

INFLUENCE OF FUNCTIONALISM IN LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

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Abstract

Since the emergence of functionalism in the 1970s, with its view of language as a dynamic, open system whose primary function is communication, the parlance of Applied Linguistics¹ has seen drastic changes in its approach to language study, particularly, touching teaching and learning. This paper examines the approach of the functionalists to language description with the view to determining the influence it has on language learning, specifically. This, as should be expected, implicates language teaching - a process that facilitates learning. The study finds that, apart from apparent shift in attitude to the nature of language and focus on what the learner needs to learn, the functionalists approach has brought about significant changes in methods and technique of language teaching especially through communicative language teaching (CLT). However, it is found that in this part of the world, the influence seems more of a theoretical thing that thrives only in the world of discourse than a practical one. It is recommended, therefore, that teachers be more exposed to the current issues and practices in language teaching. Seminars, workshops and re-training programmes in which they will be acquitted with current issues in the field need to be organised for them by the governments and non-governmental organisations.

INTRODUCTION

¹We use Applied linguistics in the narrow sense of it whereby it is seen as the application of insight gained from linguistic theory, description and analysis to solve practical problems and issues relating to language teaching (or problems in the classroom), not in the broad sense whereby it is seen as application of these same insights to solve problem relating to human communication, generally.

There are two opposing views underlying language description and pedagogy. namely, the formalist and the functionalist views. The former stresses the importance of linguistic codes or forms and seeks explanation for the structure of language from the linguistic system itself whereas, by contrast, the latter sees the structure of language as driven by its function. Based on these two views, the two principal approaches underlying language description and pedagogy, namely: formalism and functionalism were birthed.

The interest of this work is basically on the functionalist view (functionalism), precisely, on its influence in language study, particularly, language learning and teaching. However, by way of setting the background and, to promote clearer understanding of the basics, it is pertinent to present run-throughs of the two views, concentrating mainly on their emergence, tenets and popularization in linguistic scholarship, and zoom in on functionalism thereafter.

Overview of formalism and functionalism in language study

Formalism and functionalism are, according to McElvenny (2019), a pair of highly productive and polysemous terms that occupy a central place in much linguistic scholarship. The mention of formalism and functionalism evokes in the mind of many a scholar an idea of diametrically opposed views and approaches in language study. Put in the exact words of Newmeyer (2010, p.301), Formalism and functionalism in linguistics are often taken to be diametrically opposed approaches. However, as Newmeyer (p.301) further argues, a close examination of the relevant phenomena reveals that the two are complementary, rather than being irrevocably in opposition to each other. While this position of Newmeyer may be true, it does not obviate telling the two apart as it behoves us to do in what follows.

Formalism

The term *formalism* derives from the word *form*. The notion of form is not etymologically linguistic nor is the idea it conveys an exclusive concern of linguistics. Form is primarily a

biological term. Form refers to the shape or visible structure of a thing or person (Wikitionary 2020). Defining form, Willianson (2014) writes:

In general, *form* refers to the shape and structure of something. It can also mean the organization, placement and relationship between things. As such, language form refers to the so-called surface features of language and how these are arranged. The rules that govern how particular language features are arranged are the grammar of the language.

On a practical level, according McElvenny (2019)

... “form” has long been employed in a general sense to refer to the perceptible outer appearances of linguistic expressions, especially in connection with the inflectional variants of words. On a deeper theoretical level, there has often been an effort to find underlying motivations for these appearances and so conceive of “form” in senses loaded with metaphysical and epistemological significance (2019, p.v).

Diverse notions of "form", as embedded in biological, cognitive, aesthetic, physics, computing, and mathematics discourses exist, and have been employed in accounts of language structure and relationship (cf. McElvenny 2019).

Following from the diverse definitions and interdisciplinary nature of the term form, the notion of formalism – one of the derivatives of form – “harbours a family of senses referring to particular approaches to the study of language as well as representations of linguistic phenomena” (McElvenny 2019). Therefore, like its parent, the term “formalism” defies concise definition, although when applied as labels to directions in linguistic research they generally imply concentration on internal systematicity to the exclusion of external explanatory factors alongside an inclination to abstraction and axiomatization – two tendencies that may in fact manifest independently of one another (McElvenny 2019, p.iv; cf. Newmeyer 1998).

