THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to present information about the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), which is an implementation of the CLT in terms of syllabus design and methodology. The primary goal of CLT is to make learners develop the ability to use language to get things done, whereas language learning occurs by producing it, and not by drilling it. In this sense, TBLT provides a connection between the classroom and the real-world through the use of task-based activities, where learners are encouraged to comprehend, manipulate, produce, and interact in the L2. The theoretical framework about CLT is based on Ballman (2001), Richards (2015, 2006), Richards and Rodgers (2014), and about TBLT is based on Nunan (2015, 2013, 2010, 2004). Therefore, to complement this research, I carried out a case study to show the strengths and weaknesses of an English as a second language student in Brazil, who had had CLT classes in English previously. The adult participant of the case study concluded her English studies in the second semester of 2020 in a language course, in the city of Canoas-RS, Brazil. Data of the learner's L2 oral production was collected applying six TBLT tasks, related to her level of instruction, and analyzed in this paper. According to the results obtained, I found some weaknesses, such as not having enough world knowledge about a specific topic, which hindered communication in one of the tasks. However, the learner's strengths outweighed her weaknesses, which show that CLT together with TBLT can be efficient in the acquisition of English as a second language.

Keywords: Communicative Approach; Task-based Activities; Case Study.

Resumo: O propósito deste artigo é apresentar informações sobre a Abordagem Comunicativa e Aprendizagem Baseada em Tarefas, que é a implementação da Abordagem Comunicativa em termos de design de currículo e metodologia. O principal objetivo da Abordagem Comunicativa é desenvolver nos aprendizes a habilidade para usar a língua para conseguir realizar coisas, já que o aprendizado ocorre pela produção, e não por treinamento. Nesse sentido, a Aprendizagem Baseada em Tarefas proporciona uma conexão entre a sala de aula e o mundo real, através do uso de atividades baseadas em tarefas, onde os aprendizes são encorajados a compreender, manipular, produzir, e interagir na L2. O referencial teórico sobre a Abordagem Comunicativa é baseado em Ballman (2001), Richards (2015, 2006), Richards and Rodgers (2014), e sobre a Aprendizagem Baseada em Tarefas em Nunan (2015, 2013, 2010, 2004). Portanto, para complementar esta pesquisa, um estudo de caso foi realizado para mostrar os pontos fortes e pontos fracos de uma aprendiz de Inglês como segunda língua no Brasil, cujas aulas anteriores foram ministradas na Abordagem Comunicativa. A adulta participante do estudo de caso concluiu seus estudos no segundo semestre de 2020 em um curso de idiomas, na cidade de Canoas-RS, Brasil. Os dados de sua produção oral foram coletados por meio da aplicação de seis atividades baseadas em tarefas, relacionadas ao seu

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nível de instrução, e analisados neste estudo. De acordo com os resultados obtidos, alguns pontos fracos foram encontrados, tal como não possuir conhecimento de mundo necessário sobre um tópico específico, o que dificultou a comunicação em uma das tarefas. Entretanto, os pontos fortes da aprendiz prevaleceram sobre os pontos fracos, o que mostra que a Abordagem Comunicativa juntamente com a Aprendizagem Baseada em Tarefas pode ser eficiente na aquisição de Inglês como segunda língua.

Palavras-chave: Abordagem Comunicativa; Atividades Baseadas em Tarefas; Estudo de Caso.

INTRODUCTION

People have always found a way to communicate and make themselves understood. However, the ability to communicate in a natural way and to know what to say and how to say something is not so simple for second language learners. When people decide to learn and go to class, they usually hope to reach a level of fluency in which they will be able to sound natural, or at least interact socially in a satisfactory way.

Language is the only way we have to communicate with other people. Without language, we would not be able to achieve objectives, such as sharing ideas, solving complex problems, and expressing our wishes and desires. In order to achieve these objectives, language should be learnt as communication, and not only as a list of facts or a group of symbols (NUNAN, 2013). Long (2015) argues that in the twenty-first century, second language learning and teaching are more important than ever and "are more important than even many language teachers appreciate".

In language classrooms, learners need the ability to use language to get things done (NUNAN, 2013). That is the primary goal of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the focus of this article. Classroom communication places a central position in language instruction, and the CLT classes focus on learning a language by producing it, and not by drilling it (BALLMAN, 2001). "Learners learn a language through the process of communicating in it" and meaningful communication increases the opportunity for learning (RICHARDS, 2006). In this sense, when learners do not find the right words, they are encouraged to use synonyms or to paraphrase the idea, by adapting terms or finding other ways to say something (BALLMAN, 2001).

