BALANCE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING: HONORING TRADITION AND CELEBRATING INNOVATION

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This project by Natalia Tsarikova is accepted in its present form.

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a study aimed at finding a flexible approach to teaching that is responsive to learner needs and preferences whilst at the same time utilizing communicative language teaching and form-focused instruction. In other words, the author aims to find a balance between CLT (learner centered approaches) advocated by many trainers and teachers in Uzbekistan and the Grammar Translation method (teacher centered approaches) that has been widely practiced as well. The author's primary purpose is to find an approach which is centered principally on ***learning*** rather than on the teacher or the learner. The author maintains that teaching is a complex process which is neither imposed by the teacher the way things were handled by the Grammar Translation approach nor fully left to learners as in CLT. Teaching should be based primarily on learners' needs and should involve continuous assessment of how it serves learning. The author also advocates judicious use of teacher talk, often dismissed by CLT supporters. She considers it as a valuable source of linguistic input, particularly in EFL situations.

Descriptors:
English (Second Language), Teacher Effectiveness, Teacher Role, Teaching Experience, Teaching Methods, Grammar Translation Method, Communicative Language Teaching

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INTRODUCTION

This study is the result of my own teaching search and experience which was shaped by a number of factors. My constant aspiration to become a better teacher brought me from teacher centered Grammar Translation method to Communicative Language Teaching and then to a balanced approach which is centered on learning rather than the learner or the teacher.

I first got genuinely interested in teaching when I happened to participate in a teacher-training seminar on communicative methodology. Before that moment I had worked at a pedagogical institute for about three months and had a very vague idea of what teaching a language was all about. I tried to apply the same methods that my teachers used i.e. to follow the textbook, which was at least 30 years old and very teacher centered. That is how my teaching career began.

I was fascinated by CLT and started changing myself from a traditional teacher towards a CLT teacher. I completed a series of teacher training seminars on communicative methods of teaching, and gradually became a convinced CLT teacher. That approach to teaching was completely different from what I had been used to. Students, not a teacher, were the focus of attention and teaching was subjected to learning. All my lessons were learner centered- I used a lot of group work and pair work and I tried to minimize the teacher talk at my lessons.

I had spent a little more than three years teaching in a communicative way and did not see myself using a different approach. However, I began noticing that in spite of the fact that I was doing my best to be a 100% communicative teacher;

there was something wrong in this picture. My students sometimes were upset when they did not receive direct input from me. It seemed as if they wanted me to teachertalk to them, otherwise, they got a feeling that they were not learning much. So, I started to question myself 'Why is this feeling of dissatisfaction? What should be changed? Why is CLT not working?'

Luckily enough, I came to SIT where I had been exposed to many different teaching approaches. I realized that there are so many various ways of teaching and there are different teachers but what is common for all is learning and learners. That is why I believe that teaching should be LEARNING and thus learner centered as opposed to teaching and teacher centered.

In Uzbekistan, similarly to other countries, we moved from teacher-centered approach in ELT to learner centered, which I find to be equally lopsided or two extremes. I have experienced both of them in my teaching career having started as an authority in the classroom and finished as a teacher trainer on communicative methodology. Needless to say, that the Grammar Translation approach is heavily associated with a focus on form and error correction while neglecting the communicative value of the language. CLT, on the other hand, is mainly focused on meaning and developing communication skills of the learners underestimating error correction and form focused exercises. In my project I aim to find a balance between the two, exploring the value of both form-focused and meaning-focused exercises. Before I came to this research I experienced some disappointment with both methods. Furthermore, none of the two was fully satisfying for my students either. Since our (Uzbekistani) students were taught or/and are still being taught

mainly in a predominantly teacher centered form focused instruction, they expect at least some input from the teacher. As the survey that I conducted among students of the Banking and Finance Academy and other educational institution shows, they also expect error correction and teacher talk from the teacher.

So, my study aims to find a flexible approach which is responsive to learners' needs and is often a combination of the two approaches, namely focus on form and focus on meaning(at the examples of Grammar Translation and CLT). Moreover, I advocate teacher talk as a valuable source of language input in an EFL situation.

A brief outline of my teaching experience and key assumptions regarding this study are provided in the Introduction Part.

Chapter 1 of my project describes the ELT context in Uzbekistan as well as my own teaching context at the Banking and Finance Academy.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to the analysis of Teacher Talk, CLT and the role of balance in language teaching and learning.

Chapter 3 is a description and analysis of the results of the questionnaire which was aimed at exploring students' feelings about some questions in ELT such as error correction, teacher/student talk, their attitude to form and meaning focused activities. In this chapter I also describe my own experience with CLT as a teacher of young adults.

Finally, the conclusion provides some guidelines for EFL teachers on a balanced approach to language teaching.

CHAPTER 1

TEFL IN UZBEKISTAN

In this chapter, I will describe the economic and political background in Uzbekistan as well as recent educational reforms that have entailed changes in English Language Teaching. I will focus on the higher education reforms, explain my teaching context and talk about problems in ELT today.

I. Economic and political developments in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is one of the former Soviet republics, which is situated in Central Asia and borders Kazakhstan in the north and northwest, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the east and southeast, Turkmenistan in the southwest, and Afghanistan in the south.

The fact that Uzbekistan once existed under the Soviet Union explains the multinational composition of the population of the country. The country has been the home for many Russians, Ukrainians, Germans, Koreans, etc. from Soviet times. One of the influences of the Soviet Union on Uzbekistan is the influence of Russian culture and language, which has been the language of communication for all peoples living in Uzbekistan. The education system inherited a number of Soviet features as well.

After Uzbekistan gained its independence in 1991 and joined with ten other former Soviet republics in the Commonwealth of Independent States, the government began to establish political and cultural contacts with many countries. This open policy after the period of a rather closed existence within the Soviet Union attracted a lot of foreign collaboration into the country. Many foreign representative offices and joint ventures were opened, which created a lot of job opportunities requiring good knowledge of English. The educational reforms resulted in an increased number of students going to study abroad and a number of foreign specialists coming to Uzbekistan to lecture on professional topics and share their knowledge and experience. On the whole the recent changes have led to the increased popularity of English which was in many respects caused by the transition to the market economy.

II. Reforms in the Education System of Uzbekistan

After Uzbekistan gained its independence, it was faced with the problem of finding its own way of economic and social development considering the national peculiarities and competitiveness in the world market. It entailed a radical reform of the education system in Uzbekistan, which had retained a number of characteristics from the Soviet system of education. Uzbekistan became a member of the international community and was keen to develop a modern system of education.

The reform of the education system in Uzbekistan was given special priority considering the composition of the population of the country, where according to a

UNICEF Monitoring Report for 2003, 42% of the population is less than 17 years of age.

As a result, On 29 August 1997 President I. Karimov signed a Law on the establishment of a **"National Program for Personnel Training"** aimed at raising the level of education in Uzbekistan up to the level of advanced countries, developing its own standards and promoting mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of education. (See www.uzbekistan.com)

III. Higher Education in Uzbekistan

The total number of students is 221,400

According to the National Program for Personnel Training higher education is based on the secondary specialized education (academic lyceum), and vocational specialized education (professional college) which includes 2 levels: a Bachelor degree level and Master's degree level.

The Bachelor's degree level is a basic higher education providing fundamental and applied knowledge according to specialty, with a period of study not less than 4 years. Upon the completion of the bachelor program the graduate is conferred with the degree of bachelor and granted a diploma of state standard, which provides the right to begin his/her professional activity.

The Master's degree level is higher education with fundamental and applied knowledge in a concrete field and lasts up to 2 years on the basis of the

Bachelor‘s degree. Master’s degree holders are given a diploma of a state model, which provides the right to be engaged in professional activity. It should be stressed that only students who have studied for a bachelor degree in the same field may apply for the corresponding Master’s course.

Higher education reform

The Higher Education reform identified in the National Program for Personnel Training details a number of areas that are critical for the new system to become fully operational. These areas include:

- *training higher education teaching staff (including training abroad in the best universities),*

In this regard, the government favours various educational exchange programs and scholarships provided or sponsored by international organizations such as ACCELS, IREX, CAFÉ, the British Council, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), ADB, etc.

- *to intensify the educational process by introducing the use of new pedagogical methodologies, information technologies and modular systems,*

All EFL staff are highly encouraged to attend the methodology trainings and seminars on new methods of teaching. Training, retraining and upgrading of pedagogical staff are obligatory requirements of the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education. Every 5 years the teaching staff of all types of

Higher Educational Institutions should have short-term retraining or upgrading courses.

IV. My Teaching Context – The Banking and Finance Academy

The Academy was established in October 1996 following a proposal of the Central Bank and the Banking Association of Uzbekistan with the aim to prepare highly qualified personnel for the financial sector and comprehensive, fundamental and applied research regarding development of the financial markets, monetary system, banking and monetary policy in the country.

The Academy comprises three faculties: Banking, Finance, Advanced Training for Top Managers in Banking and Finance.

The academy resides in a building reconstructed, redesigned and extensively repaired with the involvement of foreign building companies to comply with the needs of the process of academic and research studies. Halls and premises are decorated with the works of the painters from Uzbekistan. All this serves to create the specific aesthetic atmosphere of the Academy.

