature**

We hereby approve that this thesis by Azin Nasseh entitled

**Focus on Communication in Iranian High School  
Language Classes:  
A Study of the Role of Teaching Materials in  
Changing the Focus onto Communication  
in Language Classes**

be accepted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (M.A.) in teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

**Committee on the Oral Examination:**

*Supervisor:* Dr. Esmaeel Nourmohammadi

---

*Advisor:* Dr. Mohammad Reza Anani Sarab

---

*First Internal Examiner:* Dr. Abdollah Sarani

---

*Second Internal Examiner:* Dr. Farokhlagha Haidari

---

*Head of the Department of the English Language and Literature:* Dr. Yahya Keikhaie

---

**Zahedan, Iran**  
**September, 2012**

ارتباط در کلاس به عوامل زیادی از جمله معلمان، دانش آموزان، برنامه های درسی<sup>1</sup> و از همه مهم تر، مواد آموزشی<sup>2</sup> وابسته است. در تدریس ارتباطی زبان<sup>3</sup> که تاکید زیادی بر توانش ارتباطی<sup>4</sup> دارد، کتاب درسی به عنوان عامل موثر بر پویایی کلاس محسوب میگردد که درس ها را از طریق فراهم آوردن متن ارتباط کلاسی و هم چنین نوع تمرین زبانی که دانش آموزان در طول فعالیت های کلاسی به آن مشغول اند، کنترل می کند. این حقیقت که زبان اموزان ایرانی هم چون سایرینی که زبان انگلیسی را به عنوان زبان خارجه فرا می گیرند، نیازمند توسعه مهارت های زبانی در مدرسه و در سطح نقش های زبان هستند، حقیقتی مسلم است. تحقیق حاضر، بر آن است که میزان تمرکز بر ارتباط در کلاس های زبان دوران دبیرستان ایران را شناسایی کرده و هم چنین تاثیر اصلاحات در دروس کتاب درسی را که با هدف افزایش قدرت ارتباطی آن ها انجام میشود را بر میزان ارتباط کلاس در آن درس ها مورد سنجش قرار دهد. تحقیق حاضر بر اساس طرح آزمایشی تک موردی و با استفاده از طرح مشاهده ای COLT<sup>5</sup> به عنوان ابزار گرد آوری اطلاعات، انجام گرفت. دو کلاسی که در هر دو بخش این تحقیق مورد ارزیابی قرار گرفتند، هر کدام متشکل از 25 دانش آموز دختر از یک دبیرستان دخترانه نمونه دولتی بودند. بررسی و تفسیر داده های گرد آوری شده نشان می دهد که در زمان استفاده از کتاب درسی فعلی آموزش و پرورش، میزان تمرکز بر ارتباط در کلاس های زبان دوران دبیرستان ایران، در وضعیت نسبتا پایینی قرار دارد. در مقایسه، مشخص شد که استفاده از دروس اصلاح شده همان کتاب درسی تاثیر به سزایی بر میزان ارتباط در همان کلاس های قبلی داشت. نتایج کلی این تحقیق، به این نظریه که کتاب درسی نقش به سزایی در برانگیختن ارتباط کلاسی در کشورهایی همچون ایران که زبان انگلیسی در آن ها زبان خارجه محسوب می شود ایفا میکند، قوت می بخشد.

---

<sup>1</sup> Syllabus

<sup>2</sup> Instructional Materials

<sup>3</sup> Communicative Language Teaching

<sup>4</sup> Communicative Competence

<sup>5</sup> COLT (Communicative Orientation Language Teaching) Observational Scheme

# **DEDICATION**

To Imam Reza (P.B.U.H.)  
On the Anniversary of his Birthday

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I give thanks and praise to God, whom I have always put first in my life. He has been with me from the very beginning and through every step of my educational career. With His help this project received support of Dr.Hajibabaii, Minister of Education, who, in person, approved of my request that this project should receive official support for more ease of work.

This thesis would not have been possible without the assistance and support of many individuals. I wish to acknowledge and express my appreciation of these people for their invaluable contributions.

I would like to give thanks to my beloved family for being my source of strength and inspiration during this journey: My mother, father, brothers, and sister who helped me find the strength to continue when things got tough. They have all been supportive in many ways and I am grateful to have them in my life.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Esmaeel Nourmohammadi, Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Sistan and Baluchistan and also to my advisor Dr. Mohammad Reza Anani Sarab, Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at Shahid Beheshti University. My grateful thanks are extended towards both for being so excellent guides to me and for their essential contributions to this study. I appreciate their care for and interest in my work, as well as helping me grow as a researcher along the way. I cannot thank them enough for their time, talent, dedication and open-door policy. On more than one occasion, I found that they dropped their own work to help me and to recommend or provide the references that would serve as the guide for this study.

