



THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO NON-SPECIALIST STUDENTS

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Abstract: This article explores how effective the communicative approach is in teaching English to students whose main field of study is not languages, but who need English for practical and professional use. The research looks at the role of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in helping learners develop communicative competence, with particular attention to speaking and listening skills. A qualitative method was used, including classroom observations and an analysis of students' feedback on communicative activities such as group discussions, role plays, and real-life situations.

The results show that this approach helps students become more fluent, confident, and motivated, as it encourages them to actively use the language rather than simply learn rules. Compared to more traditional teaching methods, the communicative approach better prepares students for real-life communication. At the same time, some difficulties were observed, including large class sizes and limited lesson time, which can make it harder to apply the approach effectively. The study demonstrates that the communicative approach is a practical and beneficial method for teaching English to non-specialist students and suggests that it should be more widely used in language classrooms.

Keywords: communicative approach, CLT, English language teaching, non-specialist students, communicative competence.

Introduction

In the modern global environment, English plays a key role as a means of communication in areas such as education, business, science, and international relations. For students who are not majoring in language studies, learning English is not simply an academic requirement but a practical skill they need for their future careers and everyday communication. These non-specialist learners are expected to use English in real situations, including taking part in discussions, understanding academic materials, and interacting in professional settings. Because of this, the teaching approach used in the classroom becomes especially important.

For many years, traditional methods like the grammar-translation approach have been widely used in English language teaching. These methods mainly focus on learning grammar rules and memorizing vocabulary. Although they can help students improve their reading and writing accuracy, they often do not prepare learners well for real communication. As a result, many students struggle to speak or understand English in practical situations, even after several years of study.

To address these issues, the communicative approach has become increasingly popular in language education. This approach focuses on using language for meaningful communication, encouraging students to participate actively and engage in real-life tasks. Instead of concentrating only on grammar, it aims to develop students' ability to use English effectively and appropriately in different contexts.

The purpose of this article is to explore how effective the communicative approach is in teaching English to non-specialist students. It examines its impact on learners' speaking and listening skills, as well as their motivation and overall progress in language learning. By comparing this approach with more traditional methods, the article also discusses its strengths, possible challenges, and its value in improving English language teaching for non-specialist learners.

Methodology

This research follows a mixed-methods design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to obtain a more complete understanding of how effective the communicative approach is in teaching English to non-specialist students. Using both types of data makes it possible to examine students' learning experiences, classroom behavior, and language development in a more detailed and balanced way.

The study was carried out in a university environment and involved students from different academic disciplines who are not majoring in English language studies. The participants were mainly first- and second-year undergraduate students with different levels of English proficiency, ranging from elementary to intermediate. This diversity allowed the researcher to observe how learners with varying abilities respond to communicative teaching strategies.

To collect data, several methods were used, including classroom observation, structured questionnaires, informal interviews, and teacher feedback. Classroom observations were conducted over a specific period during regular English lessons. The aim was to see how communicative language teaching methods were applied in real classroom practice and how students reacted to these activities in natural learning conditions.

During these lessons, teachers implemented a range of communicative tasks designed to encourage interaction and meaningful use of English. These included pair and group work, discussions, role-plays, problem-solving activities, debates, and real-life simulations such as ordering in a restaurant, arranging travel plans, or conducting interviews. The main goal of these tasks was to help students use English more freely and naturally, rather than focusing only on grammatical accuracy.

Alongside the qualitative data, quantitative data were gathered through a structured questionnaire given to students. The questionnaire contained Likert-scale statements (from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree") that measured aspects such as students' motivation, confidence in speaking, level of participation, perceived improvement in listening and speaking skills, and overall satisfaction with communicative lessons. The responses were then converted into numerical form and analyzed using percentages to identify general trends among the participants.

In addition, informal interviews and short group discussions were conducted to gain deeper insight into students' personal experiences. These helped to understand their attitudes toward communicative activities, the challenges they faced, and how they felt this method compared with traditional grammar-based teaching. Teachers also shared their observations and experiences, which contributed to a more complete understanding of the classroom process.

All collected data were analyzed using both *descriptive statistical methods* and *thematic analysis*. Quantitative results were presented in the form of percentages and frequency counts

to show overall patterns in student responses. At the same time, qualitative data from observations, interviews, and feedback were examined to identify common themes such as engagement, confidence, fluency development, interaction, and classroom participation.

Finally, the results from both data types were compared with typical outcomes of traditional, grammar-focused teaching methods. This comparison helped evaluate how effective the communicative approach is in improving English learning among non-specialist students and provided a clearer picture of its advantages and limitations in real educational settings.

Research Component	Type of Data	Instruments / Tools	Purpose
Classroom observation	Qualitative	Observation checklist, field notes	To examine how communicative activities are applied in real classroom settings and how students respond during lessons
Student questionnaire	Quantitative	Likert-scale survey (1-5 rating scale)	To measure students' motivation, confidence, participation, and perceived improvement in English skills
Informal interviews	Qualitative	Guided questions, open discussion	To explore students' personal experiences, attitudes, and challenges in communicative learning
Teacher feedback	Qualitative	Interview notes, verbal feedback	To understand teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness and challenges of the communicative approach
Data analysis	Mixed (Qualitative + Quantitative)	Statistical summary, thematic coding	To identify patterns in student responses and evaluate overall effectiveness of the communicative approach

Results

The results of this study indicate that the communicative approach has a clear positive effect on teaching English to non-specialist students. One of the main changes observed was a noticeable increase in students' participation during lessons. Learners were more involved in classroom activities such as pair and group work, discussions, and role-playing tasks, which made the learning process more interactive and dynamic compared to traditional teacher-centered lessons.