The Academy invites leading foreign specialists in the field of the monetary-finance system to introduce modern techniques.

At present, working relations have been established with the representative offices of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Deutsche Bank and ABN-AMRO Bank in Tashkent.

The closest relations the academy has are with the ministry of Finance of Japan, and the Institute of Fiscal and Monetary Policies as its structural unit.

Syllabus and materials

The syllabus is not prescribed and is drawn up by the teachers considering the needs of the students. It focuses both on general and specialized English.
As for the materials, teachers draw on various sources including both old Soviet and new communicative textbooks: There is no core textbook.

Students

Students of the Banking and Finance Academy in the first 40-week stage of their education go through the theoretical course of basic and special disciplines, intensively studying foreign languages (now English, French and German). The second stage is the 9-week training at the financial and banking institutions within the republic and abroad.

Students, age 23 to 40, are young professionals and are required to have a Bachelor degree in the same field and at least three years of corresponding working experience. They are predominantly male and all of them have had a very traditional teacher centered education. So, when they come to the Academy many of them have all kinds of negative attitudes or experiences in learning languages and with regard to their own beliefs about teaching and learning. They believe that a teacher is an authority in the classroom. They are not used to working in pairs or group but rather as a whole class with a teacher in front. However, many of them are open-minded and ready to challenge their views on teaching and learning.

There are usually students of different levels of proficiency ranging from elementary to upper intermediate. The language level of my students varies from

high beginner to high intermediate with the majority in the range pre-intermediate to intermediate.

Classroom setting and equipment

The classrooms are furnished with modern desks, which are bolted to the floor, very often in rows but sometimes in a U-form. Teachers at the Academy have audio and video equipment at their disposal as well as Overhead Projectors and computers. Teachers are encouraged to use technical aids while teaching.

Teaching/learning aims and outcomes

The academy graduates who complete the full programme and defend their diploma in their selected speciality will be issued with the State diplomas of the established type and be awarded with the Master's degree.

By the end of the course students take a State English Exam and are required to read and understand professional literature namely 'Financial Times', 'The Economist' and so on; to interpret information on graphs; speak on professional and everyday topics. In addition, many of them have to write and defend their thesis in English.

Students also undergo a mid-year check or 'level exam', which is a kind of placement test that tests all four skills. This is necessary to determine students' level of language knowledge in order to select the best candidates for the summer schools abroad. The best students are sent to professional summer schools in different countries where they take all courses in English and their English language knowledge is crucial.

V. ELT Context in Uzbekistan

Recent ELT background

In order to describe the present state of things in ELT today in Uzbekistan I would like to look back to the mid 90s since these were the years of my study at university. All the classes were teacher centered with little or no use of group or pair work. The textbooks, which served as the only source, were mostly grammar translation with elements of the audio-lingual approach. The exercises typically elicit repletion with the students repeating after the teacher/tape in chorus or translation of texts from English into Russian and vise versa. Students frequently read texts in order to answer questions about the text. The only purpose of such texts was for students to examine the language of the text- the language of the textbook was not used to communicate anything else; the "comprehension" questions which followed such texts involved the students telling the teacher what the teacher already knew.

When I graduated from the Pedagogical Institute and started working as a teacher, I thought I was doing my best to be the best of the teachers I had had. So, I asked my students to do drilling exercises in chorus, learn poems by heart, do translation exercises and retell the texts. Besides, all this was prescribed by the curriculum. I tried to be as authoritarian as I could needless to say my lessons were completely teacher-centered. This was the ELT situation in the mid 90s.

Fortunately for me, after about a month of teaching (late 90s) I attended a teacher-training seminar that focused mainly on the communicative approach. This

event proved revolutionary for my teaching career and I began to use CLT in my teaching. Since then my lessons have gradually become rich in communicative activities, including mingle activities, information gap activities, group and pair work. Following the advice of my teacher trainer"Ask! Don't tell! Make your teaching learner centered." I was trying to minimize my teacher talk and to the best of my ability to adhere to the method; let my students have abundant practice in speaking, not to mention plentiful use of pair and group work. I shortly became a teacher trainer on communicative methodology and its faithful follower. ELT in Uzbekistan began to change very slowly owing to the teacher training seminars conducted by OSI Soros Foundation and other organizations.

Present Situation in ELT in Uzbekistan

So, in order to give a full picture of the present situation in ELT in Uzbekistan I should note that a big proportion of English teachers are aware of current methodology (mainly the communicative approach) and a few of them are using CLT in their classrooms. The fact that there are new communicative textbooks for secondary schools approved by the Ministry of Education of Uzbekistan also proves that the change has been started.

However, the majority of English teachers are still very traditional in their teaching. ***At Universities***, for instance, the syllabus is based mainly on the old fashioned textbooks which demand that students do a lot of drilling exercises, transcribe the sentences and translate texts, not to mention long explanations of grammar rules, etc. An example of the typical textbook exercises is given below.

XVI. a) Get ready to read the text aloud.
b) Write a translation of the text. (Note that the text is approximately 350 words)

II. a) Search the text for English equivalents of the phrases listed below and write them in your exercise book.
(Arakin 2000)

The syllabus is often prescribed and no changes are allowed. Teaching is very much authoritarian.

At schools the situation is slightly different due to the new modern textbooks that have been introduced by the government in the secondary school curriculum. According to the Minister of Public Education of Uzbekistan D. Yuldashev at present within the process of transformation of all the social activity and perspectives of the country development, textbooks are being renewed, new subjects are added and teaching staff is being retrained. Thus, at present secondary school teachers of English are required to use the new communicative textbooks from grade 5 to 9.

Nevertheless, there is still a big opposition to the communicative approach among the English teachers including those at schools. Most of the teachers are still using the grammar translation teacher centered approach in their classrooms. Moreover, when they use a communicative textbook, which became possible owing to the new secondary textbooks recommended by the Ministry of Education, they tend to have students read the texts aloud taking turns, translate them into their mother tongue, make up sentences with the new words, etc and consequently ruin the idea of the communicative textbook.

On the other hand, there are teachers who are open to change and are willingly using CLT. These are the teachers who have received some ***training*** on

modern methodology. The teacher trainings are mostly conducted by the British Councils, ACCELS, OSI Soros Foundation, USIS (PAS) and UzTEA (Uzbek Teachers of English Association). The teacher trainings focus predominantly on learner centered methodology and Communicative Language Teaching.

Problems in ELT

Even though ELT has been undergoing many changes recently and there has been a shift towards CLT, many teachers including myself have encountered a number of challenges or even frustrations using the ***communicative approach*** namely students' resistance to communicative teaching, ineffectiveness of the method and many CLT activities. The problems I have described above are in my opinion predetermined by many factors including the cultural and educational background of the students in Uzbekistan, which I will consider in more detail further in my work.

The grammar translation method that has been used for many years does not work either and has become outdated partially due to the new more open policy of Uzbekistan and many other countries where educational and political institutions became more sensitive to the importance of teaching foreign languages for communicative purposes (not just for the purpose of fulfilling a "requirement" or of "passing a test"). Now that there are more and more students go to study abroad and meet a lot of English speaking people here in Uzbekistan, they need English mainly to converse with Native Speakers of English. There has been a great shift in the

learning objectives towards conversational English as opposed to the Soviet period when English was taught and learnt mainly in order to be able to understand written language. And of course there is no need to say that knowledge of English will help students gain better professional positions in future where they will need to use it in negotiations with their foreign counterparts.

CHAPTER 2

TEACHER CENTERED VS LEARNER CENTERED TEACHING: FINDING THE BALANCE

I. Teacher Talk

The notion of teacher talk has probably existed for as long as there has been teaching and the attitude towards it has changed depending on the methodology in fashion. Therefore, teacher talk has either been favoured, as in teacher-centered approaches, or considered to be bad, as in learner-centered methodology.

Hadley (1993:175) refers to 'teacher talk' as 'a type of listening material that contributes to the acquisition of the language'. However, among the numerous different definitions of 'teacher talk' I am inclined to side with that of Krashen (1984) and all those who argue that 'teacher talk' tends to consist of a simplified code, characterized by slower, more careful articulation, the more frequent use of known vocabulary items, and attempts to ensure comprehension via restatements, paraphrases, and nonverbal aids to understanding. Indeed, numerous research indicates that teachers modify their speech when addressing L2 learners in the classroom in a number of ways (Ellis, 1994). Chaudron (1998: Chapter 3) provides a comprehensive survey of studies of teacher talk. His main conclusions are summarized in Table 1.