In the accounts of Harvey (2020), formalism “is now usually taken to refer “to the formal method and the formalist school which emerged in Russian literary studies after 1916.” According to him, Russian Formalism initially proposed that a text must be analysed for its intrinsic character prior to considering it as a social or ideological document – a view that has ever since drawn a complex argument about its implications. Currently, formalism has exhibited many different tendencies.

Formalism as a research mindset is at home in many fields – such as logic, mathematics, aesthetics and literary studies – and represents an area of rich historical cross-pollination between linguistics and other disciplines (McElvenny 2019). In the study and description of language (specifically, teaching and learning – the focus of this paper), formalism is a theoretical orientation or approach which emphasizes the structure/form of a language, or more technically, *language code*. As opposed to functionalism, which sees language as a dynamical system whose meaning is not constructed independently in the mind, but reflects our overall experience as human beings (Alba-Juez, 2016), formalism considers language as an autonomous arbitrary system whose form is independent of its function.

From the classical era, when issues appertaining to language began to receive more definite and defined attention, till the 1970s, “form” remained solely the object of focus in language description – teaching and learning. This aligns with Anasiudu (2001, p.35), who specifically situating it on teaching, remarks: “For long, the focus of language teachers was on the structure of the target language as the basis of language teaching.” The assumption underlying the formalist approach in focusing the structure of language is that, according to Anasiudu, “the knowledge of grammar would lead to an effective use of language.” In other words, the target of the formalist in language teaching is the grammar of the target language (L₂), with the belief that the learner's effective use of the language depends on his mastery of the structural principles of forms of the language.

The common-sense view of what language is for is "language is used for communication" (Van Valin Jr., 2003). Surprisingly, in the words of Van Valin, "most prominent linguists in the field reject this view" completely, and many others hold that the fact that language may be used for communication is largely, if not completely, irrelevant to its study and analysis. Chomsky champions this view, and those who are in substantial agreement with his position are called formalists. Opposing Chomsky are the functionalists – those that are strongly committed to a view of language which takes its role in communication as central to its study and analysis.

From the account of formalism by some authors, one may be tempted to conclude that formalist approach started with Chomsky (see Van Valin Jr, 2003). What is correct to say in this regard, rather, is that the dichotomy set up between the formalist and the functionalist was formalized with the thesis of Chomsky. Formalist approach had been since the classical era, but never so-called before the 1970s. It is functionalist view that can correctly be said to have gained its wider theoretical acceptance and popularity during the 1970s; informed by the disagreement over what constitutes the primary function of language.

The history of formalism from its classical beginning to the present is epochal. There are three epochs, each marked by different grammars. The three grammars of formalism *are traditional grammar, structural grammar and transformational generative grammar (TG)*. They have all, according to Anasiudu, provided data to different degrees for language teaching. In other words, they have influenced language teaching and learning with the different tenets that characterize them. Anasiudu (2001), in detail, presents the tenets of the grammars and the methods employed by each in describing and teaching language.

Traditional Grammar

Traditional grammar has no particular theoretical base. However, in Crystal's view (cf. Anasiudu, 2001), the grammar thrives on the tenets that

- (a) Language is static and any change is a corruption of the language and so unacceptable.
- (b) Grammar is a set of normative/prescriptive rules, based on the standard dialect.
- (c) Grammar is universal; all languages, therefore, are expected to display the same features.

It is based on these tenets that the traditional grammarians designed methods and techniques of describing and teaching language which are basically prescriptive. Traditional grammar based its analysis on written form of language. As such, the classical work is seen as the standard based upon which prescriptions on language usage are given.

Structural Grammar

Structural grammar, according to Anasiudu is based on the theory of behaviourism and characterized by the tenets

- (a) Language is speech. Spoken medium is, therefore, emphasized over writing.
- (b) Language is a system of forms, which are items combined to form sentences.
- (c) The language system is arbitrary; hence, the relationship between a word and the object it stands for is conventional.
- (d) Language is for communication; hence, samples for analysis are drawn from speech, though the emphasis remains on form.