Thank you very much for your patience with me and believing in me.

To all my professors at the University of Sistan and Baluchestan, the Department of English Language and Literature who provided insightful education and supportive environment, I am gratefully indebted.

My sincere appreciation is also extended to my colleagues who provided me with their feedback which was indeed helpful. I especially thank two of them who participated in the study to teach the lessons. I am truly grateful for their time, trust, and commitment: Mr. Mohammad Reza Rahmani and Mr. Mohammad Reza Habibi whose enthusiasm and creativity in language teaching is admirable.

Many thanks are also extended towards Mr. Meisam Karimi for his generous helps on all the hard job of video recording and film making this study needed. He never hesitated to offer a hand, always willingly and promptly assisted me.

I would also like to thank my dear friend Ms. Maryam Sanei Moghadam, from Shahid Beheshti University, for her care all through the process of thesis writing. Especial thanks go to Niki Hosseini, who kindly, as the second rater, did the observation coding.

I wish to acknowledge and express my appreciation to the following people for their invaluable contributions: Dr. Hamid Reza Verdi, Mr. Ali Reza Moghimi, Mr. Fanoodi, Mr. Mohammad Hossein Barati, Mr. Abbas Khorashadi, Mr. Nourmohammadi, Mr. Ranjbar, Ms. Fariba Boujaraan, Ms. Leila Shafiee, and Ms. Zohreh Hosseini. Thank you very much for all the help you offered to best hold the needed 12 teaching sessions in this study.

## **ABSTRACT**

Classroom communication depends on many factors, including teachers, learners, syllabi and, more importantly, instructional materials. In Communicative Language Teaching which highly emphasizes communicative competence, textbook is viewed as a factor which affects classroom dynamics and controls lessons by providing a prepared script for classroom interaction and also the kinds of language practice the students engage in during class activities. The fact that Iranian high school students as any other EFL language learners need to develop language skills in school at a functional level is a well established fact. The present study aimed at detecting the degree of focus on communication in Iranian high school language classes and examining the effect of the modifications made in some textbook units to make them more communicative on the lesson's degree of focus on communication. The design of the present study was single-case experimental design using the COLT observation scheme as the instrument for data collection. The cases examined in the two teaching phases of the current case study were 2 classes of 25 female students of grade one of a girls' secondary public school. The analysis and interpretation of the collected data revealed that the degree of focus on communication was rather low when the current textbooks were used. In comparison, the use of the modified units from the current textbook made a considerable increase in the focus of communication. The overall results lend weight to the idea that textbook factor is focal to the whetting of classroom communication in EFL settings, including Iran.



## Table of Contents

DEDICATION .....	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES .....	x
LIST OF APPENDICES .....	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xii
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study.....	5
1.3 Significance of the Study .....	10
1.4 Definitions of the Key Terms.....	12
1.4.1 Communicative Language Teaching .....	12
1.4.2 Communicative Competence .....	12
1.4.3 Syllabus Design.....	13
1.4.4 Teaching Materials.....	13
1.4.5 COLT Observation Scheme .....	14
1.5 Research Questions and Hypothesis .....	14
1.6 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study.....	15
1.7 Organization of the Study.....	16
<b>CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....</b>	<b>18</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	18
2.2 Critics' Translations of Chomsky's Linguistic Competence .....	18
2.2.1 Dell Hymes' Views.....	19
2.2.2 Halliday's Views.....	21

2.2.3	Gumper'z Views .....	23
2.3	Models of Communicative Competence .....	24
2.3.1	Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983) .....	24
2.3.2	Savignon (1985).....	27
2.3.3	Bachman and Palmer (1996).....	28
2.3.4	Celce-Murcia (1995-2007).....	32
2.4	Implications of Communicative Competence in Language Pedagogy .....	35
2.4.1	The Importance of Culture.....	36
2.4.2	The Importance of Discourse and Context .....	37
2.4.3	The Need to Balance Language as System and Language as Formula	37
2.4.4	The Need to Focus on Dynamic Aspects of Interaction .....	38
2.4.5	The Need to Focus on Strategies From Time to Time.....	39
2.5	Communicative Language Teaching.....	40
2.5.1	Origins of CLT.....	40
2.5.2	Definition, Principles and Versions of CLT .....	42
2.5.3	Classroom Activities in CLT .....	46
2.5.4	CLT in EFL Contexts: Horse of a Different Color.....	51
2.5.5	Dissatisfaction with CLT in the Twenty First Century .....	58
2.6	Instructional Material and Language Teaching.....	61
2.6.1	The Role of Textbook Factor .....	62
2.6.2	Characteristics of Effective Language Teaching Materials.....	64
2.7	An Overview of English Teaching in Iran .....	67
2.7.1	Presumed Adoption of CLT in Iran: Concerns over the Existing Problems .....	68
2.7.2	Iranian Secondary School English Textbooks: Evaluations.....	69
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .....</b>		<b>74</b>
3.1	Introduction .....	74
3.2	Participants .....	74
3.3	Instrumentation.....	75
3.4	Procedures .....	78