In this article, I present information about the Communicative Approach, based on Ballman (2001), Richards (2015, 2006), Richards and Rodgers (2014) and task-based activities, based on Nunan (2015, 2013, 2010, 2004). Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching in terms of syllabus design and methodology. Therefore, I present data about a case study with task-based activities applied to a B1 English student from a language course in Canoas - RS in Brazil. The material used in this case study was designed by Willis (2015) to be applied to B1 communicative classes. The objective of this study is to evaluate whether or not CLT and TBLT are efficient to develop the L2 of an English student. The data analysis of this case study is presented in section three of this article, followed by the final considerations.

WHAT IS THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH?

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or the Communicative Approach appeared to change the traditional scenario of language teaching as a second language (L2)[2]. According to Richards (2015),

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2   In this paper, the term second language (L2) is used as a synonym for foreign language (FL).

in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, language was needed to be treated appropriately as a communicative resource, and afterwards, the result was the creation of CLT. This approach prepares learners for survival in the real world, through the use of language in different communicative purposes and contexts. Richards (2015) says that "real communication is a defining characteristic of CLT". Nunan (2013) states that in CLT, learners must learn to use language to get things done in the real world. CLT focuses on the learners and the set of things they are required to do with the language, through the use of authentic materials.

When CLT first appeared, it received great support from prominent academics and the British Council. It became widely known and accepted because it provided a basis for a new wave of textbooks (RICHARDS, 2015). According to Nunan (2013), the Council of Europe aimed to identify the set of language usage that learners would want to use to carry out specific tasks. Before the acceptance of CLT, Situational Language Teaching was in evidence. Richards (2015) says that educators understood that the Situational Language Teaching and other similar methods needed to be replaced by approaches in which language was used communicatively.

Richards (2015) says that when CLT emerged in the 1980s, the challenge for publishers and textbook writers was to create materials which embraced topics, functions, and notions to constitute a communicative textbook. Howatt (1984) says that a possibility to ease the challenge to develop a new approach was to focus on the users themselves, by developing a system of discourse analysis. According to Howatt (1984), it is a question of stimulating the development of the language system itself, and not only attempting to activate an existing but inert knowledge of the language. He says that the attention moves from the language to the user, laying on the efficiency in which communication takes place and on the abilities that learners are able to gather to support and enable communication.

According to Richards (2015), the first communicative courses had too much in common with situational materials, in relation to their lesson format, drills, and practice methodology. Ballman (2001) says that in general, teachers were provided with ways of communicating with learners concretely and clearly related to their reasons for learning the language through the use of functional labels for language lessons. As a result, a functional dimension had been incorporated to the syllabus design in most new courses in English by the late seventies. Richards (2006) says that from the 1990s to the present, this functional syllabus is arranged "according to the functions the learner should be able to carry out in English". Additionally, a mastery of functions is related to communicative competence, which is needed for communication in a number of different situations. According to Ballman (2001), although the familiar structural patterns were maintained, they were ordered and organized differently around functional headings, in which was helpful to keep the individual lesson units together.

Nunan (2013) describes a weak and a strong version of the Communicative Approach. The strong version states that communicative engagement is enough for language acquisition. The weak version, which Nunan advocates, refers to a systematic focus on language systems as important for language acquisition. Nunan (2010) says that the weak version of CLT focuses on form and it "appears to be in the ascendancy these days".

Richards and Rodgers (2014) describe three important principles of CLT. The first one is the communication principle, which refers to activities based on real communication to promote learning. Next, the task principle refers to the language used to carry out meaningful tasks. Finally, the meaningfulness principle relates to the use of language that is meaningful to the learner.

According to Richards (2006), communicative competence is the goal of CLT. For that reason, when learners use language for meaningful communication, it means they have reached the goal of CLT. He establishes the aspects of language knowledge which are included in the communicative competence. Some aspects are described by him as "knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions; knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge; and knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts". Richards (2006), Ballman (2001), and Nunan (2013) say that the communicative competence can be developed through task-based activities.

Richards (2015) states that learners use communicative strategies to compensate for their limitations in grammar, vocabulary, or discourse skills. However, he says that language learning happens because of many other processes. Among them are meaningful and purposeful interactions, negotiation of meaning, attending to feedback, paying attention and trying out different ways of saying things.

Students are responsible for participating in the activities by being aware of the goals and objectives, trying to learn as much as possible while doing them (BALLMAN, 2001). They have both internal and external resources at their disposal to create and express meaning. Teachers are considered one of the external resources, because it is their job to clarify the steps of the activity, answer a vocabulary question, and help students to stay on task. The activities chosen must be

engaging and take into consideration the students' level, as well as being articulated with the rest of the syllabus. Additionally, Richards (2006) says that in CLT, teachers are responsible for focusing on real-world communication, providing opportunities for learners to put in practice what they know to develop accuracy and fluency, being tolerant of learners' errors, letting learners discover grammar rules, and integrating speaking, reading, and listening skills.

