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Functional Approach to Applied Language Teaching

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Abstract

This article explores the teaching of applied language in Department of Applied Foreign Languages (AFL) in terms of functional approach. More than just the description of a teaching method, so dynamic and often varying from one teacher to another, we are interested, in particular, in a successful implementation of the above mentioned approach in the process of knowledge acquisition in specialized language, needed for training and employability of foreign language technicians.

Key words*: Applied Language Teaching, learner, functional and communicative approaches, translation, effectiveness, method, LSP.*

Résumé

Cet article explore la didactique de la langue appliquée en Section de Langues Etrangères Appliquées (LEA) sous l'angle de l'approche fonctionnelle. Plus que la simple description d'une méthode d'enseignement aussi dynamique et souvent variable d'un enseignant à l'autre, nous nous intéressons ici en particulier à une mise en œuvre efficace de l'approche susmentionnée dans le processus d'acquisition de savoirs linguistiques spécialisés nécessaires pour la formation et l'insertion professionnelle du technicien des langues étrangères.

Mots clés*: Didactique de la Langue Appliquée, apprenant, approches fonctionnelle et communicative, traduction, efficacité, méthode, Langue spécialisée.*

Introduction

The outstanding development in many economic and scientific sectors over the last decades has oriented (and is still orienting) the content design process in LSP (Languages for Specific Purposes) or applied Modern/Foreign Languages. Usually regarded as a restricted means for professional communication between scientists, technicians or those belonging to a same field of knowledge, specialized

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languages are actually just components of the general-purpose language whose extension has no limit but global knowledge.

The spreading and popularization of Applied Language use goes certainly hand in hand with their teaching to all learner categories, be they native speakers or not. In training for specific contexts, when learners belong to the same trade, the teacher should adopt individualized approaches. And, as argued by L. E. Ho (1984: 37), the instructor's job is helping "the students communicate about their lives and experiences", i.e. "successfully integrate both socially and vocationally". In this respect, there are various and different approaches that aim mainly at building (or helping build) in the learner any required specific skills for a given field of knowledge or application. Most of those pedagogical theories are sketched out of weaknesses that have been either noticed or just supposed in former ones. This fact, perhaps, does not question the scientific soundness and validity of such approaches but somehow demonstrates the permanent interconnection between former and new ones. In fact, most of theoretical positioning in Foreign Language Teaching is inspired on a systematic appraisal always drawn from ongoing and former experiences.

This paper intends to explore the communicative and functional-notional approaches in the light of the various experiences specific to Applied Foreign Language teaching in our universities[1]. In Senegal, the national Education Act sets the following goal to Foreign language teaching at university level:

> Préparer l'apprenant à s'ouvrir à d'autres cultures, tout en l'aidant à acquérir une certaine maîtrise des langues étrangères qui lui permettra de faciliter son insertion dans la vie active, face à un monde qui a tendance à faire du multilinguisme une exigence du moment.[2]

Considering these official guidelines, the working out process of teaching contents has been oriented towards specific subjects more conducive to make the graduates in Applied Foreign Languages develop the required skills for immediate employability. Among the basic linguistic subjects that determine the building process of those learner's specific skills are Translation, Comprehension/Expression (oral and written) and Applied Language (in Tourism

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[1] My source field is the *Section de LEA* of Gaston Berger University (Saint Louis), often considered as the leading department in AFL teaching in Senegal; the others, much younger, namely in Thiès and Ziguinchor, started just some five years ago …

[2] My translation: "Preparing the learner to be open to other cultures, while helping him/her gain some mastery of foreign languages likely to facilitate his/her employability in a world that tends to consider multilingualism as a requirement of the moment".

or Business). Although the latter, by its denomination, represents the core object of the present study, the analysis is even so extended to all the above mentioned subjects. The very objective does not consist in elaborating a global approach in Applied Foreign Language Teaching – this has already been well carried out by Mbaya (1998) in earlier papers – but rather making some assessment about the effectiveness of two key approaches in the transfer process of technical linguistic knowledge.

Thus, just before giving a more or less limited overview of those approaches, referring to various and general theoretical issues, I'll come back to some key aspects in Foreign Language Teaching; afterwards, I'll draw specific points in Applied Language Teaching and end up with some appraisals on functional and communicative approaches.

