

INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPING STUDENTS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

¹Khamrayeva Mahzuna Gayratovna, ²Yusupova Mushtariy Bakhtiyor kizi, ²Farmonova Shakhlo Navruz kizi

¹EFL teacher of Faculty of Foreign Languages, Karshi State University, **Uzbekistan**

²Students of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Karshi State University, **Uzbekistan**

ABSTRACT

Modern interactive teaching is a direct outcome of Communicative Language Teaching which aims at learner-centered classrooms where the approach is task-based, engaging, fun activities to keep the language learners motivated to achieve communicative competence. This article explores the significance of selecting interactive activities to develop students' communicative competence in English language teaching and learning.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, interactive teaching, interactive activities, communicative competence.

INTRODUCTION

Communicative competence is defined as the ability to acquiring the ways of using the language in meaningful situations to produce meaningful acts of communication and master the formation rules of the language. According to Hymes (1967), communicative competence is as the speaker's ability to participate in a society not only as a speaking member but also as a communicative member. The concept "communicative competence" has been used by many sociolinguists including both knowing a language (linguistic competence) and knowing how to use it, i.e. in addition to grammaticality, the notion of competence should include contextual appropriacy or knowledge of sociolinguistic codes and rules.

Modern interactive teaching is a direct outcome of Communicative Language Teaching which aims at learner-centered classrooms where the approach is task-based, engaging, fun activities to keep the language learners motivated to achieve communicative competence.

There are the characteristics of the communicative approach in English language teaching and learning.

- The teacher acts as the facilitator who will guide the learners to become more autonomous.
- It focuses on using grammatical structures in the situations correctly.
- It requires of the teaching with use of authentic materials that should address the learning needs of the students.
- It focuses on language functions and the ability to interact effectively with others.
- It relies on specially designed tasks which help the learners become more fluent and efficient users of the target language.

Materials and Methods

Communicative activities are focused on encourage and require language learners to interact effectively with others. Communicative activities have real purposes: to find information, break down barriers, talk about any topics. When a lesson is focused on developing reading, listening or writing skills, communicative activities should be integrated into the lesson. According to

the scholars Moss & Ross-Feldman, the research on second language acquisition (SLA) suggests that more learning takes place when students are engaged in relevant tasks within a dynamic learning environment rather than in traditional teacher-led classes (Moss & Ross-Feldman, 2006).

How do we know to what degree an activity is communicative?

Consider the following questions.

Are the students speaking when they are:

Singing?

Reciting a memorized text?

Practicing pronunciation?

Reading aloud?

Describing an image?

Answering questions spontaneously?

Doing activities?

What are the benefits of using communicative activities?

- More exposure to Target Language
- More authentic opportunities to use the language
- Fun and interesting for learners
- Provides opportunity to use authentic materials

What are some of the challenges of using communicative activities?

- Teachers need to know how to offer support and what support needs to be offered. More time is required for planning and preparation of communicative activities.
- Communicative activities might pose challenges in assessment
- Learners can be resistant- especially if they are accustomed to teacher-centered styles of teaching

Let's look at Bilash's Criteria for designing Communicative Activities to develop students' communicative competence.

Name the activities you typically do in your L2 classroom in the columns. Analyze each according to the criteria listed. Give one point per criteria. After comparing the scores of activities, think of ways to alter an activity so that it meets more of the criteria!

CRITERIA (one point each)	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3	Activity 4	Activity 5
Activity takes place in or replicates a real life context					
Activity uses authentic materials (those that could be used by a native speaker of a similar age)					
Activity involves use of both personal knowledge and skills as well as language knowledge and skills					
By doing the activity participants learn and use content knowledge					
Talking is necessary in order to complete the task					
Interaction is necessary in order to complete the task					
In order to complete the activity everyone must speak and listen repeatedly					

All participants must use stretches of language (sentences or several sentence responses)					
Participants must problem solve or use advanced thinking skills (strategic knowledge) in order to complete the task					
Activity is novel – motivating – for participants					
Activity must be fun/interesting for participants					
Activities are low risk and high security					
Instructions are given by the teacher in the target language					
Total score					

Using Bilash's Criteria for communicative activity, we have designed some interactive activities to develop our faculty students' communicative competence.

Advice Letter: In this activity, students will be asked to write advice letters to the juniors on how to be successful in the course that they have completed in the previous semester. This is very useful as a teacher's resource as it will provide with the feedback on what worked best for the students.

Anonymous Peer Feedback: This activity encourages much introspection amongst the language learners as they have identified their strengths and weaknesses of their own and their group mates as well.

Catch and Talk: This simple interactive activity is found one of the most engaging by learners at all levels of English proficiency in teaching all language modules in the faculty. The element of surprise as the learner who gets a piece of chalk passed to them is required to speak and engages them totally in the game.

A Minute Paper: An effective task to write a small reading log of the learning of writing of reports and articles as the learners are able to list in the right order following the steps of composing a piece of writing.

Power Point Presentation: Students often use PowerPoint to prepare presentations on their favorite topics and defend them in-front of the whole class.

Create a Quote: Students are asked to create their own quotes based on their own experiences of learning.

One minus Quote: this task works well with advanced learners to fill the gaps in utterances with suitable phrasal verbs.

Memory Pictures: students are asked to bring the pictures to undertake free writing tasks based on the pictures. This activity works best with the intermediate level of students.

Debate: Mostly, advanced learners always find this task more engaging as each one of them have a chance to speak their mind at least once on a topic chosen for the debate.

CONCLUSION

Our experiences of using the interactive activities in foreign language classroom clearly show that our students are active recipients of information but are actually creators of information. These interactive activities were task-based, engaging, fun activities to keep the language learners motivated to achieve communicative competence.

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