

The Communicative Approach: Improving meaningful, authentic and learner-centered classes
through lesson planning for teachers at the Centro Cultural Colombo Americano

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ABSTRACT

Since the decade of the 70s, the communicative approach has been the most used methodology in terms of teaching English as a foreign language. This hasn't been the exception at the Centro Cultural Colombo Americano (which for the interest of this research it will be named as CCCA) and all its branches, however we would concentrate this research paper in one of its branches, in the city of Palmira.

The purpose of this Monograph is to show how the application of the communicative approach and the use of the lesson planning as a tool can bring the desired outcomes and goals of a class, that is having meaningful, authentic and learner-centered classes.

This has been done by examining different bibliography reviews on the communicative approach and lesson planning, in the learning and teaching process. Upon examination of this review, it becomes clear that the application of the communicative approach and the effective lesson planning could bring an excellent opportunity to both learners and instructors to practice and improve the teaching-learning experience. This monograph highlights the positive outcomes of the synergy of planning lessons under the principles of the Communicative Approach.

Keywords: Communicative approach, lesson planning, meaningful, learner-centered, authenticity.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Centro Cultural Colombo Americano in the city of Palmira has offered English courses for over 10 years; it has implemented a communicative methodology called the Communicative Approach as part of its teaching policies.

In this research, we will define the Communicative Approach under its three main pillars: A) Meaningfulness, B) Authenticity and C) Learner-centeredness. Although many other characteristics define this approach our interest is to study how teachers can improve, therefore class outcome become unexpected. We will guide you through a theoretical review and concepts on what the Communicative Approach is, and how it can be beneficial to apply those 3 characteristics in lesson planning thus, engaging more the students in meaningful and authentic classes.

We are advocates in correlating lesson plan design with class outcomes and expectations. In this regard, since the problem falls on the fact of lack of class preparation to target these three pillars properly, we want to improve class preparation with the purpose of improving teaching practices according to the communicative approach. In order to achieve this desired goal, we will guide ourselves through a monograph because one of the goals in this research is to become a future participatory research involving the teaching community at the institution to take action and provide solutions as a work team.

Significance of the Study

It is important to conduct research for the twelve teachers at the Centro Cultural Colombo Americano on the subject of applying the communicative approach (which for the importance of this monograph will be named CA) properly through effective lesson planning strategies because of the impact that it will have to both teachers, who will learn, understand and apply the main principles of the communicative approach (meaningfulness, student-centeredness and Authenticity, among others) and students who will be taught under such principles, which will end up in enriching both teaching and learning practices.

we strongly believe that lesson plans reflect teachers' thoughts and ideas as well as their philosophy for teaching based on the learners' needs. As Linda Jensen, (2005) states "A lesson plan is an extremely useful tool that serves as a combination guide, resource, and historical document reflecting our teaching philosophy and our goals for our students." (p.403) Even though the major concern of this research is not how to use a lesson or why use a lesson plan, it is important to reflect that knowing the how will also benefit the teaching practices correlating better learning. In fact, students' sensitivity and learning response will also benefit, since this is also the goal of planning. This was clearly demonstrated by Peterson, Max, and Clark (1978) who provided data on the teacher effectiveness as measured by student achievement and attitude, concluding in that teacher planning, teacher behavior and student achievement interact in a very complex way.

The main benefit for teachers is to understand how to make better decisions conducting their classes when they refer to the use of the communicative approach as part of their pedagogical output. In addition to that, this will also help teachers assess themselves as far as methodology application

when it comes to building teaching objectives that provide optimal input and output in the four language skills, and therefore, students' language level as far as proficiency.

Statement of the Problem

The CCCA is located in the city of Palmira. Its teaching and learning objective is to teach English to young and adults. There are 12 in-service teachers, who have been working as EFL teachers at the institution for more than 2 years. Some of these teachers hold different degrees in Education, however a great deal of them do not hold any education or language-related degree. Nevertheless, all the teachers have been exposed to some form of teacher training to acquire pedagogical and didactic tools to become English Teachers and conduct their teaching practices under the institution's methodology, Communicative Language Teaching, commonly known as the Communicative Approach, which we will be addressing as CA during the extension of this research. In this regard, the most noticeable problem has been related to the way classes are being taught. As class observers and lesson plan analysts, the lack of preparation of the lessons: including the didactic strategies, and the correct application of the methodology itself which the institution has established for all its teachers to follow, has had a negative impact on how many teachers are having issues designing lesson plans in which the application of this approach can be properly done in order to provide communicative competence and not a grammatical competence. According to Richards (2006):

a communicative competence refers to the knowledge we have of a language that accounts for our ability to produce sentences in a language. It refers to knowledge of the building blocks of sentences (e.g., parts of speech, tenses, phrases, clauses, sentence patterns) and how sentences are formed. A grammar competence is referred as the focus of many

grammar practice books, which typically present a rule of grammar on one page and provide exercises to practice using the rule on the other page. (p.3)

Following the objectives of the CA, we can find that, classes should be designed in order to provide learner-centered, meaningful and authentic classes, Yandel, J. (1987) learning theory principles of the Communicative Approach. In this regard difficulties on how to understand and apply the principles of the communicative approach, lack of mentoring and coaching as well as action plan follow-ups, the teacher being the center of the teaching-learning process, poor lesson plan designed, lack of activities that enhance productivity in students such in the four skills such as: repetition, filling in the gaps, listen and complete and grammar oriented classes, are some of the main reasons and evidences of an improper ways of applying the methodology optimally and also why there is plenty of in satisfaction with students' progress and English proficiency once it is measured by the CEFR with results under B1. The main factor here, however, is primarily how classes are conducted and what type of preparation that is carried out by teachers to promote a much better quality of class outcome for students in the four language skills in terms of meaningfulness, authenticity and student-centeredness, characteristics of the communicative approach. Consequently, how can the teachers improve, meaningful, authentic and learner-centered classes through lesson planning at the Centro cultural Colombo americano?

