



WAYS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE THROUGH A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

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Abstract: This article examines the development of students' linguistic competence through a communicative approach in foreign language education. The main goal of modern foreign language education is not only to master grammatical rules and lexical units but also to develop students' ability to use language accurately, appropriately, and purposefully in real communicative situations. The article analyzes the content of linguistic competence, the theoretical foundations of the communicative approach, methods for developing oral and written communication, and the potential of interactive teaching methods. It also provides practical recommendations for improving students' linguistic competence through pair and group work, role-plays, problem-solving situations, dialogues, discussions, information-gap activities, and authentic materials. The article is conceptual and methodological in nature and does not present the results of an experimental study.

Keywords: communicative approach, linguistic competence, foreign language education, communicative competence, speech activity, interactive methods, dialogue, oral communication, written communication, authentic materials.

In the context of today's globalization, learning a foreign language has become an important component of an individual's educational and professional development. Knowing a foreign language is not limited to memorizing the meanings of words or grammatical rules. Learners need to be able to use the



language units they have acquired independently and appropriately in various communicative situations. Therefore, particular attention is being paid to the communicative approach in modern language education.

In traditional language teaching, explaining grammatical rules, memorizing vocabulary, and completing written exercises have often occupied a central position. As a result, learners may acquire sufficient theoretical knowledge about the language system but experience difficulties in expressing their ideas freely in real conversations. Therefore, connecting language knowledge with communicative activity has become an important pedagogical task in modern education.

The communicative approach is primarily based on teaching language as a means of communication. Within this approach, the learner is not simply a person who repeats ready-made grammatical structures but an active participant who expresses ideas, asks questions, provides answers, supports opinions, and attempts to understand the interlocutor in particular situations.

The main purpose of this article is to highlight the potential of the communicative approach for developing students' linguistic competence and to recommend effective methods that can be used in foreign language lessons.

Linguistic competence refers to a learner's knowledge of the language system and ability to use it. It encompasses an interconnected set of grammatical, lexical, phonetic, and orthographic knowledge.

Linguistic competence can be divided into the following major components:

1. **Lexical competence** – knowing the meanings of words and expressions and being able to use them in appropriate contexts.
2. **Grammatical competence** – using grammatical forms and structures correctly.
3. **Phonetic competence** – correctly producing sounds, stress, intonation, and pronunciation patterns.



4. **Orthographic competence** – following writing conventions and spelling rules.
5. **Syntactic competence** – combining words correctly in terms of meaning and grammar to construct sentences and texts.

However, linguistic competence is not limited to knowledge of language units. Learners also need to know when, why, and how such units should be used. In this respect, linguistic competence constitutes an important component of communicative competence.

The communicative approach is an educational concept aimed at using language in real-life communication. Hymes introduced the concept of communicative competence and emphasized that knowing a language does not simply mean being able to construct grammatically correct sentences [1].

Canale and Swain associated communicative competence with grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic dimensions [2]. These perspectives increased attention to learners' ability to perform real communicative tasks in foreign language education.

Within the communicative approach, the teacher is not only the primary source of knowledge but also an organizer and facilitator of learners' communicative activities. The learner becomes an active participant in the educational process.

This approach is based on the following principles:

- using language in real communicative situations;
- ensuring active learner participation;
- working in pairs and groups;
- organizing meaningful and purposeful speaking activities;
- using authentic materials;
- creating opportunities for learners to express themselves without fear of making mistakes;
- supporting learners' independent thinking and initiative.



The main advantage of the communicative approach in developing linguistic competence is that learners acquire language units not in isolation but within specific situations.

For example, rather than simply asking learners to memorize the grammatical structure **“Could you help me?”**, it is more effective to practice this expression in a real-life situation. A learner may ask an employee for help at a hotel, request information about a product in a shop, or ask a stranger for directions. As a result, the grammatical form becomes associated with a particular communicative purpose. Similarly, instead of memorizing new words as separate lists, using them in dialogues and situations helps learners transform their vocabulary into active language use.

For example, the words:

reservation – booking – available – cancel – confirm

can be practiced through a dialogue about booking a hotel room rather than simply being memorized. In this way, learners not only understand the meanings of new words but also learn how to use them in communicative situations.

Effective Ways to Improve Students’ Linguistic Competence

1. Dialogue and Pair Work

Dialogic activities are among the most effective tools of the communicative approach. By asking and answering questions, requesting information, expressing opinions, and maintaining conversations in pairs, learners actively use language units.

