

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN DEVELOPING ACCURACY AND FLUENCY OF A2 LEVEL EFL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT The purpose of conducting this research is to identify the role of communicative activities in teaching grammar to A2 level students. To the main objective of this article is to evaluate whether communicative activities are helpful for raising students' grammar competence and to assist teachers to adapt these activities in grammar instructions for A2 level students.

Key words: CLT, communicative and deductive approaches, communicative competence, communicative activities, integrative approach

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is mental system of rules and categories that allows humans to form and interpret the words and sentences to their language (Hymes, 1980). Grammar is considered as the central point of any language by many linguists, therefore it is a real challenge to make grammar classes active, vivid and creative for most language teachers. The traditional activities such as fill in the gaps, drills etc., have not met the teacher's main objective, which is to enable students to learn grammar. This problem gave rise to the development of communication based methods and Communicative language teaching, CLT approach (Sweet, 1995). The idea of CLT has been expanded since the mid of 1970s, and its main goal is to develop learners' communicative competence through interaction and communication with others. The core function of CLT is implementation of communicative activities to teach all four skills, vocabulary and grammar. By communicative activities one may understand the tasks that promote language learning and use real life situations to trigger communication. The research on this theme starts with defining CLT and characteristics of communicative activities, followed by the approaches that have been used in teaching grammar. Then, these approaches are going to be compared with CLT. The study concludes by highlighting advantages and drawbacks of implementation of communicative activities in grammar classes of A2 level students.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

CLT is now considered as a broad approach to teaching, rather than as a teaching method. By approach, it is understood set of theories and principles for teaching. Varieties

of interpretations are possible while applying these principles. It does give flexibility and freedom while applying them. A method contains instructional design, detailed specification of contents, roles of teachers and learners. The teaching procedures and techniques are elaborated. Hence the methods are best learned through training. The teacher's role is to follow the method and apply it according to the rules (Hymes, 1994).

There are vast number of exercises and activities in communicative approach which "help students to achieve the communicative competence, and engage learners in communication" (Richards, 2001). Communicative activities that play vital role in communicative language teaching are of a great use for the teachers. These activities assist them to teach all four skills and especially grammar in interactive and interesting classes. Communicative activities are purposeful and objective oriented, and they are special tools for learning language, especially grammar in interactive way.

Richards (2006) in his book "Communicative language teaching today" points out some key features of communicative activities:

- Communicative activities should be handfull for learners in feeling autonomy and independence in language classroom. Teachers ought to be instructors and facilitators while giving tasks so that students consider themselves not dependent to the teachers.
- The main demand communicative approach from teachers is to give brief, to the point instructions and possibility to interact and to exchange information in classroom environment.
- Communicative activities motivate learners to have fun while doing the communicative tasks.
- Communicative tasks are realistic. Their distinctive feature is focusing on real life examples rather than isolated structures.
- In communicative activities, learners take priority and can give several possible responses to the questions. They are able to share their ideas, to comment on the topic discussed and define their point of view. In contrast, in teacher-led classrooms learners were expected to be quiet and listen to the teacher and then, when their turn to speak came, they could respond to the teacher in unison with the one correct answer.

RESULTS

One of the goals of CLT is to develop fluency and accuracy in language use. Fluency is natural language use occurring when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction and keeps comprehensible communication even with some limitations in his or her communicative competence. Fluency is developed by creating classroom activities in which students must negotiate meaning, use communication strategies, correct misunderstandings, and work to avoid communication breakdowns (Littlewood, 1981). Activities focusing on fluency

- Implement natural use of language

- Focus on maximal achievement of communication
- Require meaningful use of language
- Use of communication strategies
- Produce unpredictable language
- Relate the language use to the context

Activities focusing on accuracy

- Implement classroom use of language
- Focus on the formation of correct examples of language
- Practice language out of context
- Practice small samples of language
- Do not require meaningful communication

Discussions

There are various types of activities, one could find in Communicative language teaching, as jigsaw, information gap, discussions, role-plays, interviews and games. Features of several groups of communicative activities could be characterized as follows:

- Task-completion activities: the focus is to fulfill the tasks on the basis of students' knowledge. Puzzles, games, map-reading could be samples of this type of activities;
- Information-gathering activities: the focus is to gather information with the help of class surveys, interviews and different searches;
- Opinion-sharing activities: the focus is to exchange ideas, opinions and values in order to have broad understanding;
- Information-transfer activities: the focus is to transfer one type of information into another one with the help of imagination, creativeness. For example, students read a text of a particular process then they should draw this process in a graph;
- Reasoning-gap activities: the focus is to derive some new information from given information through the process of inference.

CONCLUSION

Grammar is central to the teaching and learning of languages. It is also one of the more difficult aspects of language to teach well. Over the years, many methods have been developed for teaching grammar and have been built upon, abandoned, or combined, all with the same goal in mind—teaching students how to communicate effectively and understand how to use the English language.

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