Objectives

General Objective

To analyze how to improve meaningful, authentic and learner-centered classes through lesson planning for the teachers at the Centro Cultural Colombo Americano

Specific Objectives

To reference information of other study works done previously about meaningfulness, authenticity and learner-centered classes.

To interpret the literature on the use of meaningfulness, authenticity, and student-centeredness in EFL environments

To identify how lesson planning helps enhance the communicative approach based on the literature

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Variety is one of the main components as to the reason why Foreign language acquisition is becoming more and more popular as well as important. We will begin by reviewing which theory is more prominent throughout different peer reviewed journal articles. Then we will look back in time at how the beginnings of the communicative approach were. After that we will be showing a comparison among other methods and approaches to show that the CA provides more opportunities for learning a foreign language more effectively. Subsequently we will mention the most important factors of the communicative approach such as its role, assessment and the most important principles that have helped to shape the CA. Afterwards we will refer to task-based learning and how it can be a tool within the CA that can bring the 3 pillars to use. Next, we will move to explain how teachers should approach lesson planning in order to incorporate the attributes of the CA. Finally, we reviewed some case studies in the pursuit of having a broader view of the communicative approach and its application.

Communicative approach background

The changes in education in Europe and the interdependence of the European countries made them to articulate alternative methods of language teaching, due to the fact that more people had the obligation to learn a language for work reasons and children were given the opportunity to learn a foreign language, the increased demand made them realize that they needed to evolve from traditional methods such as grammar-translation method that the aim was, as stated by Larsen-Freeman (2000):

helping students read and appreciate foreign language literature. It was also hoped that, through the study of the grammar of the target language, students would become more familiar with the grammar of their native language and that this familiarity would help them speak and write their native language better. (p. 11)

Due to the fact that grammar-translation method wasn't efficient in getting the students ready to use the language communicatively the direct method then became prominent, it is based on the fact that "meaning is to be conveyed directly in the target language through the use of demonstration and visual aids, with no recourse to the students' native language" (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, pg. 22). On the other hand, another method that was left behind in the United States in the 1960's was the Audio-lingual method that "drills students in the use of grammatical sentence patterns" (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, pg. 35). Educators then realized the importance of an approach that emphasizes the communicative ability and brought better results, that's why the CA was then used in order to make the communicative ability the aim for language teaching.

The communicative approach originated in Great Britain the 1960's, and there have been many authors that contributed in the construction of the communicative approach, first we have Noam Chomsky that was among the first one to demonstrate that "standard structural theories of language were incapable of accounting for the creativity and uniqueness of individual sentences. Therefore, there was a shift from the insistence on the mere mastery of grammatical structures to the emphasis on communicative proficiency" (Basta, 2011, pg. 125). Another Linguistic theory of communication that favored CA is Hymes theory of communicative competence, Hymes (1972) stated that "a model of language must design it with a face toward communicative conduct and social life. The engagement of language in social life has a positive, productive aspect" (p.60). Therefore, interacting with others is beneficial to L2 learners in order to acquire knowledge. Other theory that influenced

greatly in the CA is Halliday's functional account of language use. Halliday (1970) as cited in Richards and Rogers (1999) stated that "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" (p.70). In many important books and papers Halliday created an important theory of the functions of language which correlates with Hyme's perspective of the communicative competence. The communicative approach was then a response to the following methods and that's the reason why the authors just mentioned wanted to change those traditional methods to one in which the communicative competence became the most important one in language teaching.

Communicative Approach contrasted with Grammar Methods

Most theoretical frameworks and authors have attempted to comprehend and understand which method and approaches would be most effective when teaching English as a second language. For example, Grammar translation methods were one of the most utilized methods approaching second language teaching. However, researchers found that when children were exposed to this method they did not respond as effectively or positively (Pica, 1999). The same researchers then found out that due to the application of the communicative approach, it allowed children to express better and more effectively in the second language, and that one of the most positive characteristics was that children did not have that extra pressure of being grammatically corrected (Pica, 1999; Canale & Swain 1980). In this regard, the oral communication becomes the most important component because it allows students to have the necessary knowledge in the target language or second language before the application of correct grammar sentences. With this being said, communication becomes more important than grammar. However, the grammatical component is important when teaching

adolescents and adults because it allows the adolescents and the adults to better comprehend the language in question by comparing the grammatical laws of both languages in question (Pica, 1999). When instructors approach learners to help them comprehend a second language, the teacher must always approach directly to instruct and to correct the learners. As a rule of thumb, instructors or teachers should not point out more than one error per feedback (Pica, 1999). Also, if the student is not understanding or expressing themselves as expected, there can be a number of strategic questions that teachers can ask to help students. Examples of these questions according to Patricia A. Duff are as follows: “Did you say X?” or “Could you say that again?” (Duff, 2007). In this part when the grammatical part becomes relevant, only once students are capable of expressing themselves comprehensively and coherently. The grammatical approach, also known as the “garden path” approach, becomes dominant because the focus is placed on the forms, features, and structures of the second language (Pica, 1999). In other words, the "garden path" is a grammatical approach to the second language where the technique is of "sequencing instruction on grammar rules and exceptions" rather than having the rules and exceptions explained together at the same time (Pica, 1999).

