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## **Communicative language teaching in Georgia : from theory to practice**

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## **CHAPTER 2: HISTORY OF LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Placing CLT, the language teaching method which is the focus of the present dissertation, in its historical context enables the reader to compare and contrast it with other teaching methods described in the mainstream literature that deals with the second-language learning/teaching field, and to accentuate the distinctive features characteristic of CLT in better ways (for a detailed discussion on Communicative Language Teaching, see Chapter 3). For this reason, a brief discussion of the foreign language teaching methodology history is provided in the present chapter. A more detailed overview of the chapter is provided below.

#### *Chapter overview*

The present Section of this chapter (Section 2.1) discusses the general dynamics observed throughout the history of language teaching methods and the method categorization principles adopted in this chapter. The older mainstream methods of foreign language teaching, such as the Classical Method/ Grammar Translation, The Direct Method and the Audio-Lingual Method, are described in Section 2.2. The shift towards more communicative approaches to language teaching and the emergence of so called “alternative methods” are looked at in Section 2.3, while Section 2.4 discusses the Communicative Approaches. Finally, Section 2.5 provides a summary of the chapter as well as a discussion of the “post-method condition” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 161) witnessed today.

Foreign language teaching became a profession in the early twentieth century, when the concept of a “method” emerged in language teaching, a concept referring to “a set of teaching practices based on a particular theory of language and language learning” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 1). The theoretical grounds and principles underlying a certain method were subsequently used to form the basis for foreign language teaching curriculum, syllabus, classroom procedure, and for defining teachers’ and learners’ roles as well as material design. There were, in addition, some cases where methods were not supported by any profound theoretical basis, but rather emerged as a result of certain strong culturally-grounded beliefs with regard to what the value and general goal of language learning was, the Classical Method and the Grammar Translation Method being two such instances (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 1; for more discussion, see Section 2.2).

Since the emergence of the profession of language teaching, a constant search has been ongoing on the part of applied linguists and teachers for a teaching method which would prove to be more efficient than the previous

one. The failure of a given existing language teaching method to accomplish its goal and the emergence of new language teaching theories and ideologies in linguistics and adjacent fields of study resulted in frequent changes and innovations in the field throughout the twentieth century (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 1). According to Brown (2007), “a glance through the previous decades of language teaching shows that as disciplinary schools of thought – namely, psychology, linguistics and education – waxed and waned, along went language-teaching trends” (2007: 1). Thus, it can be said that the tendency in foreign language teaching was that of seesawing: that one method would usually be replaced by a radically different alternative, which can be explained by the fact that the lack of success of a given method occasioned a desperate search for another approach representing the other extreme of teaching ideology. As Mackey (2006: 138) rightly remarks, “while sciences have advanced by approximations in which each new stage results from an improvement, not rejection, of what has gone before, language-teaching methods have followed the pendulum of fashion from one extreme to the other”.

It should also be noted that a certain ambiguity has been witnessed and debate has been ongoing with regard to what exactly the term ‘method’ refers to and what components it comprises. To cast some clarity upon the issue and to provide insight into the efforts made, prominent representatives of the language teaching field have tried to “lessen the terminological confusion” (Antony, 1963: 67), the discussion below offers an overview of the topic. In an attempt to provide an accurate and comprehensive definition of ‘method’, the works of three applied linguists have been considered here: the three-component model of definition of the term offered by Anthony (1963); another three-component definition by Richards and Rodgers (1982); and a two-component one suggested by Kumaravadivelu (2008). Antony distinguishes between *Approach*, *Method*, and *Technique*, defining approach as “a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language and the nature of language teaching and learning. It describes nature of the subject matter to be taught. It states a point of view, a philosophy, an article of faith...” (2008: 63-64), whereas a method is “an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic, a method is procedural” (2008: 65) and a technique can be described as “a particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective” (2008: 66). According to Kumaravadivelu, this arguably rather simplistic, “hierarchical” depiction of classroom teaching activities, coupled with the “blurred” distinctions offered in Antony’s definition with regard to the proposed concepts of approach, method and techniques, necessitated a further “refinement” of the terminology (2008: 85). This job was first undertaken by Richards and Rodgers (1982, 1985) who offered the substitution model of *Approach*, *Design* and *Procedure*, both terms are

included under *Method*, which includes the components of theory as well as practice (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 16).

