



IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

Tohirova Ozoda Tolib kizi

English language teacher,

Technical School No. 2 of Kitob district,

Qashqadaryo region, Uzbekistan

Abstract. This article examines the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in improving the speaking skills of students at technical and vocational education institutions. Speaking is widely recognized as the most demanding of the four language skills, yet in many classrooms it remains underdeveloped because instruction is dominated by grammar explanation and translation. Drawing on the theoretical foundations of communicative competence and on classroom practice in the context of educational reforms in Uzbekistan, the article analyzes the principles of CLT, describes practical communicative activities — role-plays, information-gap tasks, pair and group discussions, simulations and project work — and explains how they reduce speaking anxiety, increase student talking time and develop fluency together with accuracy. The article also discusses typical difficulties in applying CLT (large classes, limited class hours, students' fear of making mistakes) and offers recommendations for teachers. The findings suggest that systematic use of communicative activities significantly increases learners' willingness to communicate and the overall quality of their oral production.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), speaking skills, communicative competence, fluency, accuracy, interactive methods, role-play, information gap, pair work, willingness to communicate, vocational education.



Introduction

In the modern world, English has become the main language of science, technology, business and international communication. For this reason, the ability to speak English fluently is no longer a luxury but a practical necessity for young specialists, including graduates of technical schools and colleges. In the Republic of Uzbekistan, special attention is paid to foreign language teaching: the Decree of the President of December 10, 2012 “On measures to further improve the system of learning foreign languages” and subsequent state programs raised the status of English at all levels of education and required teachers to move from traditional grammar-based instruction to modern, communication-oriented methods.

Despite these reforms, classroom observation shows that many learners can read texts and complete grammar exercises but cannot hold even a short conversation in English. The main reason is that speaking practice often occupies only a small part of the lesson, while most of the time is spent on rules, translation and written tasks. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which appeared in the 1970s as a reaction to structural methods, offers a solution to this problem: it places real communication at the center of the lesson and treats language primarily as a tool for exchanging meaning, not as a set of abstract rules. The purpose of this article is to analyze how CLT can be used to improve students’ speaking skills and to share practical recommendations based on teaching experience in a technical school.

Theoretical background

The theoretical basis of CLT is the concept of communicative competence introduced by D. Hymes (1972), who argued that knowing a language means not only knowing its grammar but also knowing when, where, with whom and how to use it appropriately. M. Canale and M. Swain (1980) developed this idea and identified four components of communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. A successful speaker therefore



needs more than correct sentences: he or she must be able to start and maintain a conversation, react to a partner, choose suitable expressions for the situation and overcome communication breakdowns.

J. Richards and T. Rodgers describe CLT not as a single rigid method but as a broad approach based on several principles: (1) learners learn a language through using it to communicate; (2) authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities; (3) fluency is an important dimension of communication; (4) communication involves the integration of different language skills; and (5) learning is a process of creative construction that involves trial and error. H. Brown adds that errors in a communicative classroom are viewed as a natural part of learning, and the teacher acts mainly as a facilitator and participant rather than a controller.

Speaking itself is a complex skill. According to S. Thornbury, it includes two main aspects: knowledge of language features (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar) and the ability to process this knowledge “on the spot,” in real time. P. Ur notes four typical problems of speaking lessons: inhibition (fear of mistakes and criticism), “nothing to say,” low or uneven participation, and the use of the mother tongue. A well-organized communicative lesson is designed precisely to overcome these problems.

Communicative activities for developing speaking

Practice shows that the following communicative activities are the most effective in technical school groups.

Information-gap activities. Each student receives only part of the information (for example, two versions of a timetable, a map or a technical drawing with missing details) and must obtain the rest by asking questions. Because the information is



genuinely unknown, students have a real reason to speak and listen, which is the essence of communication.

Role-plays and simulations. Students act out real-life situations: a job interview, a conversation in a workshop, ordering equipment, explaining a malfunction to a foreign specialist. For vocational students such tasks are especially valuable, because they connect English directly with their future profession and make the language personally meaningful.