Feature	**Main conclusions**	**Main studies**
		Legaretta 1977;

Amount of talk	In general, the research confirms the findings for L1 classrooms-namely, that the teacher takes up about two thirds of the total talking time.	Bialystok et al. 1978; Ramirez et al. 1986.
Functional distribution	There is considerable evidence of variability among teachers and programs, but the general picture is again one of teacher dominance in that teachers are likely to explain, question and command and learners to respond.	Shapiro 1979; Bialystok et al. 1978; Ramirez et al. 1986.
Rate of speech	Teachers, like native speakers in general, slow down their rate of speech when talking to learners in comparison to other native speakers and also do so to a greater extent with less proficient learners. However, there is considerable variability among teachers.	Henzl 1973; Dahl, 1981; wesche and Ready 1985; Griffiths 1990 and 1991a.
Pauses	Teachers are likely to make use of longer pauses when talking to learners that to other native speakers.	Downes 1981; Hakansson 1986; Wesche and ready 1985.
Phonology, intonation, articulation, stress	There have been few studies which have attempted to quantify these aspects of teacher talk, but teachers appear to speak more loudly and to make their speech more distinct when addressing L2 learners.	Henzl 1973 and 1979; Downes 1981; Mannon 1986.
Modifications in	Several studies provide evidence of a	

vocabulary	lower type-token ration and teachers also vary in accordance with the learners' proficiency level, but Wesche and Ready (1985) found no significant vocabulary modifications in university lectures in L2 learners.	Henzl 1979; Mizon 1981.
Modifications in syntax	There is a trend towards shorter utterances with less proficient learners, but some studies which use words per utterance as a measure report no modifications. The degree of subordination tends to be lower, but again results have been mixed. Teachers use fewer marked structures such as past tense. More declaratives and statements than questions are used in comparison to natural discourse. Ungrammatical teacher talk is rare.	Pica and Long 1986; Gaies 1977; Kleifgen 1985; Early 1985; Wesche and ready 1985.
Modifications in discourse	There is some evidence that teachers use more self-repetitions with L2 learners, in particular when they are low level proficiency.	Hamayan and Tucker 1980; Ellis 1985d

Table 1: Main features of teacher talk (summarized from Chaudron 1988: Chapter 3 cited in Ellis 1994: 582)

Yet, I find Hadley's (1993) assertion quite legitimate who has pointed out that 'teacher talk' can sound quite authentic since it is generally not planned or scripted. Rather, it flows naturally as the teacher develops a given theme or topic

and often involves interactive exchanges with students. These exchanges, when not contrived or overly structured, have the flavor of a real conversation.

The discussions of teacher talk have become more acute, especially over the last 10 –15 years as a consequence of the popularity of communicative methodology. The followers of CLT argue that teacher talk should be minimized so that students have as many opportunities to speak in a lesson as possible. And failure to follow this recommendation, as Bowen and Marks (1994) state, is a frequent source of teacher guilt. Moreover, until comparatively recently, teacher talk in the EFL classroom was considered to be something of a danger area for language teachers, and trainee teachers were warned to use it sparingly (Cullen, 1998). Thus, teacher talk, according to some quite firmly established CLT beliefs, deprives students of the chances to improve/practise their own speaking skills.

On the other hand supporters of teacher talk claim that 'teacher talk' is often the only source of authentic listening for learners of English as a foreign language and, Krashen (1981) in my opinion, makes a valid point stating that 'teacher talk' is 'a potentially valuable source of comprehensible input for the learner which is essential for language acquisition'. By comprehensible input, Krashen refers to 'a language that contains structures that are "a little beyond" our current level of competence (i+1), but which is comprehensible through our use of context, our knowledge of the world, and other extra linguistic cues directed to us'. Krashen (Krashen and Terrell, 1983, p.35cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2003:104) believes that listening and reading are of primary importance and the ability to speak or write will come automatically. He emphasizes the significance of teacher-talk that is

aimed at providing comprehensible input. He asserts that when we 'just talk' to our students, and if they understand our talk, then "we are not only giving a language lesson, we may be giving the best possible language lesson since we will be supplying input for acquisition" (Krashen and Terrell, 1983, p.35cited in Kumaravadivelu (ibid), 2003:104). However, Ellis disputes this when he states that relatively few studies to date have attempted to show that comprehensible input actually leads to the acquisition of new linguistic features (Ellis, 1994: 27).

Hence, I feel strongly that a teacher is often the only competent source of the linguistic input, particularly in EFL situations. Minimizing the quantity of teacher talk may deprive the learners of access to valuable listening practice, opportunities for ***incidental learning*** and for communicative interaction with a more fluent speaker of the language they are learning. Even though teachers sometimes feel that they talk unnecessarily much, simply taking a quantitative approach and minimizing teacher talk is probably too crude a solution (Bowen and Marks, 1994: 9). Interest in teacher talk within the profession has shifted away from a concern with quantity towards a concern with quality: while the question of how much teachers talk is still important, more emphasis is given to how effectively they are able to facilitate learning and promote communicative interaction in their classroom through, for example, the kind of questions they ask, the speech modifications they make when talking to learners, or the way they react to student errors (see, for example, Nunan 1989). My experience shows that effective teacher talk, as Richards and Lockhart maintain, may provide essential support to facilitate

both language comprehension and learner production (Richards and Lockhart 1994:184).

As a consequence of the popularity of CLT in the field, recently educators have had a tendency to focus on another feature of teacher talk namely **'**communicativeness**'**. Communicative teacher talk or a teacher's verbal behaviour in the classroom should reflect authentic use of the target language. In other words, a teacher's use of the language in the classroom should be as close to real life as possible and 'share features of so-called authentic communication outside the classroom' (Thornbury, 1996) which implies the use of information gap activities and referential questions rather than display or comprehension questions.

However, Cullen (1998) makes a valid point in my opinion stating that there should be a distinction between the outside world and the classroom. Since it is not always true that what is communicative and authentic in real life is communicative and authentic in the classroom. The classroom context is unique and follows its own rules and conventions, which are rather different from communication in real life. Nunan (1987: 137) defines genuine communication as follows:

> genuine communication is characterized by uneven distribution of information, the negotiation of meaning (through, for example, clarification requests and confirmation checks), topic nomination and negotiation of more than one speaker, and the right of interlocutors to decide whether to contribute to an interaction or not . . . In genuine communication, decisions about who says what to whom are up for grabs.

Indeed, according to Nunan's research, which used these characteristics as criteria of communicativeness, even teachers who are committed to communicative language teaching can fail to create opportunities for genuine interaction in their classrooms. The received results are understandable since the classroom

environment is artificially created in order to facilitate and enhance learning. Seliger (1983: 51 cited in Nunan 1987) agrees that the language classroom is, by definition, a contrived context for the use of language as a tool of communication. The bulk of time in a language class is devoted to practicing language for its own sake because the participants in this activity realize that that is the expressed purpose of their gathering together in a room with a blackboard and a language expert, the teacher. What is more, everyone in the classroom should be given equal opportunities to participate and the teacher is the one who is in charge of distribution of roles and responsibilities in the classroom. In addition, it is conventional that a teacher follows a certain scenario in a lesson, namely a lesson plan. Thus, it is reasonable that the classroom context cannot be approximated to genuine communication in real life.

Cullen (1997) believes that communicative talk in the classroom must be based primarily on what is or is not communicative in the context of the classroom itself, rather than on what may or may not be communicative in other contexts.

This is not to deny the importance of analyses of the properties of spoken discourse found in contexts outside the classroom (e.g. Hoey 1992) in shedding light on what our wider teaching goals should be, and to that extent suggesting ways in which the discourse of the classroom

could be moderated, in order that these goals might be more successfully achieved. But that is a rather different matter from suggesting that classrooms only need to replicate communicative behaviour outside the classroom in order to become communicative (Cullen 1997).

Cullen (1998) instead of defining the notion of 'communicative teacher talk', suggests that rather than comparing the way teachers talk in the classroom with the way people talk outside it, a more productive approach would be to identify ***categories of teachers' verbal behaviour in the classroom***. The following six categories that he gives are based on classroom observations and analysis of lesson transcripts:

- questioning/eliciting
- responding to students' contributions
- presenting/explaining
- organizing/giving instructions
- evaluating/correcting
-' sociating'/establishing and maintaining classroom rapport.

Questioning/ eliciting

Research suggests that questioning is one of the most common techniques used by teachers. In some classrooms over half of class time is taken up with question-and-answer exchanges (Gall 1984 cited in Richards and Lockhart 1994). There are several reasons why questions are so commonly used in teaching.

- They stimulate and maintain students' interest.
- They encourage students to think and focus on the content of the lesson.
- They enable a teacher to clarify what a student has said.
- They enable a teacher to elicit particular structures or vocabulary items.
- They enable teachers to check students' understanding.
- They encourage student participation in a lesson.

According to second language researchers questions are crucial in language acquisition. My experience totally confirms Banbrook and Skehan's point that 'questions can be used to allow the learner to keep participating in the discourse and even modify it so that the language used becomes more comprehensible and personally relevant" (Banbrook and Skehan 1989 cited in Richards and Lockhart 1994).

Types of teacher questions

There are many different ways to classify questions (Mehan 1979; Sinclair and Brazil 1982; White and Lightbown 1984) and consequently there are numerous kinds of questions that researchers differentiate. In this section I will focus on two types of questions which have been a subject of a debate among educators from the point of view of communicativeness in the classroom context, namely, display questions, the answers for which are obvious and known both to students and a teacher, and referential, the answers for which the teacher does not know. This is probably one of the features of teacher talk that has been most thoroughly researched, and there is evidence (e.g. Long and Sato 1983) to suggest that the vast majority of questions teachers ask are display questions, whereas in 'real life', of course, most questions are referential. This claim was echoed by Thornbury (1995), who also analysed transcripts of elicitation questions, and came to the conclusion that they often follow the classic IRF type (teacher initiates →student responds →teacher follows up/gives feedback) in which the teacher initiates the chain (typically by asking a question), a student responds, and the teacher then gives

feedback to the student (e.g. ‘good’) before initiating another chain with another question. The structure of spoken discourse outside the classroom is usually more complex and flexible

than this (Hoey 1992).The results prove that questioning that teachers use are by far more teacher led rather than communicative.