According to Ballman (2001), one example of a classroom communication activity is the storytelling, because of its preparation for real-life language use. Teaching students how to identify intensifiers, react to them in the stories, and construct collaborative texts can be done even before they are completely able to deal with the linguistic demands of narrative discourse. Time and practice in speaking are two important factors that will lead students to become automatic in some processes, and pay attention to others. In accordance with Ballman (2001), Richards (2006) affirms that information-gap activities are related to real communication, because people "communicate in order to get information they do not possess". This kind of task requires learners to use their linguistic and communicative resources to complete it. The author (*op. cit.*) also gives many other examples of activities, such as task-completion, information-gathering, opinion-sharing, information-transfer, reasoning-gap, and role-plays.

According to Ballman (2001), a communicative classroom is the appropriate environment where students have the chance to interact with others. The classes must be focused on meaning rather than on accuracy of form. He states that interpersonal complex skills are learnt through communicative strategies in class, and task-based activities are considered the best ones. The author identifies three different roles of grammar instruction, such as no grammar instruction, grammar instruction in support of communication, and grammar accuracy training. The best option is to follow the middle-ground, defined as grammar instruction in support of communication. In this sense, it is important to use pedagogical tasks in the classroom, which are known as task-based activities and, if necessary, grammar can be taught to support the communicative tasks.

Task-based Activities

According to Nunan (2013), a task-based activity must engage learners in exchanging meanings, have clear connections between the classroom and the real-world, and pursue a communicative goal. The author states that task-based activities are composed of pedagogical tasks, which must have a relationship with real-world tasks. In pedagogical tasks, learners are supposed to comprehend, manipulate, produce or interact in the L2 to reach a non-linguistic outcome. Additionally, the task[3] should have a sense of completeness, so that learners are able to evaluate their own progress in the end.

Nunan (2004) also emphasizes the implementation of grammatical knowledge to the purpose of expressing meaning, drawing attention to the fact that meaning and form are strongly interconnected, and showing that being able to express different communicative meanings is possible due to the existence of grammar. The relationship between Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is defined by Nunan (2013) as the former being a broad, philosophical approach to the language curriculum that employs theory and research in linguistics, anthropology, psychology and sociology, and the latter being the product of this philosophy at the levels of syllabus design and methodology.

Rehearsal and Activation Rationale

Nunan (2013) subdivides pedagogical tasks into rehearsal tasks and activation tasks. Rehearsal tasks attempt to give learners the opportunity to rehearse in the classroom a real-world task. Activation tasks aim to stimulate learners to activate the forms and function of the language they have been learning.
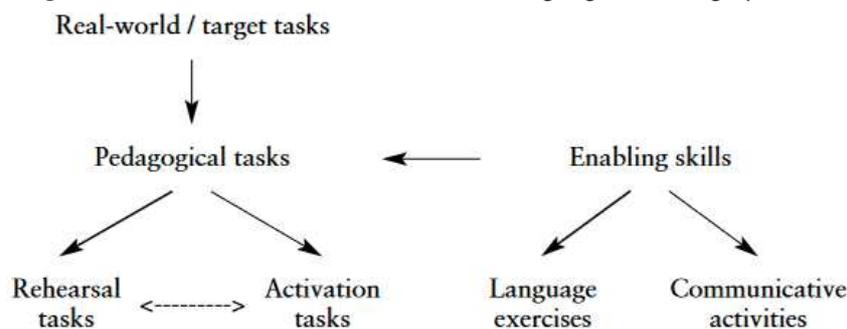
When learners are engaged in such tasks, they alternate from reproductive language use to creative language use. The reproductive language use occurs when learners' are reproducing and manipulating language models, which were given by the teacher, the textbook or audio material. The creative language use refers to recombining familiar words, structures and expressions in a new way. Using language creatively shows that learners are highly engaged in language acquisition, as a result of being required to put together their emerging language skills and resources (NUNAN, 2004).

In the framework for Task-based Language Teaching, there are also activities designed to develop skills and knowledge to ease the process of authentic communication. These activities are called enabling skills, and they consist of language exercises and communicative activities. Language exercises can be focused on lexical, phonological or grammatical systems. Communicative activities are placed in the middle of language exercises and pedagogical tasks. These activities are considered communicative because during the interaction, the learners cannot be absolutely sure of the way their partners are going to answer (NUNAN, 2004).

As shown in Figure 1, it is possible to notice the connection between pedagogical tasks and enabling skills in this framework for TBLT proposed by Nunan (2004).

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3   In this article, tasks are referred to pedagogical tasks.

Figure 1 − A Framework for Task-based Language Teaching by Nunan

Real-world / target tasks

Pedagogical tasks   ←   Enabling skills

Rehearsal   <------->   Activation   Language   Communicative
tasks   tasks   exercises   activities

Source: Nunan (2004)

After introducing the basic building blocks of TBLT, what follows is a broad view of how all these aspects described above can form units of work through their combination. According to Nunan (2015), there are four essential dimensions that compose a task: language, procedure, learner and learning process. They are formed by three principles: the authenticity principle, the form-function principle, and the task dependency principle.

