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Philosophy, Pedagogy, and Communicative Language Teaching

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Abstract

Communicative language teaching theorists have made significant advances in the field of language teaching, particularly on the levels of syllabus design and classroom organization. However, little work has been done on developing a form of pedagogy which embraces the new syllabus, adopts the recommended classroom organization, and applies both of these consistently to the underlying principles and goals of communicative language teaching. This paper attempts to fill that void. To accomplish this, first, the criteria which an appropriate pedagogy should meet will be distilled from the extant literature on communicative language teaching. Then, a model of teaching from the history of philosophy -- Socratic dialectic -- will be explicated, followed by a discussion of the relevant theoretical principles it embodies. Finally, this form of pedagogy will be applied to communicative language teaching, and some important implications of its use will be explored.

Introduction

In his inaugural address in 1869 as Harvard University's new president, Professor Eliot summed up the educational climate of his day by remarking that "the problem to be solved is not what to teach but how to teach." More than a century later, Professor Eliot's observation is as relevant as when it was uttered; educators across the globe are still actively engaged in trying to solve the riddle of effective teaching methodology, or pedagogy.

Perhaps nowhere have the winds of pedagogical change swept across a discipline more profoundly than in foreign language teaching. The history of language teaching is strewn with the abandoned relics of past methodologies, each which had its day in the sun, only to be replaced by the latest methodological innovation or pedagogic insight. On the whole, however, language theorists in recent years have been making steady progress toward articulating a coherent set of principles regarding what language is and how it is learned and, consequently, how it should be taught.

For the time being, it appears the Communicative Approach has won the upper hand in foreign/second language teaching, supplanting the time-worn methods which all too often produced students who were "structurally (linguistically) competent but communicatively incompetent" (Johnson and Morrow, 1981 : 1). Foundational to the Communicative Approach is the view that the ability to manipulate grammatical structures is only part (and perhaps a lower order part) of what it means to learn a language. There is "something else" involved in learning a language: "the ability

to be appropriate, to know the right thing to say at the right time" (Johnson and Morrow, 1981 : 2). We can summarize the aim of communicative language teaching (hereafter CLT) as teaching language *use*, in contrast to teaching *about* the language in abstraction.

Based on these initial insights, CLT theorists were quick to reorient the focus and goals of language teaching away from structure-based content in isolation, toward teaching language as an organic process embedded in real-life contexts. David Wilkins' (1976) pioneering work in developing "semantico-grammatical categories" and "categories of communicative function" laid the groundwork for the notional-functional syllabus which dominates CLT today.

Moreover, it was inevitable that redefining the goals of language teaching would necessitate changes in how language teachers view their subject, their task, and their role in language teaching. Rather than focusing primarily on the finished product in language learning, CLT stresses fluency over accuracy, and therefore emphasizes language learning as a process. Further, the classroom interaction between teacher and students is viewed less as a means to an end, and more as an end in itself. These dichotomies (all permutations of the original contrast between linguistic and communicative competence) have been summarized succinctly by Richard Allwright when he asks, "Are we teaching *language* (for communication) or are we teaching *communication* (via language)?" (Brumfit and Johnson, 1979 : 167).

CLT largely affirms the latter half of Allwright's disjunction as a guiding principle, and this required a subsequent restructuring of the typical classroom experience. Techniques such as information gap and jigsaw learning were introduced to involve students in communicative situations which more closely resemble natural interaction outside the classroom. Finally, this radical restructuring of classroom activity and organization demanded a no less dramatic reappraisal of the role of the teacher. No longer the center of activity, the fount from which all knowledge flows, the teacher's role has been redefined using metaphors like "overseer," "facilitator," and "co-communicator" (Littlewood, 1981 : 92).