According to Krashen there are two ways in which an adult can develop a competence in a foreign language; by acquisition and by learning. Language acquisition refers to a process similar to how we become competent in our first language. Learner “picks up” the language and gives it its own meaning as language is presented in context. Language learning is a more conscious process in which the rules of the language are presented thus making the learner aware of them (Krashen,82). we can see then that CA falls under language acquisition and Grammar translation under language learning.

Communicative Approach contrasted with the Direct Method

The Direct-Method came into the teaching scenario as a response to the problems faced by teachers with the Grammar-Translation method. Supporters of this method believed that a language was best learnt if the student had enough opportunity to be exposed to the target language. They believed that another language could be learnt in the same way a first language was acquired. In other words, students had to receive large amounts of input and output in the target language to allow them to receive and produce the language. In this methodology, as mentioned by Richards & Rodgers (2012) teachers had to use long explanations to avoid using the mother tongue when a simple translation would have been more efficient. This contrasts with the CA, Larsen-Freeman (2000) stated that. "Judicious use of the student's native language is permitted in CLT. However, whenever possible, the target language should be used not only during communicative activities, but also for explaining the activities to students" (p.132). Direct-method relies heavily on presenting vocabulary through realia and other resources like flashcards, miniature models, etc. Grammar rules are not presented, and they are acquired inductively. The teacher interacts a lot with students and guides them into figuring out the grammar. Later on, as the classes progresses, teacher becomes a facilitator of communication of student to student. In CA, authentic material is used widely, grammar is also presented inductively, but the role of the teacher is always the one of a facilitator. in CA, teachers promote a student-student interaction, students should have as much time to produce among them. (Naim, s.f.)

Communicative approach contrasted with the Audiolingual method

The Audiolingual method is based on the idea that language is learned through drilling and repetition. It is connected to the theory of behaviorism. According to Mart (2013) "The Audio-Lingual method considered language simply as form of behavior to be learned through the

formation of correct speech habits'' (p. 63). in other words, ``The overall aim of instruction is to duplicate native language habits in the learner through a stimulus-response reinforcement teaching methodology'' (Dendrinos, 1992, pg.114). It uses stimuli to provoke the response of the student. The expected response is reinforced with a reward and student satisfaction. This methodology is very controlled and teacher-centered, contrasting a lot with the CA. CA was a response to the Audio-Lingual Method and it focused on the idea that students learn the language if they have the opportunity to use it. the audiolingual method does not explain grammar rules and forbids translation whereas CA uses it when necessary. CA has as one of its central features meaningful communication but with the audiolingual method limits this type of communication. In the audiolingual method accuracy is key. On the other hand, CA takes errors as part of the learning process. (Task-Based Grammar Teaching,2016)

TABLE I
CHECKLIST FOR COMPARING ELT APPROACHES

CRITERIA AND PARAMETERS	ELT APPROACHES			
	Grammatical	Audiolingual	Communicative	Natural
1	Supporting Theories			
	Behaviorism or Conductism			
		X		
	Krashen's Hypotheses about Second Language Acquisition			
			X	X
	Universal Grammar (Innatist)			
			X	X
	Socio-Cultural			
			X	
	None			
	X			
2	Creation Purpose			
	To teach classical languages			
	X			
	To teach people who needed to travel/study in other countries			
		X		
	To teach people from the army to communicate in wars			
		X		
	To teach European languages and allow Europeans to communicate			
			X	
	To teach any person willing to learn			
				X
3	Materials Used			
	Realia			
				X
	Physical objects			
				X
	Observable actions			
				X
	Books			
	X	X	X	X
	Audio			
		X	X	X
	Visuals			
		X	X	X
	Audio-visuals			
		X	X	X
	Language laboratory			
		X		
	Worksheets			
	X			
	Authentic materials			
			X	X
4	Techniques Used			
	Drills			
	X	X		
	Translation			
	X			
	Memorization			
	X	X		
	Role-plays			
			X	X
	Dialogues / Conversations			
		X	X	X
	Reading and comprehension activities			
			X	X
	Vocabulary exercises			
	X		X	
	Games			
			X	X
	Hands-on activities			
			X	
	Oral presentations			
			X	X
	Pair and group work			
			X	X
	Mind engaging tasks			
			X	
	Listening activities			
		X	X	X
5	Teacher's Role			
	The teacher is accountable for creating an appropriate environment (full of comprehensible input) for language learning			
				X
	The teacher is the center of the class at certain grade			
		X		
	The teacher is the center of the class. All the class turns around him.			
	X			
	The teacher is a guide.			
			X	
6	Student's Role			
	Active learner			
		X	X	X
	Passive learner			
	X			
	Goes from passive to active, depending on the stage of language learning			
				X
7	Students' mother tongue role			
	Students are banned from using it			
		X		
	Students can use it as a support			
			X	X
	It is important in the learning process			
	X			
	The teacher speaks only in the target language			
		X		

Figure 1. Comparing ELT approaches (Matamoros-González, Asunción Rojas, Pizarro Romero,

The Role of the Communicative Approach

First, we have the role of the teacher that is to be a facilitator of the communication process within all the students, also being a guide in the activities and procedures that monitors their performance and provide any help when needed. As Fosch (2017) says. “ Instead of being a class-dominator, as they were supposed to be in the past, they shifted to become a class-supporter” (p.13). Other important factor of the communicative approach are the learners since in the CA they participate actively in the activities while the teacher is the facilitator.

furthermore, the activities that are carried out in class need to focus on the communicative practice in which language is being used within a real communicative context, where real information is shared, and the information being exchanged is not totally predictable (Richards, 2006). In this regard, the role of the CA in the activities is “to produce meaningful and real communication, at all levels. As a result, there may be more emphasis on skills than systems, lessons are more learner-centered, and there may be use of authentic materials ” (Council, 2006). another factor to consider as mentioned by Benmostefa (s.f). “Communicative language testing is intended to provide the teacher with information about the learners’ ability to perform in the target language in certain context-specific tasks” (p.1)

Communicative Approach testing

The communicative approach originated from the theory of language as communication in which the main aim of language teaching is to promote the communicative ability. In this regard, all the components that came together in elaborating the communicative competence play an important role for developing communicative language testing. (Benmostefa, s.f.). As opposed to traditional assessment that focused on separate language components or receptive skills, that usually have established response formats. (Nguyen & Le, s.f.)