The authenticity principle is relevant because learners will have the advantage of using language items from the real-world. This principle will expose learners to interactions formed by grammatical and discourse elements. The form-function principle has to do with making form and function relationship transparent, and it is established by using deductive and inductive reasoning. The task dependency principle concerns what learners are able to do with the data they are working with. In this principle, the tasks are attained to one another to create a sequence between them (NUNAN, 2013).

In relation to the elements that compose a task, Nunan (2004) points out goals, input, data, and learner procedures. These elements are supported by teacher and learner roles, as well as the settings in which tasks are performed. Goals may be related to a number of general outcomes, such as communicative, affective, or cognitive. They can be implicitly stated or construed from the task itself. Goals should also relate to the student rather than the teacher, and the ones that are underpinned by observable performances are the most useful (NUNAN, 2015).

While completing a task, learners work with spoken, written, and visual data, which is called input. Input can be provided by a large variety of sources, such as the teacher or a textbook, and it also can be created by the learners themselves (NUNAN, 2004). Long (2015) calls attention to simplified input, which are adapted texts easily comprehended, elaborated by publishers. He states that simplified input has a "limited value for language development" because they are originally written to be read, and differ in a great number from genuine spoken discourse.

The element which specifies what learners will do with the input that constructs the point of departure for the learning task is referred to as procedures. Nunan (2004) suggests that the sorts of communicative behaviors learners are expected to use in genuine communicative interactions in the real world are important to be analyzed in tasks. In terms of procedures, they can be characterized by skill getting or skill using. In skill getting, memorization and manipulation is used by learners to master phonological, lexical, and grammatical forms. In skill using, these skills are applied in communicative interactions.

In order to contextualize a real communicative classroom, task-based materials have been designed to support CLT. Among them are simulations, several types of games, and role playing activities.

The implementation must include exchanging information to complete a task, by giving emphasis on oral communication. Ballman (2001) says that task-based activities stimulate cohesiveness because the performance of the pair or the group of students relies on themselves, through mutual collaboration and support. Usually, games and competition are enthusiastically received by many students, where they have to construct something in groups.

THE CASE STUDY

The purpose of a case study is to intensively study a single case that can reveal information about a larger class of cases (GERRING, 2007). In this article, task-based activities were used to carry out the case study, which aimed to identify if the learner was prepared for real-like communication after having had about three and a half years of communicative classes.

For this case study, I invited a former student of mine to participate. I had taught this student for three years in a language course. She is a twenty-year-old Brazilian learner of English, who has already concluded her English studies in the second semester of 2020 in a language course, in the city of Canoas-RS, Brazil. To preserve her identity, she will be referred to as 'Anne' in this article. Anne has studied for four years at the language course, until she reached B1 level. Because she had also studied English at a regular school, she was able to skip the basic one level when she began studying at the language course, and went straight to basic two.

From 2017 to the second semester of 2020, Anne studied levels intro, 1, 2, 3, and conversation, consisting of 40 hours each. The material used in class was Interchange, 4th Edition, by Richards, Hull and Proctor (2012) by Cambridge University Press. Interchange is based on communicative methodology and has been used by more than 50 million people around the world. Every unit of Interchange consists of a specific topic, grammar section, and function (CAMBRIDGE, 2020).

Anne was exposed to the weak version of CLT. As mentioned previously, the weak version underlines the importance of focus on form, and has effectively integrated traditional and communicative principles (NUNAN, 2013). Therefore, the leading method of this study relies on the strategies of the Communicative Approach, with subsequent analysis of speech data. I used task-based activities to evaluate how Anne deals with the tasks communicatively, which can be recognized in her speaking.

Anne is a B1 English student. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), B1 level students are independent users. Independent users are able to understand the main points of evident input patterns on familiar matters usually found in work, school, leisure, and the like. They can deal with situations that appear while travelling in an environment where the language is spoken and can maintain a discussion on familiar topics or on personal interests. The users can talk about dreams, hopes, ambitions, experiences, as well as briefly give reasons and explanations for their opinions and plans (COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2020).

Anne's classes at the language course, from 2017 to the second semester of 2020, included interpersonal speaking, negotiation of meaning, and communicative strategies. The chance to interact with others was established when she had the possibility to know her classmates and learn about new cultures, by using communication to do things together. Her classes were performed in a middle-ground pattern, in which the grammar instruction is used to support communication (BALLMAN, 2001).

Task-based activities

I carried out this case study for a period of six weeks, from August to November 2020. In this period, Anne and I had six online meetings of one hour and thirty minutes each, which were recorded for further analysis. I collected data of Anne's L2 production applying six TBLT tasks, related to her level of instruction. In this section, two tasks are analyzed to show her strengths and weaknesses in real-life communication. These tasks were chosen over the others because Anne seemed to be more interested in the topics they involved. The other tasks discussed issues about the North and the South Pole, which she did not know much, or topics similar to those in the analyzed tasks.