[I] **T**: Um, a little bit of vocabulary. Let’s look at the picture. What can you see?
[R] **Sl:** Children.
[F] **T:** You can see some children. You can see a TV.
PI What else can you see?
[R] **S2**: A sofa.
[F] **T:** A sofa.
[I] **T**: Or another word, same thing, different word.
[R] **S3**: Couch?
[F] **T:** Ah! Couch. A couch.
PI Everybody: couch.
[R] **Ss**: Couch.
[F] **T**: Couch. OK?
(Thornbury 1995:280)

We need to remember, however, that teaching has its pedagogical goals which need not be neglected at the expense of communicativeness. Here I entirely agree with Cullen (1997) who maintains that in order to determine how communicative a teacher’s use of a particular category, such as questioning, is in a particular lesson, one would take into account not only the extent to which particular questions engaged the students in meaningful, communicative use of language, but also the pedagogical purpose of the questions asked, and the teacher’s success in communicating this purpose clearly to the learners. Yet there is an

indication that both types of questions can be equally beneficial and perform important communicative functions in the classroom context since the pedagogical setting is somewhat different from real world outside the classroom.

Responding to students' contributions

Another feature of teacher talk is feedback on what students are saying. Ellis (1994) maintains that 'feedback' serves as a general cover term for the information provided by listeners on the reception and comprehension of messages. Feedback can be either positive or negative and may serve not only to let learners know how well they have performed but also to increase motivation and build a supportive classroom climate (Richards and Lockhart 1994:188). Thus, educators distinguish between feedback on content and feedback on form (correctness of grammar or pronunciation). Richards and Lockhart (1994) point out a variety of strategies available in giving feedback on content:

- Acknowledging a correct answer
- Indicating an incorrect answer
- Praising
- Expanding or modifying a student's answer
- Repeating
- Summarizing
- Criticizing

(For more information see Richards and Lockhart 1994:189)

After all, as Thornbury (1996) puts it, there is not much point in asking referential questions if no attention is paid to the meanings the learner is expressing. But ritualized responses, such as 'OK', irrespective of the message, anchor the

classroom discourse firmly in the traditional IRF camp, and suggest that 'it doesn't matter what you say so long as you pronounce it properly'.

On the other hand, Cullen (1998) argues that feedback on form has a place in language teaching. Therefore, there must be ways of providing feedback in a way which is as communicative as possible in the context of the classroom and which assists in the attainment of the pedagogical purposes for which the students are there. The issues of feedback on the form (error correction) are discussed below.

Presenting/explaining and giving instructions

According to Nunan's definition of genuine communication (quoted on page 2 earlier) communicative teacher talk should be characterised by speech modifications, hesitations, and rephrasing, e.g. when explaining, giving instructions, etc.

However, Cullen (1998) totally confirms my point of view arguing that even such a non-communicative thing like echoing learners' responses can be very reasonable in the classroom context. The teacher may have perfectly valid communicative reasons for doing this, such as making sure that everyone in the class has heard what Student A has just said, so that a discussion can continue with everybody following it. In a large class, echoing by the teacher may be the quickest and most effective way of doing this. Equally important is the convention in many classes throughout the world that the teacher's repetition of a student's response acts as a signal confirming that the response is correct.

In the same way, a teacher's classroom instructions might be assessed as being more or less communicative according to how clearly they were understood and followed, whether they were sufficient or even superfluous, and whether the teacher allowed opportunities for the students to seek clarification and to 'negotiate meaning'.

Evaluating/correcting

Feedback on form or error correction has become a big issue in recent years with some scholars arguing that 'error correction' does very little to encourage lasting positive change in learners' production, either in speech or in writing (see, for example, Terrell 1977, 1982; Krashen 1982) Other scholars, however, argue that both instruction and feedback can have a positive impact on second language acquisition (see, for example, Long 1983; Ellis 1985, 1990).

It also seems that educators can not agree on when, what and how to correct. They distinguish among various forms of corrective feedback, ranging from very direct and immediate correction of errors to more indirect and/or delayed correction strategies. However, Hadley (1993) in her hypothesis suggests that a whole continuum of feedback strategies may be useful at different times in second language instruction.

Another issue concerns attitudes towards error correction both of learners and teachers. Many researchers (Ellis 1994; Cathcart and Olsen 1976; Chenoweth et al. 1983) found that ESL learners like to be corrected by their teachers and want more correction than they are usually provided with. Moreover, they found that

learners liked to be corrected not only during form-focused activities, but also when they were conversing with native speakers. This liking for correction contrasts with the warnings of Krashen(1982) that correction is both useless for ‘acquisition’ and dangerous in that it may lead to a negative affective response.

As has been seen from the overview there are so many arguments about what aspects of teacher talk are considered to be communicative or not in the language classroom. Cullen (1997) distinguishes three advantages in the approach describing and evaluating teacher talk that he suggests. Firstly, the categories of verbal behaviour are rooted firmly in the reality of the classroom and on what typically goes on there. Secondly, the criteria for assessing the communicative use of classroom language in each of these categories are likewise based on what it takes to be communicative in the context of the classroom itself, rather than in some outside context. The model of communicative teacher talk emerging from such an approach should thus reflect the primary function of teacher talk, which is to support and enhance learning. Thirdly, a model of communicative language teaching which recognizes the importance of the pedagogical function of teacher talk within the classroom context, and what it means to be communicative within that context, is likely to be a more realistic and attainable model for teachers to aspire to than one which insists on the replication of features of genuine communication as the only measure of genuine communicative teaching.

In other words, I strongly agree with Cullen and other educators who argue that the question of communicativeness should be considered not from the point of view of the outside world but from the perspective of ***classroom*** authenticity.

II. Communicative Language Teaching

Recent discussions of language teaching methodology have emphasized the importance of providing opportunities for learners to communicate. Within the last quarter of a century, communicative language teaching(CLT) has been put forth around the world as the "new ", or "innovative" way to teach English as a second or foreign language. The essence of CLT is the engagement of learners in communication in order to allow them to develop their communicative competence. By definition, CLT puts the focus on the learner. Learner communicative needs provide a framework for elaborating program goals in terms of functional competence (Savignon 2001).

CLT has developed from the writings of British applied linguists such as Wilkins, Widdowson, Brumfit, Candlin, and others, as well as American educators such as Savignon(1983), all of whom emphasize notional-functional concepts and communicative competence, rather than grammatical structures, as central to language teaching (Richards and Rogers 1986: 65). The term '***communicative competence'***, first used by Hymes (1972) in deliberate contrast to Chomsky's 'linguistic competence', reflects the social view of language which has found increasing acceptance since the middle of the sixties (Stern 1983:111). Savignon (2001:16) defines communicative competence as the ability of classroom language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning, as distinct from their ability to recite dialogs or perform on discrete point tests of grammatical

knowledge. In other words, learners are put in the communicative language situations where they have to fulfill the unrehearsed task using their skills to negotiate the meaning, exchange information or seek clarification rather than speak in memorized patterns. Savignon adds that development of communicative competence consisting of grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociocultural competence and strategic competence is possible through practice and experience in a wide range of communicative contexts and events. It is interesting to note that sociocultural competence extends well beyond linguistic forms and puts an emphasis on the importance of cultural awareness rather than cultural knowledge. What must be learned is a general empathy and openness towards other cultures which also involves consideration of the possibility of cultural differences in conventions or use.

However, some educators challenge the principles of 'communicative competence' in CLT. Take for instance Hammerly (1991), who I believe rightly asserts that "The present overemphasis on communication has led to a neglect of structure. One can communicate fairly well in an SL with gestures, a phrase book. And a pocket dictionary- but is this being 'competent'?" He maintains that it is the language itself that must be at the center of education theories being the hardest to master. He also adds that it is unfortunate that many people have adopted the position that an SL method cannot be both structural and communicative.

Indeed, discussions of CLT often lead to the questions of grammar or accuracy. Many educators and teachers criticize the approach for the imbalance of attention to form and meaning with the prevalence of the latter. In fact, meaning is

of primary importance in CLT whereas grammar becomes important only when lack of grammatical accuracy prevents interlocutors from getting the message across. One of the most frequently asked questions by teachers is how should form and function be integrated in an instructional sequence?