The first level, *approach*, defines those assumptions, beliefs, and theories about the nature of language and the nature of language learning which operate as axiomatic constructs or reference points and provide a theoretical foundation for what language teachers ultimately do with learners in classrooms. The second level in the system, *design*, specifies the relationship of theories of language and learning to both the form and function of instructional materials and activities in instructional settings. The third level, *procedure*, comprises the classroom techniques and practices which are consequences of particular approaches and designs. (Richards & Rodgers 1982: 154)

Richards and Rodgers' definition of the term *Approach* coincides with that offered by Antony; however, *Design* and *Procedure* (replacing Antony's *Method* and *Technique*) provide more detailed definitions: under *Design*, the further concepts of language teaching syllabus, learner and teacher roles, and instructional materials and their types and functions are also specified (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 86). *Procedure*, like *Technique* in the Antony framework, refers to actual classroom activities; however, Richards and Rodgers describe this component in more elaborate terms: "the types of teaching and learning techniques, the types of exercises and practice activities, and the resources – time, space, equipment – required to implement recommended activities" (Kumaravadivelu, 2008: 86).

Charging Richards and Rodgers' model with being somewhat ambiguous, and criticizing the three-component model of describing classroom teaching activities as "redundant and overlapping", Kumaravadivelu suggests the two-component model of definition of the language teaching related terms: namely, of *Principles* and *Procedures* (2008: 86, 87). He merges the levels of *Approach* and *Design* proposed by Richards and Rodgers and elaborates that the activities described under method/design, such as "syllabus construction, material production, and the determination of learner/teacher roles" go beyond the responsibilities of a practicing teacher, who should be in charge of the undertakings that fall under technique/procedure aspect of language instruction (2008: 87).

Acknowledging the validity of the reasoning offered by Kumaravadivelu with regard to the interpretation of language teaching-related terminology, the model offered by Richards and Rodgers is the one adopted in the present dissertation, as their use of 'method' as a general term for referring to the unity of language teaching principles, as well as their *Approach* versus *Method* distinction, provides the more elaborate definitions needed (with *Approach* referring to the broader term under which *Method* falls as a sub-category) to describe the teaching methods later in this chapter, as well as in other parts of the present dissertation.

According to Kumaravadivelu (2008), “another source of tiresome ambiguity that afflicts language teaching is the absence of a principled way to categorize language teaching methods in a conceptually coherent fashion” (2008: 90), which is due to the emergence of a plethora of major and minor methods, some mainstream, some alternative, during the twentieth century. The “Method Boom” (Stern, 1985: 249) that was witnessed in the 1970s made this need even more obvious. Currently, Kumaravadivelu (2008: 90-92) claims, there are at least “a dozen” of various language teaching methods, and the categorization scheme he offers is as follows.

- a. *Language-centered methods* – deal with language structures mainly and aim to help learners practice “pre-selected” and “presequenced linguistic structures” through pre-determined form-oriented activities (such as, the Grammar Translation and the Audio-Lingual Method).
- b. *Learner-centered methods* – deal with learner needs and relevant contexts and aim to provide opportunities for learners to practice “preselected and presequenced linguistic structures” as well as provide communicative/functional abilities through meaning-oriented exercises (such as the approach at the focus of this thesis and currently officially favored in Georgia, Communicative Language Teaching).
- c. *Learning-centered methods* – deal with the “cognitive processes of language learning” and considered them as “nonlinear” and thus unsuited for pre-determined activities and approaches to teaching. Hence, these methods (such as, the Natural Approach) aim at providing learners with opportunities for spontaneous, meaningful communication through which language knowledge is hoped to be constructed.

Yet another form of grouping foreign language teaching methods is adopted by Richards and Rodgers in their book *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (2001), according to which the trends in language teaching over the last fifty years are presented in the following three categories:

- a. Major trends in twentieth-century language teaching
- b. Alternative approaches and methods
- c. Current communicative approaches.

The presentation of foreign language teaching methods adopted in this chapter will follow Richards and Rodgers’ model, as this approach allows for readers to be provided with historical and chronological perspectives on language teaching methods in addition to descriptions at theoretical (where evident), design and procedural levels.

## 2.2 MAJOR METHODS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

The first method as such that emerged historically in Europe in the teaching of non-native languages was the Classical Method, which was mainly used for teaching Latin and Greek. According to this method, it was believed that a profound knowledge of the grammar of the target language would contribute to better familiarization with and mastery of the grammatical system of one's native language and that the language learning process would also be a beneficial "mental exercise even though learners would probably never use the target language" (Dincay, 2010: 43).