The structuralists employ slot-filler technique in analyzing the structure of a language; in teaching, "drilling" is also favoured. In the structuralists' view, language is a set of habits; therefore, learning a new language is simply forming a new set of habits. Moreover, meaning does not seem central to the structuralists, hence it is avoided. This informed their mechanical method of teaching.

Transformational Generative Grammar (TG)

Another grammar that, in the words of Anasiudu, ^c "services" formalism' is TG, which is based on the theory of *mentalism*. The tenets of TG are:

- (a) Language is a mental phenomenon, not a set of habits. It is innate and so an "intrinsic inheritance of human beings" and that there is Language Acquisition Device (LAD) that facilitates every normal child's easy acquisition of language.
- (b) Language is universal. All normal children acquire language and all languages share certain common characteristics.
- (c) Language is system that relates meaning to things. Therefore, meaning is the sole object of language.

Based on the above, the leading transformationalist, Noam Chomsky, posits that the perfect knowledge of language is that possessed by the native speaker. Thus, the descriptive target of the linguist should be the native speaker's grammar. Against this backdrop, Chomsky in his *Syntactic Structures* (1957) identifies two sets of processes involving phrase structure (PS) rules and transformational rules (see Anasiudu 2001 for details).

In sum, the three grammars of formalism influenced language teaching and learning in different ways, though, the bottom-line has remained emphasis on form. Both the traditional and the structuralist grammars have been extensively used in language teaching, but the same is not true of TG. This is attributable to its abstractness (Anasiudu, 2001),

In this paper, our interest is in the functionalist approach. Our overview of the formalist approach in the foregoing arose out of the need to have at least a basic knowledge of it, since functionalism hardly can be understood without understanding formalism from which it departed. We shall seek to examine, in the paper, the various ways the functionalist approach has influenced language learning, which implicates language teaching also.

Functionalism/Functionalist Approach

We have in the foregoing characterized the contrasting views on the primary function of language, which gave rise to a dichotomy set up between those linguists who believe it to be communication and take communicative functions of language to be important for its analysis (the functionalist), and those who at the very least consider the communicative functions of language to be irrelevant to its analysis, following Chomsky (the formalist). We have also noted that formalist approach solely ruled the parlance of language study and teaching till the 1970's when functionalist approaches birthed some drastic changes in language pedagogy.

The notion of functionalism is associated in many linguists' minds with a dichotomy between formal and functional approaches (cf. Mackenzie 2015). Functionalism, as a term, derives from the word "function" which generally refers to an activity that is natural to or the purpose or role of something. In linguistics, functionalism (also referred to as functional linguistics) refers to the approach to language study that is concerned with the functions performed by language, primarily in terms of cognition (relating information), expression (indicating mood), and conation (exerting influence) (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1998). It refers to an orientation in linguistic research which emphasizes language functions and the way these functions are actualized in communication.

Functionalism, according to Bell (1981), is a view of language as a dynamic, open system by means of which members of community exchange information. Put differently, the functionalist view sees language as a dynamical system whose meaning is not constructed independently in the mind, but reflects our overall experience as human beings (Alba-Juez, 2016). The functionalist approach derives from the socio-linguistic orientation and specifically the ethnographic description of communicative functions. According to Agbedo (2007), the socio-linguists and the ethnolinguist emphasize the point that using language for communicative purpose means more than just using language forms correctly. In line with this contention, Agbedo has argued that the context in which language is used is extremely

relevant to linguistic interaction between groups and individuals. This context, according to him, is equally structured and has a rule system so that the competent language user will have to apply this rule system as well in order to be able to communicate adequately.

Characterizing functionalist approach, Anasiudu re-echoed Bell's definition of functionalism above, noting that while formalist approach views language as a static, closed system, the functionalists approach, on the other hand, considers language as a means of exchanging information and, therefore, a dynamic, open system.

