



Classroom Activities to Enhance ESL Learner's Communicative Competence

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Abstract:

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method offers English as Second Language (ESL) learner's purposeful classroom activities to help them acquire communicative competence. In nutshell, communicative competence is knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts and also knowing how to maintain communication despite by having limitations in ones language knowledge. In a CLT classroom, the students as a community learn to communicate through collaboration and sharing. The role of the teacher is not only to create opportunities for language learning but also to train the students to reflect on their language use for effective learning. This paper discusses on how communicative language teaching (CLT) is adapted in present ESL classrooms through communicative activities like Role play, group discussions, just a minute (JAM) and Talk show interview to help ESL learners communicative.

Key words: Communicative Language Teaching, communicative competence, classroom activity,

Full Text

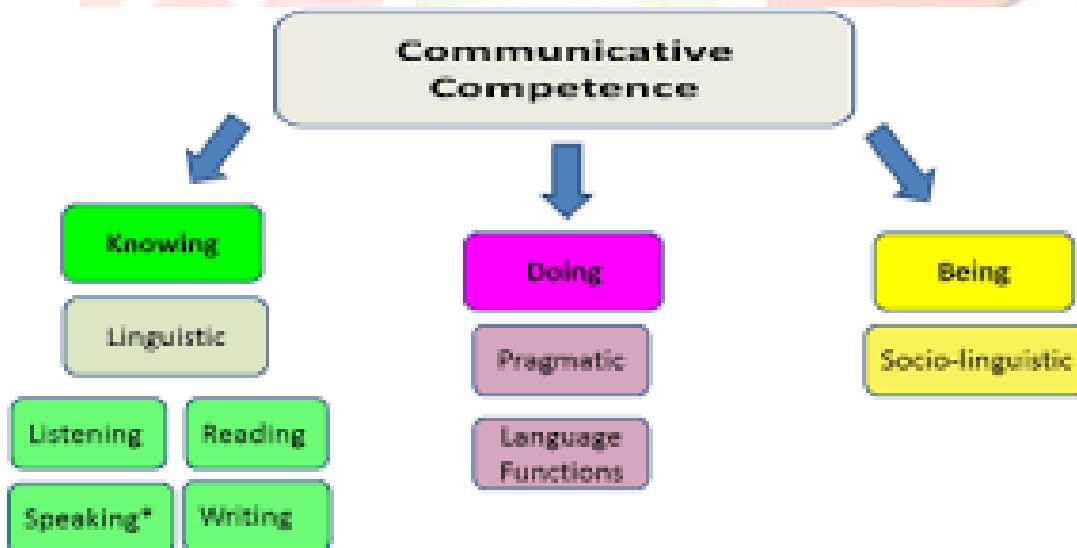
INTRODUCTION

ESL learners learn to communicate in English by using language communicatively. This aligns with the "learning by doing" or the "experience approach". It is believed that Second Language Acquisition (SLA) occurs subconsciously as a result of communicating in situations where the focus is on meaning. This subconscious process is similar to the process a child utilizes in acquiring his first language. The acquisition and enhancement of

communicative language learning skills have long been considered the primary and substantial goals of language learning. Communicative competence is a term in linguistics which refers to a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology and the like, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately (Wikipedia, 2016). Communicative language teaching allows learners to practice English as it is actually used in a speech community and equips them with the language skills they will need when they leave the classroom for the real world (Brown (1994), As such Communicative Language Teaching is driven with the objective of teaching students communicative competence.

According to J C. Richards (2006) Communicative competence includes the following aspects of language knowledge:

- Knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions
- Knowing how to vary our use of language according to the setting and the participants (e.g., knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication)
- Knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts (e.g., narratives, reports, interviews, conversations)
- Knowing how to maintain communication, despite having limitations in one's language knowledge (e.g., through using different kinds of communication strategies)



DISCUSSION:

Since the advent of CLT, teachers and materials writers have sought to find ways of developing classroom activities that reflect the principles of a communicative methodology. Communicative language teaching is an effective way to engage learners in a natural context and help them develop their language skills. Instead of just learning English grammar rules and word lists, it encourages learners to improve their language in a personalized way and helps them to interact in real life situations in English. Therefore, communicative language teaching is about enabling students to practice more and relate language to their own realities. Communicative language teaching activities are focused on realistic communication for students. The more English is used by students in practice, more is their success. it's a better way of motivating them for better learning.