Later, in the spread of extensive schooling to the middle and lower social classes in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Classical Method was modified for the teaching of modern foreign languages and came to be known as the Grammar Translation Method (GT). The Grammar Translation Method has no real theoretical bases – whether "linguistics, psychological or educational" – to corroborate its practices (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 5). It was a language teaching method devised on pragmatic grounds of economy and suited the existing institutional resources. GT offered very little beyond insight into grammatical rules and some measure of involvement by learners in the process of translating texts from a second language into a native tongue. No focus on communication or real-life language was provided under this method (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 4).

The process of globalization and the increase in foreign travel for both business and pleasure in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe and latterly other continents brought about the need for something approaching mass oral proficiency in foreign languages. As a result, the Direct Method emerged, which was the opposite extreme to the Grammar-Translation Method. The idea emphasized in the Direct Method is that learning a language is an innate ability and that foreign languages ought to be learned in the same way children pick up their first language – by being directly exposed to the language, with no translation employed at all (Richards & Rodgers, 1996: 9). A generation after the appearance of the Direct Method in Europe (1920s-1930s), this method evolved into the Oral Approach (1950s-1960s), or as it is more frequently referred to, Situational Language Teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 31). One of the distinctive features of Situational Language Teaching is the emphasis it places on linking knowledge of structures to situations of their practical application: meaning is explained through situational dialogues, visual aids, realia, pantomime, gestures, demonstration, mime and drawing, with no recourse to the students' mother tongue (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 41-46).

As applied linguists in Europe were engaged in developing the Structural-Situational Method, their American counterparts were called upon by their government, already drawn into World War II, to devise an effective, accelerated course to teach their army personnel conversation skills in various foreign languages, so that they could work as interpreters, code-room assistants

and translators. As a result, an intensive Audio-Lingual Method, also called as “the Army Method” (1940-1960s), emerged. Under this method, it was recommended that learners be taught a foreign language for six days a week, ten hours a day (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 50-51; Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 98). Being based on the behavioural theory, this method largely focuses on speaking and listening skills and effective habit formation through adequate reinforcement. The Audio-Lingual Method largely employs rote memorization, repetition, drills and dialogues in the study process (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 100; Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 56, 58).

### **2.3 ALTERNATIVE METHODS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING**

According to Kumaravadivelu (2006) “language-centered methods proved to be immensely helpful to the classroom teacher. The entire pedagogic agenda was considered teacher-friendly, as it provided a neat rules-of-thumb framework with which to work”. In language centered methods, the aims of language teaching, teaching materials, lesson structure as well as assessment approaches are clearly determined. Thus, the teacher is in complete control of classroom processes and at ease (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 109). However, convenience and ease with which a certain teaching method can be employed does not necessarily mean their being successful. The strongly-felt inadequacy of the “language-centered” teaching methods, together with new insights emerging in the field of psychology and linguistics, triggered a quest for a substitute for the existing language teaching methods which would be better adapted to the newly emerged language learning needs. This led to the latter 20<sup>th</sup>-century paradigm shift in the language teaching field (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 109, 113).

In the early 1950s, Noam Chomsky and his followers challenged previous assumptions about language teaching. He drew the attention of the applied linguists and language teachers to the ‘deep structure’ of language and professed that language learning is about creativity more than about habit formation, and that humans are capable of coming up with linguistic structures that they have never heard before, not merely copying the model provided but creating them on their own (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 153).

In addition to Chomsky’s ideas, the advances in cognitive science and educational psychology made by Jean Piaget (1896-1980) and Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) in the first half of the century strongly influenced language teaching theory in the 1960s and 1970s. These new trends cast doubt on the effectiveness of the traditional prescriptive approaches to language teaching and on the stimulus-response mechanism and habit-formation proposed by behaviourists. They were also in line with the spirit of the age, favored more humanistic views, encouraging an emphasis on the affective and interpersonal nature of learning by putting a greater focus on the learner and on social interaction. These new tendencies and developments in linguistic and



psychological theories gave way to the “communicative movement” in mainstream language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 71), leading to the emergence of Communicative Approaches (which will be discussed in Section 2.4 below). However, around the same time, in the 1970s-1980s, the period which is referred to as the “Method Boom” (Stern, 1985: 249), other experimental methods, which also came to be known as “Designer Methods” (Nunan, 1989: 97), or “Alternative Methods” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 71), emerged in parallel with the communicative approaches.

Alternative Methods, it is claimed, focus on certain aspects neglected by the traditional approaches, such as feelings, emotions and interpersonal relationships, and hence, are sometimes also called “Humanistic Methods” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 71). According to Richards and Rodgers, “these methods are developed around particular theories of learners and learning, sometimes the theories of a single theorizer or educator” (2001: 71). Summaries of these methods, which in Kuramavadivelu’s (2008) terms fall under the “Learning-Centered Methods” category, are presented in the paragraphs that follow below in this section.

