

Communicative Approach in the Iraqi Secondary Schools: Between Theory and Practice¹

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ABSTRACT

The present study is an attempt to investigate the application of Communicative Approach in Iraqi secondary schools. The new English syllabus has been established for the sake of communication values, see this study aims to show the CLT between theory and practice.

The study falls in four sections, they are. The first section presents a general introduction to the communicative approach and the aim, problems and hypothesis of the study.

The second section is devoted to show summary and providing information about CLT in general and the role of teacher and learner.

The Third section transfers the study from theory to practice . In this practical section ,the content of the test, the administration of the test ,and then the results obtained with their discussions are illustrated.

The final section of this paper shows the concluding remarks of the study. Also the validity of the hypothesis is checked here in this section. References are listed at the end as well.

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Communicative approach can be seen as a response to the Audio-Lingual Method and as development of the Notional-Functional syllabus. It is characterized as a wide approach to teaching rather than as a teaching method with a clearly defined set of classroom practices. When the teachers communicate, they can use the language to accomplish some functions, such as arguing, persuading, or promising. Moreover, they carry out these functions within a social context. speakers will choose a particular way to express their argument not only based upon the intent and the level of emotion, but also on whom they are addressing and what the relation with that persons are (Freeman,1986:123).

Since communication is a process so, it is insufficient for students to simply have knowledge of target language forms, meanings, and function. Students must be able to apply the knowledge in negotiation meaning and integration functions. It is through the interaction between speaker and listener (or reader and writer) that meaning becomes clear. Similarly, communicative language teaching allows the teachers to include communicative activities into their teaching and uses the best elements of other methods not to neglect them completely. The classroom context is used to create activities to teach learners how to react in real world situations and not to take real world situations.

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Additionally, there is a gap between what the teachers want their students to learn and what they themselves actually want to.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this paper is to show the way that Secondary Iraqi school use for Communicative Approach with the " Iraq Opportunities Textbook ".

Problem of the Study

It is claimed that, sometimes, teachers do not apply the communicative approach in effective way in the class.

Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that communicative approach has great connection to the new syllabus of English language at Iraqi secondary schools. But not all four skills are dealt communicatively.

SECTION TWO: BACKGROUND OF CLT

The concept of communicative competence of second or foreign language was used in the early 1970s. Since the purpose of language study is language use, so the student's ability in communication should be developed and they should be motivated to communicate

Having been searched for the so-called perfect method in ELT (English Language Teaching) for long time, many approaches have been developed. Among these approaches, CLT has found its place as far as the English teaching curriculum, education policy statements, course books and teacher education programs in the world are concerned. For some, Communicative Language Teaching means little more than an integration of grammatical and functional teaching. Littlewood (1981 : 1) states, "One of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language." For others, it means using procedures where learners work in pairs or groups employing available language resources in problem-solving tasks. In Situational Language Teaching, language was taught by practicing basic structures in meaningful situation-based activities. Focusing on today's changing ELT context and the increasing trend towards CLT, Brown (1994) draws attention to the importance of real-life communication, generating language performance out of the classroom, developing linguistic fluency and facilitating lifelong language learning. Brown (1994: 43) also lists some features of CLT as follows:

1. Goals of classroom are not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence. They are focused upon all the components of communicative competence.
2. Language teaching techniques are designed to engage learners in the functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Linguistic structures do not represent the central focus but rather aspects of language which enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.
3. Fluency and accuracy are more focused and seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. Fluency may take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.
4. In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts.

The concept of communicative competence of second or foreign language was used in the early 1970s. Since the purpose of language study is language use, so the student's ability in communication should be developed and they should be motivated to communicate . In naturalistic (outside the classroom), human language communication of course takes both oral and written forms and develops in one or more languages wherever

Noam Chomsky (1959) says that human language development, or linguistic competence, was much more creative than the one that was represented by Skinnerian behaviorism. Hymes (1972), a sociolinguist, used the

term communicative competence to provide a much broader view of language use. Speakers need to know not only grammatical structures but also language use and how to speak it.

Communicative language teaching makes use of real-life situations that necessitate communication. The instructor sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life. Like audio-linguistic method of language teaching which relies on repetition and drills, the real-life situation changes from day to day. Students' motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful issues. Brown (1994:134) says that the learner should experience the language, live in it and not only memorize words, phrases and expressions but actions should always occur before the expressions. Among the features of CLT focused upon by various researchers as indicated above, some common features, such as pair and group work, fluency and accuracy, error correction and the role of the teacher make up the focus of this study.

The Roles of Teachers and Learners in the Classroom

The role of the teacher is to facilitate communication in the classroom and guide, not an all-knowing bestowed of knowledge. Students are therefore encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with other. One of his major responsibilities is to establish situations likely to promote communication. During the activities, the teacher acts as an adviser, answering students' questions and monitoring their performance. He might make notes of their errors to be worked on at a later time during more accuracy-based activities. At other times, teacher might be a co-communicator engaging in the communicative activity along with students. Students are communicators. They are actively engaged in negotiating meaning in trying to make themselves understood and in understanding other-even when their knowledge of the target language is incomplete (Richards & Rodgers, 1987:76).