The main principle of CA testing is that the activities need to be meaningful and authentic, and it needs to measure how learners can use the target language in real life activities. (Benmostefa, s.f.). Considering this, there are five requirements that accounts for communicative testing, as stated by Brown (2005) They are “ 1) meaningful communication, 2) authentic situation, 3) unpredictable language input, 4) creative language output, and 5) integrated language skills”(as cited in Benmostefa, s.f, p.2). In this regard, CA testing often combines the productive and receptive skills in order for learners to comprehend and respond as it happens in real life communication. taking this into consideration, Kathleen and Kitao (1996) observe that the communicative tests are:

Intended for communication language and are judged on the extent to which they stimulate real life communicative situations rather than on how reliable the results are. ... that communicative tests often carry a subjective element. That is, real life situations do not always have objectively right or wrong answers, and so band-scales need to be developed to evaluate the results.

so, the most important thing is not the function of language, but rather how you can use the communicative competence in meaningful and authentic situations in an integrative way. (Benmostefa, s.f.). Such testing will help with the reorganization of the lesson plan to fit students’ needs.

Communicative approach: principles to consider.

Here it is important to consider that when designing lesson plans under the communicative approach we have to take a look to its learning theory to highlight the most important principles and objectives that should also be incorporated into the lesson plan. Thus, the communicative approach as stated by British Council (2006) “Is based on the idea that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning. When

learners are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used, and this will allow them to learn to use the language. In other words, three important principles are the core and the essence of this methodology: 1) Meaningfulness, which according to David Ausubel (as cited in Rhalmi, 2011) "to learn meaningfully, individuals must relate new knowledge to relevant concepts they already know. New knowledge must interact with the learner's knowledge structure." Therefore, (Vallori, 2014) stated that:

meaningful learning, which implies longer retention than memorizing, occurs when humans relate new concepts to pre-existing familiar concepts. Then changes are produced in our cognitive structure, concepts are modified, and new links are created. It is a useful tool because it enables real learning, it generates greater retention and it facilitates transferences to other real situations. (p.199)

In this regard, Meaningful learning will occur when the new information is connected to prior knowledge, thus, allowing the students to relate the new information acquired, to ideas that they already know and making sure they will use this knowledge in the real world. 2)

Authenticity which is defined by David Taylor as genuineness, realness, truthfulness, validity, reliability, undisputed credibility, and legitimacy are just some of the words that are used when we talk about authenticity (Taylor, 1994). In this regard, classroom activities as stated by Nunan (2001) "should parallel the 'real world' as closely as possible. Since language is a tool of communication, methods and materials should concentrate on the message, not the medium" (p.59). As a matter of fact, Nunan (2001) explains that. "Tasks with a real-world rationale require learners to approximate, in class, the sorts of behaviors required of them in the world beyond the classroom" (p.40). Considering this, it is of great relevance to implement material where learners will use the language in a meaningful way, thus, allowing them to be in contact

with the real world around them. 3) Student-Centeredness according to Jacobs and Farrell (2003) as cited in (Richards, 2006):

See the shift toward CLT as marking a paradigm shift in our thinking about teachers, learning, and teaching. They identify key components of this shift as follows: Focusing greater attention on the role of learners rather than the external stimuli learners are receiving from their environment. Thus, the center of attention shifts from the teacher to the student. This shift is generally known as the move from teacher-centered instruction to learner-centered instruction. (p. 24)

On the other hand, McCombs and Whistler (1997) as cited in Froyd and Simpson, s.f. stated that “Learners are treated as co-creators in the learning process, as individuals with ideas and issues that deserve attention and consideration” (p.1). Therefore, learners take an important role in their learning process, where they’ll become more autonomous and make decisions of their own learning. Following similar principles, we have task-based learning that the main aim is to do meaningful and authentic tasks using the target language.

Task based learning as a tool within the communicative approach

According to Bowen (s.f.) “If we can make language in the classroom meaningful therefore memorable, students can process language which is being learned or recycled more naturally”. This is the premise of a new methodology that was developed in the communicative framework (Task-Based Grammar Teaching, 2016). Task-Based learning shares many principles with CA like “learner engagement with purposeful real-life tasks that emphasize communication and meaning” (Task-Based Grammar Teaching,2016). Task-Based learning doesn’t follow the traditional lesson plan approach which starts with a presentation followed by practice and production. Instead, Task-Based throws students into a task where they would use authentic

language to complete it. Later, students will compare how they got the task done and notice how they complete it. Finally, students will report what they learn to later do the same task with what they have learnt or complete a similar task. This is known as the TTT (Test-Teach-Test) approach to lesson planning proposed by Jane Willis (1996). While in the PPP approach to lesson planning the main objective is to move from accuracy to fluency, in the Task-Based approach the idea is to move from fluency to accuracy plus fluency.