The “alternative methods” mentioned in the preceding paragraph can be further classified into certain groups: three methods, Total Physical Response (Asher, 1970s), Natural Approach (Krashen & Terrel, 1983) and Lexical Approach (Lewis, 1993), can be housed under a more general umbrella category, the Comprehension Approach. As Richards and Rodgers (2001) summarize, what all these three methods have in common are the following:

- a) It is believed that the receptive skills are mastered before productive skills are
- b) It is believed that speaking should be taught only after the comprehension skills are acquired
- c) It is believed that acquisition of a listening skill is beneficial to other skills development as well
- d) It is believed that in the teaching/learning process more attention should be given to the meaning of the language rather than its form
- e) It is believed that teaching/learning process should be stress free (2001: 78-79).

In Kumaravadivelu’s (2008: 93-94) analysis, the theoretical premises of the Comprehension Approaches rest upon the following principles:

In Comprehensive Approaches:

- a. Language development is incidental, not intentional
- b. Language development is meaning-focused, not form-focused
- c. Language development is comprehension-based, not production-based
- d. Language development is cyclical and parallel, not sequential or additive.

The Total Physical Response (TPR) developed in the 1970s is influenced by developmental psychology, learning theory and humanistic pedagogy (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:73). In the TPR, physical movement activities are employed to achieve teaching/learning goals. TPR advocates that both language and body movement are synchronized through action responses and the use of the imperative. According to TPR, learning should resemble the natural process of language acquisition by children, who develop their listening competence first by responding physically to their caregivers' commands and only at a later stage becoming capable of spontaneously imitating and producing the language to which they are exposed (Rodgers, 2001: 74-89).

The Natural Approach (NA) was initially proposed by Terrell (1977; 1982). Terrell sought to incorporate into language teaching the "naturalistic" principles identified in studies dealing with second-language acquisition (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The Natural Approach (NA), like the Direct Method, is based on the assumption that a spontaneous, unorganized language teaching process, ostensibly resembling first-language acquisition, is "the only learning process which we know for certain will produce mastery of the language at a native level" (Newmark & Reibel, 1968: 153). Drawing on the theoretical basis discussed above, in the Natural Approach no explicit correction or grammar instruction is provided, the main emphasis being the teaching of lexis and of fluency, and the main target of the language learning being defined as communicating the right messages and meanings (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:178-191).

The Lexical Approach, also known as the "Slot and Filler Approach", is a method of teaching foreign languages described by Lewis in the 1990s. This method assumes that the basic building blocks of language learning is not grammar, functions or notions, but rather words and word combinations (collocations) in a language: in a word, lexis. It further assumes that learning a language involves the ability to comprehend, memorize and produce lexical phrases as chunks. The language is perceived as "grammaticalized lexis not lexicalized grammar" (Lewis, 1993), which means that vocabulary is prized over grammar *per se* in this approach. In the Lexical Approach, for the first time in the history of the profession, the language syllabus was based on a lexical rather than grammatical scheme (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:138). Having discussed three of the methods that fall under the "Comprehension Methods" category, in the remainder of this section [2.3], more "Alternative Methods", which are also believed to be more "humanistic", are further summarized.

The Silent Way also emerged as a result of a new perception of effective teaching and learning. It was adopted by Caleb Gattegno, who specialized in education through discovery and awareness. The word "silent" was used in the name of the method to assert that language learning does not necessarily take place as a result of much repetition and modeling. The main beliefs underpinning this method consist of the following principles: a) a learner

acquires the language better if he/she discovers language rules and meanings himself/herself and is creative rather than repeats and responds; b) learning is facilitated through the use of certain associative mediators, i.e., physical objects which help in creating memorable images and facilitate recall on the learners' part in the process of learning; c) a problem-solving approach contributes to language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 81). In this "artificial approach", silent awareness plays the key role: silence helps learners concentrate, whereas repetition "consumes time and encourages the scattered mind to remain scattered" (Gattegno, 1976:80). The Silent Way can well be considered not an approach or a method, but rather a complimentary micro-technique, which should be used in combination with other mainstream methods (Richards and Rodgers, 2001:81-89; Kumaravadevelu, 2006:92).