1. Some key aspects in Foreign Language Teaching

The success of the teaching process does not depend only on the teacher's pedagogical ability and learner's mental predispositions; actually, there are three other parameters to be taken into account when designing a given programme in Foreign Language Teaching (FLT):

- *The entry profile*: what is the typical fresher learner in Foreign Languages? who are the different categories of learners entering in such training programmes? To answer these questions, one may consider the evolution the field in recent years, namely in terms of learner's categorization.

In fact, since the last century, the craze for acquisition of a new language seems to involve traditional learners, pupils and students as well as people from different socio-professional classes anxious to gain promotion and social recognition, open-mindedness and have direct communicational access to modernity. This situation has definitely brought up changes in the definition of learner's primary competences; as a matter of fact, the training process dwells more and more on the acquisition of a communication rather than a linguistic competence.

This new orientation in language teaching advocates primarily utilitarian aspects and productive knowledge acquired by the learner on the target language. Besides, more and more people, either in schools, colleges or universities and private institutes of languages, are interested in the social practice of language as know-how and an excellent means of communication and personal fulfilment.

However, in the university, the choice of language, among students in Foreign Language departments, is generally subject to the quality and orientation of individual careers, which makes it rather less motivated and deliberate. No

matter what were their personal motivations before succeeding in the A Level exam, if one's final results do not abide by the selection criteria specific to the targeted course, one is compelled to reconsider his/her career path. That's even why there are more students who do opt for a language under a certain institutional constraint, which could, in the short term, influence in a negative way not only the level of interest they may have but also their performance in the field.

Thus, the most common description one could make of the entry profile in FL departments is highly dependent on the learners' former individual performance and careers. Many students do not enter FL departments out of their personal professional projects but rather owing to their results in the A Level Exam that have, somewhat, tallied with the selection criteria.

- *The skills to develop*: what are the specific objectives of the training programme? What kind of final profile (graduate) do we intend to offer to the labour market? The effectiveness of any teaching programme requires a previous definition of the abilities to build in the learner.
Designing specific objectives to Foreign Language Teaching should no longer come under the only institutional competence. The contemporary professional needs, as various as the types of learners, imply that are taken into account, in the development of pedagogic orientations, the different aspirations underlying this unprecedented trend towards the acquisition of a new foreign language.

Indeed, if formerly educational contents used to focus primarily on language as a system aiming, therefore, at the acquisition of linguistic skills, nowadays they tend to lay the emphasis on "what the learner is expected to be able to master at the end of a given period of instruction" (Richards 2006: 36). This innovative approach, also known as Comptency-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) brings to refocus the teaching process on the learner as the final output of the training programme. Semantic, pragmatic and communicative aspects of language are what channels more pedagogical efforts than purely linguistic aspects. The process does no longer consist in teaching language as a discipline that provides the learner with academic knowledge but rather as a tool of effective communication. That's even why more and more linguistic-driven approaches of language teaching fuse with that functional approach, and thus advocate learning grammar and other linguistic aspects only in the service of a *communicative competence*.

This approach recalls the American "object-based teaching" that comes in sharp contrast with the so-called "content-based teaching". It is characterized by the designing of different goals based on what Bertalanffy (1973) called "equifinality". This theory postulates that teaching objectives could be achieved from different methods, in different ways and through different channels, but

preceded by a needs' analysis conducive to the identification and definition of those objectives. Eventually, the latter are prioritized into intermediate objectives ("helping the learner learn to learn") and final ones, i.e. acquiring specific linguistic skills and know-how. Thus, as highlighted by Auerbach's ideas (1986), taken up by Richards (2006: 42), teaching should focus on the outcome of the process, getting the learners to "become autonomous individuals capable of coping with demands of the world".

The combination of all these factors has direct implications on the implementation of any teaching programme in Foreign Languages, whose success is also definitely oriented by the aspirations and internal resources of learners.