Task-Based learning uses Krashen's theory of language acquisition. The task provides students with the opportunity to use language freely and notice the gap in their knowledge and the necessity to complete that gap. Task-Based learning presents new knowledge to students in context, making it more memorable for them (Bowen, T).

on the other hand, Task-Based learning has some disadvantages, due to the fact that it uses authentic language, the selection of the task becomes crucial because if it isn't selected correctly, there is a risk of randomness in the language used (Bowen, T). Another drawback to this model is that time is difficult to control, and it becomes difficult to know when a task can finish, making lesson plans last various lessons (Bowen, T).

Lesson Planning and expected outcomes

Lesson plans are the outcome of teachers' opinions, reflections and thoughts that come out in a class. Kagan and Tippins (1992) says that "instructors create their own lesson plans because it provides them the flexibility to teach according to individual methods of organization and personality" (as cited in Ayres, 2014, p.1). Secondly Justman and Mais (1956) "support that lesson plans should reflect an instructor's individual effort" (as cited in Ayres, 2014, p.2). Moreover, Richards (1998) suggests that "The success with which a teacher conducts a lesson is often thought to depend on the effectiveness with which the lesson was planned" (p. 103).

Considering this, each teacher should organize their lesson plans according to their efforts and methods. Richards (1998) notes that "lesson plans help the teacher think about the lesson in advance to "resolve problems and difficulties, to provide a structure for a lesson, to provide a 'map' for the teacher to follow, and to provide a record of what has been taught" (p. 103). Taking this into consideration, lesson planning helps a teacher to follow an organized class, in which they can then make changes and continue improving their teaching practices and to anticipate any problems before they happen.

However, then questions that brings up is: Is it necessary for all teachers to follow the same lesson plan if we want to apply the principles of the communicative approach? Well, the answer takes us back to the principle of autonomy teachers have to write their lesson plans, but there is something in which they have to agree, that is the same principle should be applied. This is supported by Basham and Davis (1967) "if instructors are teaching the same curriculum, they do not need the same lesson plan, but they do need the same outcomes"(as cited in Ayres, 2014, p.3). Because their daily decisions in lesson planning can bring about a successful outcome for a lesson. These outcomes will be measured by the application of the CA principles (meaningfulness, authenticity and learner-centeredness). Hurst (2001) stresses that. "course outcomes are achieved by conducting comprehensive activities. Comprehensive activities are problem-solving activities where students discuss how they generated their unique answer to solving a particular problem" (p.693). Also, Instructors need to take into account the importance of having language objectives because they focus on the four skills and that is what the communicative approach is about, Renandya & Richards (2012) indicates that:

An effective lesson plan starts with appropriate and clearly written objectives. An objective is a description of a learning outcome. Objectives describe the destination (not

the journey) we want our students to reach. Clear, well-written objectives are the first step in daily lesson planning. These objectives help state precisely what we want our students to learn, help guide the selection of appropriate activities, and help provide overall lesson focus and direction. They also give teachers a way to evaluate what their students have learned at the end of the lesson. (p. 32)

Evaluating the lesson plan

Evaluating the lesson plan is of great relevance since this can help identify any problems encountered during the teaching part and help the teachers self-assess their performance likewise they can know if their lesson was a success or a failure. Ur (1996) mentions that. "it is important to stop and think after giving a lesson whether it was a good one or not, and why" (p. 219).

Nevertheless, Brown (1994) says that. "Without an evaluative component in the lesson, the teacher has no way of assessing the success of the students or what adjustments to make for the next lesson" (as cited in Renandya & Richards, 2012, p.35). Taking this into account evaluating their lesson plan can help them see if the objectives were accomplished, if the communicative approach was used in all the activities and if the students succeeded in the activities. Ur (1996) says that "When evaluating a lesson, the first and most important criterion is student learning because that is why we have a lesson in the first place" (p.220). Taking this into account, if the lessons have meaningful, learner-centered activities, teachers can make sure students are learning, because they are going to use what they learned and accomplished it according to the objectives. Ur (1996) offers a criteria to evaluate if a lesson is effective:

- (1) The class seemed to be learning the material well;
- (2) the learners were engaging with the foreign language throughout;
- (3) the learners were attentive all the time;
- (4) the learners enjoyed the lesson and were motivated;
- (5) the learners were active all the time;

(6) the lesson went according to plan; (7) the language was used communicatively throughout (p. 220).

With this being said, learners take an important role, because if the lesson plan is well-prepared and organized, it will keep their attention and increase their motivation also, it will reduce confusion, since students will know what they are expected to achieve on the objectives. (Richards & Renandya, 2012)

Integrating the principles of the communicative approach (case studies)

Meaningfulness

A case study that took place in the island of Mallorca, Spain where the researcher wanted to find out which activities were relevant to predetermine meaningful learning. During his research he used concept maps and collaborative work and the advantages of those in meaningful learning. He focused on meaningful learning based on Ausubel's theory "the most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows" (as cited in Vallori, 2014, p.199). Meaning that they could expose their previous knowledge through concept maps and collaborative works rather than memorizing those ideas. Ballester guided his research in Ausubel and Novack (1983) that says. "If we teach in a connected and related way, most of them will learn properly. Otherwise learning difficulties may arise" (as cited in Vallori, 2014, p.200). In other words, we acquired knowledge when there is a connection of important information in our cognitive structure. (Vallori, 2014).