The Suggestopedia, developed in the 1970s, can be regarded as one of the most extravagant of the so-called "alternative" or "humanistic approaches", i.e., approaches which, in line with the spirit of the latter 20<sup>th</sup> century, cater to the feelings and emotions of modern learners (Larsen-Freeman, 2008:73). The name of the method is illustrative of the concept upon which it is based: that the power of positive suggestion or, negatively, "desuggestion" of perceived limitations can have a "placebo effect" on learners, resulting in increased self-confidence, receptiveness and learning capacity in the study process (Lozanov, 1978:267). An important component that has to be incorporated into the teaching/learning process is the fine arts: music, art and drama, which is believed to be a stimulant of learners' mental reserves. A teacher is supposed to be very positive and encouraging, and should establish relaxed, child-parent type relationships with students, so that they are more open to learning (Freeman-Larsen, 2000: 75-80; Richards & Rodgers, 2001:102).

Community Language Learning (CLL) is based on the theoretical premises offered by Carl Rodgers' (1902-1987) humanistic psychology. This creative, dynamic and non-directive approach to language learning tries to apply psychological counseling techniques to learning, so the method is also known as Counseling-Learning. Its organizational rationale is based on the insight that in the learning process, advice, assistance and support need to be provided by the teacher to the learner, the latter being seen in the role of "a client", and the former in that of a "counselor" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:90). The humanistic techniques (Moskowitz, 1978) which are also the basis of Community Language Learning/Counseling Learning support the engagement of the whole person in the learning process (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:91).

Multiple Intelligences (MI) reflects the ideas expressed in cognitive psychology by Howard Gardener (1993). According to MI theory, there exist at least eight intelligences/talents within each individual which need to be acknowledged and developed. It is believed that learners learn best if the content is delivered in different ways, adapted to the capacities of individual learners and tapping various intelligences that learners possess (Richards &

Rodgers 2001:115). Consequently, individualized approach to teaching is adopted, where teachers act as needs analysts, selecting and employing a wide range of teaching materials and activities in the study process (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:120).

To sum up the discussion about the “alternative methods” of the 1970s described above, it can be said that even though these methods provide interesting, innovative and more humanistic insights into teaching/learning and are welcome by many in the contexts in which they were launched, they are comparatively “underdeveloped” in their language theory and not part of the mainstream foreign language teaching field (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:71). This might explain why these methods are referred to as useful techniques that can be used in combination with other methods to achieve specific language teaching purposes, rather than as fully-fledged methods in their own right.

## **2.4 THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE TEACHING**

As already mentioned in the previous section, by the 1960s and early 1970s, the need had emerged to teach languages more creatively for communicative purposes. Brooks (1964) effectively summarizes the dramatic paradigm shift that took place in the language teaching field at that time:

The comfortable grammar-translation days are over. The new challenge is to teach language as communication, face-to-face communication between speakers and writer-to-reader communication. A constant objective is to learn to do with the new language what is done with it by those who speak it natively. (1964, vii)

Doubt was being cast in these decades on the effectiveness of the inherited “language-centered” pedagogy: the established “additive” and unitary view of the language system, as well as “the linearity” of the learning process, was called into question, as it was no longer believed to be capable of addressing the modern communicative needs of the learner (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 114). Newmark (1966) asserted that if the choice was made to teach the acquisition of each linguistic feature in a systematic and analytical manner, progressing from the easiest to the most difficult, and only later tied into connected speech, “the child learner would be old before he could say a single appropriate thing and the adult learner would be dead” (1966: 79). Instead, more holistic, learner-oriented approaches to language teaching started to be advocated. As a result, a number of communicative methods to language teaching appeared (for more discussion about the emergence of communicative methods, see Sections 2.3 and 3.2).

According to Kumaravadivelu (2006), the Communicative Approach to language teaching is not based upon a “monolithic” theoretical framework, but rather draws upon a “multidisciplinary” basis, resulting in openness to such

distinct interpretation on the teachers' part that one is justified in talking in terms of a plurality of communicative methods (2006:116). Specifically, some of the major language teaching methods that fall under the broader term of communicative approach are Communicative Language Teaching, Content-Based Instruction and Task-Based Language Teaching (Richards & Rodger, 2001:152).

#### **2.4.1 Communicative Language Teaching**

The literature dealing with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the focus of the present dissertation, is rather inconsistent in that writers refer to it sometimes as "a method" and sometimes as "an approach". It is obvious that CLT has a rather broad framework, allowing much freedom of interpretation, normally characteristic of a language teaching approach; however, it also has certain unique characteristics, at the theoretical as well as procedural level, which allows for the differentiating of CLT from other communicative methods (see Richard & Rodgers, 2001:151). Hence, in the present dissertation, while acknowledging its approach-like nature, CLT is still referred to as a method.