- Internal resources or teaching contents: what must be the particular materials, subjects to teach? What prerequisite inputs should the learner have? Once a clear definition of the final skills is set, the success of the instructing tasks requires the teacher choose and outline relevant subjects to satisfy learners' individual needs. In the present context of this research[3], the learner's previous cognitive resources are essentially general, ranging from basic linguistic knowledge in foreign languages (Arabic, English, German and Spanish) to miscellaneous or unspecified background. Given the primary orientation or philosophy of the pedagogic project in Applied Foreign Languages, – instilling into students technical knowledge likely to facilitate their integration into professional sector – the specific subjects to develop should consist of two aspects: "the specialist subject and the language component" (Mbaya, 1998).

The *specialist* subject, concerning Tourism and Business, could encompass various fields such as: economics, computer science, accounting, travel, catering, accommodation, etc. while the *language* learning package will refer globally to two great components: comprehension and expression. These are mostly carried out through grammar, translation and civilization according to communicative and functional approaches (as discussed later in this paper, Paragraph 3). So, as we mentioned earlier, teaching contents in an Applied Foreign Language course are both learner and object-centred; they include students' basic knowledge and needs and also technical knowledge from the specific fields aimed by the training programme. The success of such a combination of learning package certainly requires the implementation of a relevant teaching approach, ranging from communicative to functional views.

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[3] This study is mostly grounded in my teaching experience at the Department of Applied Foreign Languages, Gaston Berger University, commonly known as *Langues Etrangères Appliquées*.

2. Communicative *vs*. functional approaches

According to Richards (2006: 2), *communicative* approach is mainly based up on four learning components: knowing what the learning goals are, how do learners learn language, what activities better facilitate the learning process and what the roles of both learner and teacher in class are. One relevant advantage of those components lies in the fact that they enable sharp emancipation from behaviouristic theories assuming language learning as a set of lexical and grammar-oriented activities. A communicative view of foreign language teaching considers the learner not only as a receiver but also a producer of the teaching contents. Various studies[4] have discussed and provided ample evidence about the great contribution such an approach may have on the efficiency of the learning process.

In fact, by introducing the concept of speech act and proposing a certain internal organisation for the meaning of utterances, communicative approach focuses on the essential needs of learners as social individuals naturally inclined to communicate, interact with others. This conception is facilitated by a previous individual needs analysis in society, which leads to contemplate language acquisition both as means for social integration and also as a tool for comprehending and expressing every single thing that surrounds and determines daily life. Through this point of view, language acquisition does not aim only at formal aspects (language itself) but any sociologic, cultural and psychological rules or conventions that govern those aspects and feature day-to-day communication. In a classroom context, the teaching tools and materials such as texts and student conversational supports must be taken from genuine social situations of language use.

Authenticity is of paramount importance in so far as it brings learning process within a pragmatic scope of language, even though most activities should be carried out inside the restricted space of a classroom, which may make the context sound a bit artificial. Nonetheless, this grants language teaching with basic conditions conducive to the acquisition of a specific "communicative competence", as argued by Richards (2006: 2). The learner becomes the main point of reference likely to orient the whole process in compliance with his/her personal mental dispositions and needs. In such a situation, the teacher is no longer the only master in the classroom but a facilitator, a guide and stimulator. But, this point of view has already been reconsidered earlier by Hutchinson & Waters, assuming that the

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[4] Bailly Nadine & Cohen Michael (2006) : *L'approche communicative : définition générale. Constructivisme Vs. Structuralisme,* Niveau Seuil provide us with an important overview of tens of former works on this subject.

learning process includes necessarily not only the learner's individual needs but also the social and psychological immediate environment; learning is not a mere mental process, it also means a sort of negotiation process including both individuals (learners) and the society that sets the rules to be assimilated. That's even why they:

> …would reject the term a learner-centred approach in favour of a learning-centred approach to indicate that the concern is to maximise learning (1987: 72).

No matter what the main focus of the process may be, it places some stress on the learner, either as a point of reference or as a part of it.

All of these aspects above mentioned, owing to their learner-centeredness, tend to merge *communicative* with *functional* approaches (Rogers, 1991: 11& Rézeau, 2001:95).