Pair and small-group discussions. Working in pairs and groups of three or four dramatically increases student talking time: instead of one learner answering the teacher while the others stay silent, the whole class speaks at the same time. Discussion topics should be close to students' lives and interests — technology, profession, plans for the future — so that everyone has something to say.

Games and problem-solving tasks. Guessing games, “Find someone who...” surveys, ranking tasks (“Choose the five most important tools and explain why”) and short debates create a relaxed atmosphere, lower the affective filter and motivate even shy students to participate.

Project work and presentations. Over several lessons students prepare a mini-project (for example, “Safety rules in our workshop” or “Modern professions of the future”) and present it orally. Projects integrate speaking with reading, writing and listening and develop discourse competence — the ability to produce longer, organized speech.

During such activities the teacher monitors the groups, helps with vocabulary when asked, notes typical errors and gives delayed feedback after the activity. Interrupting students to correct every mistake destroys fluency and confidence; instead, correction should be selective and supportive. Experience in groups of the technical school shows that after several months of regular communicative practice



students begin to volunteer answers, their pauses become shorter, their utterances longer, and their fear of speaking noticeably decreases.

Challenges and recommendations

Applying CLT is not without difficulties. Typical obstacles include large groups, limited weekly hours of English, mixed-level classes, students' habit of staying silent, and the pressure of grammar-oriented testing. These problems can be reduced by careful planning: dividing large groups into pairs and small teams with rotating roles; using short five–ten-minute speaking activities in every lesson instead of rare long ones; giving stronger students the roles of group leaders; teaching useful conversational formulas (“In my opinion...”, “Could you repeat, please?”) as ready support; and assessing speaking regularly so that students see that oral skills really matter. It is also important to remember that CLT does not reject grammar: form-focused work is included, but it serves communication rather than replaces it.

Conclusion

Speaking is the skill by which a language learner is most often judged, and at the same time the skill that suffers most in traditional, teacher-centered classrooms. Communicative Language Teaching offers a realistic way to change this situation: it turns the lesson into a space of meaningful interaction, gives every student a reason and an opportunity to speak, and develops fluency, accuracy and confidence together. The experience of using information-gap tasks, role-plays, discussions, games and project work with technical school students confirms that systematic communicative practice increases learners' willingness to communicate, enriches their active vocabulary and prepares them for real professional communication. In the context of the ongoing educational reforms in Uzbekistan, the wide and creative use of CLT should be considered one of the key directions for improving the quality of foreign language teaching.



References:

1. O‘zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidentining 2012-yil 10-dekabrdagi PQ-1875-son “Chet tillarni o‘rganish tizimini yanada takomillashtirish chora-tadbirlari to‘g‘risida”gi qarori. Toshkent, 2012.
2. Jalolov J.J. Chet til o‘qitish metodikasi. Toshkent: O‘qituvchi, 2012. 432 b.
3. Jalolov J.J., Makhkamova G.T., Ashurov Sh.S. English Language Teaching Methodology. Tashkent: Fan va texnologiya, 2015. 336 p.
4. Hoshimov O‘., Yoqubov I. Ingliz tili o‘qitish metodikasi. Toshkent: Sharq, 2003. 304 b.
5. Bekmuratova U.B. Ingliz tilini o‘qitishda innovatsion texnologiyalardan foydalanish // Zamonaviy ta’lim. Toshkent, 2018. №4. B. 45–49.
6. Makhkamova G.T. Innovative Pedagogical Technologies in the English Language Teaching. Tashkent: Tafakkur qanoti, 2017. 280 p.
7. Saydaliyev S. Chet til o‘qitish metodikasidan ocherklar. Namangan: NamDU, 2004. 238 b.
8. Hymes D. On Communicative Competence // Sociolinguistics: Selected Readings / Eds. J.B. Pride, J. Holmes. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972. P. 269–293.
9. Canale M., Swain M. Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing // Applied Linguistics. 1980. Vol. 1, №1. P. 1–47.
10. Richards J.C., Rodgers T.S. Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching. 3rd ed. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. 410 p.
11. Thornbury S. How to Teach Speaking. – Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005. 156 p.
12. Ur P. A Course in English Language Teaching. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 325 p.