CLT is emerged in the 1970s. It was the first method to lay the ground-work for all subsequent communicative methods of language teaching which fall under the category of the Communicative Approach. Today, it is still believed to be the method "most used by trained teachers" (Davies & Pearse, 2000:193) and "revolutionary" in the field of language teaching (Swartbrick, 1994:1). As mentioned above, CLT is claimed to be a flexible method of language teaching rather than a strictly-defined set of teaching practices (Kumaravadevelu, 2006:116). Based on the theories developed in structural linguistics in the 1960s, and on further developments in sociolinguistics and functional linguistics, the main principle that is emphasized in CLT is the communicative value of the language: language learning is about being able to communicate in various contexts, and the goal of language teaching is developing Communicative Competence in learners. If earlier methods emphasized the structural side of the language, CLT pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language (Littlewood, 1981:1).

The syllabus of CLT can be described as notional/functional, aimed at providing learners with communicative proficiency through focusing not only on language form but also on its application in actual use. In CLT, activities involving real communication are used to carry out meaningful tasks, requiring language that is meaningful to the learner and that engages them in meaningful and authentic situations. Games are widely used, as they provide many opportunities for real-life (and spontaneous) communicative situations. Pair/group work is encouraged to maximize the amount of communicative practice and to promote a cooperative mode of learning. A CLT teacher acts as

a facilitator, an independent participant and a counselor in the learning process. Mistakes are tolerated and the emphasis is on the process of communication rather than just on the linguistic form. Students assume the role of an autonomous learner, an active interpreter of input, trained to be tolerant of some types of uncertainties, willing to explore alternative learning strategies. Teaching materials have great importance as a source and stimulant for true communication. The main criteria for appropriate materials are comprehensibility and authenticity. Consequently, realia and authentic materials are widely used in the CLT classroom. The objectives of CLT are more general than being finely-tuned to learners' needs. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 163-72). While CLT aims at teaching learners how to communicate, there are other "stronger" versions of this method, which make communication itself the main means of teaching/learning (see also Section 3.3.). These communicative methods will be discussed in the subsections that follow.

#### **2.4.2 Content-Based Instruction**

Content-Based Instruction (CBI), also referred to as Content and Language Integrated Learning appeared around the 1980s (Howatt, 1984:279). The main idea in CBI is to integrate the academic content with the learning of the language and thus to make the process more relevant, meaningful and motivating for the learner. Proponents of this method believe that second-language learning is best realized when the language is used for obtaining information and when the primary focus is not on the language but on content which is interesting, useful and "comes from outside the domain of language" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:209-210). Through such an approach, students "learn the language as a by-product of learning about the real-world content" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:205).

CBI promotes integrated skills development through topic-based classes and builds upon students' existing knowledge that they bring into the classroom. Teaching is organized around the relevant content and not around any kind of syllabus. Thus, in CBI, content becomes the organizing principle of a language course syllabus as well as serving as the teaching material (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:205).

"Immersion Education", a submethod of CBI, was first developed in the 1970s, and defined by Richards and Rodgers (2001) as a type of language teaching which is realized through teaching the academic subjects in a target foreign language when the latter is the means of teaching and not the subject matter (2001:206). Several northern European countries have since the 1980s seen wide application of this approach in secondary and tertiary education in an attempt to extend the population's fluency in English (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:206-207).

Two further sub-methods can be identified within CBI – the Adjunct Language Instruction, when students are involved in two, linked courses, one for language and one for subject matter, both complementing each other; and the Sheltered Language Instruction, which deals with both native- and non-native-speaker students, taught by a specialist of the subject rather than by a native-speaker language teacher. This model offers considerable linguistic scaffolding and support to non-native-speaker students, accelerating the pace of learning so that they can catch up with their peers who are native in the target language and so as to prevent foreign students from delaying their involvement in the academic curriculum (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:217). By way of conclusion, it can be remarked that even though CBI offers many obvious advantages in the teaching/learning process – integrated skills teaching, increased learner motivation, authenticity of the teaching material – it also places a considerable burden on teachers, who were after all trained to teach language as a skill and not as subject content. Having to assume the roles of both a language as well as a subject teacher might be expected to result in the reduced efficiency of the teacher in both of his/her roles. Despite the challenges involved, however, CBI, based as it is on broad theoretical and teaching principles, can be used in many different useful ways. Hence, it continues to be a popular language teaching approach applied in many academic programs throughout the world (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 220).