The Problem

The advances made by CLT theorists have been significant, and the theoretical and practical tenets of the movement were widely embraced as ushering in a new era in language teaching. Not long after its advent, however, some small cracks began to appear in the CLT edifice, and a certain malaise became discernable in the literature on CLT. Writing in 1979, Allwright pointed out the increasingly common view that "only lip-service has normally been paid to the aim of communication" in language teaching, prompting him to conclude that CLT "has not led to a satisfactory level of communicative skill in the vast majority of cases" (Brumfit and Johnson, 1979 : 167). Furthering this rather grim assessment, Carl James warned: "Let us not deceive ourselves that CLT is a 'fait accompli'.... CLT is entering the doldrums" (Johnson and Porter, 1983 : 110).

There are no doubt many contributing factors to this slight levelling off of enthusiasm for CLT in light of a perceived lack of results. One suspects, however, that at the root of this skepticism regarding the efficacy of CLT is the fact that so far too much attention has been given to syllabus design, and too little to exploring a form of pedagogy which incorporates and unites the goals of CLT, the recommended classroom techniques, and the social realities of the language learning environment. It would appear that CLT theorists have been preoccupied with the *what* of language teaching to the virtual exclusion of the crucial *how* aspect. In other words, they have largely failed to explicate clearly what the metaphors defining the role of the teacher require in concrete terms of "teacher-talk" and teacher input in general.[1] This has resulted in an ambivalence regarding pedagogy on the part of many teachers; the role of the teacher in CLT, according to

one writer, "still seems very vague and ill-defined, and increasingly complex and confusing" (Johnson and Porter, 1983 : 130).

Faced with this pedagogical vacuum, teachers have been forced to improvise and to make educated guesses as to how best involve themselves in the process of teaching and learning. Unfortunately, the results have often been less than encouraging. Two general patterns of teacher involvement in CLT are prevalent, each representing a form of pedagogy at the extreme from the other.

On the one hand, many teachers employ CLT syllabi and materials, and give intellectual assent to the principles of CLT, but are unable to wed to this a form of pedagogy and classroom management that will yield the desired results. The teacher continues to teach in the traditional teacher-centered mode, focusing on accurate reproduction, and telling the students many facts about the language, while allowing little room for genuine interaction. This approach generally fails because it engages in CLT only in disguise, calling to mind the proverbial pouring of new wine into old wineskins. In many cases the new wine is spoiled : students leave this classroom with knowledge, but without skill.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is the teacher who employs CLT materials and whose personal involvement in the classroom process is virtually nil. In this classroom the students engage quietly in activities (usually reading and writing), and the input of the teacher is reduced to giving "feedback" in the form of a perfunctory checking of the answers to the questions or problems at the end of the lesson. In this case the role of the teacher is a very disengaged one, akin to a classroom *deus ex machina* - - a rather extreme interpretation of what a student-centered approach should entail on the part of the teacher. Over-reliance on teaching materials with too little personal involvement on the part of the teacher is a sure formula for dampening communicative potential in the classroom.

The lesson to be learned from this brief description of two common pedagogical approaches in CLT is that merely arming teachers with a new syllabus and materials based on revolutionary ideas is not *in itself* likely to produce a change in a teacher's style of teaching. The fact that teaching materials embody certain communicative principles does not guarantee that they will be used communicatively. As Brumfit notes, what students receive in materials is "a system with semantic potential" (Brumfit and Johnson, 1979 : 186), and therefore it is the responsibility of the teacher to actualize that potential. The effectiveness of any method hinges on the classroom performance of the individual teacher.

CLT theorists have had much to say that has been useful in terms of what we should teach, but on the crucial issue of how we should teach the issue remains largely nebulous. One thing, however, is certain : as language teachers we must move beyond viewing method as an ad hoc collection of activities. We need to implement a form of pedagogy based on a set of principles or criteria, in light of which specific procedures, activities or techniques can be evaluated, related and applied (Johnson and Morrow, 1979). Thus, before we can delineate a form of pedagogy appropriate for CLT we must have a clear understanding of these criteria.

