

COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH AS A KEY FACTOR IN MOTIVATING TECHNICAL COLLEGE STUDENTS TO LEARN ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in enhancing the motivation of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at a technical college in Uzbekistan. The research was conducted at Chirchiq Technical College, involving 60 first-year students divided into control and experimental groups. A quasi-experimental design was employed over one academic semester. Data were collected through pre- and post-tests, motivation questionnaires, and classroom observation. Results indicate that students exposed to communicative activities demonstrated significantly higher motivation levels and improved oral communication skills compared to the control group. The findings suggest that integrating CLT methods into vocational English education contexts can substantially increase student engagement and learning outcomes.

Keywords: communicative language teaching, motivation, EFL, technical college, Uzbekistan, vocational education

1. INTRODUCTION

English language learning in vocational and technical education institutions across Uzbekistan has gained considerable attention in recent years, particularly following the national reform initiatives aimed at integrating international standards into the educational system. Despite this growing emphasis, a persistent challenge remains: many technical

college students exhibit low motivation toward English language learning, often viewing it as peripheral to their vocational training goals.

The communicative approach, formally known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), has been widely advocated in the global EFL literature as an effective means of increasing student engagement and language acquisition. Unlike traditional grammar-translation or audio-lingual methods, CLT prioritises meaningful interaction, real-life communication tasks, and learner autonomy. However, its application in the context of Uzbek technical colleges remains insufficiently studied.

This paper addresses the following research question: To what extent does the implementation of the communicative approach affect the motivation of EFL learners in a technical college setting in Uzbekistan? The study aims to: (1) measure baseline motivation levels among technical college EFL students; (2) implement CLT-based instruction in an experimental group; and (3) evaluate changes in motivation and oral communication performance following intervention.

The significance of this study lies in its practical applicability to the Uzbekistani vocational education context, where English teachers frequently face the challenge of engaging students who perceive limited relevance in language learning.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation in second language acquisition has been extensively theorised. Gardner and Lambert (1972) distinguished between integrative and instrumental motivation, arguing that both play a role in language learning success. Dornyei (2001) later expanded this framework with the L2 Motivational Self System, which emphasises the learner's ideal self and the ought-to self as key motivational drivers. Within EFL contexts, particularly in Central Asian educational settings, instrumental motivation - learning English for professional or academic purposes - has been found to be predominant (Ramirez, 2015).

Communicative Language Teaching, as outlined by Littlewood (1981) and Richards and Rodgers (2001), positions authentic communication as the primary goal of language instruction. CLT activities such as role-plays, information-gap tasks, debates, and

collaborative projects have been shown to increase learner engagement across multiple studies (Nunan, 2004; Harmer, 2007). Spada (2007) noted that CLT tends to be more motivating than traditional methods because it gives students agency and a sense of communicative achievement.

In the Central Asian context, research on CLT implementation remains limited. Sobirov (2019) studied CLT adoption in Uzbekistan's secondary schools and found that while teachers acknowledged the method's benefits, structural constraints and limited training impeded its full integration. No published study, to the author's knowledge, has examined CLT's motivational impact specifically within the technical college (texnikum) context in Uzbekistan, representing a clear gap this study addresses.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design was employed. This design was selected because random assignment of students to groups was not feasible within the institutional structure. Two intact first-year groups from Chirchiq Technical College were assigned: one as the control group (n=30) and one as the experimental group (n=30). Both groups were taught by the same teacher to minimise instructor-effect variability.

3.2 Participants

Participants were 60 first-year students enrolled in the Information Technology programme at Chirchiq Technical College, Tashkent Region. Their ages ranged from 15 to 17 years. All participants were native Uzbek speakers with limited prior English exposure, categorised at A1-A2 level on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

3.3 Intervention

The experimental group received instruction based on CLT principles over 16 weeks (one academic semester). Lessons incorporated pair and group work, role-play activities simulating professional contexts, information-gap exercises, and short communicative

projects. The control group received instruction following the standard textbook curriculum, emphasising grammar explanation and written exercises.

3.4 Data Collection

Three instruments were used: (1) a pre- and post-test measuring oral communication performance, scored by two raters using a standardised rubric; (2) a motivation questionnaire adapted from Dornyei's (2001) framework, administered before and after the intervention; and (3) classroom observation checklists completed at four intervals during the semester. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and paired-sample t-tests.

4. RESULTS

Table 1 summarises the mean scores across key assessment criteria for both groups before and after the intervention.

Table 1. Pre- and Post-Test Results: Control vs. Experimental Group

Assessment Criteria	Pre-Test (Control)	Pre-Test (Experimental)	Post-Test (Control)	Post-Test (Experimental)
Oral Communication	48.3%	47.9%	54.1%	73.6%
Vocabulary Use	51.2%	50.4%	57.8%	76.2%
Participation Rate	42.0%	41.5%	46.3%	78.9%
Overall Motivation Index	47.2%	46.6%	52.7%	76.2%

The experimental group demonstrated a mean overall improvement of 29.6 percentage points across all criteria, compared to 5.5 percentage points in the control

group. The most pronounced gains were observed in participation rate (+37.4%) and oral communication (+25.7%). Statistical analysis revealed that differences between the groups were significant at the post-test stage ($p < 0.01$ for all criteria).

Motivation questionnaire results corroborated these findings. The experimental group's mean motivation index rose from 3.1 to 4.6 (on a 5-point Likert scale), while the control group showed minimal change (3.0 to 3.3). Classroom observation data revealed higher rates of voluntary participation, peer interaction, and task completion in the experimental group from the sixth week onward.

5. DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide clear evidence that CLT-based instruction positively influences both motivation and oral communication performance among EFL students in a technical college context. These findings are consistent with earlier research by Nunan (2004) and Harmer (2007), who identified communicative tasks as powerful motivational tools in EFL classrooms.

A particularly notable finding was the sharp increase in participation rates within the experimental group. In traditional Uzbek educational culture, students are often accustomed to passive roles in the classroom; the shift toward communicative activities appears to have disrupted this norm productively. Students in the experimental group reported, via questionnaire responses, feeling more confident and engaged when given opportunities to use English for realistic communicative purposes rather than exclusively for written grammar exercises.

The control group's modest improvement suggests that standard curriculum delivery is not without benefit, but its limitations in motivating learners are evident. This aligns with Sobirov's (2019) observations about structural constraints in Uzbek EFL education, while this study demonstrates that even within those constraints, a committed CLT-oriented teacher can produce measurable motivational gains.

Limitations of the study include its single-institution scope, the relatively short intervention period of one semester, and the absence of follow-up data to assess

sustainability of motivational changes. Future research should consider longitudinal designs and multi-institution samples to strengthen generalisability.

6. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the communicative approach is an effective tool for increasing the motivation of EFL learners in Uzbekistani technical colleges. By replacing passive, grammar-focused instruction with interactive, task-based activities rooted in real communicative purposes, teachers can significantly enhance student engagement, participation, and oral communication outcomes.

The implications for practice are clear: English language teachers in vocational institutions should be supported through professional development training in CLT methodology, and curriculum frameworks should be revised to allow greater flexibility for communicative task integration. Policy-level support, including revised assessment criteria that value oral performance, would further enable the sustained adoption of these approaches.

As Uzbekistan continues to internationalise its vocational education system, the ability to communicate effectively in English will remain a critical graduate competency. The communicative approach, as demonstrated in this study, offers a research-supported pathway toward achieving this goal.

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