#### **2.4.3 Task-Based Language Teaching**

Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), which emerged in the 1980s, is another method that belongs in the category of the Communicative Approach. Some claim that TBLT is just a “stronger version” of CLT, as it shares many of CLT’s principles: the importance placed on authentic communication and the use of meaningful language for achieving meaningful tasks in a foreign language, for instance. However, what differentiates TBLT from CLT as well as from other communicative methods is the strong emphasis and reliance it places on the tasks “as the primary source of pedagogical input in teaching and the absence of a systematic grammatical or other type of syllabus” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:240). It sees the use of tasks as the key component of the teaching/ learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:255).

As TBLT is based on the belief that learners will be more successful and effective at learning when they are focused on a task to be achieved instead of concentrating their awareness upon the language itself, the central aim of this method becomes “engaging learners in different task work” (Richards 2001:223), tasks which are organized in the right sequence. Thus, in TBLT, language assumes an instrumental role; it becomes a means to the attainment of a communicative task goal, and is not an end in itself as seen in form-focused approaches, such as the Grammar Translation method.

Various definitions exist of what the word “task” exactly implies. According to Skehan (1996:20), “tasks are activities which have meaning as their primary focus”; according to Nunan (1989), “the task is a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulation, producing or interacting in the target language, while the attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form” (1989:10); for Prahbu (1987), a task is “an activity which requires learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allows teachers to control, to regulate that process” (1987:17). As the definition of the task allows a rather broad interpretation, the need to classify tasks according to their interactive and communicative values had to be dealt with. As a result, the following categories have been identified: jigsaw tasks, information-gap tasks, problem-solving tasks, decision-making tasks, and opinion-exchange tasks (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001:234).

As for the activities undertaken in a TBLT classroom, most of them are whole-group work rather than individual learner activities, with students having to cooperate with others and take initiative in the learning process to achieve their task goals. As far as the teacher role is concerned, in a communicative lesson the teacher assumes the role of selecting the right tasks, adapting them to the group’s needs and abilities, and transforming them into teaching resources (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 236). There is accordingly a lesser focus in this method on the teacher attending to or planning on the basis of individual student level or inclination. The teaching material in TBLT is similar to CLT material, with more orientation towards authentic tasks and a greater emphasis on the authenticity of materials used (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:233).

TBLT structure is the reverse of the PPP (Present, Practice, Produce) framework of Communicative Language Teaching. In TBLT, the lesson production phase comes first and the class “retraces” from there to the practice and presentation stages. In TBLT, there is a pre-task phase (preparation), a direct task phase (procedural and spontaneous), and a post-task phase (consolidation, follow-up, focus on the language, noticing exercises, reflection, repetition, etc.). Evaluation is an ongoing part of the study process (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:238-239).

Even though Task-based Language Teaching has enjoyed popularity, it is still more widely used in a form of a ‘technique’ rather than a complete method in its own right. According to Richards & Rodgers (2001), the issues related to TBLT, such as the accuracy of task “selection”, “sequencing” and “evaluation” await further refinement and elaboration (2001:240).



## 2.5 SUMMARY AND POST METHOD PERSPECTIVES

### 2.5.1 Summary of the teaching methods

Over the past hundred years, the search for an efficient second or foreign language teaching method has been ongoing globally, and the constant substitution of one method for another, which each time has been believed to be a solution to the problems associated with the previous method, has been a common practice. For example, The Direct Method emerged (at the turn of the twentieth century) alongside the Grammar Translation method as a remedial method to address the limitations of the GT, which was strongly criticized in the early twentieth century in Europe (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:9). Later, in the 1950s, in the U.S., the Audio-Lingual Method was elaborated as a method which was thought to be more theory-grounded and thus equipped with better strategies for meeting modern-day, particularly adult professional, language learner needs. Fresh frustration with each method in turn following its initial enthusiastic acceptance eventually led to the era of innovation and experimentation in language teaching in the 1970s-1980s, resulting in the appearance of such truly alternative methods as Silent Way and Suggestopedia. Yet this era, too, turned out to be short-lived.