Contours of an Appropriate CLT Pedagogy

In the first place, we need to shift our attention away from needs analysis and preoccupation with items on a syllabus, toward fostering more genuine student involvement.[2] Paradoxically, focusing primarily on the potential communicative needs of the student has sometimes eroded student motivation because teachers tend to regard the syllabus, in itself, to be a panacea for all language teaching problems. Unwittingly, they end up teaching the course rather than the class. In contrast, we need a form of pedagogy which affirms the *students* as the "raison d'etre" of teaching.

This means we must encourage our students to express their own personalities freely in relating to others, thereby placing them at the center of classroom activity.

A natural corollary of the above is that an effective pedagogy in CLT will be based less on a pre-organized presentation of lesson objectives, and more on the teaching and learning process itself (Johnson and Porter, 1983). We need a style of teaching in which communication is an essential component of the process of teaching instead of merely a by-product. From this it follows that the interaction between the teacher and the students, and between the students themselves, will be seen as more constitutive of real learning than the students' ability to answer questions correctly on a worksheet.

Further, we need a pedagogy which "stimulates the operation of all the essential mental processes which are carried out in the normal use of language" (Johnson and Porter, 1983 : 34). Too much CLT has been less than ideal in this regard; often communicative activities are mechanical exercises in which students move words from one place to another on the written page, or parrot cues from a role card, with little understanding or appropriation. In the end, the students' linguistic knowledge remains latent, largely because the teacher failed to stimulate the students to bring their cognitive faculties to bear on the wider implications of what they have read, written, heard or said. What is needed in the language classroom therefore is an environment in which exploration, innovation and flexibility are encouraged by the way the teacher approaches his class and the subject matter. The goal is to make communication in the classroom a conscious, meaningful process.

Not only must our pedagogy stimulate students to the full use of their mental processes, it must also facilitate authentic communication. Techniques such as information gap and jigsaw learning represent significant advances in the attempt to engender genuine communication in the classroom. But simply employing these techniques without expanding significantly the linguistic demands made on the students does little to advance their communicative competence beyond a certain level.

N.S. Prabhu, in his book *Second Language Pedagogy* (1987), develops this theme further. He maintains that we need to go beyond the language exchanges in information gap activities because in these activities language is "repetitive rather than developmental, thus lowering the level of unpredictability" (p. 49). The reason for this is that in information gap activities students deal mainly with meaning which is provided, so they tend to look for language which is given as well. Much of the language they use, therefore, is borrowed. As Prabhu observes: "If the meaning is not one's own, it seems to follow that the language is not one's own either" (p. 49). It would appear that while information gap activities are useful constructs for establishing the conditions for interaction, by themselves they cannot produce communicative competence. They need to be supplemented by other forms of interaction which involve fewer linguistic restraints.

Finally, we can say that the primary innovation of CLT has been a "teaching content" approach to reaching the goal of communicative competence. What is needed, therefore, is a way of teaching which exploits this content-teaching approach to language. A pedagogy which focuses primarily on language will not, in itself, be enough; we need a form of pedagogy which is sensitive to general strategies of learning.

Learning usually takes place as a process in which new items are related and assimilated into the network of what is already known. The key, then, is integration. In the present context, the genuine communicative nature of language precludes the teacher from presenting it to students as a system in which text, ideational content, and interpersonal behavior are somehow divorced from one another (Johnson and Porter, 1983). An effective pedagogy will thus attempt to unite the physical, cognitive, and affective aspects of the learning experience into an organic whole.

When this happens, language teaching and learning will have contours similar to those of education in general.

These are heavy demands placed upon a pedagogy which purports to be congruent with the assumptions and goals of CLT. However, now that we have a clearer idea of what CLT requires in terms of a teaching approach, we are in a position to explore one model of pedagogy which goes a long way in meeting these stringent criteria.

A Model of Pedagogy from Philosophy: Socratic Dialectic

Inasmuch as CLT represents the latest developments in the endeavor to teach language, it would be natural to expect an equally new form of pedagogy to be the oil to make the engine run smoothly. In fact, quite the opposite is true regarding the model of pedagogy we propose to employ in CLT. Too often we overlook the fact that contemporary innovations have their roots in the past and, in large measure, owe their very existence to past realities.

