

FOSTERING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS THROUGH COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract: This study explores the development and implementation of a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) environment aimed at enhancing the communicative competence of university students. Given the increasing importance of effective communication skills in a globalized world, the research outlines a framework that integrates interactive pedagogical approaches, real-life communication scenarios, and collaborative learning experiences. Through a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from student assessments, surveys, and classroom observations to evaluate the impact of the CLT environment on students' language proficiency and confidence in using English in various contexts. The findings indicate a significant improvement in students' ability to engage in meaningful interactions, with enhanced fluency, accuracy, and pragmatic skills. The study underscores the necessity of creating a supportive and immersive linguistic atmosphere that prioritizes student engagement and encourages active participation.

Key words: Communicative Language Teaching, Communicative Competence, university students, innovative education, language proficiency, student engagement, mixed methods research, role-playing, evaluation, group discussions, language games and activities.

INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly changing environment of higher education, developing advanced professional communication skills has become essential, particularly through the course "Communicative Language Teaching". This course is fundamental in equipping students with the skills needed to effectively engage in complex professional interactions. Acknowledging the shifting requirements of the contemporary workforce, this research examines how innovative technologies can be utilized to improve and develop communication skills among university students. The convergence of education and technology has heralded a new pedagogical era, offering unique opportunities to enhance teaching practices. This study aims to investigate the ways in which the strategic incorporation of innovative technologies into the curriculum can nurture sophisticated communication skills. The CLT course serves as the backdrop for this inquiry, providing a rich setting to evaluate the

relationship between cutting-edge technology and effective professional communication. As the communication landscape evolves, featuring diverse modalities and platforms, the role of higher education in preparing students to address these changing challenges becomes increasingly vital. The adoption of advanced pedagogical technologies offers a promising way to reconcile traditional teaching methods with the needs of modern communication practices. This introduction lays the foundation for an in-depth examination of the transformative potential that comes with integrating innovative technologies, specifically in terms of developing advanced professional communication skills among university students within the context of the CLT course. Creating an effective method to enhance professional communicative competence in university education poses a significant challenge in the field of higher education linguistics.

Understanding Communicative Competence

The concept of communicative competence, introduced by Dell Hymes [3; 35-71], extends beyond grammatical knowledge to include the ability to use language appropriately in various social contexts. Canale and Swain [11] further developed this concept, breaking it down into four key components:

1. ***Linguistic competence:*** This foundational aspect encompasses the knowledge of the language's core structures, including grammar vocabulary, and pronunciation. It is the basic toolkit needed for constructing sentences and understanding the language at a fundamental level.
2. ***Sociolinguistic competence:*** This component highlights the importance of understanding the social contexts in which language is used. It involves recognizing and appropriately using language based on factors such as the level of formality, politeness, the relationship between speakers, and cultural norms. This competence ensures that communication is socially and culturally appropriate.
3. ***Discourse competence:*** This refers to the ability to effectively organize and connect ideas within spoken or written language. It involves crafting coherent and cohesive messages, which is crucial for maintaining clarity and flow in communication. Discourse competence also includes understanding how different texts function within various contexts.
4. ***Strategic competence:*** This component emphasizes the ability to navigate and resolve communication challenges. When faced with gaps in knowledge or unexpected difficulties, individuals can employ strategies such as gestures, paraphrasing, or asking for clarification to maintain effective communication. This adaptability is essential for overcoming potential breakdowns during interactions [4].

Together, these components create a holistic view of communicative competence, highlighting the necessity of not only knowing the language but also using it effectively and appropriately in real-life situations. This perspective encourages language learners to develop a broader skill set that facilitates meaningful

interaction and understanding in a variety of contexts. A communicative teaching framework should address all these aspects to ensure students develop well-rounded language skills.

The contributions of scholars like Michael Halliday and Bernard Spolsky have played a significant role in expanding Hymes's theory of communicative competence, transitioning the focus of language study from purely grammatical correctness to the functional use of language in social contexts. Halliday's introduction of functional grammar highlights how language serves various communicative purposes—requesting, informing, and persuading—thereby positioning language as a tool for meaning-making in interpersonal interactions. Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence further enhances this perspective by incorporating not only grammatical proficiency but also the ability to engage effectively in diverse social situations. This comprehensive view challenges Noam Chomsky's linguistic competence, which is mainly focused on the idealized and abstract aspects of language, emphasizing internal grammatical knowledge rather than the contextualized use of language in everyday life. In opposition to Chomsky's largely decontextualized approach, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) prioritizes the importance of context, purpose, and interaction in language acquisition. CLT encourages learners to engage in authentic communication experiences that replicate real-life scenarios, fostering fluency and effective communication skills over mere grammatical accuracy. The alignment of CLT with Hymes's theory marks a shift toward a richer understanding of language education that encompasses pragmatic and social dimensions. By emphasizing the ability to adapt language use to varied contexts, CLT aims to develop learners into not only proficient speakers but also socially competent communicators, able to navigate a wide range of interactions effectively. This comprehensive approach ultimately encourages the development of well-rounded language learners capable of meaningful communication across different situations [2; 46-48].