The *functional* view of language teaching, derived from communicative approach, contemplates the process as a set of specific contents and objectives designed for the acquisition of a given set of pragmatic skills. It's more about social norm than linguistic norm (Rézeau, 2001:135), which means the emphasis is not specifically laid on language itself but rather on what the latter is learned or intended for. The syllabus designing will be inspired not absolutely on the learner but on what he/she wants to acquire as a functional competence in the target language. That's what D. A.Wilkins (1979:83) states as follows:

> Language always occurs in a social context, which suggests that it is possible for people to concentrate learning upon the forms of language that are most appropriate to their needs. This creates the possibility of a learner-based syllabus to replace the subject-based grammatical syllabus.

In order to meet those teaching requirements, the contents and objectives were formerly elaborated, in the mid-seventies by experts from the Council of Europe, under the denominated as *Threshold Level*. This was an operational model intended to provide communicative abilities to particular types of learners from different social layers and trades in a foreign language. The innovating point in such an approach is in that it presented a new division of teaching contents into *notions* and *functions* abiding by the learner's specific needs in foreign context. Language is therefore regarded as a tool, a means for communication in particular social contexts. And, at the very beginning of the design of teaching contents, the teacher should ask three key questions whose answers would orient the pedagogical main goals: why learning a given language? What are the specific intended skills? What is the *minimum competency*[5] level to be reached? Those

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[5] More reading about this concept in Pekins, J., 2010.

questions could constitute important references for the definition of evaluation criteria. Learner's final skills should be certified on the basis of that *minimum competency*. Is the learner able to both use and understand language in the intended specific contexts of communication? The success level of the teaching process depends on the answer that underlies this question.

However, this pedagogic positioning may be balanced and even criticized[6] somewhat in so far as it tends to give too much priority to pragmatic or communicative aspects to the detriment of formal and structural ones (language itself). For this reason, in an Applied Language course, the teaching goals should stand for both linguistic and communicative functions. This could be an intermediate position Foreign Language teachers could implement very advisedly in the so various and changing teaching contexts.

Communicative and functional approaches to language teaching have, therefore, to be considered as a whole; actually, many theoretical aspects in the functional view are fed on communicative approach to language teaching whose general principles have spawn different pedagogic methods specific to a variety of social and professional needs.

3. Specific aspects in AFLT

Though Applied Foreign Language Teaching is not autonomous as a research field, since it borrows most of its theoretical principles from the global approach to Language Teaching, there are some particular aspects that should determine its pedagogical orientations. Teachers need specific background information to design the required teaching contents. The latter, should embody the learner's specific needs and even orient, to a certain extent, teaching strategies, as Hutchinson & Waters point it out: "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are *based on the learner's reason for learning"* (1987: 19).

All the process is *learning-centered* and includes some special pedagogical attitude in class. The following lines are dedicated to analysing both communicative and functional approaches through two main subjects: *Translation* and *Applied Language*.

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[6] Many ESL teachers and researchers (Cf. Ellis, R., 1994: 654&656), show some reluctance to *communicative approach* and, as Michael Swan (1985:3) says, argue that "grammar has not become any easier to learn since the *communicative revolution*".

3.1. Translation

Applied language teaching in translation is carried out through three courses:
- *Into French* (*version*): the course material is made up by technical texts taken from professional readings of the specific trade or sector. Being French the target language, the translation process will not consist in finding out the intended correspondences (which are well provided by a bilingual dictionary) but rather training the learner to better express into "mother tongue" technical information that have been written down in foreign language. This must be the best opportunity to test and help improve learner's expressive skills in his/her target language. Most of the time, translation is regarded in Foreign Language teaching just as a means for the acquisition of linguistic knowledge. It would stand as an efficient way, often ill-implemented, to second language acquisition (Widdowson, 1978:18; Harmer 1991:62; Ellis 1992:46; Ur 1996:40). Although this has been proven to be an outmoded method, it should be integrated into a whole approach that enables develop accuracy and flexibility in expression. To better explore those ways and means for "appropriate application of translation within a communicative paradigm" (Popovic, 2001:3), the course should follow four major steps:

Step 1, choosing the support text: once the professional field to study is set, the teacher is free to extract his/her text in any of the various topics currently dealt with in the given trade; this needs to be done according to certain pedagogic criteria of choice contemplating the acquisition of specific knowledge on a *progressive scale*. For instance, in tourism, one could start by texts on most common services like transportation or accommodation, and end up with the sub-sector that requires more technical information treatment (marketing, catering, sustainability, etc.). The text content should not be focussed only on lexical items, but also, in a communicative perspective, on cognitive aspects that require linguistic "challenging activities" (Popovic, ibid).

