

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

O'roqova Dilnavoz

English teacher at Jondor 1st technicum.

Abstract. Speaking is one of the most complex language skills because it requires learners to coordinate linguistic knowledge, cognitive processing, pronunciation, fluency, and interactional competence in real time. In foreign language classrooms, learners may possess considerable grammatical and lexical knowledge but still experience difficulties when communicating spontaneously. This article examines the role of communicative activities in developing students' speaking skills and explores how interaction-based classroom practices can contribute to learners' fluency, confidence, and communicative competence. The study is based on a qualitative review and theoretical analysis of literature related to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), second language acquisition, and classroom interaction. Particular attention is given to information-gap activities, role-plays, discussions, problem-solving tasks, simulations, and storytelling. The analysis indicates that communicative activities provide learners with opportunities to produce meaningful language, negotiate meaning, receive feedback, and develop interactional strategies. The findings also suggest that the effectiveness of such activities depends on appropriate task design, learner proficiency, classroom management, and the balance between fluency-oriented and form-focused instruction. The article concludes that communicative activities can serve as an important component of English language teaching when they are systematically planned and supported by appropriate scaffolding and feedback.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, speaking skills, communicative activities, EFL learners, oral communication, fluency, interaction, language learning

Introduction. Developing effective speaking skills has become one of the central objectives of contemporary English language teaching. Unlike receptive skills such as reading and listening, speaking requires learners to process and produce language almost simultaneously. During spoken interaction, learners must select appropriate vocabulary, construct grammatical structures, pronounce words intelligibly, organize ideas, respond to interlocutors, and manage turn-taking. Consequently, knowledge of grammatical rules alone does not necessarily enable learners to communicate effectively. Traditional approaches to foreign language teaching have often placed considerable emphasis on grammatical accuracy, vocabulary memorization,

translation, and controlled repetition. Although these practices can contribute to linguistic knowledge, they may provide limited opportunities for spontaneous communication. Communicative Language Teaching emerged partly in response to this limitation by emphasizing the functional and interactive nature of language.

Within a communicative approach, classroom activities are designed not simply to make learners produce grammatically correct sentences but to encourage them to use language for meaningful purposes. According to Richards (2006), communicative language teaching focuses on developing learners' ability to use language appropriately in different communicative contexts. Therefore, communicative activities occupy an important position in the development of oral communication. The purpose of this article is to examine how communicative activities contribute to the development of students' speaking skills. It specifically focuses on the theoretical foundations of communicative activities, their potential benefits, the challenges associated with their implementation, and the pedagogical conditions that influence their effectiveness.

Literature Review. The theoretical development of communicative language teaching can be connected to broader changes in the understanding of language competence. Hymes (1972) introduced the concept of communicative competence, emphasizing that knowing a language involves more than knowledge of grammatical structures. Learners also need to know how language is used appropriately in particular social contexts. Canale and Swain (1980) further developed the concept of communicative competence by identifying several components, including grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. Their framework provides a theoretical basis for classroom activities that require learners to use language for actual communication rather than simply demonstrate knowledge of grammatical forms.

The Interaction Hypothesis proposed by Long also provides an important theoretical foundation for communicative activities. According to this perspective, interaction can facilitate second language acquisition because learners have opportunities to negotiate meaning, request clarification, modify their language, and receive feedback. Communicative tasks therefore create conditions in which learners actively participate in the construction of meaning. Krashen's (1982) theory also emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input and affective factors in language acquisition. Although his theoretical claims have been debated and developed further by subsequent researchers, the concept of reducing unnecessary anxiety remains relevant to speaking instruction. Learners are more likely to participate actively when classroom activities provide supportive conditions for communication.

Swain's Output Hypothesis adds another important perspective. Producing language encourages learners to notice gaps between what they want to express and

what they are able to express. Communicative tasks therefore provide opportunities for learners to test their developing linguistic resources through meaningful production.