The functional view to language description and pedagogy was ideated in Malinowski's (1923) work, in which he birthed two important concepts to the functional approach, namely:

- i. the context of situation as indispensable for understanding language; and
- ii. the reference to social and emotive functions in communication (Yalden, 1987; cf. Ahmed 2013, p.92).

from the works of Bronislaw Malinowski, a professor of anthropology at the University of London.

Also pivotal in the emergence and popularization of functional approach to language description (or functional linguistics, as it is generally called) was the Prague school. The Prague School was a Czech/Russian-dominated, Prague-based group of scholars, which held sway in the 1920s and 1930s, and whose members (most prominent among whom were Vilém Mathesius – who was the founder – the Russian linguist Nikolay Trubetskoy, and the Russian-born American linguist, Roman Jakobson) published a number of far-reaching works that proposed and advanced a functional approach to language study.

According to Ahmed (2013, p.92), the functional approach visualizes language as a tool that performs a number of essential functions or tasks in the community, which uses it. The most outstanding among these tasks is the communicative function – serving the needs and wants

of the mutual understanding of individual members of the given language community (Ahmed 2013, p.92; cf. Yalden, 1987).

Highlighting the contributions of some Prague linguists in developing functionalism in language study, Ahmed (2013, p.92) states:

The Prague linguists try to apply their functional views in language teaching. These views are also elaborated by Jakobson (1960), who draws a distinction between everyday language and poetry in terms of poetic functions and communicative functions. His dichotomy between poetic speech (expressive) and communicative speech (transactional) is criticized because all the language functions overlap in the verbal communication whether in poetry or everyday language.

Another prominent figure in advancing the functional ideas is John Rupert Firth, commonly known as J. R. Firth. Inspired by Malinowski's work (1923), Firth (1957) developed his theory of context of situation and its application to language description, which according to Ahmed (2013), has led to the functional syllabus design. Both Firth and his predecessor, Malinowski, expressed the same view of language context-dependent (in terms of meaning) and sociological (in terms of orientation). This view opposes the form-based view of language as being a self-contained system (in terms of meaning generation), and psychological in orientation.

Michael Halliday, inspired by the notion of his teacher, J. R. Firth, and also influenced by Malinowski, gives accounts of meaning and context of situation (Halliday 1973; 1975; 1976; 1978), which remained a "driving force in linguistics" (Ahmed 2013, p.93) up till date. Halliday's works on the development of functions in the communicative language and language functions in society are connected to his formal linguistic theory (known as systemic functional grammar), which has led to the development of notional-functional

syllabus, and becomes the base for the modern functional approach to language teaching (Ahmed 2013).

Tracing the origin of the functionalist approach to language learning, Oluikpe (personal interaction) holds that Hymes' communicative competence served as the germ that developed into serious studies in language functions. Bell's (1981) account has it that descriptive linguists themselves, during 1960s and 1970s, were evolving models of language which concentrate more and more on semantics and this led to their accepting that part of the meaning of a word or sentence lies in the situation in which it is used. This means that semantics overlaps to some degree with pragmatics. Continuing, Bell states that simultaneously, the philosophers were turning their attention towards the analysis of ordinary language; which according to him began to have a substantial impact on linguistics in the 1960s with the appearance of Austin's *How to do Things with Words* [1962].

The above implies that functionalist approach is a *potpourri* of insights from a number of fields. Anasiudu, highlighting this, has averred that the functionalist approach has developed with ideas from different disciplines including not only linguistics, philosophy and socio-linguistics, but also such others as psychology.

Influence of Functional Approach on Language Description

In Applied Linguistics, the influence of the two major theoretical approaches – formalist approach and functionalist approach – is evident in various areas. (We shall concentrate only on the influence of functional approach here). A number of grammatical models have arisen out of functionalism, all in the bid to show that knowledge required for fluent, effective and appropriate use of language is much more than knowing the abstract forms and ability to combine syntactic components. Though, many models of grammar attributable to functionalism exist, we may wish to comment of few them here.