There have been a number of applied linguists who have argued strongly and in theoretically persuasive terms that explicit ***grammar*** teaching should be avoided. One line of argument for the avoidance of grammar is that grammar teaching is impossible because the knowledge that a speaker needs in order to use a language is simply too complex (Prabhu 1987). Another is that grammar teaching is unnecessary because that knowledge is of a kind which cannot be passed on in the form of statable rules, but can only be acquired unconsciously through exposure to the language (Krashen 1988). However, as Thompson (1994) maintains in the consensus view of CLT, it is now fully accepted that an appropriate amount of class time should be devoted to grammar, this has not meant a simple return to a traditional treatment of grammar rules. The view that grammar is too complex to be taught in that over-simplifying way has had an influence, and the focus has now moved away from the teacher ***covering*** grammar to the learners ***discovering*** grammar. Wherever possible, learners are first exposed to new language in a comprehensible context, so that they are able to understand its function and meaning. Only then is their attention turned to examining the grammatical forms that have been used to convey that meaning. The discussion of grammar is explicit, but it is the learners who are doing most of the discussing, working out - with

guidance from the teacher – as much of their new knowledge of the language as can easily and usefully be expressed.

Savignon (2001) admits that the nature of the contribution to language development of both form-focused and meaning –focused classroom activities remains an open question. She asserts that the optimum combination of these activities in any given instructional setting depends no doubt on learners' age, nature and length of instructional sequence, opportunities for language contact outside the classroom, teacher preparation, and other factors. However, for the development of communicative ability, research findings overwhelmingly support the *integration* of form-focused exercises with meaning focus experience. Grammar is important, and learners seem to focus best on grammar when it relates to their communicative needs and experiences (Savignon 2001).

In view of discussions about genuinely communicative and non-communicative activities some theorists pointed out a 'weak' and a 'strong' version of CLT. Here I tend to agree with Littlewood (198l), a proponent of the '***weak' approach***, who attempts to reconcile non-communicative and communicative activities by suggesting that such things as drill and controlled practice have a valid place in the language class as pre-communicative activities which provide learners with the necessary prerequisite skills for more communicative language work. It is suggested that genuine communication is characterized by the uneven distribution of information, the negotiation of meaning (through, for example, clarification requests and confirmation checks), topic nomination and negotiation by more than one speaker, and the right of interlocutors to decide whether to contribute to an

interaction or not. In other words, in genuine communication, decisions about who says what to whom and when are up for grabs. Nunan (1987) proposes a compromise saying that if one accepts a 'weak' interpretation of communicative language teaching, then one must accept the value of grammatical explanation, error correction, and drill. However, learners also need the opportunity to engage in genuine communicative interaction. Lightbown and Spada (1990) point to the benefits of a combination of communicative language teaching and form-focused instruction- a kind of "hybrid" approach that recognizes the contributions of both kinds of teaching to the learning process (cited in Hadley 1993):

> Classroom data from a number of studies offer support for the view that form-focused instruction and corrective feedback provided within the context of a communicative program are more effective in promoting second language learning than programs which are limited to an exclusive emphasis on accuracy on the one hand or an exclusive emphasis on fluency on the other.

Hadley (1993:104) citing Richards and Rogers (1986) summarizes some of the ***principles*** characterizing major distinctive features of this approach:

1. Meaning is of primary importance in CLT, and contextualization is a basic principle.
2. Attempts by learners to communicate with the language are encouraged from the beginning of instruction. The new language system will be best learned by struggling to communicate one's own meaning and by negotiation of meaning through interaction with others.
3. Sequencing of materials is determined by the content, function, and/ or meaning that will maintain students' interest.

4. Judicious use of the native language is acceptable where feasible, and translation may be used when students find it beneficial or necessary.
5. Activities and strategies for learning are varied according to learner preferences and needs.
6. Communicative competence, with an emphasis on fluency and acceptable language use, is the goal of instruction. "Accuracy is judged not in the abstract, but in context".

(Based on Richards and Rogers 1986: 67 cited in Hadley 1993: 104)

The summarized principles clearly stress the significance of meaning and contextualization as well as the focus on the learner. The negotiation of meaning is encouraged from the beginning of instruction and is seen as central. Learners are given sufficient opportunities to communicate with each other, or participate in discourse directed at the exchange of information which as a number of scholars have proposed is the most effective way of developing successful L2 competence in a classroom (see Krashen 1982; Swain 1985; Prabhu 1987). Ellis (1994) asserts that there is now convincing evidence that learners can learn 'naturally' in a communicative classroom setting. However, he admits that communicative classrooms may not be so successful in promoting high levels of linguistic competence (Ellis 1994).

Ellis 1994:

1. Giving beginner learners opportunities for meaningful communication in the classroom helps to develop communicative abilities and also results in linguistic

abilities no worse that those developed through more traditional, form-focused approaches.

2. Communicative classroom settings may not be sufficient to ensure the development of high levels of linguistic and sociolinguistic competence, although they may be very successful in developing fluency and effective discourse skills.

   Richards and Lockhart 1994

It is characteristic of CLT to distinguish three major ***stages in a lesson***- a pre-activity, a during-activity and a post-activity. The latter is often divided into practice and production. These stages appear in different sources under different names (e.g. into, through, beyond)

In CLT, the following sequence of activities is often used (Littlewood 1986 cited in Richards and Lockhart 1994:119)

Writing

1. *Pre-writing activities.* Activities designed to generate ideas for writing or focus the writers' attention on a particular topic.
2. *Drafting activities.* Activities in which students produce a draft of their composition, considering audience and purpose.
3. *Revising activities.* Activities in which students focus on rereading, analyzing, editing, and revising their own writing.

Reading

1. *Pre-reading activities*. Activities which prepare the students for reading the text. Such activities could include providing a reason for reading, introducing the text, breaking up the text, dealing with new language, and asking signpost questions.

2. *While-reading activities*. Activities which students complete as they read and which may be either individual, group, or whole class.
3. *Post-reading activities*. Activities which are designed to provide a global understanding of the text in terms of evaluation and personal response. Such activities could include eliciting a personal response from the students, linking the content with the student's personal experience, establishing relationship between the text and others, and evaluating characters, incidents, ideas, and arguments.

As one can notice there is a general acceptance of the complexity and interrelatedness of skills in both written and oral communication and of the need for learners to have the experience of communication, to participate in the negotiation of meaning. It is clear that the principles of CLT apply not only to speaking and listening activities but to reading and writing activities as well which involves interpretation and negotiation of meaning between writers and readers. Speaking and listening activities also go through the same stages namely preparation stage or pre-activity, during -activity where the teacher presents the material of the lesson and post –activity stage where students practice the new concepts and apply them in a new situation.

CLT emphasizes the use of ***small group*** or ***pair work*** but is not limited to it. 'Group tasks have been found helpful in many contexts as a way of providing increased opportunity and motivation for communication. However, classroom group or pair work should not be considered as essential feature and may well be inappropriate in some contexts'. (Savignon 2001: 27)

In CLT the ***teacher*** has two main roles: the first is to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and texts. In this role, one of his major responsibilities is to establish situations likely to promote communication. During the activities he acts as an adviser, answering students' questions and monitoring their performance (Larsen-Freeman 2000). The second role is to act as an independent participant within the learning -teaching group.

Challenges for teachers

Depending upon their own preparation and experience, teachers themselves differ in their reactions to CLT. Some feel understandable frustration at the seeming ambiguity in discussions of communicative ability which lacks precision and does not provide a universal scale for assessment of individual learners. Other teachers who welcome the opportunity to select and/ or develop their own materials, providing learners with a range of communicative tasks, are comfortable relying on more global, integrative judgments of learner progress(Savignon 2001).

Another challenge for teachers is that CLT places greater demands on the teacher than certain other widely-used approaches. Lessons tend to be less predictable; teachers have to be ready to listen to what learners say and not just how they say it, and to interact with them in as 'natural' a way as possible; they have to use a wider range of management skills than in the traditional teacher-dominated classroom. In addition, non-native speakers of English probably need a higher level of language proficiency - or rather, a different balance of proficiency skills - to be

able to communicate with ease, and to cope with discussing a broader range of facts about language use than they are accustomed to. Perhaps most importantly, teachers may have to bring to light deeply-buried preconceptions about language teaching (mostly based on their own language learning experiences at school and university), and to compare them openly with alternative possibilities that may be less familiar but perhaps make better pedagogic sense (Medgyes1986 cited in Thompson 1994).

Nevertheless, numerous classroom-based research provides evidence that even many experienced teachers knowledgeable about and committed to communicative language teaching often tend to use more traditional patterns of classroom interaction rather than genuine interaction. Thus, according to Nunan (1986) the most commonly occurring pattern of interaction was:

Teacher initiation

Learner response

Teacher follow-up

The following extract demonstrates that it is generally the teacher who decides 'who should say what, when'. While the ostensible focus is on meaning, the covert focus, at least from the learners' perspective, is on form.

S: Quiss?
T: Pardon?
S: It will be quiss? It will be quiss? Quiss?
ss: Quiz, quiz.
T: Ahmm, sorry? Try again.
S: I ask you . . .
T: Yes.
S: . . . you give us another quiss?

T: Oh, quiz, oh. No, no, not today, it's not going to be a quiz today, sorry.
Nunan 1986

In each of the lessons analysed by Nunan(1986), the teachers claimed to be teaching 'communicatively', and to a certain extent they were, with all lessons ostensibly focusing on functional aspects of language use. However, in terms of the patterns of classroom interaction, there was little genuine communication between teacher and student (or, for that matter, between student and student). There was also a great deal of 'traditional' language work.