The researcher selected a group of 28 students, 14 year-year-olds, that were in secondary education, the main topic was about Balearic Islands'. In order to put Ausubel's theory in context, the teacher asked them about what they already knew about the topic, so they were exposed in

their previous knowledge. Then students´ created a concept map in pairs to organize their ideas. In here the researcher was able to verify the use of collaborative work thru concept mapping. Moreover, students had to investigate on their own, in which they had to do the task in open work, where students produced, and the teacher was more a guide in their process, taking us also to student-centeredness.

the researcher concluded that there many benefits of meaningful learning and activities. In this regard, unsuccessful learners can work hard in order to acquire new knowledge. Moreover, the researcher found that teachers were more motivated to use Ausubel's methodology and didn't want to go back to traditional methods since they felt students were able to achieve the goals proposed. Vallori (2014) suggested that ´In meaningful learning, the use of concept maps and collaborative work makes learners take a new approach to school tasks´´ (p.206). Likewise, they felt motivated to do the tasks and pleased with the new experiences.

Authenticity.

Another case study was conducted this time in Iran. This Case study investigated the effects of authenticity in the classroom of secondary schools (grades 9-12). The study depicts how English as a second language is acquiring more and more importance especially in the private sector. English has become so important, that the quality of the English program has become a vital factor in selecting a school.

The study followed a qualitative approach with different instruments to collect information like interview and questionnaire. Later, a desk-based analysis of the curriculum, questionnaires, and interviews were done for the purpose of the study. Other tools were considered, like class observation, but permission was not granted by the Iranian authorities without any reasonable explanation.

The literature review finds authentic material as those “which are designed for native speakers; they are ‘real’ texts designed not for language students, but for the speakers of the language in question” (Dahmardeh, 2012). Some examples of these are newspapers, radio shows and even television shows in the target language.

The author concludes that textbooks should not be rejected but instead, they should be accompanied by authentic material. Authentic material increases student motivation in the class. Exposing students to the true form of the language will allow students to deduct important cultural and lexical information. The author suggests that textbooks accompanied by authentic material will motivate students, give them the sense that they are learning and that they are improving their overall communication skills. Having all this checked, would meet the students’ entire check list.

Student Centeredness.

Another study took place in Beijing, China where the researcher Samon Maekele Tsegay wanted to find out the effects of student centeredness at Higher Education Institutions. Some of the challenges that student centeredness encountered included a change in perception. Traditional teaching included the transmission of the knowledge directly from teacher to students, having students memorize the information (Tsegay, 2015). Teachers used a traditional methodology where students’ participation was null, and teachers simply lectured their classes.

The researcher selected two classes with Chinese instructors and one class with all-Chinese students and another with mixed-nationality students. The researcher verified that the classes were taught with student centeredness. The research is qualitative, interviews and observations were used to collect the data. In its findings the author recalled what the Interviewees mentioned. He noted that the interviewees believed the classes were student-

centered and students had a lot of opportunity to produce. Although the interviewee believed students should have had more control. The students noticed that the class was different to teacher-centered classes. They were able to see that students were more involved in practical and independent studies inside and outside of class through cooperative learning. The author reviewed that these were important aspects of student-centered classes and that it made it more enjoyable for the participants.

Tsegay (2015) suggested that. “student-centered learning environment are highly connected with the facilitation and direction of the instructor. The facilitation of the instructor can recognize or marginalize students, which could greatly affect their participation and building up of a strong student-centered learning environment” (p.145). Students are able to apply principles of student-centered classes like cooperative learning and sharing their experiences but most importantly, applying content-based learning into real world problems. Nonetheless, there is still a necessity in embracing all students into class participation. The author also pointed out that culture or culture-based personality is a challenge to develop a solid student-centered learning environment.

This Monograph review’s purpose is to have a broader understanding of what the communicative approach is about. This is important because many teachers often use different approaches when teaching communicatively, but they do not realize the importance in including the 3 main pillars: meaningfulness, authenticity and student-centeredness in their classes. There has been much research on the communicative approach and how it contrasts with the different methodologies. Most of the research found the effects these three pillars have when implemented correctly in the classroom. Helping teachers become better at their job and getting them to see the importance in lesson planning is also extremely important in a globalized world.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This research is presented as a monograph that was developed with a qualitative research, since we studied different literature sources considering the work of different authors, and we supported our analysis by incorporating quotes and citations from the analyzed texts and literatures. The qualitative approach according to Cropley (2015) is based on:

the fundamental idea that “reality” is subjective: Every human being constructs an individual, personal view of the world on the basis of his or her specific interactions with the external world (including the people who are part of this world). As a result, much of what a person, including researchers, regards as reality actually consists of a set of impressions, inferences and opinions in the person's mind. (p.11)

In other words, we construct our own reality and the qualitative research permits us to see how reality is constructed in the CA and by the teachers of the CCCA. Thus, reflection becomes the most relevant fact in the analysis of texts and literatures in the CA, and it all can be developed with qualitative research. This approach allowed us to comprehend how the CA understands education and what the teachers of the CCCA should be following. The qualitative approach is fundamental for our type of research.

Type of research

The type of qualitative research that should be applied in the present study is content analysis, since this type of qualitative research allows us to examine any piece of writing. Krippendorff (2004) describes content analysis as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (p.18). This means that this inductive approach will permit us to infer results based on the analysis of literature. Thus, this approach is the most adequate to replicate our inferences. Its subjective nature provides a suitable scenario for new insights, which in the end increases the understanding of the effect of the three pillars of the communicative approach in lesson planning.

ECEDU Line**Factores asociados a la calidad de la Educación a Distancia**

This ECEDU line is the one that fits this research the best. Even though it is very virtual and distance education related. It still deals and concerns with pedagogical practices and a good use of didactics. Our research problem has to do with effective use of the communicative approach through effective lesson planning. This line covers, methodological, pedagogical and didactical aspects, besides it also concerns about quality. Adaptation of some of its principles will be key to developing this research since the problem relates to face-to-face environments.

