Communicative Language Teaching (Ch9)

Introduction

In this lesson, students will learn about Communicative Language Teaching, or CLT. CLT is one way of teaching for the development of communicative competence, which can be defined as the ability to use the language appropriately in a given social situation. CLT tends to emphasize language functions such as requesting, apologizing, or inviting. It has proven to be an extremely influential way of language teaching, even today.

Learning Objectives

- Students will learn about Communicative Language Teaching and its techniques and principles.

Learning Outcomes

- **Principles**: Students will be able to describe key principles of Communicative Language Teaching such as its goal, the difference between "linguistic competence" and "communicative competence", the importance of social context, and authentic language and communication.
- **Techniques:** Students will be able to describe and express their thoughts about the predominant techniques and resources used in a Communicative Language Teaching lesson.
- **Application**: Students will be able to create a sequence of activities for a given set of resources (i.e., *Information Gap*, *Picture Strip Story*) that follow the principles and techniques of Communicative Language Teaching.

Key Vocabulary

- Language functions (p. 115)
- Linguistic competence (p. 115)
- Communicative competence (p. 115)
- Communicative Approach (p. 115)
- "fuzzy" and flexible (p. 115)
- Authentic language and communication (p. 119, p. 121)
- Communicative event (p. 120)
- Cohesion and coherence (p. 120)
- Social context (p. 121)
- Interlocutor roles (p. 121)
- Morrow's three characteristics of communicative activities: information gap, choice, feedback (p. 122)
- Authentic materials, scrambled sentences, language games, picture strip story, role-play (pp. 126-128)

Video (watch before class)

- https://youtu.be/3kRT-rsKxn4

CLT Survey

What is involved in CLT methodology in your view? (*Please check one.*)

a. CLT is student/learner-centered approach. True ☐ Not True ☐ Don't know ☐

b. CLT emphasizes fluency over accuracy. True ☐ Not True ☐ Don't know ☐

c. CLT emphasizes communication in a second language (L2) True ☐ Not True ☐ Don't know ☐

d. CLT relies heavily on speaking and listening skills. True ☐ Not True ☐ Don't know ☐

e. CLT requires teachers to have a high proficiency in English. True ☐ Not True ☐ Don't know ☐

f. CLT involves only group work or pair work. True ☐ Not True ☐ Don't know ☐

g. CLT requires higher knowledge of the target language culture. True ☐ Not True ☐ Don't know ☐

h. CLT involves no grammar teaching. True ☐ Not True ☐ Don't know ☐

i. CLT involves teaching speaking only. True ☐ Not True ☐ Don't know ☐

j. CLT is basically an ESL methodology, not EFL. True ☐ Not True ☐ Don't know ☐

Understanding Communicative Language Teaching

1. What is the goal of Communicative Language Teaching?

2. What is linguistic competence? What is communicative competence? How are they different?

3. What are language functions?

Experience

4. Consider the Communicative Language Teaching video, the sample lesson in the textbook (pp. 116-119), and the observations and principles of Communicative Language Teaching (pp. 119-125).

    a) What are the language functions in the lessons?

    b) Consider Morrow's three features of communication – information gap, choice, and feedback – on textbook pages 122-123. Explain how these three features of communication are incorporated in the lessons.

    - Information Gap

    - Choice

    - Feedback

Reviewing the Techniques

5. Communicative language teaching uses tasks, games, and authentic materials extensively. Match the techniques below with their description.

Authentic Materials •	• A wide range of activities that are generally intended to provide an interesting and entertaining way of developing communication skills, particularly speaking and listening.
Scrambled Sentences •	• Activities that give students the opportunity to practice communicating in different social contexts and in different social roles. They can be more or less structured.
Language Games •	• Activities that uses images to facilitate communication. They can help students to develop problem-solving skills and also provide students with practice in negotiating meaning.
Picture Strip Story •	• Newspaper articles, weathers forecasts, menus, timetables, pop songs, and other kinds of resources that are realistic (not necessarily genuine) examples of actual language use.
Role Play •	• A mixed-up text or dialogue that students have to sequence correctly as a way of teaching them about cohesion and coherence.

What do you think?

6. Let's find out what everyone thinks about Communicative Language Teaching. The textbook on page 128 asks several questions for reflection. First, **choose one question** that you want to discuss with your classmates. Second, **prepare a sample answer** to share with the class.

   a) Is achieving communicative competence a goal for which you should prepare your students?
   b) Would you adopt a functional syllabus?
   c) Should a variety of language forms be presented at one time?
   d) Are there times when you would emphasize fluency over accuracy?
   e) Do these or any other principles of Communicative Language Teaching make sense to you?
   f) Would you ever use language games, problem-solving tasks, or role-plays? When?
   g) Should all your activities include the three features of communication?
   h) Should authentic language be used?
   i) Why do we say that communication is a process?
   j) What does it mean to say that the linguistic forms speaker uses it should be appropriate to the social context?

_____

_____

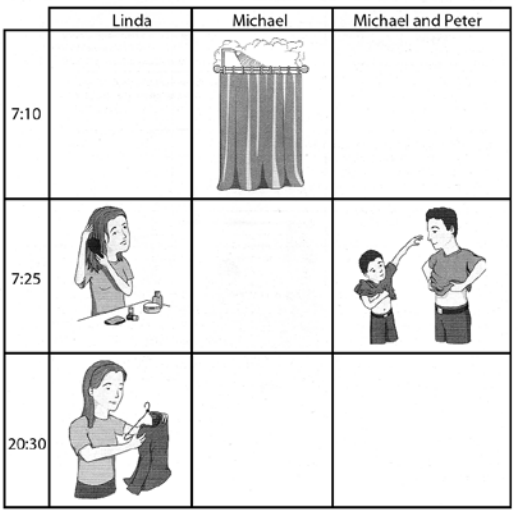
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In-Class Activity #1 (Information Gap)

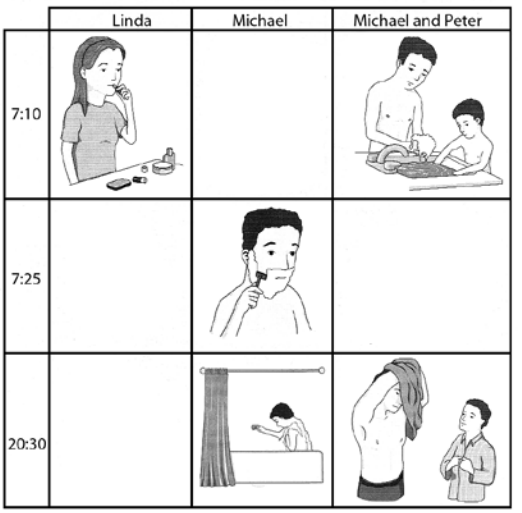
7. In this question, you will apply what you have understood about Communicative Language Teaching. You have been asked to teach a **middle school beginner** language class. Using the resource below:

   Step 1: Decide what the topic of the activity is.
   Step 2: Decide what the function(s) will be.
   Step 3: Create instructions to students about how to do the activity.