Case Grammar (CG): This is one of the numerous reactions to TG. It came to light in the late 1960s and was known under the cover label of Generative Semantics. Charles Fillmore is the champion of this grammar. In his seminal paper *Case for Case* published in 1968, he elaborated the theory of ‘deep case’. Deep cases were conceived as making up part of the deep structure of sentences and were held responsible for determining the semantic function of constituents

Functional Grammar (FG): This model has developed out of dependency Grammar. It is termed functional because it conceives language as a tool for verbal interaction, and assumed that grammar must be understood and explained as far as possible within the framework of language usage. The first complete account of FG is Dik (1978); later elaborations of the theory are incorporated into Dik (1997), which was published posthumously.

FG seeks to conform to three criteria of adequacy:

- i. Pragmatic adequacy: linguistic theory must assume linguistic description which can be interpreted in the wider framework of pragmatic theory of verbal communication
- ii. Psychological adequacy: FG strives to develop a theory in agreement with the finding of current psycholinguistic research on language acquisition, language processing and language production;
- iii. Typology adequacy: the theory of FG must apply to all languages, regardless of their typological features.

In FG, the sentence is the basic domain of syntax, it is conceived of as having a layered structure, which includes a core and a periphery, and sentence constituents are viewed as functioning on three distinct relational levels: semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic. Accordingly, each constituent is assigned a semantic, a syntactic and a pragmatic function within each given sentence (Luraghi and Parodi, 2008). In order to gain high practical

acceptability, FG refrains from using abstract concepts typical of formal approaches such as TG.

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG): SFG is a functional approach to language developed by Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday, a British linguist. The word ‘functional’ in SFG refers to the communicative function of language, with special emphasis on the social aspect of linguistic interaction. Following the central relevance of social interaction for linguistic analysis, SFG focuses on discourse structure, rather than on sentence structure. There are three metafunctions connected with this model of grammar: ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions, which we will not discuss further here.

Influence of Functional Approach on Language Learning/Teaching

Though the grammatical models briefly discussed above are not specifically or directly aimed at teaching, elements of these models of grammar are quite evident in teaching method and syllabus design. The practice of applied linguistics saw a drastic change during the 1970s occasioned by the new orientation brought in by the shift from formalism to functionalism. From the functional perspective of language learning and teaching, language is basically seen as a vehicle for communicating meaning and messages [Richards and Rodgers, 1995]. In this light, it is, therefore, the goal of a language teacher to teach the language learner those features of language that will facilitate his ability to express functional meaning. Corder (1975) cited in Ezeude (2007, p.203) captures the belief and goals of the functionalist in the following words:

We do not teach language for its own sweet sake... We teach language so that our pupils can communicate and be communicated with, so that they may convey meaning and understand meaning, so that they may enter into satisfactory mutual relation with speakers or writer of the language.

Looking at Corder's statement above, one may argue that those goals can equally be achieved through formalist approach, and that was exactly what Chomsky did. However, studies have evinced that more are actually communicated than is actually spoken or written. More so, meaning often derives from beyond the structural elements/constituents in an expression (Ezeude, 2007). Communicating effectively, therefore, involves more knowledge than of structures and forms in a language. It is that extra knowledge (background knowledge) that enables the speaker-hearer to relate the structural elements to external (functional elements) to convey meaning. This is exactly what Hymes' communicative competence tries to characterize.

Communicative competence, in essence, is a term established by Dell Hymes (197). It is, according to Agbedo (2007, p.343), the knowledge needed by a speaker or hearer, but is much more broadly based than the *linguistic competence* of Chomskyan linguistics. Instead of referring only to the knowledge of linguistic forms, Hudson (1980, p.219-20) observes that communicative competence includes our knowledge of how to use linguistic forms appropriately. Therefore, the goal of a student of language, notes Hymes should be to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. According to Agbedo (2007, p.343), he acquires competence as to when and when not to speak; as to what to talk about and with whom; when, where, in what manner, etc.