3.5	Data Analysis.....	81
<b>CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....</b>		<b>83</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	83
4.2	Results .....	83
4.2.1	Part A .....	84
4.2.1.1	Activity/Time and Student Modality .....	84
4.2.1.2	Participation Organization and Topic Control.....	87
4.2.1.3	Content .....	89
4.2.1.4	Materials .....	91
4.2.2	Part B.....	92
4.2.2.1	The Target Language.....	92
4.2.2.2	Information Gap.....	93
4.2.2.3	Incorporation of Utterances .....	94
4.2.2.4	Sustained Speech .....	97
4.2.2.5	React to code or Message .....	98
4.2.2.6	Student Form Restriction.....	98
4.3	Discussion of the Findings .....	99
4.3.1	Discussion of Part A and B.....	99
4.3.2	Research Hypothesis .....	105
4.3.2.1	Communicative Environment.....	105
4.3.2.2	Communicative Behavior Representation Graph.....	108
4.3.3	Research Question 1.....	109
4.3.4	Research Question 2.....	112
<b>CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, IMPLICATION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION</b>		<b>117</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	117
5.2	Summary of the Study.....	117
5.3	Summary of the Findings .....	117
5.4	Implications of the Study .....	118

5.4.1	Theoretical Implications .....	118
5.4.2	Pedagogic Implications .....	119
5.5	Suggestions for Further Studies .....	122
5.6	Conclusion.....	120
	<b>References.....</b>	<b>125</b>
	<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>139</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
Table 2.1 Hyme’s view of Chomsky’s Competence and Performance.....	20
Table 2.2 Areas of Language Knowledge by Bachman & Palmer, 1996 ....	31
Table 3.1 Basic Information about the Teacher Participants.....	74
Table 4.1 Activity/ Time and Student Modality.....	85
Table 4.2 Participation Organization and Topic Control.....	88
Table 4.3 Content.....	89
Table 4.4 Materials.....	91
Table 4.5 The Target Language.....	93
Table 4.6 Information Gap.....	94
Table 4.7 Teacher Incorporation Utterances.....	95
Table 4.8 Student Incorporation of Utterances.....	95
Table 4.9 Sustained Speech.....	97
Table 4.10 React to Code or Message.....	98
Table 4.11 Student Form Restriction.....	99

## LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
Figure 2.1 Chronological Evolution of ‘Communicative Competence’ ...	35
Figure 2.2 Hutchinson and Torres’ Model (1994, P.318).....	63
Figure 4.1 Total Communicative Environment.....	107
Figure 4.2 Communicative Behavior Representation Graph.....	109

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

<u>Appendix</u>	<u>Page</u>
Appendix A COLT Observation Scheme: Part A.....	140
Appendix B COLT Observation Scheme: Part B.....	142
Appendix C COLT Observation Scheme: Definition of Categories.....	143
Appendix D Modified Units .....	150
Appendix E Normal Units .....	169

# **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

## **Abbreviations**

ALM: Audio-Lingual Method

CLA: Communicative Language Ability

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

COLT: Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching

ESL: English as a Second Language

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

ELT: English Language Teaching

ELTs: English Language Teachers

F: Form

FCC: Focus on Form in a Communicative Context

FCP: Focus on Form for a Communicative Purpose

GTM: Grammar Teaching Method

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

LSP: Language for Specified Purposes

MCLT: Modified Communicative Language Teaching

ME: Ministry of Education

MONE: Ministry of National Education



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

Language learning and becoming bilingual is about getting your meaning across and being understood in a language or languages other than your own. The learner's whole person is affected as he/she struggles to reach beyond the confines of his/her first language and into a new language, a new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling, and acting. So, second or foreign language learning is not a set of easy steps that can be programmed in a quick do-it-yourself kit. What may be most surprising, in this regard, is the fact that while it has been largely acknowledged that language learning, at its most basic, is about communication, talking and interacting with real people, language learners get easily preoccupied with the details of learning a language. Consequently, what would come to sharp focus to them is nothing more than grammar, structures, creating perfect sentences and so on and so forth. This is not to say that these areas are not important, but when one is learning a language, especially in the early stages, it is important to remember why he is learning it. Foreign language study fails to realize the fundamental goal of enabling the learner to use the new language as a communicative tool (Wanner, 1979, p. 25)