Breen and Candlin (1980) suggest that as the ultimate purpose of a communicative language classroom is achieving communicative competence, the learners are supposed to negotiate for meaning between themselves in their own ways. In the communicative classroom, learner's roles are between themselves and the learning objectives. The learners may also have monitoring role for other learners, which means they can provide feedback for their colleagues. Therefore, they are also potential teachers for other language learners. Another important role is as informant to the teacher regarding their own learning improvement. Principally, a communicative language classroom would provide the opportunity for both the teacher and the learners to be mutually dependent participants in a communicative method of teaching and learning.

Richards and Rodgers (2006) added that in a communicative language classroom the use of text is quite limited. Grammatical rules are not taught explicitly. Many applied linguist say that explicit grammar instruction does not help learners to be proficient. Students are helped to work in pairs or small groups, because working in pairs or small groups is considered to be a very effective method to enhance the communicative skills of students. According to Breen and Candlin(1980: 99), a well-informed teacher should play two main roles in the communicative classroom. First, the teacher should be a facilitator of the communicative activities between all learners in the classroom as well as a facilitator between the learners and different activities and discourses. The second role is to perform as an interdependent member in the language learning. Therefore, the teacher needs to be able to organize resources and also become a resource that controls procedures and activities in the classroom.

Activities in a Communicative Language Classroom

A well-informed teacher in communicative classroom is to develop fluency in the use of target language. Fluency is natural use of language that happens when a language speaker is involved in meaningful communication and keeps understandable while continuing to interact even though his or her communicative competence is limited (Richards, 2006).

- **Role Play-** Role play is a teaching method that has been proven to encourage active learning and allow students to gain experience they have never had before (Van Ments, 1999). Objective of role play is-learning to ask and answer questions in a formal or informal setting. In this activity, students **will form in group of four**. Teacher gives one job advertisement from a newspaper or magazine to each group and asks them to spend a few minutes to discuss about the ad. Later students have to play the roles of interviewer and candidates. Hedge (2000) suggests that role play is very suitable for communicative classroom when performed in pairs or groups because it would encourage the participation of all students. Consequently, the students will be engaged in active learning activities.
- **Group-Discussion** - Low proficiency students can benefit from being paired with their high proficiency counterparts, likewise, high proficiency learners would benefit more from the activity when they are paired with high proficiency students (Leaser, 2004). A well - informed teacher would create as many interactions as possible between the participants, and this can be done by assigning individuals to work in pairs or small groups. By completing activities in this way, learners will gain several advantages: They are
 - They can learn from hearing the language used by other group members.
 - They will produce more language than they would use in teacher - front activities.
 - Their level of motivation increase
 - They will have the chance to develop fluency.
- **Just a Minute (JAM)** - It is based on the class room experience and aims to provide an insight of how JAM could be instrumental improving students communication skill of the Students. The aim of the game is to allow participants to speak on a given topic for sixty seconds, without repetition, hesitation or deviation. When conventional language teaching is complemented by interesting games such as Jam, the results are quite fruitful in order to increase class participation and skill development. This practice could be used by students with good communication skills to increase creativity. The choice of words, context, content of humor, flow and style determines the creativity level. The student definitely reaches for new words to avoid repetition, thus enhancing the vocabulary. To overcome hesitation is one of the other challenges. Most students use fillers such as ums, aahs, that is, nothing but, etc. The initial Jam games may not be quite successful. Once the students practice enough on speaking, prior to classes, the improvement could be visibly noticed in their confidence level, language flow, organization of speech and even their body language
- **Talk show interview-** It is an exciting and important step to get hired to get an interview. The interview will focus on a conversation aimed at finding out more about personality, skills. Communicating well during interview is a critical part of the process, allowing participation to best represent and hire. Students will

experience what it's like to be the host of a talk show or the guest answering questions before a live audience in the studio. Same like group discussions students' work in pairs. The host student prepares and writes five questions on a piece of paper. The celebrity student will be given a question list in advance so that they can prepare answers for the questions. Instruct the students of celebrity to respond in full sentences. Let the pairs present their segment. For the benefit of the whole class, students can give live commentary or translation as they go along.

Conclusion- There are more activities that can be applied in CLT classroom, such as: jigsaw, information-gathering, opinion sharing, information-transfer, reasoning gap, etc. Communicative activities have real purposes: to find information, break down barriers, talk about self, and learn about the culture. Even when a lesson is focused on developing reading or writing skills, communicative activities should be integrated into the lesson. Communicative activities should be used to help students get to know each other from the outset, even though available time is sufficient for only one activity. To sustain the learners' motivation in participating the communicative activities. Teachers need to make a appropriate classroom arrangement which could be conducive for purpose.

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