For example, short dialogues can be organized around topics such as **“At the airport,” “At the hotel,” “At the doctor’s,”** and **“At the university.”**

Through such activities, learners:

- formulate questions;
- provide answers;
- use new vocabulary;



- apply grammatical structures;
- pay attention to pronunciation and intonation.

As a result, several linguistic skills can be developed simultaneously.

2. The Use of Role-plays

Role-plays strengthen learners' preparation for real-life communicative situations. For example, one learner can act as a hotel receptionist while another plays the role of a guest.

Situation: The guest wants to check into the room earlier, but the room is not ready yet. The receptionist needs to suggest an alternative solution.

In this situation, learners acquire not only vocabulary but also communicative functions such as making polite requests, explaining, suggesting alternatives, and refusing appropriately.

3. Problem-based Situations

Problem-based situations encourage learners to express their own ideas rather than simply repeat prepared answers.

For example:

“You have arrived at the hotel, but the room you booked is not available.

What would you say to the receptionist?”

The learner analyzes the situation and independently selects appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures.

Such tasks help transform linguistic knowledge into practical language use.

4. Information-gap Activities

In an information-gap activity, two learners have different pieces of information. They need to identify the missing information through questions and answers.

For example, Learner A has a hotel room schedule, while Learner B has the arrival and departure times of guests. Through communication, they must identify the appropriate room.



This method naturally encourages learners to ask questions and listen carefully to answers.

5. The Use of Authentic Materials

Materials taken from real-life contexts are particularly important for developing communicative competence. These may include:

- menus;
- advertisements;
- hotel booking pages;
- transport schedules;
- emails;
- short social media messages;
- video dialogues;
- tourist brochures.

Through such materials, learners observe how language is actually used in communication and understand the practical functions of the language units they have learned.

Assessment of Linguistic Competence

Within the communicative approach, assessment should not be based solely on the number of grammatical errors. Learners' ability to use language effectively to accomplish communicative tasks should also be taken into account.

Assessment criteria may include:

Criterion	Description
Linguistic accuracy	Correct use of grammatical and lexical units
Fluency	Expressing ideas continuously and understandably
Vocabulary range	Using a variety of words and expressions
Appropriateness	Selecting language appropriate to the communicative situation
Pronunciation	Pronouncing words and sentences clearly



Communication strategies	Asking questions, clarifying information, and maintaining interaction
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Such assessment makes it possible to evaluate not only whether learners can provide a “correct answer” but also whether they can use the language effectively in real communication.

Education organized through a communicative approach increases learners’ classroom participation. Learners do not acquire language merely by listening to the teacher or completing textbook exercises; instead, they use the language in practical activities.

The major pedagogical advantages of this approach include:

1. increasing learners’ speaking activity;
2. helping incorporate new words into active vocabulary;
3. connecting grammatical knowledge with practical language use;
4. developing independent thinking;
5. creating an environment in which learners are not afraid of making mistakes in communication;
6. strengthening preparation for real-life communicative situations;
7. developing learners’ communicative and linguistic competence in an integrated manner.

At the same time, the communicative approach does not reject grammar instruction. On the contrary, grammatical knowledge is regarded as a means of supporting communicative activity. Learners should not only know a grammatical rule but also understand when and for what purpose it should be used.

The communicative approach is one of the effective methodological foundations for developing students’ linguistic competence in foreign language education. This approach makes it possible to connect language units with real communicative situations and to ensure learners’ independent thinking and active participation in speaking activities.



Explaining grammatical rules and memorizing vocabulary alone are not sufficient for developing linguistic competence. Learners should use the language resources they have acquired in dialogues, discussions, role-plays, problem-based situations, information-gap activities, and tasks based on authentic materials.

Thus, the communicative approach facilitates the transition from **knowing a language to actively using it** and from **theoretical knowledge to practical communication**. As a result, learners can develop into language users who are able to communicate accurately, clearly, appropriately, and effectively in different situations.

Main Conclusions

1. The communicative approach connects learners' linguistic knowledge with real language activities.
2. To develop linguistic competence, grammatical, lexical, and phonetic knowledge should be regularly applied in communicative situations.
3. Dialogues, role-plays, problem-based situations, information-gap activities, and authentic materials increase learners' active participation in communication.
4. In assessment, fluency, vocabulary range, appropriateness, and communication strategies should be considered alongside grammatical accuracy.
5. The communicative approach transforms foreign language learning from a process of acquiring theoretical knowledge into a process of preparing learners for real communication.

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