

What does 'communicative' mean?: A research discussion for language teachers



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About us:

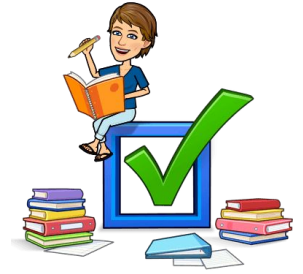
Reed



- BYU-H Chinese Instructor
 - textbook-sequence, CCLT*, performance-based assessments
- Teacher support since 2009
 - workshops, articles (e.g. HITESOL)
- Research
 - Usage-based Linguistics
 - Conversation Analysis
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*Comprehension-based Communicative Language Teaching (see ACTFL special interest group)

Jeenna



- High School Spanish Teacher on Maui since 2006
- Versed in CCLT pedagogy and research and theory on SLA
- Passionate about improving my teaching
- Provide PD on CCLT pedagogy
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Context: Exploring teacher questions about pedagogy and connecting our questions to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research and theory

Goals: After this presentation participants will be able to:

- Understand some research connections to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
- Understand why there is often a disconnect between SLA researchers, teachers, and textbooks
- Recognize examples and non-examples of CLT activities and/or strategies
- Make connections between your own teaching and CLT principles

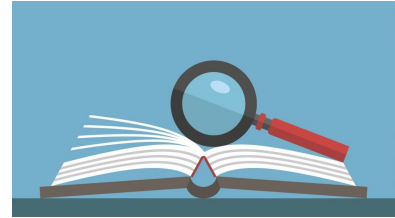


A note on Definitions

- Researchers provide a unique definition at the start of each study they write up, so definitions typically vary.
- Goals between researchers vary widely; only some connect with teaching;
- “micro-bridge”-building is a third kind of work--not teaching and not research



Research definitions



Communication (using the target language)

VanPatten (2017): “Communication is the expression, interpretation, and sometimes negotiation of meaning in a given context. What is more, communication is also purposeful” (p. 3).

Meaning

- Actions: asking, answering, warning, playing, more... vs. drilling
 - Develop topics: personal info, task ideas, story ideas...
 - Talk about language: use TL to discuss words, grammar

Context

- Institutional: classroom ✓ vs. restaurant, bank, taxi, etc.
- Non-institutional: vs. home, family, friends

Purposeful = use TL to accomplish a goal (versus just learn language)

**PLEASE PUT
YOUR
QUESTIONS IN
THE CHAT...**



Q: Vocabulary Lists

At the start of a unit or lesson I will sometimes create a vocabulary list with terms and words that I know we will be using for that lesson. We will review the vocab before engaging in the content and then I will use the vocabulary throughout the lesson. Is this targeting of vocabulary considered communicative?





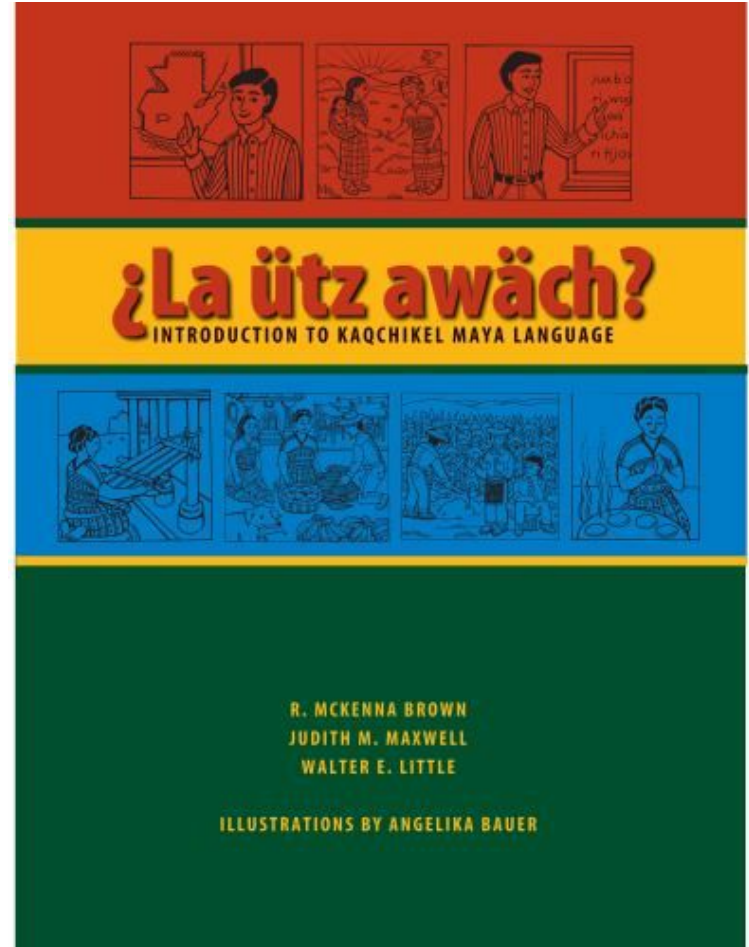
GRAMMAR?

