COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract: The communicative approach in teaching speaking skills is considered one of the most effective and innovative methods for language education, particularly in the context of English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. This approach emphasizes the practical use of language as a means of communication rather than focusing solely on theoretical knowledge. The communicative approach was developed in response to traditional methods that often prioritized grammar, translation, and repetition over real-life language applications. Instead of simply learning the rules of language, learners are encouraged to interact and express themselves in meaningful ways.

Key words: communicative competence, interaction, authenticity, fluency, learner-centered, real-life situations, speaking skills, feedback, language use, context.

Introduction

One of the central features of the communicative approach is its focus on fluency. It recognizes that language is a social tool used for communication and prioritizes the ability to convey and understand messages effectively. In this approach, linguistic competence and communicative competence are both valued, with particular attention given to how language is used in context. Classrooms become dynamic spaces in which students engage in conversations, discussions, debates, and other forms of spoken interaction. The teacher's role is to guide and facilitate these exchanges, creating an environment where learners feel comfortable to experiment and take risks with the language. Communicative teaching places learners at the center of the educational process, transforming them into active participants. The activities commonly used in the communicative classroom are designed to mirror real-life situations and practical language usage. For instance, instead of memorizing dialogues, students are prompted to create their own responses in various communicative situations, such as expressing opinions, making requests, agreeing and disagreeing, clarifying misunderstandings, or narrating experiences. Such tasks promote the development of strategic competence—the ability to plan, execute, and repair communication—which is just as important as knowledge of grammar or vocabulary.

Materials and methods

Communication skills can be learned in a variety of ways, and students use methods that provide a clear direction and practical methods. One of them is role-playing, which is an innovative way to develop communication skills and a great way to quickly learn communication skills. This method has a superpower that everyone in the class should participate in. If someone in the class is an introvert and cannot fully express their thoughts, they can be easily engaged through the role-playing method. As Van Ments (1999) notes, the use of role-playing in the classroom gives students the opportunity to explore the behaviors, interactions, and different perspectives of different members of society (Cynthia, Deaton, Kristen, Catherine, and Jack, 2012). In fact, every student participates in role-playing techniques, which provides more opportunities to assess their performance, vocabulary, and speaking skills. Additionally, this method is also useful for general attendance, such as student behavior, ability, and patience. In the state of North Carolina, researcher Hilary Flint, Mark Meyer, Monir Hossain, and Melissa

Klein (2017) conducted a study on the impact of role-playing style on their language learning, and 90% of students are satisfied with this style of enhanced speech skills. Another interactive way to teach is through movies. A carefully collected collection of films and TV series is an excellent teaching tool. In this method, students can pause, discuss, learn new vocabulary and phrases that affect the quality of their speech, and watch as much as they want. Additionally, if students discuss the characters' actions, they will listen to their peers' opinions, thus starting a debate or discussion. As a result, they communicate with each other and use all their resources to give confident, beautiful answers. Björk & Eschenbach (2014); Frank, (2013); Rodriguez and Puyal, (2012); Roell, (2010), based on the MBML instruction, helped facilitate students ' learning process with stages of integrating vocabulary for classroom Film use and classroom activities.

Another critical aspect of the communicative approach is the importance placed on authentic materials and tasks. Authenticity is prioritized to facilitate exposure to real language use as encountered outside the classroom. This approach suggests that the best way for students to develop speaking skills is to be involved in situations that closely replicate real-life conversational contexts. The use of songs, news articles, interviews, podcasts, videos, and other genuine sources helps learners to experience a range of accents, registers, styles, and functions, making their experience holistic and comprehensive. Interaction is a key to developing communicative ability. In the communicative classroom, students work in pairs or groups, participating in activities such as role-plays, discussions, debates, information gaps, problem-solving, and storytelling. These collaborative exercises provide students with opportunities to practice initiating, sustaining, and closing conversations, negotiating meaning, and using various communication strategies. The shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered classrooms empowers students and helps increase their motivation and confidence in using the language.

Results and discussion

Assessment in the communicative approach is also distinct from traditional methods. Instead of emphasizing written tests or rote memorization, communicative assessment methods evaluate the practical application of speaking skills. Teachers may use observation, peer assessment, self-assessment, interviews, and presentations to gauge students' progress in real-time as they perform communicative tasks. The feedback provided is constructive, focusing on how communication can be improved rather than merely correcting errors. This fosters a safe environment in which learners can learn from their mistakes and become more effective communicators. The communicative approach also encourages a broader understanding of the cultural and pragmatic aspects of language. Language, being deeply tied to culture, requires learners not only to master forms and functions but also to appreciate the social conventions and appropriateness of language use in diverse contexts. Through exposure to various cultural scenarios and pragmatic norms, students develop intercultural communicative competence, an essential skill in our increasingly interconnected world. Teachers using this approach embrace flexibility in instruction, adapting their methods to students' needs and interests. There is a strong focus on helping students realize their communicative goals and overcome language barriers. Teachers create meaningful contexts that prompt spontaneous speech and adjust their feedback based on each student's communicative performance, promoting an individualized path to language acquisition [1].