Step 2, pre-translation activities: they mainly concern reading-comprehension and text analysis activities. The teacher's role is to stimulate and orient student's mental appropriation of the text, by: (i) imposing first a few minute-reading, (ii) asking the right question to stimulate understanding and curiosity (what topic is developed in the text? What message does the author want to transmit? How?, etc.), and (iii) then by helping infer the contextual meaning of possible technical terms scattered in the text.

Step 3, translating: remember that specific communicative situations around the professional field or trade under consideration are supposed to be reflected in the

course. Students are not trained to perform translations as professionals. They are rather supposed to show at the end particular abilities to understand and produce relevant information in the target sector. Thus, the translation course will be envisaged not as an *end* but just as a *means* to access to those technical linguistic abilities. However, the more the translating approach lays special stress on semantic transfer and analysis, the better students are prepared to perform translational tasks within the framework of corporate activities and beyond[7]. Assessment of student translations should come under strict consideration of performance indicators in both linguistic and transferring competences into target language.

Step 4, controlling activities: the efficiency of such a method could be gauged through a series of controlling activities, considering two main parameters: lexical performance and semantic transfer performance into "mother tongue" (or A) of information, specific to the trade of specialisation. In both cases, students are required to prove minimum mastery of the key stylistic forms, terms and expressions they've come across in the support text, by using them in written target-language with contextualised communicative situations. This could be achieved through hands-on or homework activities, to enhance their creative writing in the specific language of the specialisation trade: *presenting a company or a tourist destination, describing a corporate marketing policy*, etc.

- Into Foreign Language (Prose):
Translating into a foreign language is more like a language-centred activity than proper translation focussing on semantic transfer. That's even why, the teaching method could be taken in the same way as in translation but only with this specific complex aim: acquiring *linguistic competence in foreign language* (or B)*,* which will consist of two major subjects:

Grammar: grammar for ALT is not independent from traditional grammar, but should be situation-based, i.e. tailored to the learners' needs. As Weaver (1996) points out, "teaching grammar in context" could consist in examining five broad topics[8] among which we remind just two, that seem more relevant to Applied

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[7] More and more students from AFL Departments, namely from UGB, even though they were not specially trained to, are working successfully either in Translation enterprises or, in most cases, as freelancers.

[8] The other three topics are: "(i) teaching concepts of subject, verb, clause, sentence, and related editing concepts, (ii) teaching the power of dialects and dialects of power and (iii) teaching punctuation and mechanics for convention, clarity, and style." (Weaver, 1996).

Language teaching: (i) *teaching style through sentence combining and generating* and (ii) *teaching sentence sense and style through manipulation of syntactic elements*. In both topics, the notions of *style* and *sense* are of paramount importance in so far as the main linguistic requirements in the various trades likely to interest learners place special emphasis on the his/her abilities to produce technical documents, make formal presentations and specific communications that demand clarity, accuracy and a certain in-house formalism. Therefore, pedagogic action, supported by technical discourse specific to the studied trade, needs to focus on stylistic and semantic transfer competences. Such an option does not imply that basic grammar concepts are overlooked; they could be taken up within the framework of an overview course.

Comprehension/Expression (oral &written): it is certainly the final and common aim of the whole language teaching process to build sound communicative skills in the learner. In AFL teaching, comprehension is intended to help students be aware and in control of their reading and listening, by understanding the messages conveyed through technical or specialised discourse and being able to re-express them in an accurate and intelligible way. One of the main goals in teaching comprehension for AFL may be getting the learners to improve their fluency in reading, writing and speaking tasks, especially when these deal with authentic texts taken from a specified professional sector. The success of such an approach is possible through "task-based instructions" (Nunan, 1991; Willis, 1996 and Sanchez, 2004). According to this approach, the teaching actions should bring learners to concentrate more on meaning analysis than on form-oriented efforts. This could come under two different frames and contexts, as showed in the following table:

Context/Frame	
Class	Homework
Activities/ Tasks	
Reading Brainstorming Reordering jumbled sentences Multiple choice items Oral presentations Dialogues	Group works in text analysis Creative writing on specialised topics Fostering oral competition through debates and connected oral activities Etc.