Q: Grammar

Although I avoid teaching grammar explicitly, I will sometimes point out a grammar item in context. Does this really help the students in any way or is it just a waste of time?

Q: Textbooks

I used to use a textbook, but have not in many years. However, I know that many teachers still do and this is a big question. How well does the research on SLA and CLT align with language textbooks?



Q: Input

In my lower level classes, I focus the majority of my efforts into providing the students with comprehensible and meaning-based input with little demand for them to provide true output. Should I be doing more, or is this enough?



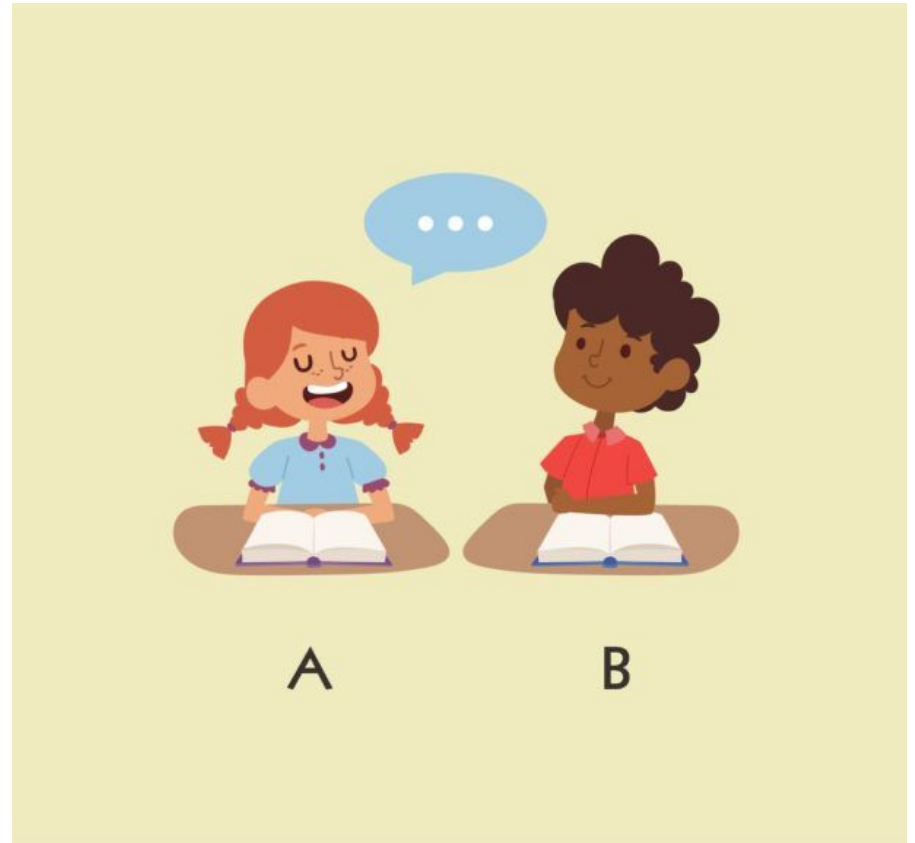
Q: Tasks

I have read that a communicative classroom uses tasks to provide content and context. I don't always use tasks, does that mean that my classroom is less communicative?



Q: Turn and Talk

In my lessons in the Face-to-Face classes, I will often have students turn and talk and either summarize what we are doing in Spanish, or ask one another a question. How communicative is this type of activity?



Q: Tasks in Breakout Rooms

With online instruction, I try to use breakout rooms sometimes to get students to interact in smaller groups, but it is not very effective because a lot of time they just speak in English. Is there any research on working in groups and keeping it communicative?



Additional Resources

Ellis, N., & Collins, L. (2009). Input and second language acquisition: The roles of frequency, form, and function introduction to the special issue. *The Modern Language Journal*, 93(3), 329-335.

Long, M. H. (1983). Native speaker/non-native speaker conversation and the negotiation of comprehensible input1. *Applied linguistics*, 4(2), 126-141.

Long, M. (2014). Second language acquisition and task-based language teaching. Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com>

VanPatten, B. (1998). Perceptions of and perspectives on the term "communicative". *Hispania*, 81(4), 925. doi:10.2307/345805

VanPatten, B. (2017). *While We're on the Topic: BVP on Language, Acquisition, and Classroom Practice*. American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. 700 South Washington Street Suite 210, Alexandria, VA 22314.

Waring, H. Z. (2016). *Theorizing pedagogical interaction: Insights from conversation analysis*. Routledge.