Student A



Student B

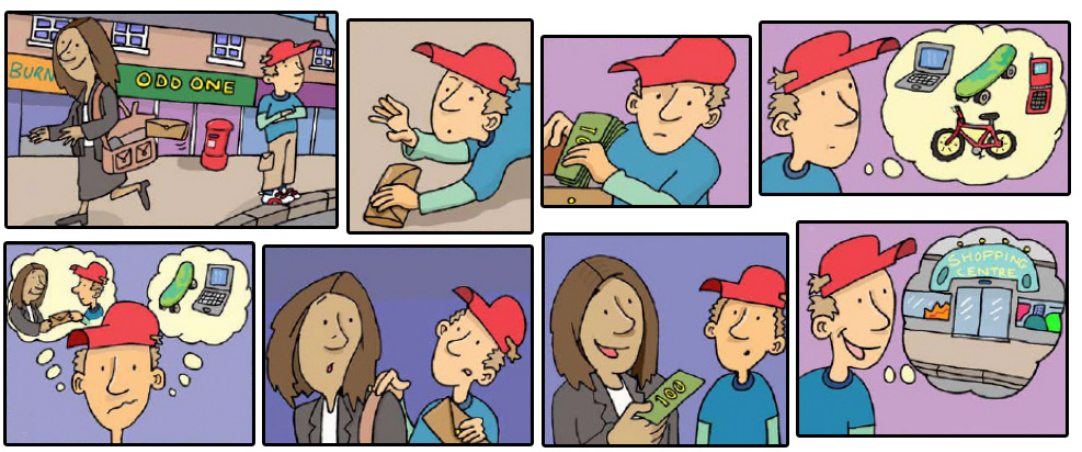


Source: Brandl, K. (2008). *Communicative language teaching in action*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

In-Class Activity #2 (Picture Strip Story)

8. In this question, you will apply what you have understood about Communicative Language Teaching. You have been asked to teach a **high school intermediate** language class. Using the resource below:

   Step 1: Decide what the topic of the activity is.
   Step 2: Decide what the function(s) will be.
   Step 3: Create instructions to students about how to do the activity.



Source: Ur, P. (2009). *Grammar practice activities* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Personal Information Gap Activity – "A"

Fill in the blanks by:

- *listening to the questions your partner asks you and writing them down.*
- *asking your partner the questions and writing their down their answers.*

QUESTIONS:	**ANSWERS:**
1) What's one of your favorite foods?	
2)	
3) What's your favorite fruit?	
4)	
5) Can you cook?	
6)	
7) What did you have for breakfast today?	
8)	
9) What did you have for dinner last night?	
10)	
11) How often do you buy food at a convenience store?	
12)	
13) What's the strangest thing you've ever eaten?	
14)	
15) *YOUR QUESTION*	

Logic Gap



Student A

Complete the puzzle below. Follow these instructions: There are eight rooms and eight tenants at Sunshine Apartments. You know that the eight tenants are Brian, David, Etsuko, Fran, Craig, Alberto, Hannah, and Gina. You don't know their exact apartment numbers.

You have three clues, and your partner has three different clues. Take turns telling each other your clues. Write each person's name in the correct room.

Sunshine Apartments

Room 201	Room 202	Room 203	Room 204
Room 101	Room 102 *Fran*	Room 103	Room 104

What does your first clue say?

1. **Fran is in Room 102.**
2. **Hannah is immediately below David.**
3. **Brian is between Alberto and Craig.**

Which is Gina's apartment? Turn to page 90 to check your answers.

Personal Information Gap Activity – "B"

Fill in the blanks by:

- *listening to the questions your partner asks you and writing them down.*
- *asking your partner the questions and writing their down their answers.*

QUESTIONS:	**ANSWERS:**
1)	
2) What's a food you hate?	
3)	
4) What's your favorite snack or dessert?	
5)	
6) What can you make?	
7)	
8) How often do you skip breakfast?	
9)	
10) What kind of toppings do you like on your pizza?	
11)	
12) Do you like ethnic food? What kinds?	
13)	
14) *YOUR QUESTION*	
15)	

Logic Gap



Student B

Complete the puzzle below. Follow these instructions: There are eight rooms and eight tenants at Sunshine Apartments. You know that the eight tenants are Brian, David, Etsuko, Fran, Craig, Alberto, Hannah, and Gina. You don't know their exact apartment numbers.

You have three clues, and your partner has three different clues. Take turns telling each other your clues. Write each person's name in the correct room.

Sunshine Apartments

Room 201	Room 202	Room 203	Room 204
Room 101	Room 102 *Fran*	Room 103	Room 104

1. Hannah is two rooms to the right of Fran.

My first clue says that Hannah is . . .

2. Craig is immediately to the left of David.

3. Etsuko is not below Craig.

Which is Gina's apartment? Turn to page 90 to check your answers.