2,500 years ago the Greek philosopher Socrates developed a form of pedagogy called "dialectic" in his discourse with the young men of Greece. Dialectic, as most commonly understood in educational theory, refers to teaching through conversation or dialogue *(dialegesthai)*-- more precisely, teaching through the asking and answering of questions. Dialectic as used by Socrates was based on the ancient Greek traditions of drama, epic, and dialogue, and Socrates was the first to weave these into a distinct mode of teaching in the Western world.[8]

From the earliest times, the history of educational theory has been marked by the polarity between the idea that education is development from within and that it is formulated from without (Dewey, 1938). Socrates devised a form of pedagogy which affirmed the former idea, for he eschewed the latter idea entirely. For Socrates, to educate meant to *evoke* knowledge, not to drum it in didactically. Thus, he was perhaps the first teacher to place the student rather than the teacher at the center of learning. Socrates was one of the world's greatest teachers-- surely one of the wisest-- and yet his style of teaching was surprisingly simple, at least at first glance.

Typically, Plato's recorded dialogues of Socrates' teaching begin in rather casual settings: Socrates is at a party with friends, he is at the gymnasium talking with the young men there, or he is engaged in conversation in the marketplace. Often Socrates professes ignorance on a topic, his aim being to engage others in a discussion of various concepts such as virtue, justice, love, and friendship. When one of his interlocutors ventures a definition, Socrates affirms it as a "good" answer but then proceeds to raise doubts by uncovering ambiguities and inadequacies of the initial attempt at an answer. He does this not to weaken what the other person said, but to strengthen it through constructive dialogue.

Accordingly, Socrates asks further questions, letting his partners do most of the talking, while keeping the general flow of the conversation under his control. In the course of this dialectical discussion the young men with whom he is conversing gradually modify their views as the subject (and their own ideas) are probed by the ever-inquisitive Socrates. This process continues until everyone is satisfied that the topic is finally viewed in an appropriate light or until, as in the *Lysis*, the discussion ends inconclusively to no one's satisfaction.

The Socratic use of dialectic, by its very nature, occasionally involves a negative element in which the questioning takes on the character of cross-examination *(elenchos)*. But through the moment of negativity in which the student realizes he does not know something clearly, or does not know it at all, evolves a positive result: Socrates believed that exposing a student's ignorance was the necessary first condition of learning. He maintained further that teaching would be effective only if the student believed he still had something to learn, then wanted to learn it and

share that learning with his teacher. For Socrates "philosophy begins in wonder," and it is the question which inspires that wonder. Thus, the negativity involved in Socratic dialectic was a *creative* negativity because it yielded the positive result of motivating his students to learn.

Socrates' pedagogy was quite unconventional even in his day, and a constantly recurring theme of the Platonic dialogues is that Socrates sharply distinguishes his teaching approach from that of the Sophists. These traditional teachers in Greece were fond of lecturing at great lengths, and relished displaying their logical acumen. In the *Sophist* Plato argues (via Socrates) against Sophistic "admonition" which "consists partly in anger and partly in a gentler sort of exhortation." According to Socrates, this traditional externalizing tendency in education "involves great labor and achieves little result."[4] In its place, he advocated a form of pedagogy which might be called "structured dialogue," a concept which, in the view of many contemporary educators, defines education on its most basic level (Gullette, 1982).

The Pedagogical Value of the Question

Before we examine ways of applying dialectic specifically to the field of language teaching, it is important to consider why questioning has peculiar power as a pedagogical tool. The type of question we refer to here is not the pedantic form questions in the classroom often take as a means to assess recall and comprehension. Rather, we speak of questioning as a foundational guiding principle of teaching-- a force which shapes a teacher's attitude toward his students and his subject and, not least of all, toward himself. This wide-ranging resonance of the question into every aspect of the educational experience derives from its relationship to the broader issues of the nature of knowledge and human experience in general.

