

INNOVATIVE TEACHING METHODS: COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Suma Priyadarshini

Assistant Professor, Department of English,
Government Arts College,
Bengaluru, Karnataka, India.

Abstract

The purpose of doing this Paper, taking up this topic in particular is that since eight years I have been teaching in Government Degree Colleges in and around Bangalore region, Karnataka; as an Assistant Professor of English. The problems faced by teachers while teaching English language as well as students learning this language seem to be widening, day by day. As a teacher it's a genuine and only concern to make English language student's friendly. Towards this goal of mine I thought of various options, all possible permutations and combinations then finally arrived at a solution which could be used as an approach in making English language easier one for our students. For my research, I have taken-up Government Degree Colleges in general and Humanities students in particular because majority of these students do come from rural areas lacking in English language proficiency. The result of these students especially in English is very very disappointing to me as a teacher, so i just thought of giving a new dimension to the way we teach! My aim is to teach them English language through the University prescribed texts only but the approach has to be changed. Then thought of this Communicative Approach, which not only teaches students English language but also makes them to learn the four skills of language too, which is very much essential in today's world.

Keywords: English language, Communicative Approach, Lack of literacy in family

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Today English is a global language. Even in India, English is a Political or Parliamentary language. In our country, English is a compulsory subject from standard First. The importance of English Language learning cannot be over stressed. It is an official language of 63 countries and unofficial second language in many countries. Nearly one billion people around the globe have some knowledge of English, either as a native language or as a second language. Except for certain regions in the world, English is the predominant language of International Commerce. Proficiency of English language in the job market has not only become more crucial with Globalization of trade but has also opened- up new jobs themselves with advances in Telecommunication technology. Many countries in the Indian subcontinent use English as an important tool in Higher Education, Administration and Mass media. Presently it is almost every country on Earth where English is spoken! But even today English language is a great problem to our students, they are scared of this subject in schools and college as well.

There are many problems faced by our students learning English language at school and college level:

Lack of literacy in family: Most of the parents in rural area are uneducated. The parents only enroll their children to school and they think that their duty is over. They never take care of their children's study or homework for that matter. So, the students don't care about their studies. As a result they never take interest in studies especially in English learning, as it is a foreign language. That is why their performance in English is always below standard.

Poor Educational conditions: In rural area 70% of the population, live under below poverty line. This is the reason why students from rural background lack in modern education. Parents don't have money to provide their children costly books, uniforms, transport facilities and last but not the least admission fees.

Lack courage and confidence: The teaching process is very ordinary. Schools and colleges fail to encourage students to involve them in cultural programmes, gatherings, debates, group discussions and personal interviews. That is why they become nervous, shy and weak in all other activities including academic performances.

No guidance facilities in rural area: In Taluk or in big cities, students have various sources to gain knowledge of English language like coaching classes, tuitions etc. Even though the inclination to learn English is very poor, parents don't have neither time nor money so that the students can get the basic facilities to learn English. The approach should change right from the school level to teach and learn English.

Less stress on grammar learning: Grammar is like a `devil` to our students! Most of the students even at Graduate and post-Graduate level do not know about the basic grammar like Parts of Speech, tenses etc, indeed it is a shocking fact.

When these students come to Under-Graduate courses they prefer Government colleges only for fee structure as well as the Government Policy which holds the opportunity to give admission to all pass students from previous standard. Along with this they select Humanities, this option is very natural keeping the content of the subjects which offer Arts courses. Obviously they have come from the mediums of their mother tongue. Here, in Karnataka Kannada is the Regional language so they do come from Kannada medium of instruction. To top it all when they join Graduate courses English is the only subject of worry for them, for all the reasons I have mentioned above. So, to tackle this problem and to make it approachable the kind of method we are using as of now is not giving us any solid results. It's high time to change our approach to make English easier one.

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As a solution to all these problems I feel that if we adopt Communicative Approach in teaching English language to these under-graduate students, it would be a practical solution to most of the problems we as teachers and them as students are facing in today's scenario.

Communication based on real language used in our day-to-day life activities in communicating to connect with others, communicate in real life situations, communicate to talk about our experiences, communicate to express our emotions, communicate to learn from others. Communication is a holistic process that often calls upon the use of several language skills. English is a second language for us and this language learning is facilitated when learners are engaged in interaction and meaningful communication. Language learning is a gradual process that involves creative use of language in trial and error basis, although errors are common(natural).

