APPROACHES BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN TEACHING GERMAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract. *The development of oral communication competence represents a central goal in contemporary German as a Foreign Language (DaF – Deutsch als Fremdsprache) pedagogy. Rooted in the communicative turn of the 1970s and aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), modern approaches prioritize communicative competence over traditional grammar-translation methods. This thesis examines key approaches, including the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) paradigm, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), and conversation analysis-informed methods. These approaches emphasize authentic interaction, real-life tasks, and the integration of speaking with listening skills. Drawing on empirical studies and didactic frameworks, the analysis highlights advantages such as increased fluency, motivation, and intercultural awareness, alongside challenges like balancing accuracy with fluency and implementation in large classes or exam-oriented contexts. The discussion contributes to understanding how these methods foster effective oral production in DaF classrooms.*

Keywords: *oral communication competence, communicative language teaching, task-based language teaching, Deutsch als Fremdsprache, CEFR, speaking skills, conversation analysis, foreign language pedagogy.*

Introduction. In foreign language education, the shift from structural to communicative paradigms has placed **oral communication competence** at the forefront. Oral competence encompasses not only linguistic accuracy but also pragmatic, sociolinguistic, and strategic abilities to engage in meaningful interaction (Canale & Swain, 1980). For German as a Foreign Language (DaF), this is particularly relevant given the CEFR's emphasis on communicative proficiency across levels A1–C2 (Council of Europe, 2001).

Historically, DaF teaching relied on grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods, which often neglected spontaneous speaking. The **communicative turn** in the 1970s, influenced by Hymes' (1972) concept of communicative competence and Habermas' discourse theory, redefined language learning as preparation for real-world communication. Today, approaches focus on developing speaking through interaction, authenticity, and learner-centered activities.

This thesis addresses the following questions: What are the main theoretical and methodological approaches to fostering oral communication in DaF? How do they align with CEFR descriptors? What are their strengths, limitations, and implications for classroom practice? The analysis draws on key didactic literature and empirical studies to provide a comprehensive overview.

Theoretical Foundations The cornerstone is **communicative competence**, comprising grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic components (Canale & Swain, 1980). In DaF, this is operationalized through CEFR descriptors for spoken production and interaction, emphasizing fluency, coherence, and appropriateness.

The **communicative approach** (CLT) prioritizes meaning over form, using authentic materials and role-plays to simulate real communication (Richards, 2006). Conversation analysis contributes by examining turn-taking, repair strategies, and adjacency pairs, informing task design for natural dialogue (Henne & Rehbock, 2001).

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) extends CLT by centering lessons on meaningful tasks that require language use for goal achievement (Willis, 1996; Ellis, 2003). In DaF, tasks simulate professional or everyday scenarios, promoting fluency while allowing focus on form during post-task phases.

Methods. This thesis employs a qualitative literature review and synthesis of empirical studies on DaF oral competence. Sources include didactic handbooks, CEFR-aligned curricula, and research articles on CLT/TBLT implementation in German classrooms. Examples are drawn from secondary and tertiary levels, with attention to learner needs, task authenticity, and assessment practices.

Key Approaches and Their Implementation

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) CLT dominates DaF pedagogy, emphasizing interaction in meaningful contexts. Activities include role-plays, information gaps, and discussions to develop fluency (Richards, 2006). In practice, teachers use authentic texts (e.g., podcasts, videos) and focus on communicative functions like requesting, agreeing, or narrating.

Empirical studies show CLT improves speaking confidence and pragmatic skills, though challenges arise in accuracy-focused exam systems (Obodoeze et al., 2018). In Chinese DaF contexts, adaptations address cultural reluctance toward spontaneous speech through structured pair work (various studies on communicative methods in Asia).

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) TBLT organizes lessons around tasks with clear outcomes (e.g., planning a trip in German, debating a topic). Pre-task preparation introduces language, while post-task reflection targets form (Willis, 1996).

In German secondary schools, TBLT tasks like collaborative podcast planning enhance sustained monologue and interaction (research on oral exams in EFL/DaF). Studies demonstrate improved speaking proficiency and motivation at B1–B2 levels,

particularly when tasks are authentic and learner-relevant (e.g., guided tours, professional simulations).

Conversation Analysis-Informed Approaches Drawing from corpus linguistics and spoken language analysis, these methods teach conversational mechanisms (e.g., back-channeling, repair). They are integrated into CLT/TBLT to develop natural turn-taking and discourse coherence (EERA studies on conversational competence).

Practical applications include corpus-based exercises analyzing authentic German dialogues, helping learners move beyond scripted exchanges.

Discussion. These approaches align with CEFR's focus on interaction and production, fostering learner autonomy and intercultural competence. Strengths include increased motivation through meaningful use, better transfer to real-life situations, and holistic skill development.

Limitations involve potential neglect of explicit grammar (leading to fossilized errors), difficulties in large classes, and teacher training needs. In non-German-speaking environments, limited exposure requires creative use of technology (e.g., conversational agents, online tandems).

Hybrid models—combining CLT/TBLT with form-focused instruction—offer promising solutions, as seen in task-supported approaches.

Conclusion. Approaches centered on oral communication competence have transformed DaF pedagogy, moving from form-dominant to meaning-driven instruction. CLT and TBLT, supported by conversation analysis, effectively develop fluency, pragmatic awareness, and interactional skills essential for CEFR progression.

Despite implementation challenges, these methods prepare learners for authentic communication in professional, academic, and social contexts. Future developments should integrate digital tools, AI-assisted practice, and balanced focus on accuracy to maximize outcomes. This evolution underscores the ongoing relevance of communicative orientations in foreign language education.

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