A Sheet

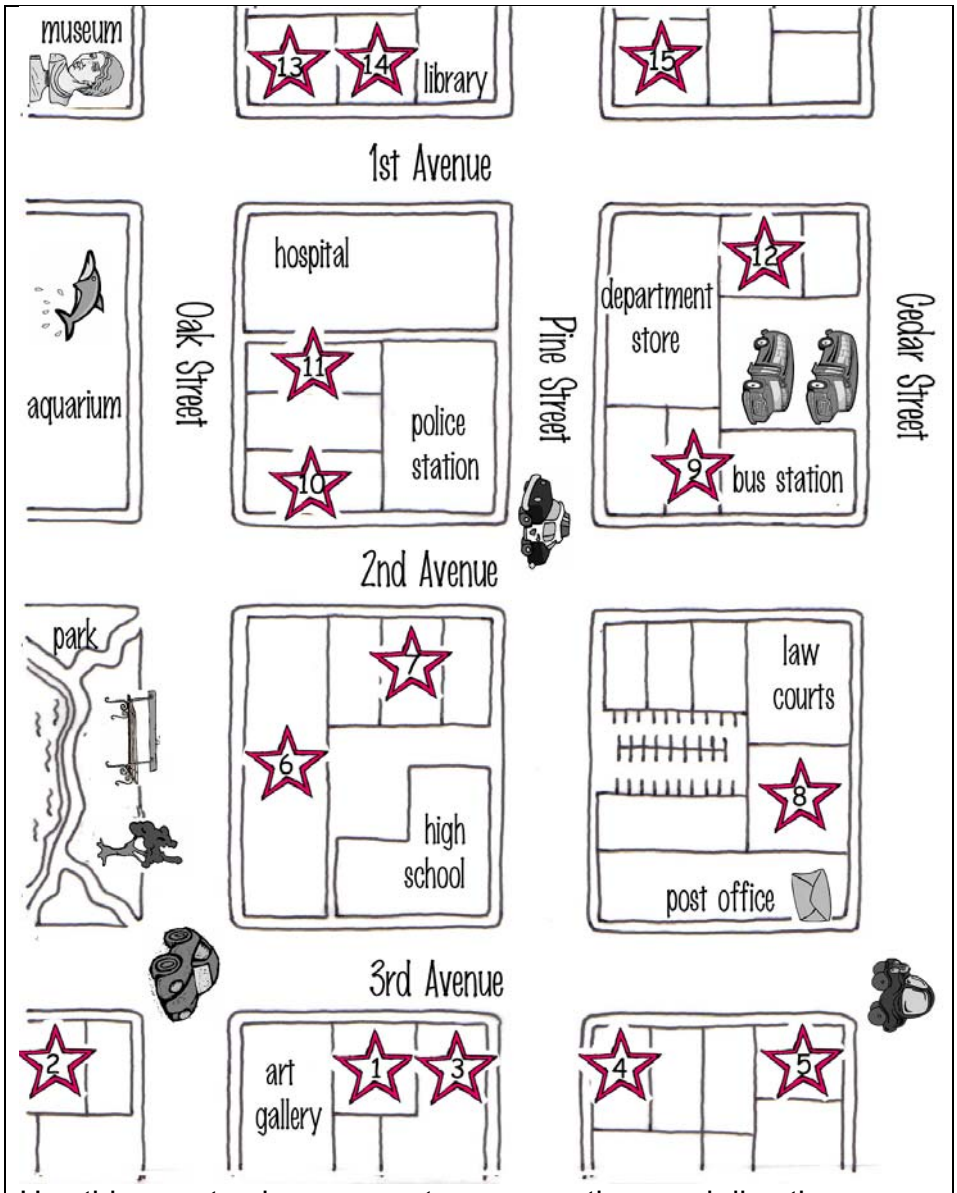
Giving Directions

Language Points

Giving Street Names
It's on Pine Street
It's on 2nd Avenue.
It's on the corner of 2nd and Pine.
Giving Nearby Landmarks
It's across from the bank.
It's next to the park.
It's opposite the library.







Use this map to give your partner suggestions and directions.

Ask your partner where you can do the following:

buy some steaks.
see a movie
order some sushi
rent a bike
pick up a bathing suit
get some aspirin
purchase some software

Fill in the name of the buildings that belong in the blanks:

(1) *Ming's Dynasty*
(2) *Hungry Burger*
(3) _____
(4) *Elegant Shoes*
(5) _____
(6) *Starlight Videos*
(7) _____
(8) *Mike's Bowling Alley*
(9) _____
(10) *Monet Cafe*
(11) _____
(12) *Ace Music CDs*
(13) _____
(14) *Mark's Supermarket*
(15) _____

B Sheet

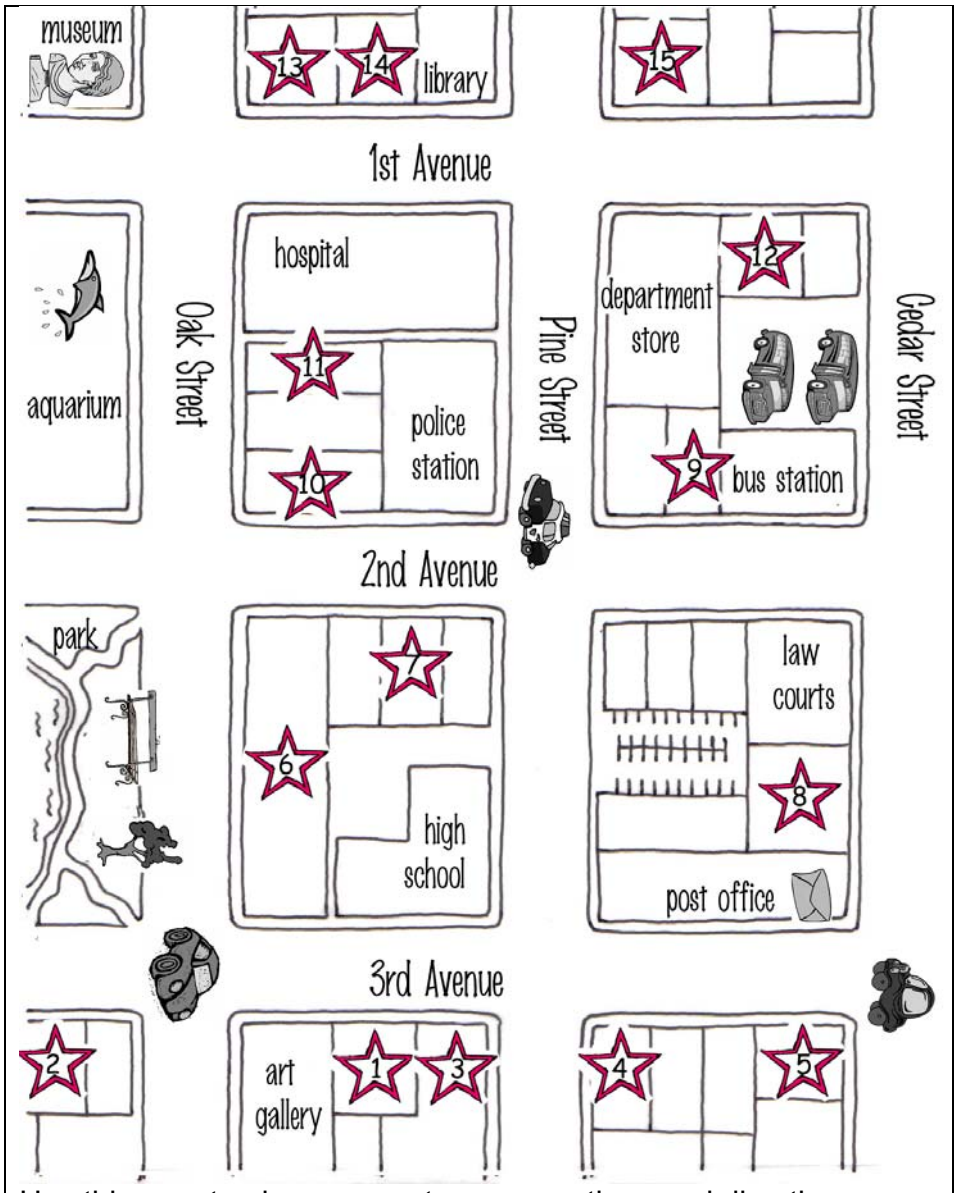
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Use this map to give your partner suggestions and directions.