- **Speaking Skills**
- **Reading Skills**
- **Listening Skills**
- **Writing Skills**

Communicative approach is based on the idea that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning. When learners are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used, and this will allow them to learn to use the language. Example: Classroom activities guided by communicative approach are characterized by trying to produce meaningful and real communication, at all levels. As a result, there may be more emphasis on skills than system and lessons are more learner-centered, there may be use of texts prescribed by the respective universities.

Communicative Approach is in reality an umbrella term – a broad approach rather than a specific teaching methodology. This approach emphasis the ability to communicate the message in terms of its meaning, instead of concentrating exclusively on grammatical perfection or Phonetics. Therefore the understanding of the second language is evaluated in terms of how much the learners have developed their communicative abilities and competencies. It emphasis the ability to communicate the meaning of the message, instead of concentrating on grammatical perfection.

The Communicative Approach has various Teaching characteristics:

Understanding occurs through active student interaction in the foreign language i.e., English.

Teaching occurs using authentic English text books prescribed by the respective university. Students not only learn the second language but they also learn strategies for understanding. Importance is given to learner's personal experiences and situations, which are considered as an invaluable construction to the concept of the lesson (texts prescribed)

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Using the new language in unrehearsed contexts creates learning opportunities outside the classroom.

The most common educational model applied in the context of Communicative Approach is the Functional-National Approach which emphasizes the organization of the syllabus. This breaks down the use of language into Five Functional categories that can be more easily analysed;

1. Personal (feelings)
2. Interpersonal (social and working relations)
3. Directive (influencing others)
4. Referential (reporting about things, events, people or language)
5. Imaginative (creative and artistic experiences)

These Five Functions are delivered by the teachers in the classroom using `3 Ps` Teaching approach;

Presentation
Practice
Production

Communicative Approach in language teaching is existent as Functional approach since 1970`s in Britain. It is an approach, not a method; a unified but broadly based theoretical position about the nature of language and of language learning and teaching. This approach is found in the changes in British language teaching tradition dating from the late 1970`s. A lot of British Linguists contributed to the formation of the communicative approach which aims to make communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) the goal of language teaching and develop procedure for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication.

Communicative competence: Is what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community.

Richards and Rodgers (1986) described communicative approach as an approach rather than a method, since it represents a philosophy of teaching- that is based on communicative language use.

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Advocated by many applied linguists, communicative approach in their views emphasizes national functional concepts and communicative competence, rather than grammatical structures as central to teaching.

The major characteristics are:

- A. Meaning is Primary- contextualization is basic.
- B. Attempts to communicate in first language is encouraged in the beginning of instruction.
- C. Material sequencing is determined by the context meaning and function.
- D. Mother tongue(first language L1) is acceptable when feasible.
- E. Activities and strategies for learners are varied.
- F. Communicative competence is the goal of instruction.

In Hyme`s view, a person who acquires with competence acquires both knowledge and ability for lang

- a. Whether something is formally possible
- b. Whether something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available
- c. Whether something is appropriate in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated
- d. Whether a. something is in fact done, actually performed and what its doing entails.

Canale and Swain (1998) identify Four dimensions of Communicative Approach competence;

1. Grammatical Competence- Similar to linguistic competence by Chomsky , by what is formally possible.

2. Sociolinguistic Competence- Understanding of the social context in which communication takes place, including role relationships, the shared information of the participants, and the purpose for their interaction.

3. Discourse Competence- The interpretation of individual message elements in terms of individual message elements in terms of cohesion and coherence.

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4. **Strategic** competence- The coping strategies to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair and redirect communication.

Three Principles are:

The Communication Principle – Activities that involve communication promote language learning.

The Task Principle – Activities that involve the completion of real-world tasks promote learning.

The Meaningfulness Principle – learners must be engaged in meaningful and authentic language use for learning to take place.

- The Primary function of language is for interaction and communication.
- Language is a system for the expression of meaning of the activities that truly communicate have features of information gap, choice, and feedback, they must be guided by the teacher for unrehearsed situations.
- Grammatical structures had better be subsumed under various functional categories

Authentic materials are preferred

- There should be less attention to grammatical rules but fluency should never be encouraged at the expense of clear, unambiguous, direct communication
- Technology and increased teachers language proficiency now make achieving the goals of communicative approach possible

Communicative Activities are listed below;

- A. A desire to communicate
- B. A communicative purpose
- C. Context of language
- D. Variety of interaction

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