Population

Due to the fact that this is a study done on gathering bibliographical citations and references through the literature review, the population would be then examined in the authors investigated for the purpose of this monograph, and the conclusions they were able to gather in their investigations, that mostly involved the use of the communicative approach among teachers and students.

Instruments

The development of this monograph consists of literature research done in virtual libraries as well as academic books on the traditional methods contrasted with the communicative approach, its principles, task-based learning, lesson planning and its outcomes, as well as relevant case studies that hold information on the importance of the 3 pillars in the communicative approach. Those samples have been analyzed using Index Card Template (see appendix A) designed by the analysts of this monograph. The index cards contain the author, the year, the citation and the analysis of the sample taken. The information gathered in the index cards can help us to analyze and compare in order to produce some possible conclusions. Index cards gave us the opportunity to have a more organized information and produce a more in-depth analysis of this information.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The results are interpretations of the findings which are grouped in categories: meaningfulness, student-centeredness and authenticity. The results are intended to interpret and explain the outcomes on the use of the communicative approach with the purpose of improving classes through lesson planning, thus, facilitating classroom interaction with a communicative purpose.

Table 1

Authenticity

Taylor, D (1994)	Nunan, D (2001)	Nunan, D (2001)	Dahmardeh,M (2012)
Authenticity which is defined by David Taylor as genuineness, realness, truthfulness, validity, reliability, undisputed credibility, and legitimacy.	classroom activities as stated by Nunan (2001) "should parallel the 'real world' as closely as possible. Since language is a tool of communication, methods and materials should concentrate on the message, not the medium"	Nunan (2001) explains that "Tasks with a real-world rationale require learners to approximate, in class, the sorts of behaviors required of them in the world beyond the classroom" (p.40)	Dahmardeh (2012) finds authentic material as those "which are designed for native speakers; they are 'real' texts designed not for language students, but for the speakers of the language in question".

Research clearly indicates that authenticity is essential when planning a lesson due to the fact that it provides essential characteristics of real language, in this regard authentic classes facilitates learning inside and outside the classroom because learners relate their previous knowledge with the new one, therefore, making connections with the real world.

Table 2

Meaningfulness

David Ausubel (as cited in Rhalmi, 2011)	Vallori (2014)	Vallori (2014)	Bowen, T, (s.f)
<p>“To learn meaningfully, individuals must relate new knowledge to relevant concepts they already know. New knowledge must interact with the learner’s knowledge structure.”</p>	<p>“In meaningful learning, the use of concept maps and collaborative work makes learners take a new approach to school tasks” (p.206)</p>	<p>(Ballester, 2014) states that: “meaningful learning, which implies longer retention than memorizing, occurs when humans relate new concepts to pre-existing familiar concepts. Then changes are produced in our cognitive structure, concepts are modified, and new links are created. It is a useful tool because it enables real learning, it generates greater retention and it facilitates transferences to other real situations” (p.199).</p>	<p>“If we can make language in the classroom meaningful therefore memorable, students can process language which is being learned or recycled more naturally”</p>

It is evident that meaningful learning relates new knowledge with previous knowledge to make it more memorable. In this regard, students will retain more if this component is included in class, hence laying the ground for collaborative and even authentic classes, leading the way to new knowledge acquisition naturally.

Table 3

Student-Centeredness

Breen and Candlin (1980)	Jacobs and Farrell (2003)	Tsegay (2015)	McCombs and Whistler (as cited in Froyd and Simpson, s.f)
<p>Breen and Candlin (1980) says that the role of learners are being a : negotiator – between the self, the learning process, and the project of learning – emerges from and interacts with the role of joint negotiator within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities which the group undertakes. The implication for the learner is that he should contribute as much as he gains, and thereby learn in an interdependent way. (p.100)</p>	<p>Jacobs and Farrell (2003) see the shift toward CLT as marking a paradigm shift in our thinking about teachers, learning, and teaching. They identify key components of this shift as follows: Focusing greater attention on the role of learners rather than the external stimuli learners are receiving from their environment. (as cited in Richards, 2006, p.24)</p>	<p>Students are able to apply principles of student-centered classes like cooperative learning and sharing their experiences but most importantly, applying content-based learning into real world problems.</p>	<p>“learners are treated as co-creators in the learning process, as individuals with ideas and issues that deserve attention and consideration” (p.1)</p>

Student-centeredness is an important component for modern classes. Student-centeredness empowers students in the class making them an active part of it. This allows them to work collaboratively and build knowledge as a group. The motivational aspect is also a factor in student-centeredness, students feel they are important to the class therefore they feel more motivation to participate.

Table 4

Lesson planning

Brown (1994)	Ur (1996)	Richards, J.C (1998)	Richards, J.C (1998)
“Without an evaluative component in the lesson, the teacher has no way of assessing the success of the students or what adjustments to make for the next lesson” (p.398)	“When evaluating a lesson, the first and most important criterion is student learning because that is why we have a lesson in the first place” (p.220)	“The success with which a teacher conducts a lesson is often thought to depend on the effectiveness with which the lesson was planned” (p. 103)	Richards (1998) notes that “lesson plans help the teacher think about the lesson in advance to “resolve problems and difficulties, to provide a structure for a lesson, to provide a ‘map’ for the teacher to follow, and to provide a record of what has been taught” (p. 103)

Lesson planning has also been shown to have an impact in the communicative approach, since it foments the teachers to have an organized lesson in which they can have evidence of their classes, this indicates that it can help teachers reflect on their teaching practices and come out with solutions that can help their students learn effectively. Assessment in the lesson plan is important because this permits the teacher know how much the students have learned. Student learning is the whole reason for the lesson plan.