Research on task-based language teaching has also highlighted the importance of meaningful tasks in second language development. Ellis argues that tasks can encourage learners to use language primarily for meaning while creating opportunities for attention to linguistic form. In this sense, communicative activities can connect fluency-oriented practice with language development. Richards identifies pair work, group work, role-play, problem-solving, and information-sharing activities as important techniques associated with communicative language teaching. Similarly, Harmer emphasizes the importance of giving learners opportunities to interact with one another rather than limiting classroom communication to teacher-student exchanges. Overall, the literature suggests that speaking development requires opportunities for meaningful language use, interaction, negotiation, and feedback. Communicative activities provide a practical classroom framework through which these processes can occur.

Methodology. This article employs a qualitative literature-review methodology. Rather than collecting numerical data from a particular group of students, the study synthesizes theoretical perspectives and findings from existing literature concerning communicative language teaching, second language acquisition, classroom interaction, and speaking development. Relevant academic works were selected according to their relationship with three major areas: communicative competence, interaction in second language learning, and classroom activities for developing oral communication. Foundational works by researchers such as Hymes, Canale and Swain, Krashen, Long, Swain, Ellis, Richards, and Harmer were examined to identify major theoretical principles.

The analysis focused on the following questions:

1. How do communicative activities contribute to the development of speaking skills?
2. What types of communicative activities provide opportunities for meaningful oral interaction?
3. What benefits can learners gain from communicative speaking activities?
4. What challenges may limit the effectiveness of these activities?
5. What pedagogical conditions can improve their implementation?

Discussion. The findings demonstrate that communicative activities can make an important contribution to speaking development because they transform learners from passive recipients of linguistic information into active participants in communication. This shift is consistent with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching, in which language is treated as a resource for expressing meaning and achieving communicative purposes.

One important implication is that speaking instruction should provide a balance between controlled practice and freer communication. Beginners may require vocabulary support, sentence frames, model dialogues, and guided questions before they can successfully participate in open-ended discussions. As learners become more proficient, teachers can gradually reduce this support and introduce more complex communicative tasks. The role of the teacher also changes within a communicative classroom. Instead of controlling every interaction, the teacher can act as a facilitator, organizer, observer, and source of feedback. This does not mean that teachers should stop teaching grammar or correcting errors. Rather, grammatical instruction can be integrated with communicative practice according to learners' needs.

Another important issue is feedback. Excessive correction during communication may interrupt fluency and increase learners' anxiety. On the other hand, the complete absence of feedback may allow persistent errors to remain. A balanced approach can involve allowing learners to complete the communicative task first and then addressing common or significant errors afterward. Task selection is equally important. Information-gap activities may be appropriate for developing question-and-answer skills, while role-plays can develop pragmatic competence. Discussions can encourage extended speech and opinion expression, whereas problem-solving tasks can promote negotiation and interaction. Consequently, teachers should select activities according to specific learning objectives rather than using communicative activities simply for variety. The literature also suggests that communicative activities should be adapted to learners' proficiency levels. A task that is appropriate for B1 learners may be too demanding for A1 learners. Effective scaffolding can therefore include pre-teaching vocabulary, providing useful expressions, modeling the task, assigning clear roles, and gradually increasing task complexity. Overall, communicative activities should be regarded not as a replacement for all other teaching methods but as an important component of a balanced language-learning program. Their strongest contribution lies in creating meaningful opportunities for learners to use language for communicative purposes.

Conclusion. Communicative activities have an important role in the development of students' speaking skills because they provide opportunities for meaningful interaction, oral production, negotiation of meaning, and the development of

communicative competence. Activities such as information-gap tasks, role-plays, discussions, simulations, storytelling, and problem-solving can expose learners to different forms of spoken communication and encourage them to use English for purposeful interaction. The literature reviewed in this article indicates that successful implementation depends on several factors, including appropriate task design, learner proficiency, classroom organization, teacher support, and effective feedback. Communicative activities are most productive when they are integrated with vocabulary and grammar support and when learners are gradually moved from controlled practice toward more independent communication. Thus, speaking instruction should not focus exclusively on grammatical accuracy or memorization. Learners also need regular opportunities to use English spontaneously and purposefully. A carefully structured communicative approach can help create these opportunities and contribute to the development of learners' fluency, confidence, and interactional competence.

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