

Handout: The Communicative Approach

As you might expect, the Communicative Approach contextualizes language learning in the way that people use language—to communicate. This is different from a grammar- or rules-based approach to language learning and from a translation approach to learning language. The communicative approach has six elements:

Learning takes place through real communication.

Language learning is contextualized in the real-life experiences of students.

The focus of language learning is on usage, not how language works.

There is lots of interaction among learners and between learners and the tutor.

Trying and making mistakes are part of the learning process.

The tutor serves as a facilitator of learning.

Handout: Direct Instruction and Discovery Learning

Direct Instruction

Research shows that students need direct instruction to develop necessary reading skills and strategies. Explicit instruction and I Do- We Do- You Do may be more familiar terms. Direct instruction has the following structure:

Explain

When teaching a new skill or strategy, provide a clear explanation of the skill and how the student will use it. In the case of a strategy or process, provide an explanation of the steps involved. Let the student know what will happen in the lesson and what the result will be (at the end of the lesson, you will be able to ...).

Model

Give students examples of the skills or strategies and demonstrate how they are used. When modeling, it is important to model “invisible” skills as well as the visible ones. For example, if you are modeling summarizing, you can think aloud to model the process of sorting through information and determining the essential pieces to include in the summary. Modeling the application of skills and strategies, including the thinking process, helps students understand how and when to use them effectively.

Guide Practice

Students have an opportunity to practice new skills and strategies with varying degrees of support. The support can consist of giving feedback and assistance, or it can be embedded in the structure of print materials. In either case, guidance and support build students’ confidence that they are applying the skills and strategies correctly. As students grow more comfortable and confident, you reduce the level of support.

Apply

As students continue to use new skills and strategies, they learn to do so without the support of the teacher or materials. They apply their new knowledge outside of the textbook and classroom and can assess its effectiveness.

Watch this video of a lesson that uses direct instruction:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fwv1J1pgHHA&t=1s>

Discovery Learning

Discovery learning involves the tutor constructing an experience for students to participate in, then the students making observations and testing new theories of language. *Problem-based learning*, *problem-posing learning*, *experiential learning*, and *guided discovery* are terms that describe similar processes. Discovery learning can be less procedural than direct instruction, but it contains specific elements.

Learning occurs through experience.

Learning begins with an experience, either a real-life experience or one constructed by a tutor to reflect a student's real-life experience. The student participates in the experience, makes observations or inferences about it, then investigates and tests the new knowledge in other contexts.

Tutor acts as a facilitator.

In discovery instruction, the tutor acts more as a facilitator than as a traditional teacher. It is the tutor's responsibility to construct an experience that represents the students' own experiences and also demonstrates the language principles to be learned. The tutor then facilitates the students' discovery of important information by asking questions, calling attention to details, and encouraging exploration and investigation. Finally, the tutor creates opportunities for students to test their new theories of language both inside and out of the classroom.

Students discover facts and relationships.

Students are responsible for discovering new facts and relationships, as opposed to the more traditional structure where the teacher provides them. This discovery process allows students to draw upon their own relevant existing knowledge to help them make sense of the new information.

Students construct their own understanding.

Even though the tutor facilitates the learning process, students are the ones with primary responsibility and accountability for learning. They construct their own understanding of language concepts based on their own needs and prior experiences.

Watch this video of a lesson that uses discovery learning:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j34nWOuP8s8>

Handout: Components of Reading

Alphabetic

Alphabetic is the combination of skills that allows readers to identify words in print. The skills include phonemic awareness (the ability to hear and manipulate the sounds of the language) and a variety of word analysis skills including phonics, word families, and word parts.

Fluency

Fluency is reading quickly, accurately, and with inflection. Fluency affects reading comprehension in several ways. First, fluent readers can dedicate more of their reading effort to comprehension because it is not being spent decoding words and putting them together in meaningful phrases and sentences. Fluent readers are also able to read with proper emphasis and inflection (prosody is the technical term), which adds meaning. Finally, when students increase their reading fluency, their motivation usually increases. Students are able to read more easily, and are more likely to enjoy reading. In addition, fluency instruction allows students to hear their progress, which motivates them to continue with their learning.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is important to reading comprehension in two ways. First, and most obvious, readers need to know what individual words mean to get meaning from the larger text. Second, readers need a good vocabulary to be able to read a broader variety of materials and materials at higher levels. As they read increasingly complex materials, they encounter new words, expanding their vocabularies and allowing them to read new things.

There are different types of vocabulary and different levels of understanding. We have an oral vocabulary—the words we use and understand in listening and speaking, and we have a reading vocabulary—the words we recognize and understand in print. We know some words very well and can use them flexibly, taking advantage of the nuances of their meaning. We know other words at a simple level, but we don't recognize their nuances. And then there are words we don't recognize at all. All of this is affected by the background knowledge we bring to reading.