Hudson (1980, p.220) has argued that one of the main components of an individual's communicative competence is a vast *schemata* or abstract structures, for efficiently handling particular types of problem - how to tell a joke, introduce people to each other, etc. It is this type of linguistic knowledge that characterizes the objectives of functionalist approach to language teaching (Agbedo). This central objective is implicit in Littlewood's (1981, p.iii) who posits, as cited in Agbedo, that the learner "must develop strategies for relating these (linguistic) structures to their communicative functions in real situations and real time..." On

this note, Littlewood concludes that language teachers "must provide learners with ample opportunities to use the language themselves for communicative purpose".

The implication of the two aspects of communicative language use should be clearly incorporated into the teaching/learning process. In the first place, 'task-oriented' activities have to be included, i.e., the learner has to be set "task" to be mediated through language; actual meaning should be central to these tasks, which should be of the type where success or failure is seen to be judged in terms of whether or not these tasks are performed. (Agbedo 2007, p.343-4). The second strand of functionalist language use which Littlewood considers to be of importance to language teaching is, according to Agbedo, the information gap principle. Explaining this principle, Agbedo has it that for the success of the teaching/learning process, the language material used should be as realistic as possible, and this precludes making learners converse about matters with which both the learners and their conversation partner are fully informed. Although, as observes Agbedo, "these two principles have been referred to as the most important principles, which should be given special attention, Littlewood (1981) and Johnson (1979a, 1982) do not lose sight of the fact that the structural elements of language and language skill must also be taught and practiced.

The influence of functional approach has also been evident in grammar texts such as Leech and Svartvik (1975), a communicative grammar based on correspondence between structure and function. In this learners' grammar, each section is built around a major function of language, such as denial and affirmation, describing emotions, and presenting and focusing information (Schmitt, 2002).

The different approaches have equally influenced syllabus design. As Far (2008) points out, during the recent years, the focus of syllabuses has shifted away from structure to situations, functions and notions to topics and tasks. Under formal approach, many grammar texts are based on structural syllabus design which are defined in formal terms, with lexical items and

grammatical patterns presented according to structural categories such as nouns and noun phrases, verbs and verb phrases, verb tense and aspect, and clause and sentence types. In contrast, the ideals of functionalism is obvious in notional syllabuses, which are defined in functional terms such as the speech act of requesting, ‘*Could you VP?*’; offering, ‘*Would you like X?*’ and so on (Schmitt 2002); these notional syllabuses developed at a time when linguistic interest had begun to shift to the communicative properties of language (Widdowson, 1979).

Various teaching methods also draw on insight from functional approach. One of such teaching approaches that evolved from functional considerations is communicative language teaching (CLT), which according to Schmitt, view language as communication and consequently shifting the focus from sentence-level forms to discourse-level functions.

Hymes' communicative competence as can be seen above stimulated great interest in studying language functions and culminated in Wilkins, *Notional Syllabuses* (1976) – a work that actually led to CLT whose tenets include

- (a) Fluency over accuracy
- (b) Appropriacy (right language for a given situation)
- (c) Authenticity (language that is real to life).

CLT is an approach to the second and foreign language teaching that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. It is also referred to as “communicative approach to the teaching of foreign languages” or simply the “communicative approach”. Historically, CLT has been seen as a response to the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), and as an extension or development of the notional functional syllabus, Task-based language learning, a more recent refinement of CLT, has gained considerably in popularity.

As an extension of the notional-functional syllabus, CLT also places great emphasis on helping students use the target language in a variety of contexts and places great emphasis on learning language functions. Unlike the ALM, its primary focus is on helping learners create meaning rather than helping them develop perfectly grammatical structures or acquire native-like pronunciation. This means that successfully learning a foreign language is assessed in terms of how well learners have developed their communicative competence, which can loosely be defined as their ability to apply knowledge of both formal and sociolinguistic aspects of a language with adequate proficiency to communicate.