III. Balance in Language Teaching and Learning

Teacher centered and learner centered education

Over the years there have been many arguments as to whether Foreign Language Teaching should be teacher centred or learner centred. Most people involved in language teaching and learning would agree that almost all modern literature on methodology advocates learner-centered approaches. Every ELT conference nowadays usually has plenty of presentations on learner centered teaching. Indeed, ELT is one of very few fields that has been practicing learner centeredness, whereas the other fields of education have always been strictly teacher centered.

Teaching field has been subject to frequent major shifts in philosophy-shifts that reflect changing assumptions about the purpose of language study, the nature of language, the process of learning and language learning, and the role of teaching in general and language teaching in particular. These shifts have naturally

had major pedagogical consequences affecting approaches, methods, procedures, and even the choice of specific teaching techniques (Hammerly 1991).

Yet, changes are not necessarily improvements. As Mackey (1965:138 cited in Kumaravadivelu 1994) observed about half a century ago " while sciences have advanced by approximations in which each new stage results from an improvement, not rejection, of what has gone before, language- teaching methods have followed the pendulum of fashion from one extreme to the other". Mackey's observation totally confirms the situation with language teaching in Uzbekistan. Evidently, there has been a shift in the field from one extreme to the other, namely from teacher-centered instruction in which learners had facts and rules hammered in their minds, to a student-centered situation where the teacher's primary role is to provide a favorable environment in which the students themselves create their own version of linguistic reality by unconsciously 'testing hypotheses'. The two approaches are fundamentally different in their assumptions about language teaching and learning as well as being different in their principles and techniques. As a result, such a drastic change in methodology has led to conflicting reactions.

Kumaravadivelu (1994) noticed that all methods and approaches can be divided into *language-centered, learner-centered and learning-centered methods. A language-centered method* (e.g., audiolingualism) seeks to provide opportunities for learners to practice preselected, presequenced linguistic structures through form-focused exercises, assuming that a preoccupation with form will ultimately lead to L2 mastery. Then, there are *learner- centered methods* (e.g., communicative methods) that seek to provide opportunities for learners to practice preselected,

presequenced linguistic structures and communicative notions through function-focused activities, assuming that preoccupation with form and function will ultimately lead to L2 mastery. Finally, there are *learning-centered methods* (e.g., "the natural approach") that seek to provide opportunities for learners to participate in open-ended meaningful interaction through language learning tasks, assuming that a preoccupation with meaning making will ultimately lead to L2 mastery (Kumaravadivelu 1994: 29).

However, I agree with Nunan and other educators who assert that from the practitioner's point of view, none of these methods can be realized in their purest form in the actual classroom primarily because they are not derived from classroom experience and experimentation but are artificially transplanted into the classroom and, as such, far removed from classroom reality (Nunan, 1991; Pennycook, 1989; Richards, 1989). Hammerly (1991) has the same opinion and states that although languistics must be theoretically sound, it should not be primarily a matter of theory. The views of successful, experienced practitioners should carry much weight, may be as much as those of theoreticians and experimental researchers.

Hammerly (1991) makes a valid point in my opinion challenging CLT. He maintains that the communicative approach has been widely promoted without carefully controlled methodological comparison studies: 'While a few studies have attempted to compare certain teaching procedures, I know of no major study in which a communicative method was carefully compared with a structural method,

much less a balanced method emphasizing *both* structure and communication as needed. The lack of such objective data should have led to concern and caution.'

Different changes in approaches and methods have been aimed at making teaching effective. One of the traditional principle arguments in various methodologies is the issue of centeredness. In some methods/approaches the center is on the teacher whereas the others put the focus on the learner. Another long-established argument that has become somewhat traditional is the issue of fluency and accuracy. While some educators are convinced that language functions should be emphasized over forms, others feel strongly that grammatical accuracy should be stressed over the fluency. However, there are those who believe that teaching should aim for a balance between the two. For instance, Skehan (1998) believes that the challenge is balanced concern for communication on the one hand, and form at a general level on the other hand, so that neither dominates at the expense of the other.

My experience proves what Hammerly (1991) states in his book on Fluency and Accuracy. He maintains that balance will not be achieved by focusing almost exclusively on one type of competence, one skill or one language component. Neither is balance attained by mindlessly trying to do everything at the same time. Thus, he believes that an early emphasis on fluency- with communicative competence in mind- results in a major and apparently permanent loss of accuracy, making the attainment of a high level of SL competence impossible. An early emphasis on accuracy, however, does not impede but rather helps the later gradual development of fluency. In view of this Hammerly makes a point that *balanced*

results in SL teaching are possible only when a beginning and intermediate emphasis on linguistic accuracy gradually shifts to an advanced emphasis on communicative fluency and accuracy. According to Hammerly (1991), approaches to and methods of language teaching, which of course follow assumptions, exhibit the same imbalance. From an overconcern with structure, methodologists have moved to an overconcern with communication and, in many programs, neglect of structure. Students are expected to communicate however they can. Control of structure, these theorists say, will gradually emerge unconsciously. Well, this does not happen and can not happen within the SL classroom. Encouraging students to communicate freely beyond what they know of the SL leads them to make far more errors than can possibly be corrected effectively (even if the students are old enough to benefit from linguistically focused correction); as a result, the deficient mental rules on which those errors are based become habitual. Seedhouse (1997) illustrates the problems inherent in both an extreme focus on form and accuracy and an extreme focus on meaning and fluency by examining extracts from classroom transcripts.

Extract 1

T: do you make your bed every morning. (nods)

L: Yes, I make my bed every morning.

T: (shakes his head)

L: No, I don't make my bed every morning.

T: Does your father make your bed every morning?

L: Yes, my father makes my bed every morning.

T: Does your little brother make your bed every morning? (demonstrates a small brother)

L: Yes, my little brother makes my bed every morning.

T: (shakes his head vigorously)

L: No, my little brother doesn't make my bed every morning. I have no little brother.

(Bolte and Herrlitz 1986: 206)

It should be pointed out that the focus of this exercise is utterly on form and accuracy and the problems have been created at the meaning and fluency end of the continuum: it is hardly possible to meet such a dialogue outside the classroom.

Extract 2

L: China, ye.

T: Uh huh, in Greece. What about in Greece. Many bicycles?

L: Mmm. Bicycles, motor.

T: Uh huh, in Australia, er, bicycle, er, we wear a helmet.

LL: Helmet. Yes, yes.

T: Special [gestures] helmet.

LL: Ohh. Kong.

L: Malaysia, same, same.

T: Same in Malaysia?

LL: Yes, yes.

L: Moto, moto.

T: In China a little or a lot?

L: Motor. Some motor bicycle.

T: Motor bike.

L: Yes, yes. Bicycle, no. China, bicycle no. motor, yes.

T: Ah huh.

L: Cap, cap.

L: Cap.

L: Hat on, hat, hat.

T: Hat.

LL: Hat, hat.

T: Ah, in Australia, motor bike, yes. Yes, yes, yes. Bicycle, yes, good (oh). Children, special helmet (helmet) Helmet, mmm. Special helmet.
(Nunan 1989: 144)

What we typically find is that the teacher downgrades expectations of the linguistic forms produced by the learners, and makes concessions in order to understand, accept, and praise their language (Seedhouse 1997:337). In extract 2 we see that the teacher accepts without comment or correction any and every minimal, pidginized interlanguage form learners produce, which could result in fossilized errors or simply slow down the learner's progress. In fact, such a failure to recast or provide any form of corrective adversely effects the whole class because everyone is deprived of critical / optimal input. When we examine the teacher's contributions we find that he or she (a native speaker) is actually downgrading his or her own language to a minimal, pidginized interlanguage devoid of verbs(apart from line 4) which is, in effect, mimicking the learners' interlanguage. In fact the teacher's language here functions as input and model.

Teaching procedures have also been influenced by the present imbalance. For example, according to currently popular methods teachers do not see a need to teach pronunciation, to have the students thoroughly learn and manipulate oral language samples, or to correct linguistic errors. But this neglect clearly leads to poor long term results- in these examples, respectively, a noticeable foreign accent, no linguistic foundation to fall back on, and terminal grammaticality. The sad part is that such outcomes are avoidable.

Error correction or rather its emphasis is typically associated with an extreme focus on form and accuracy. It is clear that we usually find absence of error correction in fluency focused activities (Extract 2). Correction policy, according to Seedhouse, can thus be seen to play a vital role in the establishment a balance between form and meaning. Seedhouse provides an example of a dual focus. In Extract 3, the learners (a multilingual, multinational group of adult, intermediate level learners in a language school in England) are talking about what they had done the previous weekend.

Extract 3

L1: And what did you do last weekend?

L2: On Saturday I went on my own to Canterbury, so I took a bus and I met L6- he took the same bus to Canterbury. And in Canterbury I visited the Cathedral and all the streets near the Cathedral and I tried to find a pub where you don't see – where you don't see many tourists. And I find one.

T: Found.

L2: I found one where I spoke with two English women and we spoke about life in Canterbury or things and after I came back.

T: Afterwards.