A quick glance at the literature of applied linguistics and language teaching would be enough to understand that the field of second language teaching has undergone many shifts and trends over the last few decades and the pendulum of uprising methods has been swinging in a nonstop fashion change. One method is born, then grows, blooms and gets prevalent for some time, but sooner or later, what once appeared new and promising seems strange and outdated , then a new

one comes on show while occasionally considerable overlap is found in their theoretical as well as practical orientation to L2 learning and teaching.

In brief, until the mid 1960s, approaches and methods had improperly directed the teaching of foreign languages to structuralist and behavioral directions which deprived learners from being exposed to potential communicative and functional components of language.

In the late 1960s, with the help of the applied linguists of the time (e.g. Halliday, 1970; Wilkins, 1972; Widdoson, 1978; Candlin, 1976; Brumfit, 1978), the *communicative (functional) approach of language teaching* emerged as a more accurate study of language to give adequate attention to language use as well as language form and also to the needs of the language learners. This approach, in essence, was a claim to the validity of the statement that the goal of language learning is the development of communicative competence. The idea of grouping bits of language according to *communicative functions* like apologizing, requesting, and advising through the writings of Austin on speech acts (in USA ), which was then taken up and extended by Searle, was also well-timed to coincide with the renewal of the interest in the way language was put to communicative use. Meanwhile American sociolinguists (Gumperz, 1972; Hymes, 1974; Labov, 1972) took the study of discourse and language in its social context. They argued for a focus in language teaching on *communicative proficiency* rather than on mere mastery of structures and were also seriously interested in educational significance of their work.

Along with the mentioned changes in methods and approaches to teach a language, educational curricula and syllabi, generally seen as indispensable units of second language programmes, have also taken different forms to represent various theories of learning and accordingly have been realised in various ways. The language course syllabi predominant before the 1970s were structuralist /formal/grammatical ones, which were based on the structuralist, behaviourist and

cognitivist-Chomskian learning theories and emphasized the forms and usage instead of use.

In the last 50 years language teaching has undergone many changes in ideas about syllabus design and methodology. *Communicative Language Teaching* (CLT) has prompted a rethinking of approaches to syllabus design and methodology (Richards, 2006). Munby (1978, p.1), for example, in his development of *communicative syllabus design* refers to Hymes' effect both on his work and the foreign and second language teaching field:

The upsurge of interest in the content of the language syllabus, following the concern with communicative competence generated by Dell Hymes, reflects inter alia a feeling that we ought to know much more about what it is that should be taught and learned if a non native is to be communicatively competent in English .

Needless to say, content and its organization are subsumed within a *curriculum* as part of the methodology and not within the syllabus. Breen and Candlin (1980) think that any teaching curriculum is designed as a response to three interrelated questions: What is to be learnt (content)? How is the learning to be undertaken and achieved (methodology)? To what extent is the former appropriate and the latter achieved (evaluation)? They also believe that a communicative curriculum would place language teaching within the framework of this triangular relationship and provide it with the role of servant to the learning teaching process. Thus, in a communicative framework, content would not necessarily be prescribed by purposes but would be selected and organized within the communicative and differentiated process by learners and teachers as participants in that process.

To Nunan and Lamb (1996), language curriculum development has been greatly influenced by a change in views on the nature of teaching and learning. The change in views is reflected in the objectives and content of language programs, as well as activities, materials, and teacher/learner roles. They contrasted

traditionalism with CLT and concluded that the advent of communicative language teaching made curriculum development much more complex as communicative curricula reflected on the learner's communicative needs and shed light on learning preferences. Thus, much more information about and by learners came to be incorporated into the curriculum process. They also found that CLT made language curricula undergo modification in that language focus exercises were developed as a second-order activity. That is to say with the emergence of CLT, communicative tasks made up the central building block within the curricula. Instead of being designed to teach a particular lexical, phonological or morphosyntactic point, tasks were designed to reflect learners' communicative needs to provide them with the desired communicative competence.

Logically, teaching materials are the key component of the curricula in most educational programs including governments' school language courses. Cunningsworth (1995, p.7) summarizes the role of coursebooks in language teaching as:

- a resource for presentation materials (spoken and written)
- a source of activities for learner practice and communicative interaction
- a reference source for learners on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and so on
- a source of stimulation and ideas for classroom activities
- a syllabus (where they reflect learning objectives that have already been determined)
- a support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence