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Implementing Effective Techniques of Communicative Approach in English Language Teaching

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Abstract: *In the contemporary age of high professional requirements such as excellent communicative skills, the pressure on the learners to develop their communicative skills of English is rather imperative. The need for successful learning of communicative skills of English language suggests communicative ability to be the goal of language teaching. In other words, to teach English language using communicative approach becomes essential. The article presents the issues of implementing the most effective techniques of communicative method to the teaching process of language learners.*

Keywords: *communicative competence, communicative activities (CA), communicative approach, communicative language teaching (CLT), English as a second language (ESL), language learners.*

I. INTRODUCTION

At the era of rapid and profound changes and tensions education requires a gradual shift in curriculum construction focusing on the transferable competencies that learners need to develop in instructional settings. Types of skills and competencies that students need to gain today are different from in the past. The main factors for this phenomenon include expanding communication with the world and increasing speed and scope of information exchange in the global village. The prevailing situation in the web space by the language of the distributed substance is solidly held by English, which is a solid inspiration to learn English for the individuals who wish to advance their worldwide abilities. Every single language has a small number of term patterns. Mastering only those sentence habits would not help the learners to converse in the point words. The learner needs to learn the communication functions of those structures. Language learners should learn how to use the target language appropriately in any situations of society. The real life situations such as asking someone for the time, conversation between customer and waitress, buying a ticket at the airport, ordering a room at the hotel and etc., are important activities for learners to practice.

It is not only important to learn the linguistic forms but also to understand their potential communicative functions and social meanings. That is to say, the learners should be able to relate the linguistic forms to appropriate non-linguistic knowledge in order to interpret the specific functional meaning intended by the speaker. One of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language, combining these units into a more fully communicative view [7].

Communicative language teaching is based on Hymes's concept of communicative competence [5] which is an extension of Chomsky's concepts of linguistic competence and performance [3]. Hymes pointed out that linguistic or grammatical competence alone is not enough to be able to use language in a given cultural social set up. Thus, the situation in which language has to be used becomes relevant for language teaching. He further emphasized that a normal child's acquisition of knowledge of sentences is not only grammatical but also appropriate because of communicative competence [4].

It is important to mention here that communicative language teaching is strongly associated with a number of activities such as group work, pair work, open or cued dialogues, role playing, etc. These activities are called communicative activities and are designed by the teachers to provide an opportunity for learners to use language that they have already learnt in different situations.

A. Basic Research Questions

This study attempted to answer four leading research questions: they are as follows: (1) how do university ESL teachers present the communicative activities in the English language lessons? (2) In what manner do university ESL students behave participating in activities? (3) What are the activity types that university ESL teachers use in presenting communicating activities? (4) What are the challenges that university ESL teachers face while presenting communicative activities?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The present section is devoted to briefly present an overview of what the communicative method is and the type of communicative activities.

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is the name which was given to a set of beliefs which included not only a re-examination of what aspects of language to teach, but also a shift in emphasis in how to teach. A guiding principle was to train students to use language forms appropriately in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes. Activities in CLT typically involve students in real or realistic communication, where the accuracy of the language they use is less important than successful achievement of the communicative task they are performing. Thus, the role-play and simulation have become very popular in CLT, where students simulate a television programme or a scene at an airport.

As it has been discussed above, we can infer that most of the challenges that hinder students not to practice communication in the classroom resulted from nervousness, shyness, low participation, and mother tongue influence.

There are different kinds of techniques and activity types that the teacher should use to teach communicative skills. They include discussions (activities in which the learners discuss and come up with the result), role play (an activity in which learners take part), simulations (letting students bring items to the class to create a realistic environment), information gaps (students should share ideas from each to fill the gap), brainstorming (students can produce any ideas in a limited time), interviews (students can conduct interviews on selected topics with various people)...

In line with the aforementioned communicating activities, the researchers developed the research question which addresses what activities are being used to teach and develop communicating skills. This literature review is a base for the very activities of communicative method in the class.

ESL teachers should play a significant role in teaching and implementing communicative activities. Furthermore, the roles a language teacher needs to play in communicative classrooms as follows:

- *Needs Analyst*: Responsible to determine and address the learners' language needs
- *Counselor*: Takes the responsibility for reconciling misunderstandings among interlocutors to maximize communication through paraphrasing, confirmation, and feedback
- *Manager*: Manages the ongoing group processes in the classroom setting for communication and communicative activities
- *Resource Provider*: Being a knowledge provider offers the necessary help when the learners are missing and they deserve assistance

As the above discussion shows, the roles of teachers in the class need to be immense in addressing the needs of students, advising the students, managing the communicative activities in the class, and helping the students with different resources.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

Communicative language teaching is an approach which provides an opportunity to the learners to communicate in the target language. The use of the functional aspect of language makes them able to communicate in the target language in their day to day life. Generally, communicative language teaching makes use of authentic material because it is important to give them the opportunity to understand how language is actually used outside the classroom. Students are involved in real life situations tasks that require communication. In this approach, the teacher sets up a situation, in which students are likely to be involved in real life. In some activities, the outcomes of them are unknown to the students. The result depends on their reactions and responses. Thus, they will be kept motivated and they will be kept in suspense until they finish the activity and see the clear outcome [8]. Furthermore, in a communicative language teaching class use the language through communicative activities. Most of these exercises are completed through pair and group work. Those activities give students the opportunity to be involved in real or realistic communication. Normally those activities are fluency-based activities, such as role-plays, games information gap activities, interviews [2]. The following activities help to promote language learners' speaking and communication skills:

- Brainstorming – encourages learners to produce the idea of solving practical and scientific problems individually or in groups.
- Discussion – is an active method of sharing opinions on a specific problem individually and freely.
- Role-play – develops confidence and refines the skills.
- Story narrating through the pictures – helps to foster creativeness and imagination.
- Story forming – provides opportunities for learners to improve imagination, speaking and as well as communication skills.
- Reporting – serves as collecting information or presenting attitude to a problem.
- Interviews – chance to practice speaking ability not only in class but also outside and helps students becoming socialized.

When the author of this article began teaching writing and integrated skills courses at a newly opened Shakhrisabz branch of Tashkent State Pedagogical University named after Nizami, a principal assumption was that for academic success the students needed to interact in the target language within their community of learners, and not just within the confines of the traditional classroom.

This was due to the fact that the branch of the university itself was located in an isolated community in rural southern part of Uzbekistan, a setting where opportunity to interact with English speakers, besides some international tourists, was not available.

Since the primary objective of this study was to examine ESL teachers' practice and implementation of communicative skill activities in the Shakhrisabz branch of TSPU named after Nizami at English lessons for students whose major is English.

According to the data, there were a total of 241 students who were studying English as their major, and they were studying at first and second courses, at the first course there were five groups, and second year students were divided into three groups of in 2020-2021 academic year. From the total, 35% of the students (only second course students) were selected as the participants of this study. The selected students were also communicated first by the researcher, and they confirmed their willingness to participate in this study and to give relevant data.

On this, Lund [28] pointed out that "For small populations (under 1,000), a researcher needs a large sampling ratio (about 30 percent)." Thus, based on the aforementioned authors' recommendation, 62 (30%) students were selected and exposed to fill in the questionnaire.

To conduct this study, a total of 62 students (50 female and 12 male) who were registered in the 2020-2021 academic year at Hemis platform, and 10 ESL teachers who were assigned to teach the students whose major is English and were the participants of this study.

The age of students who participated in this study was found between 16 and 25, and teachers' age ranged between 27 and 40. As students are sole individuals that have direct contact with teachers, students in this study were selected as participants for two reasons: the researcher intended to identify how their ESL teachers implement communicating activities in their classes and secondly, to know the kind of activities their teachers use while implementing communicating skill activities. Similarly, ESL teachers were also taken as participants of this study in order to get relevant data about how they implement communicative skill activities and challenges they face while implementing.

The interview with the ESL teachers was conducted to develop rapport and hold general discussions regarding the teaching methods used in the lessons, attitude and behavior of their students, problems faced by them etc. While interviewing, one of the teachers said: *"Using communication activities helps my students to be more active. Mainly I divide them into mini groups, especially it is fruitful while training speaking skills"*.

Another teacher emphasized that, *"The students in groups are mainly multi-levelled, so I have difficulty in conducting role-play activities."*

Next respondent claimed that: *"Teaching speaking in the context of this place is too difficult as the number of the students in one class are high in number, so it is difficult to give equal chance for all students to speak"*.

The other problem teachers face is that some students are not interested in saying anything or expressing their feelings because they fear speaking in front of their friends or because of the lack of experience.

Therefore, teachers are forced to follow those who lead the class only, as another interviewee claimed: *"In my case, 68 percent of the students are afraid of making mistakes related to grammar or choosing right vocabulary in front of their friends, which causes domination of some students. Naturally, it makes lessons to seem planned and dull"*

The observations in classrooms revolved around teaching methodology, communicative activities, use of first language in the teaching of second language, correction work, teacher's role, students participation, etc.

For a more authentic assessment of the gap between the theory and practice of communicative language teaching, it was essential to understand the views and attitudes of students as well. A well structured questionnaire was designed to measure the attitude of students towards the communicative approach.

Teachers and students through interviews and questionnaires respectively indicated that there are a number of CA strategies that are used in teaching English language in classrooms. Table 1 shows some of the CA strategies used at the lessons, their effectiveness, as well as challenges students face in using communicative approach strategies.

Table 1. Students' responses about activity types that are used by teacher at English language lessons

1.	Type of activities	Always	Usually	Some times	Rarely	Never	Total (100%)
a)	<i>Pair work</i>	16 (25.80)	30 (48.38)	22 (35.48)	4 (6.45)	0	62 100
b)	<i>Debates</i>	3 (4.83)	7 (11.29)	40 (64.51)	13 (20.96)	9 (14.51)	62 100
c)	<i>Group discussions</i>	12 (19.35)	29 (46.77)	30 (48.38)	0	1 (1.61)	62 100
d)	<i>Role plays</i>	17 (27.41)	25 (40.32)	23 (37.09)	7 (11.29)	0	62 100
e)	<i>Interviews</i>	0	18 (29.03)	41 (66.12)	8 (12.90)	5 (8.06)	62 100
2.	How these activities help students?						
a)	<i>Enhances students to express and interact with their ideas</i>	30 (48.38)	18 (29.03)	12 (19.35)	6 (8.33)	6 (8.33)	62 100
b)	<i>Helps to understand content of the subject</i>	6 (8.33)	37 (51.38)	14 (19.44)	12 (19.35)	3 (4.83)	62 100
c)	<i>Motivates students to speak freely</i>	19 (30.64)	25 (40.32)	18 (29.03)	6 (8.33)	4 (6.45)	62 100
d)	<i>Helps students to speak fluently</i>	33 (53.22)	21 (33.87)	10 (16.12)	7 (11.29)	1 (1.61)	62 100
e)	<i>Increases students' vocabulary</i>	15 (24.19)	40 (64.51)	17 (27.41)	0	0	62 100
3.	The challenges students face in using communicative approach strategies						
a)	<i>Lack of learning materials</i>	8 (12.90)	12 (19.35)	17 (27.41)	28 (45.16)	7 (11.29)	62 100
b)	<i>Fearing of making mistakes</i>	32 (51.61)	28 (45.16)	8 (12.90)	4 (6.45)	0	62 100
c)	<i>Feeling shy</i>	38 (61.29)	18 (29.03)	9 (14.51)	5 (8.06)	2 (3.22)	62 100
d)	<i>Inadequate time to conduct CA activities</i>	12 (19.35)	16 (25.80)	28 (45.16)	12 (19.35)	4 (6.45)	62 100
e)	<i>Noise making when conducting CA activities</i>	23 (37.09)	28 (45.16)	12 (19.35)	9 (14.51)	0	62 100
f)	<i>Mother tongue influence</i>	14 (22.58)	18 (29.03)	29 (46.77)	9 (14.51)	2 (3.22)	62 100

As it is clearly seen from Table 1, the activities used by ESL teachers were role plays and pair works. Bu debates were held rarely during the lessons. Also teachers should pay attention that the activities provided at their lessons should enhance students to understand content of the subject they are teaching. To do so, a great effort is expected from the teacher.

The next research questions were aimed at finding the challenges EFL students face during the communicative activities at the intended educational organization.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study aimed at analysing application of CA strategies which enhance English proficiency, the manner in which teachers present CA, and the challenges students face during the participation at such CA.

There are different CA strategies that are commonly used in teaching English language subjects such as pair work, debates, group discussions, role plays and interviews. The CA strategies are used in classrooms in order to help students to obtain competence in English language.

Moreover, the findings show that students have the role of participating fully in the CA activities, such as asking questions in English language class, listening attentively to teachers and their fellow students in classroom and to speaking English language inside and outside the classroom. This calls for the students to participate fully in CA strategies for them to be competent in the language. The results of the study implicates further studies that are worth mentioning in the areas of action study on improving teachers' implementation and learners' practice of CA in the English language lessons.

Lastly, the study found out that despite the use of CA strategies in intended university branch, teachers and students find different challenges mother tongue interference to both teachers and students in the classroom, overcrowded classrooms, noise making during CA activities, students feeling shy to speak English in classrooms and teachers' being unable give equal chance to students which leads the active participants being the same during almost all lessons, their domination, few students taking part in performing CA activities, and making the studies seem similar and repetitive. English teachers are required to identify the challenges their students face while participating at CA.

However, language teachers tried to present the communicative activities by using different activities, the data indicated that the teachers' use of communicative activities enhances students to express and interact with their ideas, help students to speak independently, which can be considered as being first and foremost factors for gaining communicative competence.

Generally, teachers know how far the activities are interactive, but they assume that it is a tireless and time consuming activity. They feel that they are responsible for their students' performance which depends a lot on the correction work done on individual basis. They feel that it is very difficult for a teacher not to correct a mistake on the spot during an activity. One more thing that the teachers find difficult to handle is to stop the students from using their mother tongue during an activity.

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