All six tasks consisted of introduction, discussion of relevant questions, post discussion, language focus, report, consciousness-raising, controlled practice, and vanishing words (WILLIS, 2015). The data collected in the tasks was analyzed to attest if Anne was able to solve TBLT tasks.

In the first task, the lesson was based on a true story that was reported in a newspaper a few years ago. The headline was 'I've Just Jumped off the Empire State Building'. As an introduction, the headline was given to Anne and she had to answer the question 'How is it possible that someone who has jumped off the Empire State building will still be alive to talk about it?' (Chart 1).

Chart 1 – Introduction – The Empire State Building

> **Anne:** I think it was like... a sport. Like, a parachute. Like these sports that people fly, maybe.
>
> **Teacher:** OK. Now, I'm going to ask you to use the expressions might have, perhaps, or maybe, and make upa sentence with the word parachute.
>
> **Anne:** The person who jumped off might have used a parachute.

Source: Own authorship, 2020.

It is important to notice that in terms of grammar, Anne did not show any difficulties to use the modal verb 'might' with the present perfect. She also used the phrasal verb 'jump off' from the headline in the correct tense. The second step of this task was to give her some sentences of the original report, so that she would draw her own conclusions of what had really happened. The extracts she was given were the following: decided not to commit suicide; knocked on the window; depressed; took a lift; a ledge on the 85th floor; 300 meters below; hard at work in his office; I poured myself a stiff drink; opened by Bill Stackman; safety fence; a television station. After studying these phrases and having listened to two other guesses, she came up with the story (Chart 2).

Chart 2 – Discussion of Relevant Questions

> **Teacher:** Now, you will try to connect, as much as possible, the expressions from the original text and make up your own version. I'll give you some time to do it.
>
> **Anne:** OK. Is it OK if... like, I don't use all the words?
>
> **Teacher:** Yes, no problem. Can you read your guess for me?
>
> **Anne:** I think there were... I think it is told by a person like... In first person that might be... telling what happened, but my guess is there was a man who decided to take his own life, he was working hard in his office and he was depressed. He took a lift and went 86th floor. In a ledge... in the 85th floor, he decided not to commit suicide. He trespassed the safety fence and knocked on the window that was opened by Bill Stackman. I forgot to say thar before he took a lift, he had a stiff drink.

Source: Own authorship, 2020.

In this step, Anne used negotiation of meaning when she asked "Is it OK if… like, I don't use all the words?". In her version of what happened in the original report, she was able to use all phrases she was given, except for 'a television station'. Later on, she told me that she did not know where to place it, and that it seemed unfit to use 'a television station' in her version. Next, she had to underline from the original text all the expressions with 'self' or 'selves', and explain their word formation (Chart 3).

Chart 3 – Consciousness-Raising – Reflexive Pronouns

> **Anne:** The first one is founf himself all alone, decided to kill himself, throwing himself off, to find himself on, and I poured myself a stiff drink.
>
> **Teacher:** OK, very goof. So, these words with 'self' or 'selves' ate the end are called reflexive pronouns. We're going to analyze myself, herself, itself, yourself, ourselves, and yourselves. OK? So, now we're going to see how theu are formed. You jut have to take a look at these pronouns anf tell me how they are formed.
>
> **Anne:** It is the possessive pronouns, Her and self, it and self, yourself too. I think it is all of them.
>
> **Teacher:** All of them are formed by possessive ponouns, right?
>
> **Anne:** Yes, they are all the same.
>
> **Teacher:** OK, but let's think about himself and themseves. Are himself and themselves formed by possessive pronouns?
>
> **Anne:** I think they are possessives, too.

Source: Own authorship, 2020.

In this part, Anne did not say that 'him' and 'them' are object pronouns, and instead she made a mistake by saying that they are possessive pronouns. In the following part, the language focus was done by giving her some verbs that could be   used with a reflexive pronoun. These verbs were 'enjoy', 'watch', 'behave', 'help', 'feel', and 'kick'. She received some sentences with blanks to fill up with the verbs given to her (Chart 4).

Chart 4 – Language Focus – Reflexive Pronouns

It was such a silly mistake. I could... myself.	*enjoy*
It's dangerous. You have to... yourself.	*watch*
There's plenty of food. You can... yourself.	*behave*
I don't... myself today. I've got a bit of a headache.	*help*
He was looking forward to the party. He was going to... himself.	*feel*
They are always naughty. They don't know to... themselves.	*kick*

Source: Willis, 2015.

According to Chart 4, Anne had to complete the sentences with the verbs she was given. At first, she did not have any difficulties with the vocabulary, but the lack of information related to the contexts of each sentence was noticeable in her speech (Chart 5).