L2: Afterwards I came back by bus too. And on Sunday what did you do?

L1: Oh, er, I stayed in home

T: At home.

L1: On Sunday I stayed at home and watched the Wimbledon Final. What did you do on Sunday?

L2: On morning

T: In the morning

L2: In the morning I took the bus…

(Mathers 1990: 109)

The focus in Extract 3 is both on meaning and form. The content has personal meaning to the students in that they are able to contribute new information concerning their personal experiences. It also has a focus on fluency as learners are able to maintain a conversation by themselves. Accuracy focus is in that the teacher corrects all errors and the learners adopt the corrected forms in the subsequent utterances. This example proves that it is possible for teachers to achieve a balance between the focus on form and meaning, accuracy and fluency.

Even teaching techniques have been affected by the philosophical shift in language teaching. Communicationists (the term coined by Hammerly) do not think that careful, purposeful imitation is an important procedure, so they frown upon teaching techniques designed to enhance it. They reject any sort of mechanical practice, so the study of successful drilling techniques has been largely abandoned. Because they do not think it is important to correct errors, research on the effectiveness of various error correction techniques is at a standstill.

In contrast to the already existing methods, in view of the mentioned weaknesses of the approaches/methods some educators (take for example Kumaravadivelu) envisage a post method condition which will enable practitioners to generate location-specific, classroom oriented innovative practices (Kumaravadivelu 1994).

Hawkins (1967) about fifty years ago pointed out to the existence of I/Thou/It triangle in the classroom and emphasized the relationships within the triangle. He argued that 'Without a Thou (teacher), there is no I (students) evolving. Without an It (subject matter) there is no content for the context…'. Hawkins

asserts that It is a critical component in the classroom which makes learning take place. It creates a reason for communication/ negotiations in the classroom.

The distinguishing feature of the new approach is that unlike in the other approaches the center is on the subject matter(It) rather than the students (I) or teacher(Thou).*It* is what the students need to know in order to be truly empowered and have their needs met. *It* determines what roles the students and teacher have to play for optimal learning to take place.

CHAPTER 3

QUESTIONNAIRE. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

I. Aim of the Questionnaire

As a starting point for exploring students' feelings about some questions in ELT, a short questionnaire was devised. In this questionnaire I wished to address some issues concerning students' perception of TTT, STT, issues of fluency and accuracy, elements of teacher centered and learner centered teaching. I was interested in how much time teachers/students usually talk in their English classes and how much time students think teachers/students themselves should talk in their English classes.

The reason I chose to ask students was to find out what students themselves think about certain issues in teaching. It is always interesting to hear students' opinions about certain issues in teaching as opposed to well established teachers' believes about the same things. However, considering the fact that some replies could be subjective or inadequate the data should be taken correspondingly. For the sake of simplicity the questionnaire was mainly designed in the form of multiple choice questions where students had to tick the appropriate choice.

The majority of the responses were from students of the Banking and Finance academy. A total of 50 completed questionnaires were received out of which 37 were of students of the BFA and the rest of students of the University of World Economy and Diplomacy. All respondents are young adults age 22 to 35 and pre intermediate to intermediate level of English. It is also necessary to note that

one part of the students was taught predominantly in a teacher centered way whereas another part was taught mainly in a learner centered communicative way. It should be pointed out, however,

that some questions in some questionnaires were left unanswered, and thus the number of respondents in some questions may not match the overall number.

II. Summary of questionnaire responses:

Details of respondents:

1 / 2 The majority of respondents have been studying English for more than 7 years. All the responses to why they learn English fell mainly into 4 categories: 'I need it at work'; 'I'd like to be able to speak to foreigners'; I want to study in the UK/US'; 'To broaden my career opportunities'

3 a. How much time on average do students talk at your English lessons?

-10%-20%: none

-20%-30%: 3

-30%-40%: 11

-more than 40%: 30

-5 respondents claim that students talk more than 60% at their English lessons

3 b. How much time does the teacher talk at your English lessons?

-10%-20%: 1

-20%-30%: 3

-30%-40%: 6

- more than 40%: 26

-17 students assert that their teacher talks more than 60% of the class time

4a. How much time do you think students should talk at your English lessons?

-10%-20%: 2

-20%-30%: 1

-30%-40%: 4

-more than 40%: 28

-13 respondents think that students should talk more than 60%-70% of the time

4b. How much time do you think the teacher should talk at your English lessons?

-10%-20%: 2

-20%-30%: 4

-30%-40%: 8

-more than 40%:23

- 11 students believe that their teacher(s) should talk more than 50% of the time

5. How much class time should be devoted to speaking?

-10%-20%: none

-20%-30%: none

-30%-40%: 7

-more than 40%: 24

-19 respondents feel that more than 60% should be devoted to speaking

6. How much class time should be devoted to grammar?

-10%-20%: 3

-20%-30%: 13

-30%-40%: 16

-more than 40%: 14

-4 students suggested that grammar should take up more than 65% of their class time.

5. *In general do you prefer*:

-working on your own: 12

-working in small group: 33

-working in the full-class, teacher directed: 7

6. *What type of exercise is effective in learning English? Rank in the order of importance from 1(the most important) to 7 the least important.*

Interestingly, most respondents (20) think that grammar exercises are the most effective way of learning the language. On the other hand, none of the students marked 'role plays' as effective. Discussions took the second important place (18) in the list of effective exercises. 10 students chose reading and retelling text as the most effective way of learning English.

7. *How do you feel about error correction during speaking activities? Tick the most suitable answer.*

39 of total 49 respondents think that teachers should always correct their mistakes so that they know when they make them. Seven think that teachers should correct the

worst mistakes, not overdoing this. Only two students never pay attention to error correction and one student feels bad when s/he is corrected by the teacher.

8. *What does **'to know English well'** mean for you? Rank in the order of importance from 1(the most important) to 5 (the least important).*

__ to know grammar very well

__to know a lot of words and be able to use them properly

__ to speak fluently

__ to be able to understand what people are saying

__ to be able to understand reading texts

__ to be able to write in English well

__other (please specify)

As it can be observed from the questionnaire it illustrates that the majority of the respondents indicated that students talk about 40%-50% of the class time (q*uestions 3 and 4*) which is the way it should be in their opinion. Teacher talk takes up about 40%-50% of the class time too, and, similarly, according to the responses it should stay the same.

Questions 5, 6 and 9 relate to the issues of accuracy, fluency and error correction. Despite the popular opinion that students should not be corrected during fluency developing activities, the overwhelming majority of the respondents think that teachers should always correct their mistakes so that they know when they make them.

In a survey of the most effective and least effective learning exercises (*question 8*) 38% of the students pointed out grammar exercises as most effective

whereas only 10 % viewed communicative activities as such. Very analogous results are illustrated in research from Australian Adult Migrant Education Program, reported in Nunan (1988:89-94) where students were asked to rate the most useful part of the lesson. Similarly, 40% nominated grammar exercises as most useful, while only 10% nominated communication tasks and problem-solving as most useful. In a survey of the most popular and least popular learning activities, students gave error correction a very high rating, whereas teachers gave error correction a low rating.

Therefore, it is vital to remember that learners' and teachers' idea of what a meaningful or effective activity is can be quite different. Here I support Seedhouse (1997) who states that in general, the communicative approach tends to imply that learners will find meaning-focused activities meaningful and form-focused activities meaningless. The data evidently shows that the majority of the students do not consider communicative activities as meaningful rating role-plays and games as least effective activities while grammar exercises took the leading first place. Thus, it is important that learners themselves validate the activity and find it meaningful, rather than teacher imposing his/her preconceptions onto the learners. It is also crucial to know whether the activity matches learners' language learning aims.

CHAPTER 4

MY OWN CLT EXPERIENCE

The results of the questionnaires indeed proved some observations that I made about teaching and learning and mainly CLT principles in ELT. In this part of my work I would like to consider the main CLT principles and discuss both their effectiveness and poverties based on my teaching experience in Uzbekistan.

Good communicative teaching is learner centered, not teacher centered.

In a true communicative classroom a teacher should minimize his/her teacher talk. All the activities should be learner- centred in which as Lawson (1998) defines '… the primary focus is on what the learner or participant is able to take away from the learning experience. The learner is actively involved in the process and, therefore, is much likely to retain the information and be able to apply it on the job.'

Experience shows that the students are initially happy about being immersed into absolutely new communicative environment where they are the focus of attention and their interests are seen as important. Learners actively participate in mingle activities, role-plays, problem-solving tasks, play games and so on. "Students interact a great deal with each another. They do this in various configurations: pairs, triads, small group, and whole group."(Larsen-

Freeman, 2000) They like the teacher who is so friendly and fun unlike the rest of the teachers who are authoritative and strict.