Reading Comprehension Strategies and Skills

Research says that comprehension is an active process. Good readers access their existing knowledge, set a purpose for reading, check their comprehension, and apply what they learn (strategies). To do this, readers need to recognize patterns in the way information is presented (such as main ideas and details, facts and opinions, sequences) and extract important information to use in new settings.

Adapted from Applying Research in Reading Instruction, Susan McShane, 2005

Handout: The First Meeting

Use these checklists to make sure you are on track for your initial meeting with a student.

Initial Phone Call

- When you reach the student, introduce yourself using simple language. “Hello, my name is _____. I am your new teacher. I would like to talk about when we can meet for our first lesson.” (We use the term *teacher* because it is easier to recognize than *tutor*).
 - If you do not reach the student, leave your name and number. Leave a simple message that you are his or her new teacher.
- Schedule the first meeting
 - Establish date and time
 - Establish location
 - Provide any special instructions such as where to park
 - Describe a specific meeting place
 - Describe how the student will recognize you
- Ask student if it’s OK to text or call on the day of the meeting to confirm.

If you are concerned that the student may not have understood the entire conversation or when he or she is supposed to meet, contact the literacy council so they can follow-up with the student.

The First Meeting

Prior to the First Meeting

- Scout the meeting location and identify 2-3 good places where you can study. This will allow you some options if one or two of them are taken on the day of the meeting.
- If the literacy program has given you information about the student, review it before the meeting. You should be familiar with the student’s learning history, initial assessment, and language goals so you can use these as a starting point.
- Consider what you will do for instruction during the first meeting. Language experience is a great technique to use during early meetings. It allows you to get to know a student better, understand their English language skills, and place them in a learning environment where they experience immediate success in speaking and reading. Consider bringing pictures related to your life: your family, pets, house, etc. You can use the pictures to talk about yourself and as a starting point for the language experience story. After the first 2-3 lessons, you can transition to published instructional materials or other content the student wants to learn.
- Create a “tutoring bag” that includes notebook paper or a spiral notebook, pencils, markers, and index cards.

At the Meeting

- Arrive at the meeting place at least 15 minutes ahead of the scheduled time. Find a quiet place where you and the student can talk and study.
- Introduce yourself and greet the student by name so he or she knows they have connected with the correct person. “Are you _____? I’m _____.”
- Make “small talk” with the student as you walk back to the study area, but remember to keep the language simple. “How are you today?” “Have you been busy today?”
- Use your first meeting to begin to get to know the student. The literacy council may have already given you information about the student’s life experiences, goals, and language levels. You can use this information to start conversations with the student. Be aware that information related to the student’s goals may have changed. Sometimes students are not clear about their education goals when they first come in. Use your first few meetings with a student to clarify his or her goals. Share information about your own goals and why you want to tutor.
- Explain how tutoring will work. Talk about how often you’ll meet and what you’ll do during the lessons. This is an overview, not a detailed conversation.
- Exchange contact information and establish ground rules for contacting each other. For example, you might exchange cell phone numbers and establish that you will text the student the day of your lesson to confirm that he or she is still able to meet.
- Use this conversation to build trust and rapport with the student.

Assessment and The Lesson

You should plan to use the first few lessons with a student to assess the student’s language skills (if the literacy program has not already assessed the student) or to expand on the intake assessment (if the literacy program has already assessed the student). Do this through simple instructional activities and observation. Here are some ideas for the first few lessons:

- Conversation.** Begin each lesson with a short conversation. Ask about their weekend, their job, or their family. This will help you learn about the student and build rapport. You will have a chance to hear the student speak English and get a sense of the student’s command of English vocabulary and grammar. It will also make the student more comfortable using English later in the lesson.
- Language Experience.** Language experience is a great instructional activity for the first few lessons. Use topics from your initial conversation or bring pictures or other prompts to begin discussion. Write the student’s story, and then use it for vocabulary work, word study, reading, and writing.
- Assessment.** If the program did not perform an initial assessment, plan to administer one during the third or fourth meeting. This will give you some time to observe the student’s language usage and allow you to put the assessment results in context. You can use an assessment provided by your literacy program, a placement test associated with the set of published materials you are considering using, or one of these standardized tests:
 - The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS, <https://www.casas.org/product-overviews/assessments>)

- The Tests of Adult Basic Education Class E (TABE Class E, <http://tabetest.com/students-2/tabe-class-e/>)
- The BEST Literacy and BEST Plus test (<http://www.cal.org/aea/>)
- English as a Second Language Oral Assessment (ESLOA, <https://www.newreaderspress.com/esloa>)
- Reading Evaluation Adult Diagnosis (READ, <https://www.newreaderspress.com/read>)

Most importantly, you want to plan instructional activities that guarantee student success. After the first few meetings, students should feel that they are learning new things and that they will be successful in this endeavor.