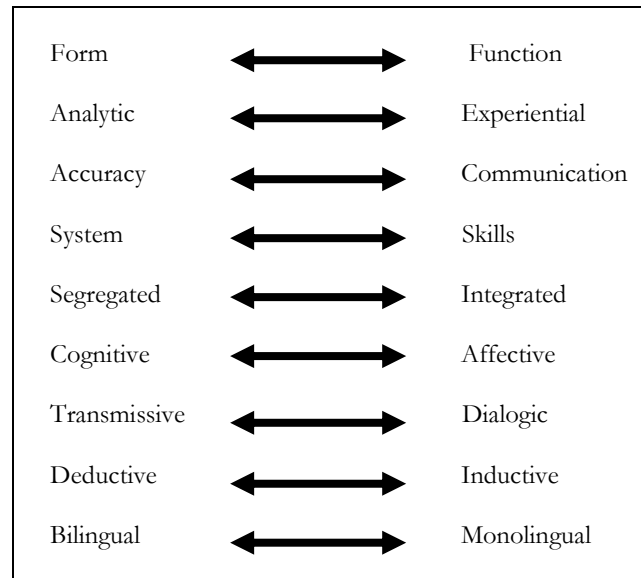
According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), even though such claimed “breakthrough” methods still tend to emerge from time to time, such as Task-Based Language Teaching, the method which has proved to be the most resilient has been Communicative Language Teaching:

Mainstream Language Teaching on both sides of the Atlantic, however, opted for Communicative Language Teaching as the recommended method for language teaching in the 1980s. CLT continues to be considered the most plausible basis for language instruction today. (2001:244)

Despite the fact that Communicative Language Teaching has been proven to be much better than its predecessors at fulfilling present-day learners’ language needs, what still needs to be considered is whether the development of the history of language teaching methods should be seen as a movement from the darkness into the light, as an evolutionary process, or not. Evidence to the contrary is forthcoming if we notice how often the principles and themes behind each ‘new’ method are being recycled and are reappearing in different forms, each time adding a slightly different perspective and taking different names. Perhaps the incessant changes that have been witnessed in the past two to three generations have not been that dramatic but rather frenetic after all.

Below, in Figure 2.5, is given a graphic representation of the nine dimensions that, according to Thorbury (2011:192), represent the main ideas and principles that underlie various language teaching methods. The principles are presented in a dichotomous pattern: the principles on the left of the diagram illustrate more form-focused, conservative approaches of foreign

language teaching (e.g. Grammar-Translation, Audio-Lingual), the principles on the right more communicative ones (e.g., Communicative Language Teaching, Task-based Teaching).



**Figure 2.5: Nine dimensions of the principles underlying foreign language teaching methods (Thornbury, 2011: 129)**

It has also been argued that, no matter what teaching methodology they claim they follow, it is the blend of the above principles (see Figure 2.5) that constitute many teachers' language teaching practice, resulting in a situation where the teacher does not employ any particular teaching method, but rather an eclectic approach of language instruction (Kumaravadevelu, 1993; Nunan, 1987). Such a generalized perception of language teaching methods, where the boundaries between them are rather blurred, in concert with the failure to find one single approach that would prove to be perfect, gradually led to the so-called "post-method era" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 244).

### 2.5.2 The post-method perspectives

Much disappointment with teaching methods that were once all the rage, and an appreciation of the fact that any language teaching method selected will have multiple purposes to serve and multiple contexts to be considered in order to achieve the desired outcome, led to the realization that it might be simply impossible to find an "all-purpose" teaching approach after all. Hence, instead of making renewed efforts to find yet another effective alternative method – which, it was now cynically expected, would lead to renewed failure without

breaking the vicious cycle of the neverending quest for methodological perfection – the search for an alternative to method itself began. This realization, at the end of the twentieth century, led to talk on the part of some linguists of the “death of methods” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 247) and, as Kumaravadivelu claims, led to the “post-method condition” in the field of language teaching (2008: 184). Kumaravadivelu describes the constant failure heretofore to find the perfect language teaching method in the following dramatic literary terms:

For a very long time, our profession has been preoccupied with, or obsessed with, a search for the best method – very much like Monty Python searching for the Holy Grail. We went on expedition after expedition searching for the best method. But still, the Holy Grail was not in sight (2008: 164).

The quest for the “best method” described above is still ongoing. Thus, the method selected for research in this dissertation – CLT – has been selected not on the grounds of its having a ‘perfect’ nature, but rather due to its being the method currently recommended by the Government of Georgia as the mainstream teaching method for public as well as private schools across the country, capable of meeting the needs of Georgian language learners today. However, the legitimacy of this latter assumption needs to be tested, and it is hoped that the current investigation will make certain contribution in this direction.

Having looked at the history and the tendencies that have been taking place in the field of foreign language teaching, in the next chapter I narrow the focus to Communicative Language Teaching, looking into its theoretical basis as well as practical aspects related to its actual implementation.