An improvement in speaking ability was also evident. Students gradually became more confident in expressing their thoughts in English and showed better fluency in communication. Although grammatical inaccuracies were still common, students were less focused on avoiding mistakes and more on successfully conveying meaning. This suggests that the communicative approach helps learners overcome fear and encourages more natural language use.



Listening comprehension also improved, as students were regularly exposed to spoken English through interaction with classmates and task-based activities. They became more capable of understanding spoken messages in context and responding appropriately during conversations.

Regarding motivation, most students expressed a preference for communicative lessons over traditional grammar-focused instruction. They found these lessons more engaging, practical, and closer to real-life situations, which increased their interest in learning English.

At the same time, some difficulties were identified during the study. In larger classes, not all students had equal opportunities to speak and participate. Additionally, learners with weaker language skills sometimes felt less confident and needed more support from the teacher. Limited class time also made it difficult to fully complete some communicative tasks.

In general, the findings show that the communicative approach improves students' engagement, confidence, and fluency, although its effectiveness can be influenced by classroom size, student level, and time constraints.

Discussion

The results of this study clearly show that the communicative approach works effectively in teaching English to non-specialist students. The noticeable progress in students' participation, speaking ability, and motivation suggests that this method creates a more engaging and learner-centered classroom compared to traditional, grammar-focused teaching.

A major factor behind this improvement is the way the communicative approach emphasizes using English for real communication rather than simply learning rules. When students take part in activities like discussions, role plays, and problem-solving tasks, they are given a chance to use the language in meaningful contexts. This helps them develop practical communication skills more naturally and effectively.

Another important point is the growth in students' confidence. At the beginning of the learning process, many students are afraid of making mistakes and prefer not to speak. However, communicative activities encourage them to focus on expressing meaning instead of worrying about accuracy. Over time, this reduces anxiety and helps learners become more comfortable using English in front of others.

Listening skills also benefit from this approach because students are constantly exposed to spoken interaction during classroom activities. Unlike traditional lessons where listening input is often limited or controlled, communicative tasks require students to understand and respond immediately, which reflects real-life communication more closely.

At the same time, the study reveals some practical limitations. In large groups, it is difficult to ensure that every student gets enough speaking practice. Students with weaker language skills may also feel less confident and need additional guidance from the teacher. In addition, limited lesson time can restrict the full use of communicative activities in the classroom.

In general, these findings suggest that although the communicative approach is highly beneficial for non-specialist learners, its effectiveness depends on how it is implemented. With proper classroom management, careful planning, and teacher support, it can greatly improve students' English learning experience.

Conclusion

This study has focused on evaluating how effective the communicative approach is in teaching English to non-specialist students, and the findings strongly suggest that it is a valuable and practical method in modern language education. The results indicate that when learners are actively involved in interactive and task-based activities, they make noticeable progress in speaking and listening skills, become more confident in using English, and show higher levels of motivation throughout the learning process.

A key conclusion of the research is that the communicative approach changes the nature of language learning from passive absorption of rules to active use of the language. Instead of concentrating mainly on grammar explanations and memorization, students are encouraged to communicate ideas, take part in discussions, and solve tasks using English. This makes the learning process more meaningful and better suited to non-specialist students, who generally need English for practical academic and professional purposes rather than as a theoretical subject.

The study also shows that students tend to respond positively to this teaching approach. Over time, many learners become more willing to speak and gradually lose their fear of making mistakes. This is an important development, as anxiety is often one of the biggest obstacles in language learning. By focusing more on meaning and communication rather than perfect accuracy, the communicative approach creates a more relaxed and supportive classroom atmosphere.

Another important outcome is the improvement in listening ability. Regular exposure to spoken interaction during communicative activities helps students adjust to natural speech patterns and respond more effectively in real-time communication. This prepares them better for real-life situations where English is used spontaneously and unpredictably.

However, the study also identifies some challenges in applying this approach. Large classes can limit opportunities for all students to participate equally, while differences in language proficiency may cause some learners to feel less confident or fall behind. In addition, time limitations in the curriculum can make it difficult to fully implement communicative tasks and allow enough practice for every student.

Even with these challenges, the overall findings show that the communicative approach is still highly effective when applied properly. Its success largely depends on the teacher's ability to manage the classroom, adapt tasks to students' levels, and provide necessary guidance and support. With appropriate planning and flexible teaching strategies, these limitations can be reduced.

In summary, the communicative approach is a highly suitable and effective method for teaching English to non-specialist students. It not only improves language skills but also builds confidence, encourages independence, and helps learners use English more naturally in real-life situations. For this reason, it is recommended that this approach be more widely used in higher education, along with continued teacher development to ensure its successful implementation.

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