Contemporary philosophers in the field of hermeneutics have contributed much to advancing our understanding of the role of the question in human experience. In his seminal work, *Truth and Method* (1975), the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer maintains that experience must be looked at in terms of process, not result. Experience always has the structure of a reversal or restructuring of awareness because "the structure of the question is implicit in all experience" (p. 325). At the base of this tendency toward reversal in human experience is the element of negativity implicit in the question: experience is first of all experience of "notness"-- we do not know something, or something is not as we assumed it to be. In other words, experience is a dialectical movement because all desire to know presupposes a knowledge that one does not have; it is a particular lack of knowledge that leads to a particular question. Gadamer goes so far as to assert unequivocally that "we cannot have experiences without asking questions" (p. 325).

The subterranean negativity involved in the question is, as we saw with Socrates, a creative negativity because herein lies the possibility of change, of seeing things in a new way. The object (a written text, an idea, another person, etc.) of one's experience is seen in a different light and one is oneself changed in knowing the object differently. For Gadamer, then, experience has its dialectical fulfillment "not in a knowing but in an openness for experience" (p. 195).[5]

Therefore when Gadamer asserts that in all human experience the structure of the question is implicit, he means that experience must be "opened up" by the question. Asking a question means "to place into the open," the openness of what is questioned consisting of the fact that the answer is not settled. The possibility of new meaning arises, not only because the object has been opened up by the question, but also because the presuppositions of the person are exposed and brought to bear on the experience at hand. Questioning and being placed in question, therefore, always go both ways. According to Gadamer, this dialectic of question and answer "makes understanding appear as a reciprocal relationship of the same kind as conversation" (p. 340). The dialectic of question and answer works out a "fusion of horizons" in which the horizon (self-understanding) of each partner in dialogue is enlarged, and experience is thereby expanded.

As we touched upon earlier, the dialectical questioning we are examining here is quite distinct from methodological questioning and analysis in which one's own presuppositions are not called into question. In this latter case, as Richard Palmer (1969 : 233) observes, questioning "operates within a system, so that the answer is always potentially present and expected within the system. They are not so much forms of true questioning as of testing." Questions to which the required answer is already known by the questioner do not open up the possibility of new meaning ; these questions Gadamer refers to as "apparent" questions. Contrary to popular belief, therefore, it is more difficult to ask a good question than it is to answer one.

The relevance of this excursion into philosophical hermeneutics to our concern with teaching methodology is now apparent. Philosophers like Gadamer have helped to uncover the genius of Socrates' approach to teaching : they have shown that Socrates devised a form of pedagogy which mirrors how knowledge is acquired and how experience is enlarged in general. Through a judicious use of the question the teacher opens up the subject matter so that both the students and the teacher can dialogue interactively with the subject at hand, and with each other. Through mutual questioning, the teacher and the students are drawn into the sphere of learning. In this sense, it is closer to the truth to say that we enter knowledge, than that knowledge enters us.

The goal of teaching through dialectic is to foster dialogue between the teacher and the students, between the students and the subject matter, and between the students themselves. Through the openness of the question and its moment of creative negativity arises the possibility of genuine dialogue at these different levels in which the horizons of the teacher and the students are fused for a time and, as a result, are expanded. In teaching through dialectic, therefore, we come closest to approximating in our pedagogy the natural process of learning and experiencing the world. And in doing so we have effectively united the physical, cognitive, and affective aspects of teaching.

Application to CLT and Some Implications

We have examined a model of pedagogy-- Socratic dialectic-- and have explored in some detail the philosophical importance of the question in learning and in human experience as a whole. This profound significance of the question gives credence to ascribing a dominant role to questioning in a teacher's "mental mix." The problem remains, however, as to the concrete application of dialectic to CLT. We will first discuss specific ways of applying dialectic to CLT, and then we will examine some wider implications of its use in CLT. In doing so we will have demonstrated how dialectic meets the criteria we outlined earlier for a form of pedagogy suitable for CLT.