Chart 5 − Language Focus − Responses

Anne: I think the first one is feel. I don't know if it makes sense in the sentence.

Teacher: OK, but we can see all the options and if in doubt, we rearrange them. What about the second one?

Anne: Help.

Teacher: Help yourself? Or maybe watch yourself?

Anne: Oh... watch yourself... 'se cuidar (in her L1).

Teacher: Exactly. The third one?

Anne: Enjoy yourself.

Teacher: When you are going to eat a second portion of the same thing, we say second helping. So, we use the verb 'help'

Anne: Oh... OK.

Teacher: Next one?

Anne: I don't feel myself today... or maybe enjoy. But I think that enjoy myself makes more sense.

Teacher: All right. Let's go to the next one.

Anne: He was going to... behave?

Teacher: Do you understand looking fonvard to?

Anne: Yes, it's 'ansioso' (in her L1).

Teacher: Yes, it is something you really want to do. So, I think it's enjoy here. Don't you think?

Anne: Enjoy himself... yeah.

Teacher: And the last one. Do you understand naughty?

Anne: lt's tipo, levado' (in her L1).

Teacher: Yes, a bad behavior.

Anne: Oh. There is behave.

Teacher: Yeah. That's it. But we didn't use kick.

Anne: Yeah. Maybe in the first one, because it's like... (tapping on her forehead).

Teacher: Yeah, like I did something very stupid that I could kick myself.

Source: Own authorship, 2020.

Anne had some difficulties in almost all sentences. She tried to put them into some context to check if they made any sense for her. When I asked her if she had understood 'looking forward to' and 'naughty', she seemed to think over the meaning before saying the correct answer. It is possible to see that all the time she tried to find some sense in the options, and when she answered wrongly and I gave her another option, she thought over and used the same communicative strategies. I believe that this exercise did not give her the full picture, and this is probably the reason why she did not have good results. After that, she was asked to say what expressions she remembered (Chart 6).

Chart 6 – Controlled Practice

> **Teacher:** Now, you just have to tell me the expressions you remember. You don't need to tell me everything.
>
> **Anne:** You have to watch yourself... something like that. I could kick myself, you can help yourself, he's going to enjoy himself, and they're going to behave themselves. That's all.

Source: Own authorship, 2020.

In this part, Anne showed that she was able to comprehend how to use the verbs from the previous exercise together with reflexive pronouns, and by doing that, she overcame her mistakes. The last step was the recognition of vanishing words. For example, Anne received the sentence 'He had no money and was so depressed he decided to kill himself'. So, I removed some parts of this sentence and she had to remember as many words as possible (Chart 7).

Chart 7 – Vanishing Words

> **Teacher**: He *** no money and was *** depressed he decided *** kill ***.
>
> **Anne**: He had no money and was so depressed he decided to kill himself.
>
> **Teacher**: Very good. I'm going to remove more words. He *** *** money *** was *** depressed he decided *** *** ***.
>
> **Anne**: He had no money and was so depressed he decided to kill himself.
>
> **Teacher**: And now? (Removed all the words)
>
> **Anne**: He had no money and was so depressed he decided to kill himself.

Source: Own authorship, 2020.

According to Willis (2015) this exercise was important to use because of its grammar points. The sentence was chosen because it had a relative clause with 'so', elision[4], 'decided + to', and the reflexive pronoun 'himself'.

The next task, also developed by Willis (2015), is based on a true story that happened some years ago, and was reported in several British newspapers. The first step encouraged Anne to speculate about what had really happened. She received some sentences from the original story (Chart 8), and I checked if she had any questions.

To check Anne's comprehension, I asked her some questions to see if she was able to connect all the elements. In Chart 9, I checked if she knew all the words from the original story. She did not remember some words in her L1[5], so she paraphrased or gesticulated.

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4   Elision is the omission of the pronoun 'he', for example: He had no money and (he) was so depressed.
5   Both Anne's and teacher's L1 is Brazilian Portuguese.

Chart 8 – Introduction – The Robbery

<u>The setting:</u>

The street outside a Richmond jewellery shop.

<u>The characters:</u>

Two young men with sledge hammers.

A pensioner, believed to be 83.

50 onlookers.

Gabrielle Henry, a shop manager.

George Wilson.

<u>Some phrases from the story:</u>

"I've got your DNA."

Rolex watches.

Snatched the balaclava from one of the criminals.

Last seen getting on a number 17 bus.

Without him they would have got clean away.

Source: Willis, 2015.

In this step, Anne used communicative strategies to say that she knew what a 'sledge hammer', a 'balaclava', and a 'sample' were, by making gestures and paraphrasing. Anne and I used negotiation of meaning to have an agreement about how somebody has gotten the DNA. Because she did not know how to say 'test tube', she used her L1 in this task, which can be seen as an important phenomenon. According to Sun and Cheng (2002), students tend to use their L1 when the task arises their interest. The first factor is that both teacher and students speak the same L1. The second factor is that as adults, learners' ability to express themselves in their L2 is not as well developed as their knowledge and experience. According to the authors (*op. cit.*), these two factors provoke a tension between what learners want to say and what they are able to say in their L2. The next step required Anne to tell her version of the story, by connecting as many elements as possible (Chart 10).