Ask your partner where you can do the following:

rent a DVD
go bowling
grab a burger
buy some shoes
pick up some milk
find a music CD
go for a cup of coffee

Fill in the name of the buildings that belong in the blanks:

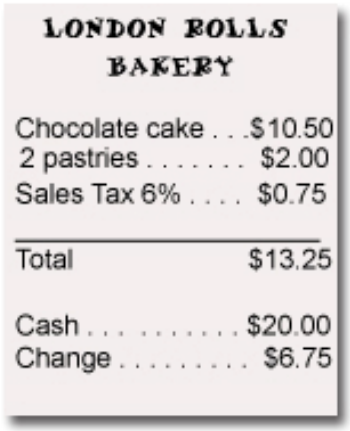
(1) *Ming's Dynasty*
(2) _____
(3) *Bedwell Theater*
(4) _____
(5) *Beaches Swimwear*
(6) _____
(7) *Niko Bikes*
(8) _____
(9) *Albert's Pharmacy*
(10) _____
(11) *Future Computers*
(12) _____
(13) *A and A meats*
(14) _____
(15) *Edo Sushi*

Sheet A

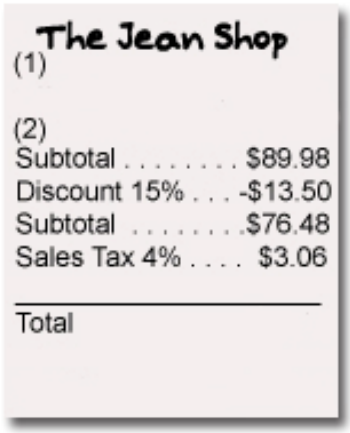
Dan's Big Date

*What did Dan buy for his big date? **Ask** your partner for the missing information. Then **confirm** the total.*

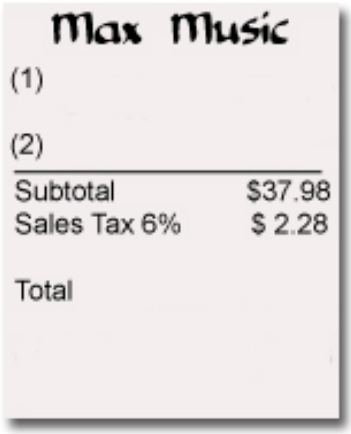
Getting Information:	
What did he buy at London Rolls Bakery? How much was it? How much was the total? How did he pay for it?	He bought a chocolate cake and two pastries. It was $12.50 for the cake and $2.00 for the pastries? With tax, the total came to 13.25? He paid $20.00 cash and got $6.75 change. (He put it on his credit card/He wrote a check.)
Confirming Information:	
So that's a total of $13.25 for the cake and pastries.	That's right.

















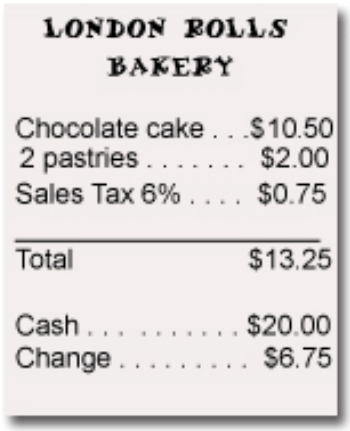


Sheet B

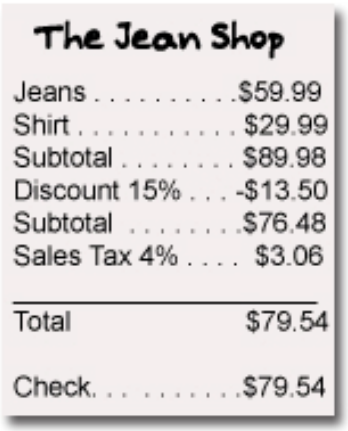
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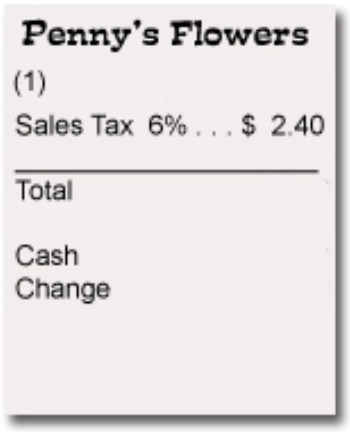
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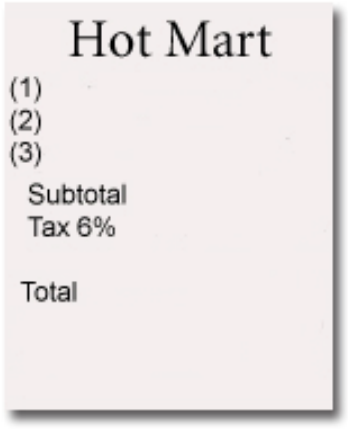