Insofar as Socrates centered his dialectical method on arriving at definitions of concepts, dialectic can be employed naturally in building up vocabulary in the language classroom. When an unknown word is encountered, the teacher can elicit responses regarding its meaning (often guesses from the context) from students, all the while helping the students to modify the original definition through pointing out ambiguities, exceptions, and wider applications. When a satisfactory definition is reached, the students are likely to remember the word because they have wrestled with a range of meaning and have participated actively in a shared task. In the end, the process-- the spontaneous interaction between the teacher and the students-- will have been as valuable, if not more valuable, than the product itself.

The same is true with the use of dialogues. Often we present finished dialogues to our students to serve as models of the linguistic item(s) we are teaching. This approach, however, removes much opportunity for creative input on the part of the students. Dialogues can be built up dialectically with the teacher setting up the context and then eliciting appropriate additions to

the developing dialogue. When inappropriate contributions are made, the teacher, through questioning, can elicit relevant criticism on different levels (language, tone, situation) from the class. When the dialogue is completed it can be exploited for intended purposes yet, in this case as well, the primary value is in the students' creative input in the process of learning. In the use of dialogues, as in many other aspects of language teaching, written materials can be an obstacle to creative and spontaneous interaction.

At the same time, however, dialectic is very useful in generating interaction with written texts when teaching the reading skill. Many times, in CLT, the written text remains an alien object which stands apart from the students. Interaction in class, if there is any at all, usually takes the form of students answering questions in writing and then reciting those answers orally in response to the many "apparent" questions asked by the teacher--often a labored, mechanical exercise for both students and teacher. Through questioning we need to open up the text so that dialogue can emerge between the student and the text--a dialogue in which the student's own presuppositions are called into question by the text. Only then can there be genuine interaction and learning because the text has been made immediately relevant.

The feedback session after group work should be a time when learning is consolidated and expanded. However, in this situation also, much oral interaction in CLT classes resembles a measured march involving students reading their answers to pre-determined questions. These questions test recall and comprehension, and they help assess reading and writing ability, but they do little to expand the student's linguistic repertoire. Nor do they demand much use of the spontaneous mental processes (involving time constraints) necessary for developing communicative competence.

During feedback sessions we need to go beyond this kind of exchange which is endemic to the traditional approach to teaching. If, as we developed earlier, knowledge is dialectical, it must be more than the mere appropriation or re-creation of someone else's meaning. Through oral questioning we should encourage students to evaluate, analyze, and relate what they know to what they are encountering. When our pedagogy reinforces the fact that learning is an internal process relative to each individual, we will have made significant progress toward our goal of placing the student at the center of learning.

Dialectic is decidedly a "content" approach to language teaching and is thus well-suited for use in faculty-specific courses such as English for Academic Purposes. By focusing mainly on ideational content instead of on language *qua* language, we use language for myriad purposes, and this unleashes the power of questioning as a pedagogical tool. Dialectic can be used to introduce topics, to explain, to help students see and confront things they have not considered previously, to help students discover connections and interrelationships, contrasts, and wider implications. Most importantly, the use of dialectic is effective in facilitating spontaneous and genuine interaction between the teacher and the students, and between the students themselves,

A dialectical form of pedagogy enables students to expand the horizons of their knowledge because the method used in the classroom is consistent with learning strategies in general. In large measure, therefore, when we lead classes through questioning, we are teaching the students how to learn : the "structured dialogue" we mentioned earlier in connection with Socrates now becomes a silent inner-dialogue in which the student takes on the role of teacher, offering self-criticism and self-encouragement (Gullette, 1982). When this happens, the goals of CLT begin to converge with the goals of education as a whole.

In addition to these specific applications of dialectic to CLT there are several implications inherent to the use of dialectic which are relevant to CLT. The fact that Socrates' dialectical encounters sometimes end inconclusively further reveals the process-orientation of this

teaching approàch over a preoccupation with tidy results. Socrates was not teaching language, it is true, but the open-endedness of his pedagogy is very appropriate in the CLT context. While the teacher should try to keep the interaction moving along constructive lines, he should not try to control the responses of the students. When both teacher and students are guided by the subject matter, rather than by lesson objectives and plans, an element of unpredictability is introduced.