However, they soon begin to feel that something is missing in their learning process. Games and other learner-centered activities are perceived as fun but after all learners expect some input from the teacher. O'Neill points out that 'there is a lot of evidence that strongly suggests that all learners need 'input' and that 'negotiated input' is always essential'. They often wait for teacher-centered/whole class activities when one student would do an exercise at the board and the rest of the class would follow him/her with the teacher guiding the student. The principle"Ask! Don't tell!" can become very frustrating when students have so many questions and want to get straight answers-they want to listen to the teacher giving the answers rather than try to ask another learner. I have observed the classrooms where the teacher would use teacher-centered activities and still much learning was going on. "Very often, far more often than most CLT supporters are prepared to admit competent whole class teaching is more efficient than pair and group work."(O'Neill, 2000)

Therefore, teacher-centered is not always bad. There are times when teacher centeredness (whole class teaching) is necessary and more effective. Proper scaffolding (Vygotsky 1978) before communicative activities can make teaching more efficient. The question is not of "Who should be in the center, a teacher or a learner?" but whether learning is taking place. What is the point of a learning centred activity if learning does not take place? In other words learning is all that matters. Anything is good if it serves learning. Thus, the principle of

absolute learner-centeredness proved to be ineffective in my experience. "The issue is how can teachers learn to vary their methods and approach, sometimes using "whole class techniques and sometimes pair/group work."(O'Neill, 2000) The question a teacher should always ask him/herself is "Are students really learning anything?"

What matters most is not whether learners learn to use the language accurately. What matters is that they learn to get their message across.

Now many support the idea that communication, grammatical or not, is all that matters which is another misconception of CLT: mistakes are considered inevitable and natural. Mistakes are tolerated and dealt with at the end of the activity or the lesson. As a CLT teacher I tried not to interrupt my students during the fluency-based activities no matter how many and what mistakes they made. My usual practice was to make notes of their errors while they were speaking and later draw their attention to their weak points. To my disappointment I must admit that this correction strategy did not work- their mistakes became fossilized and I wasted my time coming back to the same mistakes again and again. Sometimes mistakes need to be addressed on the spot to draw the student's attention. O'Neill also talks s about regular form-based practice as well as many different opportunities to use the forms for a variety of pragmatic purposes.

Language is primarily a tool of communication.

One of the main goals of CLT is to enable students to communicate in the target language, or to be able to request and give information, and use the language

appropriately in the real life (authentic) situations. In other words students must be communicatively competent, this as Hymes (1967, 1972) states, means that 'they should be able to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts'. The focus should be on meaning, not on form.

Experience shows that the excessive communicative practice gives the impression that the teaching process seems rather superficial. Quite often my students who had had an abundant practice in speaking through role-plays, information gap activities and so on, perceived it as an entertainment at the lesson and not really learning anything. The impression they were getting might have been conditioned by their belief that learning English is when students read and translate a lot of texts and do a lot of grammar exercises, in other words students should be engaged in tackling more serious tasks. It is most likely that they inherited these ideas from their previous educational background, and we, teachers, need to keep in mind that learner's beliefs make up his/her learning identity and should not be neglected in any way.

The classroom and the behavior of teachers and learners in the classroom should be as similar as possible to the behavior of people in the "real world" outside the classroom.

CLT does not favour strict turn taking and "display questions", etc which are "uncommunicative" and do not reflect the "real world" outside the classroom, where we see people using language spontaneously and communicatively.

The ***experience*** proves that turn taking; drilling exercises and display questions are sometimes necessary too. None of these things are bad-as Robert O'Neill argues-what matters is how, when and why they are done. It is too self sufficient to demand learners behave naturally (like in the "real world" outside the classroom e.g. 'role plays') after they have been presented the new material. It is obvious that in most of the cases students need scaffolding and a more teacher controlled practice after they have been presented with some new material. Based on Vygotsky's (1978) seminal work, scaffolding may be defined generally as temporary support or assistance, provided by someone more capable that permits a learner to perform a complex task or process that he or she would be unable to do alone.

The classroom environment is not the "real world"; it has its own classroom instruction, which is not used outside it but is necessary. Classroom instruction has its own laws and does not have to be the"real world"; otherwise it looks very unnatural when a teachers and learners always pretend to be something else. Besides, natural acquisition takes too long to incorporate it in the classroom, and so, teachers need to use more efficient methods.

What is the role of the teacher? What is the role of the students?

The CLT teacher facilitates communication in the classroom and enables learners with communicative situations where they can use their language skills in order to exchange information/communicate. S/he is viewed as a facilitator and very often as an equal participant of the communicative activities. Heron (1999,

p1), one of the first modern developers and writers in this field, states that 'a facilitator is a person who has the role of empowering participants to learn in an experiential group'. The teacher does not dominate in the classroom as in a teacher-centered approach and tries to keep his/her teacher talk to a minimum. Students are the ones who use the class time as the opportunity for plentiful language practice, not the teacher.

Some CLT supporters believe that a CLT teacher should never be physically higher than the students. All his/her postures and gestures should send the message that a teacher serves students who are the most important.

However, this CLT conception does not work in all cultures and contexts as ***experience*** shows. In Uzbek culture, for example, a teacher has a definite status and is deeply respected in society, which means a number of things: the teacher initiates communication; it is not nice to contradict the teacher; 'the teacher knows better'. Therefore, students expect a teacher to be at a different level, not at the same level with them as it is often the case in CLT when the teacher becomes an equal participant of an activity. It is interesting to note that CLT often describes teacher and learners as participants of a communicative activity. 'Even the use of the word 'participant' rather than 'learner' denotes the different relationships, that is that both teacher and learner are participating in learning with a balance of power that strives to be more equal than usually found in traditional education'. (Jarvis, p87) That notion of equality of powers is in conflict with the cultural perception of the teacher's role in Uzbek society.

Students also expect a teacher to be the bearer/giver of knowledge and teachertalk to them. Besides, in the conditions of a foreign language classroom the teacher is the only source of the real (spontaneous, not prepared in advance as on the tape) language in the classroom. So, why deprive learners of the authentic listening opportunity?

Another misconception of CLT is that "Since the teacher's role is less dominant than in a teacher centred method, students are seen as more responsible managers of their own learning."(Larsen-Freeman, 2000) It is rather difficult to be converted into a responsible person, especially if the background education has always been very teacher centered and teacher controlled. Even the adult students, who come to my classes and, as one would assume, would be responsible enough, need constant guidance and reminding throughout the learning process. The weakening of the teacher's control does not automatically mean an increase of responsibility for one's own learning.

CONCLUSION

The urge to start writing this project was triggered by my own professional quest and my experience at School for International Training. Having experienced many different approaches at SIT and having an absolute confusion in my mind, I decided that I would need to find an eclectic approach which will reflect informed, constructive eclecticism that would take into account my students needs and would have a combined focus – on form and on meaning.

When I began this project, I knew what methodology areas I would consider and, to some extend, I could anticipated some of the conclusions I would come to in the end. However, I did not realize how **developmental** this project would turn out for me. Indeed, this study allowed me to become a more confident teacher and more autonomous learner.

As I mentioned in the introduction, my aim was to explore ways of combining two approaches which focus either mainly on form or on meaning (Grammar Translation and Communicative Language Teaching) and reveal students' feeling about some issues in language teaching. An important part of the project was the questionnaire in which I asked students of their opinions on what is considered to be effective teaching from the point of view of many educators and teachers. As a teacher, I had my own assumptions about students' feelings about several issues. Nevertheless, some of the responses were rather surprising for me, for example it was unexpected to find that most of the students prefer to be explicitly corrected by the teacher as opposed to popular opinion. Moreover, a big

proportion of students found communicative games and role-plays not effective in learning a language, which seems to confirm a large scale study conducted in Australia nearly ten years ago by a team of educators interested in exploring the question of the extent to which student and teacher agendas match or do not match**.** Almost all of the surveyed students believe that teacher talk is important. In my opinion, these results can be explained by a number of factors one of which is cultural background. In Uzbek culture a teacher is deeply respected and is seen as the 'giver' of knowledge. Thus there is a preference to a more teacher centered teaching rather than learner centered where the teacher is only a facilitator. Students in Uzbekistan often expect a lot of input from a teacher that is why I believe many of the respondents viewed teacher talk as important. What is more, the respect for the teacher in Uzbek culture demands some authority in the classroom.

For the last 15 years or so, CLT has been very popular in the field and has been advocated my many educators and teachers. However, I believe that no methodology should be imposed on the learners but tailored to the learners' needs. The methodology of teaching foreign languages should vary significantly according to the environments in which teachers find themselves working. This is not to say that CLT is not working at all in Uzbekistan but to emphasize that it is important to consider the cultural background of the learners and make adjustments to the approach according to the environment, learners' needs and preferences.

As theoretical pendulum swings from one extreme to the other, options seemed to be followed by their opposites. We realize that we have been translating too much, so translation is banned completely. Grammar explanations are seen to

have been overvalued, so grammar explanations are swept away (Swan 1985). On the other hand, CLT has been ignoring form-focused activities and produced a lot of speakers with poor grammar. The weak CLT approach is a reasonable solution here.

My IPP has been an exploration of how we can have a balanced approach to things, taking advantage of all the existing methods have to offer us. We should not approach our decision-making in teaching in an "either-or" fashion. The greatest skill is for us as professionals to develop a good judgment on what works best for whom, for what language category, for what learning outcomes. We need to honor local traditions and be open to innovations, striking a healthy balance. This is what my IPP was all about – adding another voice and perspective to the fundamental on-going discussion in our field of finding the best way to serve students and their varied specific needs.

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