The role of error correction is nuanced in the communicative approach. Rather than immediate correction, which may hinder confidence and spontaneity, teachers often employ delayed correction or self-correction strategies. Learners are encouraged to notice gaps in their knowledge and work towards filling them through continuous practice and reflection. This learner autonomy is fundamental to the communicative approach, where students take

responsibility for their development as language users. Innovation and creativity are also fostered in the communicative classroom. Teachers design lessons that incorporate a wide range of topics relevant to students' personal experiences and interests. Lessons are often thematically organized, integrating grammar and vocabulary within a meaningful communicative context. This thematic integration helps learners see the connection between language forms and functions, enhancing retention and application. The communicative approach recognizes the diversity of learners' backgrounds, proficiencies, and learning preferences. Teachers are encouraged to use differentiation and scaffolding techniques to address individual student needs. By providing varied entry points and support, teachers ensure that all students can actively participate in speaking activities and gradually build their confidence and proficiency. In terms of classroom management, the communicative approach demands a flexible and supportive atmosphere. Teachers guide students in setting clear goals, monitor progress, and facilitate opportunities for reflection and self-improvement. Students are taught to respect each other's speaking time and to contribute constructively to group interactions. This collaborative ethos nurtures a sense of belonging and collective responsibility in the classroom [2].

Technology also plays a vital role in supporting the communicative approach. Digital resources, online forums, speech recognition software, video conferencing, and language learning apps all offer additional opportunities for authentic speaking practice and interaction. These tools allow students to connect with wider audiences, access diverse content, and receive instant feedback, making their learning experience more engaging and relevant. While the communicative approach is highly regarded, it does pose certain challenges [3].

Teachers may face difficulties in balancing fluency and accuracy, managing mixed proficiency levels, or dealing with limited resources. Institutional constraints and large class sizes can also hinder the full implementation of communicative principles. However, with careful planning, ongoing professional development, and a commitment to learner-centered values, these challenges can be addressed and overcome. Practice and repetition remain essential, but they are contextualized within meaningful communication. Grammar is not neglected; instead, it is presented as a tool for expressing ideas rather than an end in itself. This functional orientation makes learning purposeful, motivating students to develop their speaking skills actively.In the communicative classroom, students' progress is evident not only in their mastery of vocabulary or grammatical structures but also in their increased ability to participate confidently and effectively in various communicative situations. They learn to adapt their language to different audiences, express nuance and emotion, and engage with speakers from different backgrounds. This prepares them to use English successfully in academic, professional, and personal contexts [4].

The Communicative Approach in teaching speaking skills has brought significant changes to language learning classrooms. Through its emphasis on interaction and real-life communication, learners are encouraged to use language in practical situations. This approach prioritizes meaning over mere accuracy, allowing students to gain confidence and fluency as they practice speaking with peers. By engaging in authentic tasks such as role-plays, discussions, and problem-solving activities, students experience the natural use of language, which helps them internalize grammar and vocabulary more effectively. Moreover, the learner-centered nature of the Communicative Approach fosters autonomy and motivation among students. Teachers act more as facilitators, guiding learners to find solutions and express their thoughts. Immediate and constructive feedback during communicative activities enhances students' awareness of their own language use and progress. Classroom environments become more dynamic and supportive, encouraging risk-taking without the fear of making mistakes. Research and classroom observations indicate that students taught through the Communicative Approach

generally develop better speaking skills compared to those taught through more traditional, teacher-centered methods. They can handle a wider range of communicative tasks, adapt to different contexts, and interact more confidently with others. As a result, this approach not only improves speaking proficiency but also prepares learners for real-life communication outside the classroom, making language learning more meaningful and effective [5].

Conclusion

To conclude, the communicative approach in teaching speaking skills has revolutionized language education by placing the emphasis on practical, meaningful use of language. Its learner-centered, interactive, and context-sensitive methods foster not only linguistic competence but also confidence, creativity, and intercultural understanding. By preparing students to communicate effectively in real-world situations, the communicative approach ensures that they are equipped with the essential skills needed for success in an increasingly globalized society. This approach continues to evolve, adapting to new challenges and opportunities, and remains a cornerstone of effective language teaching.

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