The results indicate that the classes can be improved applying meaningfulness, authenticity and student-centeredness in lesson planning as Richards (1998) suggests 'to resolve problems and difficulties, to provide a structure for a lesson, to provide a 'map' for the teacher to follow, and to provide a record of what has been taught'' (p. 103)

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The Centro Cultural Colombo Americano located in Palmira has been teaching English for ten years using the Communicative Approach as their chosen methodology. We have identified that, in many cases, the expected outcome with the students is not achieved. Difficulties in lesson planning and the correct use of the Communicative Approach are part of this complication.

We have identified three characteristics of the communicative approach that are essential and core to have successful classes. Making sure they are in the lesson plan accounts for more successful classes. It is undeniable that each of these characteristics contributes in a particular way to achieve an expected outcome with students.

As shown in our findings meaningfulness is essential in order for students to acquire new knowledge because it relates it to the previous knowledge. Meaningfulness has the capacity to show students the gap between what the target language and what they already know. Presenting new knowledge in a meaningful way will enable students to see it more memorable hence, retain it easier. Authenticity and meaningfulness are two terms that correlate. Authenticity provides the opportunity to connect the target language with the real world, facilitating learning inside and outside of the classroom. Including authenticity in the classroom makes learning meaningful for students. Moreover, student-centeredness takes the spotlight from the teachers like in the traditional classroom and puts it on the learner. Student-centeredness give the power and the independency to students and provides the scenario for them to take control and responsibility of their learning process.

We have established that teachers had their own version of lesson planning but the key points need to be unified, taking this into account, evaluating the lesson plan can help the teachers reflect on their teaching practices and develop better classes focused on the CA and its pillars, in order to work on the four skills to enhance productivity among students, likewise they can comprehend and respond as it happens in real life communication.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the communicative approach provides the greatest opportunity for oral communication and the development of students' autonomy. In this regard, it should be used hand to hand with its 3 pillars: meaningfulness, authenticity and student-centered classes in order to strengthen lesson planning, likewise engaging the enthusiasm and desire of students to learn English.

There is not a best method to teaching a second language, the communicative approach focuses primarily in the communicative production before grammatical structure construction, and lesson planning is a way to ensure that there is a construction of communicative classes.

The integration of the three pillars in lesson planning becomes the main necessity and objective for the teachers at the CCCA due to the fact that this will allow them to plan and evaluate their teaching approaches, therefore permitting direct communication between learners and teachers to foster a greater interest in the teaching and learning processes.

Though further research needs to be done in order to determine this and identify the effects of planning according to these three pillars. Participatory Research may indeed serve as a pertinent tool where teachers, and students can both take part in the research.

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APPENDIX A: INDEX CARDS

Template***Author:***

<i>Year:</i>		Analysis
<i>Citation:</i>		

Designed by: Julieth Montoya and Juan David Montoya

Samples**Sample 1*****Author:* Monica Castella Fosch**

<i>Year:</i>	2017	Analysis
<i>Citation:</i>	“Instead of being a class-dominator, as they were supposed to be in the past, they shifted to become a class-supporter.” (p. 13)	Nowadays classes have changed to be student-centered, where the teacher is more a guide in their process and let students take a bigger role in their learning process. Thus, helping students become autonomous and independent, where the responsibility of learning will be in their hands.

Sample 2**Author:** N. Benmostefa

<i>Year:</i>	s. f	Analysis
<i>Citation:</i>	(Benmostefa, s.f.) “A central tenet of communicative language testing is that the tasks are designed to represent authentic activities which test learners are to be expected to encounter in the real world outside the classroom”	CA testing needs to focus on meaningful and authentic situations, it doesn't measure established response formats as they were in the past but rather the productive and receptive skills, in this regard learners will use the language in real life communication.

Sample 3**Author:** **Samson Maekele
Tsegay**

<i>Year:</i>	2015	Analysis
<i>Citation:</i>	“Student-centered learning is engaging every student to make a valuable contribution to the teaching-learning process. It is a complex process of cooperation and inter-communication rather than one-way communication from the teacher to the learners.” (p. 136)	Compared to traditional teaching, student-centered sees the student as an active part of the class. Communication in the class goes more in the direction of the students and not just from teacher to students. Students are an important part of the class and participation is highly regarded. This is a factor that makes the student feel engaged.

Sample 4

Author: David Ausubel as cited by Vallori, 2014

<i>Year:</i>	2014	Analysis
<i>Citation:</i>	Ausubel's theory (as cited in Vallori, 2014) "the most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows"	Previous knowledge plays an important role in CA. It sets the foundations with which the teacher and the student can acquire new knowledge.

Sample 5

Author: Mahdi Dahmardeh

<i>Year:</i>	2011	Analysis
<i>Citation:</i>	"If teachers can find genuinely authentic materials which their students can cope with that will be advantageous; if not they should be using material which simulates authentic English. In simple terms the texts should be roughly-tuned rather than finely-tuned." (p. 74)	Students should be exposed to language that we consider real. Language that is found in textbooks is too controlled and therefore not so real. This type of language does not really prepare students for the real world but puts them in a bubble that will easily burst in the real world.

Sample 6**Author: Jack C. Richards**

<i>Year:</i>	1998	Analysis
<i>Citation:</i>	Richards (1998) suggests that lesson plans help the teacher think about the lesson in advance to “resolve problems and difficulties, to provide a structure for a lesson, to provide a ‘map’ for the teacher to follow, and to provide a record of what has been taught” (p. 103).	Lesson planning is essential in a class, as a teacher it helps you to have an organized class and to solve problems when encountered, it is also a tool that can help you to evaluate your progress as a teacher and to improve the difficulties you found when teaching.