9

Communicative Language Teaching

Introduction

You may have noticed that the goal of most of the methods we have looked at so far is for students to learn to communicate in the target language. In the 1970s, though, educators began to question if they were going about meeting the goal in the right way. Some observed that students could produce sentences accurately in a lesson, but could not use them appropriately when genuinely communicating outside of the classroom. Others noted that being able to communicate required more than mastering linguistic structure, due to the fact that language was fundamentally social (Halliday 1973). Within a social context, language users needed to perform certain **functions**, such as promising, inviting, and declining invitations (Wilkins 1976). Students may know the rules of linguistic usage, but be unable to use the language (Widdowson 1978). In short, being able to communicate required more than **linguistic competence**; it required **communicative competence** (Hymes 1971)—knowing when and how to say what to whom. Such observations contributed to a shift in the field in the late 1970s and early 1980s from a linguistic structure-centered approach to a **Communicative Approach** (Widdowson 1990; Savignon 1997).

Applying the theoretical perspective of the Communicative Approach, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) aims broadly to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching. What this looks like in the classroom may depend on how the principles are interpreted and applied. Indeed, Klapper (2003) makes the point that because CLT lacks closely prescribed classroom techniques, as compared with some of the other methods we have just looked at, CLT is 'fuzzy' in teachers' understanding. This fuzziness has given CLT a flexibility which has allowed it to endure for thirty years. However, its flexibility also means that classroom practices differ widely even when teachers report that they are practicing CLT. It is probably fair to say that there is no one single agreed upon version of CLT. Nevertheless, we will

follow our usual way of understanding the theory and associated practices by visiting a class in which a form of Communicative Language Teaching is being practiced.

The class we will visit is one being conducted for immigrants to Canada. These twenty people have lived in Canada for two years and are at a high-intermediate level of English proficiency. They meet two evenings a week for two hours each class.

Experience

The teacher greets the class and distributes a handout. There is writing on both sides. On one side is a copy of a sports column from a recent newspaper. The reporter is discussing the last World Cup competition. The teacher asks the students to read it and then to underline the predictions the reporter makes about the next World Cup. He gives them these directions in the target language. When the students have finished, they read what they have underlined. The teacher writes what they have found on the board. Then he and the students discuss which predictions the reporter feels more certain about and which predictions he feels less certain about:

France is very likely to win the next World Cup.
Spain can win if they play as well as they have lately.
Germany probably won't be a contender next time.
Argentina may have an outside chance.

Then he asks the students to look at the first sentence and to tell the class another way to express this same prediction. One student says, 'France probably will win the next World Cup.' 'Yes,' says the teacher. 'Any others?' No one responds. The teacher offers, 'France is almost certain to win the World Cup.' 'What about the next?' he asks the class. One student replies, 'It is possible that Spain will win the World Cup.' Another student offers, 'There's a possibility that Spain will win the World Cup.' Each of the reporter's predictions is discussed in this manner. All the paraphrases the students suggest are evaluated by the teacher and the other students to make sure they convey the same degree of certainty as the reporter's original prediction.

Next, the teacher asks the students to turn to the other side of the handout. On it are all the sentences of the article that they have been working on. They are, however, out of order. For example, the first two sentences on this side of the handout are:

Argentina may have an outside chance.
In the final analysis, the winning team may simply be the one with the most experience.

The first sentence was in the middle of the original sports column. The second was the last sentence of the original column. The teacher tells the students to unscramble the sentences, to put them in their proper order by numbering them. When they finish, the students compare what they have done with the original on the other side of the handout.

The teacher then asks the students if they agree with the reporter's predictions. He also asks them to get into pairs and to write their own prediction about who will be the next World Cup champion.

The teacher then announces that the students will be playing a game. He divides the class into small groups of five people each. He hands each group a deck of 13 cards. Each card has a picture of a piece of sports equipment. As the students identify the items, the teacher writes each name on the board: basketball, soccer ball, volleyball, tennis racket, skis, ice skates, roller skates, football, baseball bat, golf clubs, bowling ball, badminton racket, and hockey stick.

The cards are shuffled and four of the students in a group are dealt three cards each. They do not show their cards to anyone else. The extra card is placed face down in the middle of the group. The fifth person in each group receives no cards. She is told that she should try to predict what it is that Dumduan (one of the students in the class) will be doing the following weekend. The fifth student is to make statements like, 'Dumduan may go skiing this weekend.' If one of the members of her group has a card showing skis, the group member would reply, for example, 'Dumduan can't go skiing because I have her skis.' If, on the other hand, no one has the picture of the skis, then the fifth student can make a strong statement about the likelihood of Dumduan going skiing. She can say, for example, 'Dumduan will go skiing.' She can check her prediction by turning over the card that was placed face down. If it is the picture of the skis, then she knows she is correct.

The students seem to really enjoy playing the game. They take turns so that each person has a chance to make the predictions about how a classmate will spend his or her time.

For the next activity, the teacher reads a number of predictions like the following:

> By 2030, solar energy will replace the world's reliance on fossil fuels.
> By 2050, people will be living on the moon.

The students are told to make statements about how probable they think the predictions are and why they believe so. They are also asked how they feel about the prediction. In discussing one of the predictions, a student says he does not think it is *like that a world government will be in place by the twenty-second century. The teacher and students ignore his error and the discussion continues.

Next, the teacher has the students divide into groups of three. Since there are 20 students, there are six groups of three students and one group of two. One member of each group is given a picture strip story. There are six pictures in a column on a piece of paper, but no words. The pictures tell a story. The student with the story shows the first picture to the other members of her group, while covering the remaining five pictures.