Chart 9 – Discussion about the Robbery

Teacher: Do you understand jewelry shop?

Anne: Jóias (In her L1).

Teacher: It's a place where people go to buy jewels. Do you understand sledge hammers?

Anne: I dor't remember the word, but if I see I know what it is. (She makes a gesture pretending she is holding the tool).

Teacher: Do you understand balaclava?

Anne: It is that mask (She gesticulates a mask).

Teacher: Yes, that mask which covers someone's face. OK, Im going to ask you two questions. Why might someone say I've got your DNA?

Anne: I've got your DNA... like, someone has the DNA in a system... telling someone like...

Teacher: Yes, at the moment someone got the DNA from somebody else. But why do you think it happened... or how did it happen? According to the elements we talked about.

Anne: I think someone stole.

Teacher: Stole what?

Anne: The DNA.

Teacher: OK. Do you think the DNA was on something?

Anne: Yeah, maybe onthose glasses (She gesticulates a small container). Tubo de ensaio (In her L1).

Teacher: Right. On a sample?

Anne: Yes.

Teacher: All right. Next question, who do you think got on a number 17 bus?

Anne: There was an old man. I think it was him.

Source: Own authorship, 2020.

Anne showed she had the ability to connect all the characters from the setting. She changed her mind when she said the robbers got on a number 17 bus, instead of the old man. She also managed to describe what each character could have been doing in her version of the story. It is understood that this was possible because of her interpersonal speaking, negotiation of meaning, and communicative strategies, which were developed through CLT.

Chart 10 – Report

Teacher: OK. Now, according to the things you saw... the setting, the characters... you are going to tell me what you think happened in this story. This is a true story. So, you just have to connect al these elements and give me a story.

Anne: I think the bus... last seen... I hink maybe it's one ofthe people who maybe robbed something, because he's getting away, maybe.

Teacher: So, you think the robbers... the two young men... got on the bus to run away, right?

Anne: Yeah.

Teacher: What about the old guy? How can you connect him to this story?

Anne: I think he snatched the balaclava from one of the criminals. Like, maybe without him, they would have got clean away. Maybe he saved the day.

Teacher: OK. What about George Wilson?

Anne: Maybe without him they would have got clean away, because without him... like, it's talking about a man.

Teacher: So, you think without George Wilson?

Anne: Yeah.

Teacher: OK. And what about Gabrielle Henry, a shop manager?

Anne: Shop manager... maybe the shop was the jewelry shop and she was like... working there.

Source: Own authorship, 2020.

After that, the language focus was done by explaining the uses of '-ing'. It was explained that sentences with '-ing' can have different meanings. The first meaning was to describe people and things, and after there is/are/was/were. The second use was after the verbs 'see' and 'hear'. The third use was after time words, such as 'still', 'after', and 'before'. The fourth was to describe an action that happened immediately before another or at the same moment as another, such as 'still carrying the balaclava, walked[6] away'. The last use was after the verbs 'stop' and 'start'. All examples from the texts were given to her to illustrate each use. To complete the exercise about the uses of '-ing', she received some sentences to say which option was correct (Chart 11).

Chart 11 – Language Focus - Gerund

Verbs with *−ing* are used:

a. to describe people and things: *a man wearing a balaclava*. We often see this after *There is/are/was/were*: *There were fifty people **looking on***.

b. after verbs like *see* and *hear*: *last seen **getting** on a bus*; *I saw him **getting** on a bus*.

c. after time words like *still, after, before*: *still **carrying** the balaclava; after **smashing** the windows they were going to steal the jewellery*.

d. to describe an action that happened immediately before another or at the same time as another: ***throwing down** their hammers, they ran away as fast as they could*.

e. After the verbs like *stop* and *start*.

Source: Willis, 2015.

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6   Elision. [...] still carrying the balaclava, (he) walked away.

After having received the information about '-ing' uses, Anne was supposed to match the sentences she was given into the appropriate group. There were some verbs that I did not mention, and she had to interpret them and find out which group they belonged (Chart 12).

In this step, Anne obtained good results in context comprehension in each sentence, which reveals the meaning behind them. Even though the topic was focused on grammar, she was able to connect other verbs that I had not told her, such as 'smell' and 'begin'. In relation to the other four tasks, she was able to conclude all of them. None of the difficulties that could affect the progress of the tasks were noticed. It was possible to come to this conclusion because of the negotiation of meaning and communicative strategies she used.

Chart 12 – Consciousness-Raising – Responses

Teacher: I'm going to give you some sentences now, and you're going to tell me which group they belong to. The first sentence is "I heard someone trying to get into the house".