This openness toward allowing the subject to, in a sense, control the classroom proceedings is in clear contrast to some forms of CLT pedagogy which are exemplified by technical manipulation designed to meet pre-determined objectives. The interaction in these classrooms is often rigid and predictable, lacking the life and spontaneity of genuine communication. Aims and objectives should remain fluid, and the teacher must be willing to subordinate them to the immediate learning experience whenever they stand in the way of genuine interaction. As John Dewey underscores in *Democracy and Education* (1916 : 105) : "The aim, in short, is experimental, and hence constantly growing as it is tested in action... Strictly speaking, not the target but *hitting* the target is the end in view." Teaching through dialectic will therefore always involve an element of risk-- the risk of shared inquiry in which the process of participation and interaction overshadows the production of correct answers and uncompromising adherence to items on a syllabus.

The risk that is felt when one relinquishes control of the subject matter is heightened by the radical revision in the roles of teacher and student which is demanded by the use of dialectic in teaching. Yet this aspect of dialectical pedagogy is also consistent with the demands of CLT. The teacher who uses a dialectical approach assumes, by definition, a role which is identical to the metaphors language theorists have used to describe the role of the teacher in CLT.[6] More than any other form of pedagogy, dialectic exemplifies and, in fact, presupposes a democratic classroom environment.

In the course of Socrates' dialectical discussions he often claims ignorance *(docta ignorantia)*, sometimes sincerely, and other times as an ironic catalyst to generate conversation with his students. This openness to learning on the part of the teacher invites students to participate actively because the teacher is perceived less as a standard for learning, and more as a partner in learning. The role of the teacher who teaches through dialectic stands in stark contrast to the all-knowing autocratic teacher often found in the language classroom. Educator Arnold Schoenberg, in the Forward to *Harmonielehre* (1922),[7] portrays this difference vividly : "The teacher must have the courage to be wrong. His task is not to prove infallible, knowing everything and never going wrong, but rather inexhaustible, ever seeking and perhaps, sometimes finding. Why want to be a demigod? Why not, rather, be a complete man?"

If a teacher adopts Schoenberg's advice, he will utter far fewer statements and pronouncements in class than if he were to teach in the traditional manner. He would do less "telling" (or "admonishing," to use Socrates' term) because that mode of teaching assumes knowledge on the part of the teacher and ignorance on the part of the students. Inevitably, roles are cast along these superior-inferior lines. Friedrich Nietzsche, another German philosopher, once remarked that "An educator never says what he himself thinks, but only that which he thinks is good for those whom he is educating to hear upon any subject." That which is "good" refers to that which will encourage the student to inquire further, and this will usually take the form of a question, not a statement. In this case, the role of the teacher is much closer to that of overseer, facilitator, or co-communicator than is the role of the pedagogue who maintains full reign on the learning experience. But giving up this emotionally comforting authoritarian posture in favor of a more egalitarian role is threatening to many teachers.

Interestingly, however, it is this very risk and unpredictability that make possible the greatest insights and contributions of dialectic in teaching--motivating students. A dialectical form of pedagogy is motivating on two different but related levels: in terms of creating interest and encouraging participation. Again, Dewey (1916) is instructive: he has defined "interest" as "the point at which an object touches a man; the point where it influences him" (p. 126). On this first level dialectic motivates students because, through questioning, the subject matter is opened up and "speaks" to the student, calling into question *his* presuppositions. Consequently, the subject matter becomes relevant and arouses interest-- it engages the student and thereby influences him. Although CLT materials writers try to develop materials which are in themselves interesting, it is more often the case that the content must be *made* interesting. Dialectic can be very effectively employed to achieve this end.