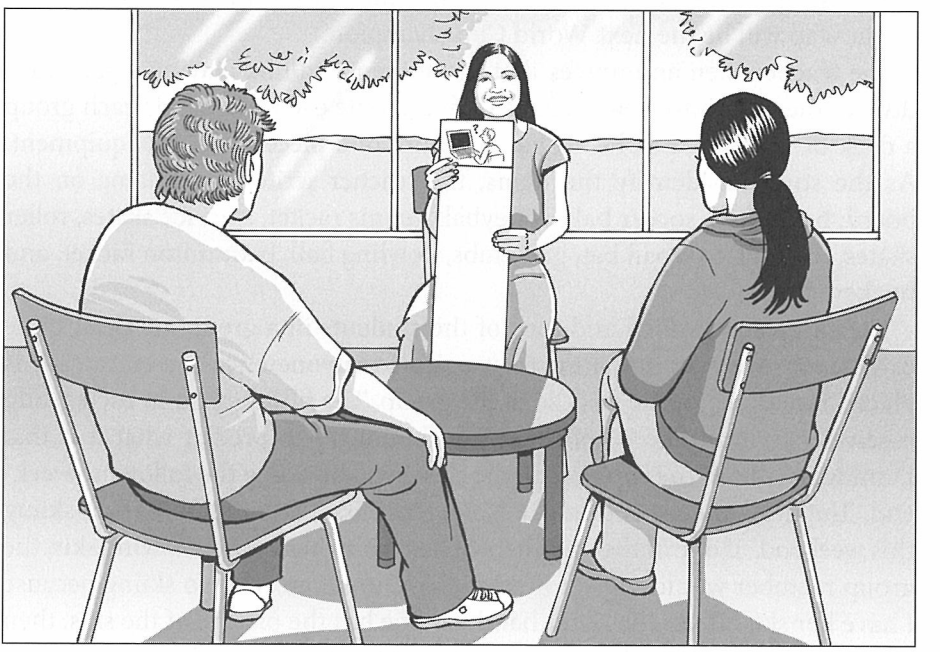


Figure 9.1 Students making predictions about a strip story

The other students try to predict what they think will happen in the second picture. The first student tells them whether they are correct or not. She then shows them the second picture and asks them to predict what the third picture will look like. After the entire series of pictures has been shown, the group gets a new strip story and they change roles, giving the first student an opportunity to work with a partner in making predictions.

For the final activity of the class, the students are told that they will do a role-play. The teacher tells them to get into groups of four. They are to imagine that they are all employees of the same company. One of them is the others' boss. They are having a meeting to discuss what will possibly occur as a result of their company merging with another company. Before they begin, they discuss some possibilities together. They decide that they can talk about topics such as whether or not some of the people in their company will lose their jobs, whether or not they will have to move, whether or not certain policies will change, whether or not they will earn more money. 'Remember,'

says the teacher, 'that one of you in each group is the boss. You should think about this relationship if, for example, she makes a prediction that you don't agree with.'

For 10 minutes the students perform their role-play. The teacher moves from group to group to answer questions and offer any advice on what the groups can discuss. After it is over, the students have an opportunity to pose any questions. In this way, they elicit some relevant vocabulary words. They then discuss what language forms are appropriate in dealing with one's boss. 'For example,' the teacher explains, 'what if you know that your boss doesn't think that the vacation policy will change, but you think it will. How will you state your prediction? You are more likely to say something like "I think the vacation policy might change," than "The vacation policy will change."'

'What if, however,' the teacher continues, 'it is your colleague with whom you disagree and you are certain that you are right. How will you express your prediction then?' One student offers, 'I know that the vacation policy will change.' Another student says, 'I am sure that the vacation policy will change.' A third student says simply, 'The vacation policy will change.'

The class is almost over. The teacher uses the last few minutes to give the homework assignment. The students are to find out what they can about two political candidates running against each other in the upcoming election. The students are then to write their prediction of who they think will win the election and why they think so. They will read these to their classmates at the start of the next class.

Thinking about the Experience

As we have seen before, there are important principles underlying the behavior we have observed. Let us now investigate these by compiling our two lists: our observations and the underlying principles.

Observations	Principles
1 The teacher distributes a handout that has a copy of a sports column from a recent newspaper.	Whenever possible, **authentic language**—language as it is used in a real context—should be introduced.
2 The teacher tells the students to underline the reporter's predictions and to say which ones they think the reporter feels most certain of and which he feels least certain of.	Being able to figure out the speaker's or writer's intentions is part of being communicatively competent.

3 The teacher gives the students the directions for the activity in the target language.	The target language is a vehicle for classroom communication, not just the object of study.
4 The students try to state the reporter's predictions in different words.	One function can have many different linguistic forms. Since the focus of the course is on real language use, a variety of linguistic forms are presented together. The emphasis is on the process of communication rather than just mastery of language forms.
5 The students unscramble the sentences of the newspaper article.	Students should work with language at the discourse or suprasentential (above the sentence) level. They must learn about **cohesion** and **coherence**, those properties of language which bind the sentences together.
6 The students play a language game.	Games are important because they have certain features in common with real communicative events—there is a purpose to the exchange. Also, the speaker receives immediate feedback from the listener on whether or not she has successfully communicated. Having students work in small groups maximizes the amount of communicative practice they receive.
7 The students are asked how they feel about the reporter's predictions.	Students should be given an opportunity to express their ideas and opinions.
8 A student makes an error. The teacher and other students ignore it.	Errors are tolerated and seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills. Since this activity was working on fluency, the teacher did not correct the student, but simply noted the error, which he will return to at a later point.
9 The teacher gives each group of students a strip story and a task to perform.	One of the teacher's major responsibilities is to establish situations likely to promote communication.

10 The students work with a partner or partners to predict what the next picture in the strip story will look like.	Communicative interaction encourages cooperative relationships among students. It gives students an opportunity to work on negotiating meaning.
11 The students do a role-play. They are to imagine that they are all employees of the same company.	The social context of the communicative event is essential in giving meaning to the utterances.
12 The teacher reminds the students that one of them is playing the role of the boss and that they should remember this when speaking to her.	Learning to use language forms appropriately is an important part of communicative competence.
13 The teacher moves from group to group offering advice and answering questions.	The teacher acts as a facilitator in setting up communicative activities and as an advisor during the activities.
14 The students suggest alternative forms they would use to state a prediction to a colleague.	In communicating, a speaker has a choice not only about what to say, but also how to say it.
15 After the role-play is finished, the students elicit relevant vocabulary.	The grammar and vocabulary that the students learn follow from the function, situational context, and the roles of the interlocutors.
16 For their homework, the students are to find out about political candidates and to make a prediction about which one will be successful in the forthcoming election.	Students should be given opportunities to work on language as it is used in authentic communication. They may be coached on strategies for how to improve their comprehension.