Anne: It is group B... after verbs, like see and hear.

Teacher: Yes. The second one is there were lots of people waiting for the bus.

Anne: A, because it's a description.

Teacher: OK. The third one is I have to get changed before going out.

Anne: C, after time words.

Teacher: Exactly. Next, snatching off the man's balaclava, he shouted "I've got your DNA".

'**Anne:** I think D, because it happened immediately.

Teacher: Yes. She could smell something burning.

Anne: She could smell something burning... maybe B, because of see, hear, and smell.

Teacher: The senses?

Anne: Yes.

Teacher: All right. The last one, they began shouting.

Anne: B, because start and begin are almost the same.

Source: Own authorship, 2020.

In a case study, Ahmad and Rao (2013) concluded that using the Communicative Approach to facilitate language teaching can produce better results than using traditional methods. Through a case study, the authors (*op. cit.*) proved that CLT is more suitable in a non-native environment, because it improves the learners' communicative skills.

It was noticed that in all six tasks, Anne used negotiation of meaning to clarify something she did not understand. She also used synonyms and paraphrased her ideas, by adapting terms or finding other ways to say something. Ballman (2001) calls it communicative strategies, which occurs when the speaker does not know how to say something and turns to paraphrase or uses a simpler way to express it.

In a task about the North and South Poles, Anne's lack of knowledge about the topic hindered her performance when answering 'true' or 'false'. In another exercise, I asked her to identify sentences in the

comparative form. Although in the text there were four elements in the comparative form, she was able to identify only two. I asked her about the other two elements, and she told me she was not sure if 'less' and 'warmer' were considered comparative forms because they were not between two elements. One example was 'Ocean retains the heat, making it less cold in winter and warmer in summer'. Anne did not understand that in this kind of sentence, the word 'ocean' is compared to itself in different seasons (winter X summer), which is another possibility of comparison. However, it did not affect her communication, because of the communicative competence she developed through years of study. In this sense, Richards (2006) says that despite learner's limitations in the L2, the communicative competence is reached when language is used for meaningful communication. In order to identify if the learner has reached this goal, he describes some elements, which were noticed in Anne's oral production, such as using language for a range of different purposes and functions; knowing how to maintain communication despite having a lack of knowledge; and knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts.

Anne had a good performance in tasks similar to the ones described previously, not showing any language difficulties. In one of the tasks, she had to plan a night out with me, and the result was satisfactory. She was able to ask the things I would like to do, and decide between what she wanted considering my opinion. It was easy to come to an agreement about a perfect night out. According to Richards (2006), learning happens through the process of communicating in the language, and meaningful communication increases students' performance. In order to compare the task about the North and South Poles and the task about planning a night out, I can state that the latter was much more interesting and meaningful to her than the former. As Richards (2020) states, students' performance becomes much better when they are engaged in things that are relevant to their needs and interests. To conclude this analysis, some characteristics described by Richards (2015) were also noticed in her performance. She used communicative strategies to compensate her limitations of grammar and world knowledge. According to the author, language learning happens because of many other processes. In this case study, Anne used meaningful and purposeful interactions, negotiation of meaning, attended to feedback, paid attention and tried out different ways of saying things. These elements were crucial to evaluate the effectiveness of CLT in the acquisition of English as a L2.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Meaningful learning is very important because students' performance becomes much better when they learn things that are relevant to their needs and interests (RICHARDS, 2020). In this sense, being relevant has a lot to do with real communication, because it gives learners the opportunity to practice outside what they learn inside the classroom. Based on this principle, many linguists believe that CLT came to revolutionize language teaching and learning.

During the online meetings, Anne has been able to communicate in real world tasks, through negotiation of meaning and communicative strategies. Although she only concluded the B1 level, and the language course where she studied does not offer more advanced levels, her L2 understanding and oral production provided relatively positive results. I believe her good performance in the tasks derives from the use of Interchange textbooks, which were designed to meet CLT needs, together with teachers' effort to use CLT.

This was not a longitudinal study, but a cross-sectional one. Therefore, Anne's performance was not tested for a long period, which makes it impossible to predict if TBLT activities will always be efficient in

the long term. In addition, according to CEFR, she is an independent learner and all the things she is able to do with the language are reflected on the tasks used with her in this case study. By fitting into the CEFR, according to Cambridge (2020), the learner is ready to take PET and other proficiency tests, which show the applicant has mastered English at different levels and has practical language skills for everyday use.

Above all, it is important to mention that despite some of Anne's weaknesses, the primary goal of CLT, which is to make learners have the ability to get things done in real life situations, was successfully achieved in this study. Finally, I expect that the general and practical aspects described in sections 2 and 3 of this article motivate other L2 English teachers to implement CLT in their classes and to carry out other applied studies about L2 learning.

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