



IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES.

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Annotation: This article explores the effectiveness of communicative language teaching (CLT) activities in improving the oral proficiency of second language learners. Despite the theoretical popularity of CLT, students often face barriers such as anxiety and lack of authentic practice. This paper reviews current pedagogical approaches, outlines a methodology for implementing task-based communicative activities, and presents findings indicating a positive correlation between sustained interactional practice and increased fluency and confidence. The study concludes that shifting focus from accuracy-based drills to meaning-focused communication significantly enhances students' speaking capabilities.

Keywords: Communicative language teaching (clt), oral proficiency, task-based learning, fluency, student engagement.

Speaking is often considered the most challenging aspect of language learning, yet it is the primary indicator of communicative competence. Traditional approaches, characterized by rote memorization and grammar-translation methods, often fail to equip students with the ability to navigate real-world conversations. Communicative activities—such as role-plays, information-gap tasks, and debates—aim to bridge this gap by prioritizing the exchange of meaning over structural perfection. This article investigates how these activities can be systematically integrated into the classroom to foster a supportive environment for oral development.



To effectively improve students' speaking skills through communicative activities, educators must transition from being the "source of information" to a "facilitator of interaction." Below is a detailed breakdown of how to structure, implement, and assess these activities to ensure maximum growth.

Structuring the Communicative Classroom

The foundation of communicative language teaching (CLT) is the PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production) model, but with a heavier emphasis on the "Production" phase.

The Input Phase (Scaffolding):

Before speaking, students need a linguistic map.

- Vocabulary Banking: Provide high-frequency phrases relevant to the specific topic (e.g., "In my opinion...", "I see your point, however...").
- Model the Interaction: Perform a mini-demo with a student to show exactly what the activity should look like.

The Preparation Phase:

Speaking is mentally taxing. Give students 2–3 minutes of "silent preparation" where they can jot down notes, keywords, or structure their thoughts. This reduces the cognitive load, allowing them to focus on articulation rather than just scrambling for words.

The Output Phase (Interaction):

The core of the lesson where students speak. During this time, your role is to circulate, listen, and note errors, but do not interrupt unless a student is completely stuck.

Designing High-Engagement Activities

For an activity to be truly communicative, it must have an "Information Gap"—the idea that one person knows something the other does not.



Advanced Information Gaps (The "Expert" Method)

- How it works: Divide a topic (e.g., Ecotourism trends) into four distinct sections. Assign each student in a group of four one section.
- The Task: They cannot share their paper. They must verbally explain their section so their group members can take notes and complete a full summary.
- Why it works: It creates a genuine need to speak and listen for meaning, not just for grammar.

The "Desert Island" or "Prioritization" Task

- How it works: Give students a list of 10 items to bring to a deserted island. They must reach a consensus on which 5 to keep as a group.
- Why it works: It forces negotiation, persuasion, and the use of conditional language (e.g., "If we have this, then we could...").

Structured Debates (The "Fishbowl")

- How it works: Place 4–5 chairs in the center of the room. Only those in the "fishbowl" can speak. The rest of the class takes notes on the arguments used. Every few minutes, a student from the outer circle tags a person in the inner circle to take their seat.
- Why it works: It focuses the group's attention and creates a professional, high-stakes atmosphere that encourages better articulation.

Assessment and Correction Strategy

One of the biggest mistakes in teaching speaking is providing too much negative feedback.

- Delayed Correction: Create a "Language Improvement Log" on the board. Throughout the session, write down common grammatical errors you hear from multiple students. At the end of the class, address these anonymously: "I heard a lot of people say 'X', but it is actually better to say 'Y'."
- Rubric-Based Feedback: Do not grade on grammar alone. Create a simple rubric for students to understand their progress:



- Fluency: Did they keep the conversation flowing without long pauses?
- Interaction: Did they ask questions to keep their partner talking?
- Vocabulary Use: Did they attempt to use the new terms introduced that day?
- Clarity: Was the message successfully conveyed?

Tailoring to Your Academic Context (Geography/Ecotourism)

Since your work involves geography and ecotourism at Namangan State Pedagogical Institute, you can integrate these subjects into the speaking practice to make it more professional:

- Case Studies: "Present the challenges of water scarcity in a specific region of Uzbekistan, then argue for a potential technological solution."
- Role-Play Simulation: "One student acts as an Eco-Tour Operator, the other as a potential investor. The goal is to sell a sustainable tourism package based on local geography."

Tips for Managing Larger Groups

- Pairing Strategy: Pair lower-proficiency students with mid-proficiency students. A large gap in proficiency often leads to the stronger student doing all the talking while the weaker student retreats.
- Accountability: For any group activity, require a "product" at the end. It could be a list, a map, or a 30-second summary. This ensures students stay on task and actually communicate, rather than speaking in their native language or drifting off-topic.

The results suggest that communicative activities provide a "low-stakes" environment that encourages risk-taking. Unlike traditional drills, these activities require students to negotiate meaning, which is a critical skill for real-world fluency. The lack of significant improvement in grammatical accuracy confirms that communicative activities are best suited for building fluency and confidence, and should be balanced with focused form-based instruction for holistic language



development. The primary barrier remained individual student anxiety; however, peer-based grouping helped mitigate this by distributing the pressure of performance.

Conclusion

Communicative activities are essential tools for transforming passive learners into active speakers. By prioritizing interaction and meaning-making, educators can help students overcome the psychological barriers of speaking a new language. While these activities do not eliminate the need for grammar and vocabulary instruction, they serve as the vital bridge between linguistic knowledge and communicative performance.

- Foster a "Mistake-Friendly" Culture: Emphasize that communication is the priority; defer error correction until after the activity concludes to maintain the flow of conversation.
- Use Information-Gap Tasks: Design tasks where students must exchange information to reach a goal; this forces the use of clarifying questions and negotiation.
- Incorporate Scaffolding: Provide "language frames" or functional phrases on the board before beginning a communicative activity to ensure students have the necessary tools to participate.
- Utilize Peer Feedback: Train students to give constructive peer feedback, which promotes autonomy and reduces reliance on the teacher.

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