Reviewing the Principles

The answers to our 10 questions will help us come to a better understanding of Communicative Language Teaching. In some answers new information has been provided to clarify certain concepts.

1 What are the goals of teachers who use Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)?

The goal is to enable students to communicate in the target language. To do this, students need knowledge of the linguistic forms, meanings, and functions. They need to know that many different forms can be used to perform a function and also that a single form can often serve a variety of functions. They must be able to choose from among these the most appropriate form, given the social context and the roles of the interlocutors. They must also be able to manage the process of negotiating meaning with their interlocutors. Communication is a process; knowledge of the forms of language is insufficient.

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

The teacher facilitates communication in the classroom. In this role, one of his major responsibilities is to establish situations likely to promote communication. During the activities he acts as an advisor, answering students' questions and monitoring their performance. He might make a note of their errors to be worked on at a later time during more accuracy-based activities. At other times he might be a 'co-communicator' engaging in the communicative activity along with students (Littlewood 1981).

Students are, above all, communicators. They are actively engaged in negotiating meaning—in trying to make themselves understood—even when their knowledge of the target language is incomplete.

Also, since the teacher's role is less dominant than in a teacher-centered method, students are seen as more responsible for their own learning.

3 What are some characteristics of the teaching/learning process?

The most obvious characteristic of CLT is that almost everything that is done is done with a communicative intent. Students use the language a great deal through communicative activities such as games, role-plays, and problem-solving tasks (see discussion of these in the review of the techniques).

Activities that are truly communicative, according to Morrow (Johnson and Morrow 1981), have three features in common: **information gap**, choice, and feedback.

An information gap exists when one person in an exchange knows something the other person does not. If we both know today is Tuesday, and I ask you, 'What is today?' and you answer, 'Tuesday,' our exchange is not really communicative. My question is called a **display question**, a

question teachers use to ask students to display what they know, but it is not a question that asks you to give me information that I do not know.

In communication, the speaker has a choice of what she will say and how she will say it. If the exercise is tightly controlled, so that students can only say something in one way, the speaker has no choice and the exchange, therefore, is not communicative. In a chain drill, for example, if a student must reply to her neighbor's question in the same way as her neighbor replied to someone else's question, then she has no choice of form and content, and real communication does not occur.

True communication is purposeful. A speaker can thus evaluate whether or not her purpose has been achieved based upon the information she receives from her listener. If the listener does not have an opportunity to provide the speaker with such feedback, then the exchange is not really communicative. Forming questions through a transformation drill may be a worthwhile activity, but it is not in keeping with CLT since a speaker will receive no response from a listener. She is thus unable to assess whether her question has been understood or not.

Another characteristic of CLT is the use of authentic materials. It is considered desirable to give students an opportunity to develop strategies for understanding language as it is actually used.

Finally, we noted that activities in CLT are often carried out by students in small groups. Small numbers of students interacting are favored in order to maximize the time allotted to each student for communicating. While there is no explicit theory of learning connected with CLT, the implicit assumption seems to be that students will learn to communicate by practicing functional and socially appropriate language.

4 What is the nature of student–teacher interaction? What is the nature of student–student interaction?

The teacher may present some part of the lesson. At other times, he is the facilitator of the activities, but he does not always himself interact with the students. Sometimes he is a co-communicator, but more often he establishes situations that prompt communication between and among the students.

Students interact a great deal with one another. They do this in various configurations: pairs, triads, small groups, and whole group.

5 How are the feelings of the students dealt with?

One of the basic assumptions of CLT is that by learning to communicate students will be more motivated to study another language since they will

feel they are learning to do something useful. Also, teachers give students an opportunity to express their individuality by having them share their ideas and opinions on a regular basis. Finally, student security is enhanced by the many opportunities for cooperative interactions with their fellow students and the teacher.

6 How is the language viewed? How is culture viewed?

Language is for communication. Linguistic competence, the knowledge of forms and their meanings, is only one part of communicative competence. Another aspect of communicative competence is knowledge of the functions that language is used for. As we have seen in this lesson, a variety of forms can be used to accomplish a single function. A speaker can make a prediction by saying, for example, 'It may rain,' or 'Perhaps it will rain.' Conversely, the same form of the language can be used for a variety of functions. 'May,' for instance, can be used to make a prediction or to give permission ('You may leave now.').

Thus, the learner needs knowledge of forms and meanings and functions. However, to be communicatively competent, she must also use this knowledge and take into consideration the social situation in order to convey her intended meaning appropriately (Canale and Swain 1980). A speaker can seek permission using 'may' ('May I have a piece of fruit?'); however, if the speaker perceives his listener as being more of a social equal or the situation as being informal, he would more likely use 'can' to seek permission ('Can I have a piece of fruit?').

Culture is the everyday lifestyle of people who use the language. There are certain aspects of it that are especially important to communication—the use of nonverbal behavior, for example, which might receive greater attention in CLT.

7 What areas of language are emphasized? What language skills are emphasized?

Language functions might be emphasized over forms. Typically, although not always, a functional syllabus is used. A variety of forms are introduced for each function. Only the simpler forms would be presented at first, but as students get more proficient in the target language, the functions are reintroduced and more complex forms are learned. Thus, for example, in learning to make requests, beginning students might practice 'Would you ...?' and 'Could you ...?' Highly proficient students might learn 'I wonder if you would mind ...'

Students work with language at the **discourse or suprasentential level.** They learn about cohesion and coherence. For example, in our lesson the

students recognized that the second sentence of the scrambled order was the last sentence of the original sports column because of its introductory adverbial phrase, 'In the final analysis ...' This adverbial phrase is a cohesive device that binds and orders this sentence to the other sentences. The students also recognized the lack of coherence between the first two sentences of the scrambled order, which did not appear connected in any meaningful way.

Students work on all four skills from the beginning. Just as oral communication is seen to take place through negotiation between speaker and listener, so too is meaning thought to be derived from the written word through an interaction between the reader and the writer. The writer is not present to receive immediate feedback from the reader, of course, but the reader tries to understand the writer's intentions and the writer writes with the reader's perspective in mind. Meaning does not, therefore, reside exclusively in the text, but rather arises through negotiation between the reader and writer.

8 What is the role of the students' native language?

Judicious use of the students' native language is permitted in CLT. However, whenever possible, the target language should be used not only during communicative activities, but also for explaining the activities to the students or in assigning homework. The students learn from these classroom management exchanges, too, and realize that the target language is a vehicle for communication, not just an object to be studied.