Using dialectic as a pedagogical tool is motivating on a second, perhaps more important, level. Developing communicative skills can take place only if students are interested, and are encouraged to express their identity and to relate with their fellow students. Dialectic, by its very nature, helps the teacher achieve an open, supportive classroom atmosphere which makes this possible. When students are engaged in a dialectical discussion with the teacher, they receive a strong sense of self-worth because they know that their contributions are an integral part of the teaching process itself; and, in turn, they are eager to participate and show what they can do. In the teacher-centered classroom, on the other hand, the students know that their contributions are not a constitutive part of the teaching and learning process, and this is highly demotivating. As a result, the students often withdraw into a detached passiveness, the death knell of language teaching in particular.

The mutual respect between teacher and students, which is embedded in a dialectical approach to teaching, spawns a lively, positive rapport, a commitment to work together. This rapport, as Prabhu (1987) observes, "represents a form of emphatic understanding of each other's behavior and is probably more productive of learning than any teaching procedure by itself can be" (p. 107). The democratic role definition of teacher and student is part and parcel of teaching through dialectic, not merely a stylistic device. It is grounded in the fact that teaching and learning cannot succeed without the contributions of both teacher and student. In the end, the teacher and the student feel a sense of shared responsibility in learning, and this is precisely the environment we need for developing communicative competence.

Conclusion

We began this discussion by noting the problem of developing a form of pedagogy consistent with the goals and requirements of CLT, and the remainder of our efforts have been devoted to outlining a form of pedagogy-- Socratic dialectic-- which meets the criteria we set up. It is true that dialectic and the framework for education it embodies are rooted in Western philosophy and culture, and this presents special challenges to teachers from non-Western cultures. Perhaps some of the ideas presented in this study will be unpalatable to language teachers whose cultural and educational realities are different from what is outlined here.

One thing, however, is certain: we need to align our classroom teaching with the theoretical principles of CLT. In many cases, this means distancing ourselves from the traditional mode of teaching. As Brumfit (1979) points out, "If CLT involves simply the substitution of one mechanical metaphor for another, it has nothing to offer. But it could be that the machine is dead: language teaching is not packaged *for* learners, it is made *by* them. Language is whole people" (p. 190). Not only does Brumfit outline the task language teachers face, he also points us toward a view of language teaching which has strong family resemblances to the dialectical pedagogy we have developed.

The challenge is to open up our concept of language teaching and to expand it so that our theory and practice coincide with the goals of CLT. Yet pedagogical change is slow. There is a strong tendency to retain loyalty to the past, to teach as we ourselves remember being taught. When we refer to role revision and reorientation of a teacher's theories we soon discover that these theories are deeply ingrained, stable, and inseparable from a teacher's entire value system and view of himself (Johnson and Porter, 1983).

However, if we consider our views of teaching as themselves dialectical in nature-- always open to reversal, redefinition, and new meaning-- we will have come a long way toward adapting our existing views to new ideas. We will then be able to slowly implement these ideas in our teaching and thus make progress toward solving the riddle of effective CLT pedagogy.

NOTES

1. Throughout this paper we make the important assumption-- integral to all good language teaching-- that the teacher conducts his class in the language which is being taught. Also, for the sake of convention and familiarity, we will employ masculine pronouns when referring to the teacher, all the while recognizing that the female gender is at least equally represented in language teaching.
2. Nicholas Hawkes (Johnson and Porter, 1983) notes that a change of this kind would require a shift from a sociolinguistic to a psycholinguistic perspective in CLT.
3. Socrates, to our knowledge at least, never put his teaching into written form; that responsibility devolved to his faithful pupil Plato. (Hence the many "Platonic dialogues" which center on Socrates.) For our purposes, it is recommended that the reader be familiar with two dialogues, the *Lysis* and the *Meno*, in order to appreciate the present discussion. These dialogues are relevant, not so much because of the content of the discussions, but because of the *manner* in which they are conducted.
4. Cf. the *Sophist* (229E-230E).
5. I am indebted to Richard Palmer (1969) for his analysis of Gadamer; cf. especially pp. 194-234.
6. Socrates' own metaphor to describe his role as a teacher was "midwifery," underscoring his keen interest in assisting his students to arrive at knowledge.
7. Quoted in Gullette (1982), p. xiv.

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