Table 1: Tasks definition/organisation in AFL Comprehension course

The effectiveness of such a method depends a lot on the teacher's specific abilities both as a monitor and instructor. Any guideline he provides for the execution of any given task should include clear orientations conducive to achieving the intended pedagogic goals. The latter are only tailored to develop learner's comprehension and expression specific skills.

3.2. Applied Language

Although it may be regarded as a too technical subject that requires as well some non-linguistic materials, Applied Language (to either Business and International Trade or Tourism) is basically a linguistic course. Applied Language Teaching (ALT) is just another local denomination for Language for Specific Purposes (LSP). In both cases, to do the job adequately, teachers are required to have "enough specific technical background" (L. E. Ho, 1984:36), in so far as teaching contents should be straddling two aspects: a technical component, consisting of the practical experiences in the specialisation field, and the linguistic component, as the basis and conveyor of those technical informational data.

- *Technical component:* The pedagogical previous actions Applied Language teachers need to carry out regard mainly "examining language tasks expected" on the trade or vocational sector (L. E. Ho, 1984: 37). This supposes teachers have established community contacts with professionals, so as to gain certain familiarity with their daily and specific linguistic uses. In *Business* and *Tourism* sectors, a general outlining of the basic language tasks could be presented as follows:

Specialisation	Tourism	Business/International Trade
Course 1	Travel/Tourism Correspondence	Business Correspondence
Language Tasks	Request for information Answering a RI Making/Managing complaints Making/answering to a booking Using the telephone	Request for product information Answering a RPI Placing/answering an order Taking phone orders and dealing with phone claims
Course 2	Marketing	Marketing
Language Tasks	Presenting a new tourist service	Presenting/describing a new product

	· Holding an open and direct commercial conversation with potential tourists · Conducting and informing a tourist marketing research. · Writing an internship or investigative report on marketing issues Etc.	· Holding an open/direct commercial conversation with potential clients - Conducting and informing a business marketing research. · Writing an internship or investigative report on corporate marketing issues · Etc.
Course 3	Tourist company organisation	Corporate internal organisation
Language Tasks	· Being able to provide a general description of any tourist company/service · Being able to make an accurate definition of any of the services/departments included in a tourist company · Etc.	· Being able to provide a general description of regular business company/service · Being able to provide accurate definitions of any of the services/departments included in a regular business company · Etc.
Course 4	Tourist industry inquiry	Business inquiry
Language Tasks	· Providing relevant information/data about tourist industry. · Producing a general investigative or internship report on tourism · Etc.	· Providing relevant information about key issues on business and International Trade · Producing a general research paper or internship report on Business and I.T. · Etc.
Course 5	Technical background	Technical Background
Language Tasks	Travel agents/Tour Operators Transportation in tourism Entrepreneurship in tourism Hotel industry and Catering Tourist policies Etc.	Basic types of business companies Regulations and legal business texts Entrepreneurship Etc.

Table 2: Outline of language tasks in Tourism and Business/International trade

The different contents above presented stand for a global curriculum in Applied Language Teaching, but should not be taken as a global model; it's more adapted to Applied Foreign Language departments (LEA) well known in French speaking universities as a synthetic teaching programme of language skills combined with technical knowledge so as to offer more job opportunities to

students from literary options. The role of language in assimilating technical knowledge is that of an envelope serving as a message conveyor; the conveyor should always fit the message, either in terms of appearance (style and formal rules) or symbol (lexical items). Actually, as Willis (1996:28) argues, what's more important in the process (technical task assimilation) is not the language used to convey information but the achievement of an outcome.

- Linguistic component:

As pointed out by Ellis (2006), task in LSP "necessarily involves language", and the linguistic component in Applied Language Teaching embodies the fundamental actions that should orient any pedagogical goal. This point of view is all the more relevant since the ultimate aim of the whole teaching process in Applied Language is not to turn students into specialists but rather language technicians able to move and communicate efficiently in tourism and business or other connected trades. To attain the intended expert level in technical language proficiency, in addition to linguistic inputs from translation course, teachers need to include and follow up two basic subjects, both in class and outside, in authentic situations: assimilating specialised lexical items/terms and practising authentic or simulated specialised tasks.