CLT is usually characterized as a broad *approach* to teaching, rather than as a teaching *method* with a clearly defined set of classroom practices. As such, it is most often defined as a list of general principles or features. One of the most recognized of these lists is Nunan's (1991) five features of CLT:

1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the Learning Management process.
4. An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
5. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

These five features are claimed by practitioners of CLT to show that they are very interested in the needs and desires of their learners as well as the connection between the language as it is taught in their class and as it used outside the classroom. Under this broad umbrella definition, any teaching practice that helps students develop their communicative competence in an authentic context is deemed an acceptable and beneficial form of instruction. Thus, according to Wikipedia (2009), in the classroom, CLT often takes the form of pair and group work requiring negotiation and cooperation between learners, fluency-based activities that

encourage learners to develop their confidence, role-plays in which students practice and develop language functions, as well as judicious use of grammar and pronunciation focused activities.

In the mid 1990s the Dogma 95 manifesto influenced language teaching through the Dogme language teaching movement, who proposed that published materials can stifle the communicative approach (see Wikipedia *ibid*). As such the aim of the Dogme approach to language teaching is to focus on real conversations about real subjects so that communication is the engine of learning. This communication may lead to explanation, but that this, in turn, will lead to further communication

CLT has two branches: English for General Purpose (EGP) and English for Specific Purpose (ESP) (Oluikpe). We can as well generalize these to be language for either general purpose or specific purpose LGP or LSP. However, we shall for our discussion purpose employ the former.

EGP focuses on general principles guiding the use of English in all situations. On the other hand, ESP focuses on helping learners to cope in their given professions or areas of study. To this end, ESP divided into such areas as *English for science*, *English for academic purpose*, *English for Business*, *English for medical doctors*, etc. To teach in these areas, the teacher requires determining before hand the need (linguistic or otherwise) of the learner. Consequently, fundamental to ESP is the tool of Needs Analysis². The diagram below shows the relationship among the/two approaches in Applied Linguistics

²Need analysis is the process by which the need of a learner of language is determined and specified before teaching proceeds.

Summary

We have looked at how functionalist approach has influenced language learning/teaching since its rise in the 1970s. It has been seen that before functionalism – far back into the classical era – was formalism, though not so christened till the entrance of Chomsky who rejected communicative function as relevant to language study and analysis. While formalist approach last, three grammars service its views. Each of the grammars was founded on different tenets but the focus has remained steadily on form or language code.

Functionalist approach, also with its own models of grammar (Case Grammar, Functional Grammar and Systemic Functional Grammar) having its beginning in the 1970's, accessioned by Hymes' communicative competence, departs from formalist approach drastically. It opposed the formalist view by contending that communication is the primary function of language and since effective communication cannot be capture only by grammatical elements, focus should go beyond forms or language code. With this assumption, the parlance of Applied linguistics witnessed drastic change in teaching/ learning methods.

One of the major teaching approaches of formalism is CLT in which one can talk of either language for general purpose or language for specific purpose.

The introduction of CLT brought about some new methods and techniques in teaching based on its different views of the learners need. CLT made communicative competence the goal of language teaching and developed procedure for teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. It therefore goes without saying that CLT has so much influenced language learning and teaching since its debut, and it has occasioned methods and techniques that depart significantly from those in vogue before, particularly the audio-lingual method which had been in practice since 1950s-1970s. According to Ezeude (2007), the comprehensiveness of CLT makes it different in scope and status from any of the other approaches and methods.

Conclusion

The foregoing has evinced clearly that both formalist approach and functionalist approach have had great influence on teaching and learning of language. The latter has succeeded in upturning the table of language teaching/learning established by the former. We have found, however, that much as this is true, it is limited to theory, as far as this part of the world is concerned. The truth is that functionalist approach has influenced teaching/learning only to the extent that paper discourses are concerned. Formalist approach seems to be the only approach known by the teachers in this part of the world - Nigeria in particular – though many cannot tell the method they use. To say that formalism still has dominion over teaching methods and techniques is to understate the fact: the succinct description of the situation is that it (formalism) still has total dominion. A cursory study of few grammar texts will do more than convince you.

It is recommended, therefore, that curriculum planners should be guided by the appropriate authorities to make real the practices of CLT, which is the major method of functionalist approach, in language teaching in Nigeria so as to maximize its benefit to language teachers and language learners. Seminars and workshops should also be organized for language teachers to get them acquitted with current issues and trends in language teaching approaches, methods and techniques.

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