9 How is evaluation accomplished?

A teacher evaluates not only his students' accuracy, but also their fluency. The student who has the most control of the structures and vocabulary is not always the best communicator.

A teacher can evaluate his students' performance informally in his role as advisor or co-communicator. For more formal evaluation, a teacher is likely to use an integrative test which has a real communicative function. In order to assess students' writing skill, for instance, a teacher might ask them to write a letter to a friend.

10 How does the teacher respond to student errors?

Errors of form are tolerated during fluency-based activities and are seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills. Students can have limited linguistic knowledge and still be successful communicators. The teacher may note the errors during fluency activities and return to them later with an accuracy-based activity.

Reviewing the Techniques

There may be aspects of CLT that you find appealing. This review has been provided in the event you wish to try to use any of the techniques or materials associated with CLT.

- **Authentic Materials**

  To overcome the typical problem that students cannot transfer what they learn in the classroom to the outside world, and to expose students to natural language in a variety of situations, adherents of CLT advocate the use of authentic language materials.[1] In this lesson we see that the teacher uses a newspaper article. He also assigns the students homework, requiring that they learn about two political candidates who are running for election.

  Of course, the class that we observed was at the high-intermediate level of proficiency. For students with lower proficiency in the target language, it may not be possible to use authentic language materials such as these. Simpler authentic materials (for example, the use of a weather forecast when working on predictions), or at least ones that are realistic, are most desirable. It is not so important that the materials be genuine as it is that they be used authentically, with a communicative intent.

  Another possibility for the use of authentic materials with a lower-level class is to use items of realia that do not contain a lot of language, but about which a lot of discussion could be generated. Menus in the target language are an example; timetables are another.

- **Scrambled Sentences**

  The students are given a passage (a text) in which the sentences are in a scrambled order. This may be a passage they have worked with or one they have not seen before. They are told to unscramble the sentences so that the sentences are restored to their original order. This type of exercise teaches students about the cohesion and coherence properties of language. They learn how sentences are bound together at the suprasentential level through formal linguistic devices such as pronouns, which make a text cohesive, and semantic propositions, which unify a text and make it coherent.

  In addition to written passages, students might also be asked to unscramble the lines of a mixed-up dialogue. Or they might be asked to put the

[1] Of course, what is authentic and natural to native speakers of the target language is not so to learners in the classroom. What is important is that these materials are used in a way that is real for learners (Widdowson 1998).

pictures of a picture strip story in order and write lines to accompany the pictures.

- **Language Games**
  Games are used frequently in CLT. The students find them enjoyable, and if they are properly designed, they give students valuable communicative practice. Games that are truly communicative, according to Morrow (ibid. 1981), have the three features of communication: information gap, choice, and feedback.

  These three features were manifest in the card game we observed in the following way: An information gap existed because the speaker did not know what her classmate was going to do the following weekend. The speaker had a choice as to what she would predict (which sport) and how she would predict it (which form her prediction would take). The speaker received feedback from the members of her group. If her prediction was incomprehensible, then none of the members of her group would respond. If she got a meaningful response, she could presume her prediction was understood.

- **Picture Strip Story**
  Many activities can be done with picture strip stories. We suggested one in our discussion of scrambled sentences.

  In the activity we observed, one student in a small group was given a strip story. She showed the first picture of the story to the other members of her group and asked them to predict what the second picture would look like. An information gap existed—the students in the groups did not know what the picture contained. They had a choice as to what their prediction would be and how they would word it. They received feedback, not on the form but on the content of the prediction, by being able to view the picture and compare it with their prediction.

  The activity just described is an example of using a problem-solving task as a communicative technique. Problem-solving tasks work well in CLT because they usually include the three features of communication. What is more, they can be structured so that students share information or work together to arrive at a solution. This gives students practice in negotiating meaning.

- **Role-play**
  We already encountered the use of role-plays as a technique when we looked at Desuggestopedia. Role-plays are very important in CLT because they give students an opportunity to practice communicating in different

social contexts and in different social roles. Role-plays can be set up so that they are very structured (for example, the teacher tells the students who they are and what they should say) or in a less structured way (for example, the teacher tells the students who they are, what the situation is, and what they are talking about, but the students determine what they will say). The latter is more in keeping with CLT, of course, because it gives the students more of a choice. Notice that role-plays structured like this also provide information gaps since students cannot be sure (as with most forms of communication) what the other person or people will say (there is a natural unpredictability). Students also receive feedback on whether or not they have communicated effectively.

Conclusion

Perhaps the greatest contribution of CLT is asking teachers to look closely at what is involved in communication. If teachers intend students to use the target language, then they must truly understand more than grammar rules and target language vocabulary.

Is achieving communicative competence a goal for which you should prepare your students? Would you adopt a functional syllabus? Should a variety of language forms be presented at one time? Are there times when you would emphasize fluency over accuracy? Do these or any other principles of CLT make sense to you?

Would you ever use language games, problem-solving tasks, or role-plays? Should all your activities include the three features of communication? Should authentic language be used? Are there any other techniques or materials of CLT that you would find useful?

Activities

A Check your understanding of Communicative Language Teaching.

1 Explain in your own words Morrow's three features of communication: information gap, choice, and feedback. Choose one of the activities in the lesson we observed and say whether or not these three features are present.
2 Why do we say that communication is a process?
3 What does it mean to say that the linguistic forms a speaker uses should be appropriate to the social context?

B Apply what you have understood about Communicative Language Teaching.

1 If you wanted to introduce your friend Paula to Roger, you might say:

Roger, this is (my friend) Paula.
I would like you to meet Paula.
Let me present Paula to you.
Roger, meet Paula.
Allow me to introduce Paula.

In other words, there are a variety of forms for this one function. Which would you teach to a beginning class, an intermediate class, an advanced class? Why?

List linguistic forms you can use for the function of inviting. Which would you teach to beginners? To intermediates? To an advanced class?

2 Imagine that you are working with your students on the function of requesting information. The authentic material you have selected is a railroad timetable. Design a communicative game or problem-solving task in which the timetable is used to give your students practice in requesting information.

3 Plan a role-play to work on the same function as in 2 above.

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