Learners in this way of teaching have to participate in classroom activities that were based on a cooperative rather than individualistic approach to learning. Students had to become comfortable with listening to their peers in group work or pair work tasks, rather than relying on the teacher for a model. They were expected to take on a greater degree of responsibility for their own learning. And teachers now had to assume the role of facilitator and monitor. Rather than being a model for correct speech and writing and one with the primary responsibility of making students produce plenty of error-free sentences, the teacher had to develop a different view of learners' errors and of her/his own role in facilitating language learning

A class of CLT focuses mainly on creating an environment centered on the learner rather than an environment focused on the teacher. This fact necessitates that the role of teachers must be changed. Instead of being a class-dominator, as they were supposed to be in the past, they are shift to become a class-supporter.

SECTION THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve the objectives of the study scientifically, the following methodologies are used:

Population of the Research

A population refers to "the entire group of people who are of interest in a particular survey" (Brown, 2001,p. 71-72). In the present study, the population covers the English teachers of the secondary schools in Najjaf city . The number of that teachers is (10 teachers from different schools

Sample of the Research

It is not an easy task to collect data from every individual in a setting or population. Sampling involves the selection of subjects from the whole population of the study. By doing so, the subgroup will be the representative of the large population. This is important because it limits effort, resources, and anguish which go into a survey project. So, ten teachers from different schools were chosen randomly as a sample for the test.

Face Validity

One of the important qualities of a good test is its face validity. "The establishment of the validity of a test or tool is nothing but a way of ensuring that the developed test is going to measure the attribute or phenomenon for the

measurement of which it has been designed by test developer and employed by the users. In this sense, the validity of a research tool lays great emphasis on the accuracy of the measurement provided by the tool at all times and situations. Thus, a research tool or test can be termed valid when it measures what it must to measure, irrespective of the time factor, repetition, and changes in the administration situation. There are several types of validity, but face validity, which refers to "a type of validity that can be established through taking subjective decisions regarding the relevance and capability of the test items to measure what they ought to measure merely on the basis of their face value", is considered as the best type of validity in educational research. (Mangal & Mangal, 2013, p. 579).

In order to check the validity of the test, the questionnaire is given to two referees in the field of phonology and linguistics. The referees were requested to point out their opinions, remarks and suggestions about the suitability, validity, and applicability of the teachers' test.

Reliability

The second important issue related to the quality of a good test is reliability. Reliability refers to the "dependability or faith" that can be imposed in a test. It is demonstrated through the *consistency* and *stability* of its measures beside the internal consistency and homogeneity maintained by its items and scales. (Mangal & Mangal, 2013, p. 565).

Administration of the Test

The test was conducted by the researcher in the form of questionnaire of (10) questions. The questions are all about the different activities of the Communicative Approach; how and to what extent the teacher relies on these activities in teaching the material to the students. The answers of the samples are taken as (Always, usually, frequently, often). The form of the questionnaire (see appendix A)

Data Analysis

After getting the data of the study, the researcher has analysed it depending on the responds of the respondents

| Items | Always (1) | Usually (2) | Frequently (3) | Often (4) |
|---|---------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------|
| 1- Using pair work in the class. | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| 2- Using group work in the class. | 1 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| 3- Communicate in English language. | 0 | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| 4- Using Arabic language for instructions. | 0 | 7 | 3 | 0 |
| 5- Correct the errors at the end of the activity. | 0 | 2 | 7 | 1 |
| 6- Teacher is the cornerstone in the class. | 4 | 5 | 1 | 0 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7- List of vocabulary to be memorized. | 1 | 5 | 3 | 0 |
| 8- Teaching grammar through listing rules. | 1 | 6 | 3 | 0 |
| 9- Emphasizing the four skills in the lesson. | 0 | 3 | 7 | 0 |
| 10- Using role-play activity. | 0 | 4 | 6 | 0 |

THE RESULTS

After analysing the data, the researcher has concluded that the communicative approach in Iraq, in the secondary schools is not widely used because most of the teachers who had been asked in this study have answered that they rarely use the activities of the communicative approach. They have linked the reasons for this luck in using grammar translation method for teaching students, to the fact that it is a new trend in teaching to which most teacher have no sufficient knowledge. And most of the teachers have graduated from schools where this approach was not applied. Few activities of the communicative approach where applied by the teacher. The only two activities which got the high degree are the correction of the errors committed by students and using lists of vocabularies to be taught. The former belongs not to the communicative approach but it has its roots in the grammar translation

CONCLUSIONS

According to the findings of this study it has become clear that in teaching English in secondary schools of Iraq no specific method is being followed , because most of the samples of the study have answer that they fellow multiple methods in teaching students .They depend on no distinct one in teaching English language. The communicative approach needs to be used on larger scale in the schools in order to avoid the of the old methods and most of the teachers need to be given a course in the communicative approach and the activities of it because teaching depends heavily on the teacher first. If there is no talented teacher, the teaching process will not achieveits goals, so, giving courses to teachers is a dire need for developing teaching process then they will transfer this knowledge to their students

Appendix A

Please, aid us by listing your opinion here;

| Items | Always (1) | Usually (2) | Frequently (3) | Often (4) |
|--|---------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Using pair work in the class. | | | | |
| 11- Using group work in the class. | | | | |
| 12- Communicate in English language. | | | | |
| 13- Using Arabic language for instructions. | | | | |
| 14- Correct the errors at the end of the activity. | | | | |
| 15- Teacher is the cornerstone in the class. | | | | |
| 16- List of vocabulary to be memorized. | | | | |
| 17- Teaching grammar through listing rules. | | | | |
| 18- Emphasizing the four skills in the lesson. | | | | |
| 19. Using role-play activity. | | | | |

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