In the first subject, teaching aids can be made up of authentic texts taken from practical experiences in the various tourist or business trades. More than grammar, lexicon acquisition is of critical importance in language teaching, for "without grammar little can be conveyed, *without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.*"[9] Meaningful utterances mostly depend on meaningful lexical items. When the latter come under a specific professional field, both teaching and acquisition process will require a particular approach. The role of the teacher as an instructor will consist in channelling and following up the learner's assimilating efforts, taking into account the key principles of "learnability" and "teachability" (Harmer, 1991: 154). In other words, the vocabulary teaching process should go through two main stages: teaching first *concrete words* and then gradually *abstract words*.

Examples in Stage 1: tourist words like *yacht, ferry, jet, high speed train* or *courtesy car*, etc. can be described and explained with less pedagogical efforts, because they are easily imagined and represented as concrete, real elements. They all refer to the same collective concept, *transport*, whose definition only reminds of a complex idea that needs much more explanation (stage 2).

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[9] Thornbury, Scott. *How to Teach Vocabulary*. London and New York: Longman, 2002.

Examples in Stage 2: analysing business and economic words like *stock exchange*, *gross domestic product, merger*, etc. requires much more efforts and a certain pedagogical approach. As specialised lexical fields, they could also be designed as course topics or chapters, according to a gradual approach, starting from less abstract and complex chapters to more intricate ones.

Teachers should not limit pedagogical goals to assimilating a certain number of vocabulary items in a given specialised lexical field; but, as controllers of the effectiveness of the learning strategies, they have to make sure the numerous combinatory possibilities of key specialised words (studied so far) are assimilated by learners. To this end, Lewis' (1993) approach to language teaching could be certainly helpful. Considering the functional view of language aiming at the acquisition of various skills in using linguistic tools to perform tasks, high lexical knowledge needs to be laid down as a pedagogical prerequisite for both functional and communicative competences. According to Lewis, lexical items constitute the main part of language and are divided into four great categories: (i) *Words and polywords*: they are the basic essentials learners need to memorise; (ii) *Collocations* are frequent and almost natural combinations of words intended to convey particular meaning; (iii) *Fixed expressions* (set phrases) and (iv) *Semi-fixed expressions*: like collocations, set phrases are often regarded as the most important part of lexical complex items, in so far as they help learners build their "ability to chunk language successfully" (Lewis, 1997) and gain certain fluency and accuracy either in oral or writing tasks. Thus, in Applied Language Teaching (ALT), linguistic component grants great importance to the acquisition of lexical competence for specific purposes, namely through an effective control of those four lexical categories.

Conclusion

The purpose of the present paper was to outline and analyse key aspects in the functional approach to Applied Language Teaching, so as to assess their effectiveness in the achievement of pedagogical goals. Some proposals we've made are mostly intended to help teachers better control and orient the learning-based process. In view of all that's been said so far, three conclusions are worth highlighting:
  -    Functional approach, almost like communicative approach, enables to better integrate learners' vocational needs in the teaching contents and process. Thanks to a previous needs analysis, that aims at defining learners' expectations

and requirements, functional view to Applied Language Teaching offers fruitful ways and means to settle and develop efficient teaching materials and activities.

-   Although acquiring specific skills in technical professional fields may be of critical importance, the pedagogic interest for technical knowledge should not overweight the linguistic component in the definition process of teaching materials, goals and tasks. Teachers must remember always that the final objective in ALT (just like in LSP) is not developing technical skills in learners but rather linguistic abilities to move and communicate in specific trades. That's even why mingling both technical and linguistic knowledge is a prerequisite ability for LSP teachers.

-   A better and more flexible use of key linguistic subjects (*Translation*, *Comprehension/Expression* and *Applied Language*), from a functional view, helps teachers improve their pedagogical performance and learners enhance technical communicative skills.

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Cette revue annuelle, organe du G.E.L.L., publie des articles traitant exclusivement des langues, du discours et de la littérature. Ils pourront être rédigés en français, anglais, allemand, arabe ou espagnol.

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