Defining communicative competence

Communicative competence is defined as the ability to interpret and enact appropriate social behaviors, and it requires the active involvement of the learner in the production of the target language. Such a notion encompasses a wide range of abilities: the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary (*linguistic competence*); the ability to say the appropriate thing in a certain social situation (*sociolinguistic competence*); the ability to start, enter, contribute to, and end a conversation, and the ability to do this in a consistent and coherent manner (*discourse competence*); the ability to communicate effectively and repair problems caused by communication breakdowns (*strategic competence*) [5].

As frequently misunderstood, CLT is not a method per se. That is to say, it is not a method in the sense by which content, a syllabus, and teaching routines are clearly

identified. CLT has left its doors wide open for a great variety of methods and techniques. There is no single text or authority on it, nor any single model that is universally accepted as authoritative. By and large, it uses materials and utilizes methods that are appropriate to a given context of learning. CLT has spawned various movements such as proficiency-based or standard-based instruction. While the early days of CLT were concerned with finding best designs and practices, the proficiency-based movement contributed to the field of language teaching by putting forward a set of proficiency guidelines. These guidelines describe language ability and are meant to be used to measure competence in a language [7; 1-10]. In this sense, the proficiency-based movement focused on measuring what learners can do in functional terms. By providing evaluative descriptions, that is, by specifying what students should know and how they should be able to use language within a variety of contexts and to various degrees of accuracy at different stages, it provided a set of broadly stated goals and thus a sense of direction for curriculum designers.

The initial aspect of this investigation delves into the dynamic realm of pedagogical technologies and their seamless integration into the academic environment. By leveraging cutting-edge technologies, educators can transcend traditional boundaries, providing students with interactive and engaging tools to enhance their communicative skills. This section scrutinizes the effectiveness of various technologies, such as virtual simulations, interactive multimedia, and collaborative platforms, in creating an immersive learning experience within the framework of the “Communicative Language Teaching” course. To foster advanced communicative competence, an integrative interdisciplinary approach is essential. This study explores the synergy between technology integration and interdisciplinary methodologies [1; 172-178]. By combining insights from various disciplines, students can develop a holistic understanding of effective communication in diverse professional contexts. The research investigates how this integrative approach contributes to the cultivation of nuanced communicative skills, thereby preparing students for the multifaceted demands of their future careers. The study proceeds to analyze the role of interactive teaching methods within the course structure. Interactive methods such as case studies, role-playing, and collaborative projects provide students with practical experiences that extend beyond theoretical understanding. The final segment of the main body focuses on the ultimate goal of the integration of innovative technologies - the formation of professionally significant competencies. This involves evaluating how the course, enriched by technological advancements, cultivates skills that are directly relevant to students' future professional endeavors. The study examines the transferability of these competencies to real-world communication situations, ensuring that students are well-equipped for the complexities of their respective fields. The training methodology is rooted in a communicative-activity approach with the aim of enhancing both the linguistic and

communicative competencies of students, alongside fostering their “linguistic sense” [6; 68-74]. The implementation of this holistic approach involves refining students’ speech skills through the use of carefully curated professionally oriented didactic materials, presented within simulated speech situations.

Using Authentic Materials

Authentic materials, such as newspapers, podcasts, and real-life conversations, expose students to natural language use. This approach enhances their ability to understand and respond to diverse communication scenarios.

1. ***Incorporating Technology:*** Technology plays a crucial role in modern language teaching. Digital tools, such as language-learning apps (*Duolingo, Babbel, and Memrise* help students build vocabulary and practice pronunciation through gamified learning), virtual simulations, online discussion forums and blogs (platforms like *Reddit, Quora, or, university discussion boards* enable students to participate in written discussions, improving both their writing and critical thinking skills), and interactive whiteboards and digital classrooms provide students with opportunities to practice communication beyond the classroom. Virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI)-based language assistants can further support interactive learning.

2. ***Encouraging Collaborative Learning:***

Pair work – Students can practice dialogues, conduct interviews, or play “question and answer” games to simulate real conversations. Example: One student plays the role of a tourist, while the other provides directions in English.

Group projects – Assignments like creating a travel blog, designing an advertisement, or presenting on cultural traditions encourage teamwork and language application. Example: Students collaborate on a research project about a famous English-speaking city and present their findings.

Role-playing activities – Simulations such as job interviews, doctor-patient conversations, or customer service interactions help students practice formal and informal communication. Example: Students act out a job interview, with one playing the employer and another the job candidate. *Debates and Discussions* – Structured debates on topics like “Social Media: A Blessing or a Curse?” encourage students to articulate opinions, listen actively, and refine their argumentation skills.

Problem-Solving Tasks – Assigning real-life scenarios where students must work together to find solutions builds communication and critical thinking skills. Example: Students are given a survival scenario (e.g., lost in the jungle) and must decide together what to do [10].

3. ***Assessing Communicative Competence:*** Traditional assessment methods often focus on grammar and vocabulary rather than practical communication skills. Universities should adopt alternative assessment techniques, such as performance-based evaluations, self-assessments, and peer feedback, to measure students’ communicative competence effectively.

Performance-Based Evaluations – Students participate in real-world simulations, such as giving a business presentation, conducting an interview, or leading a group discussion. Example: A student presents a travel itinerary in English, justifying their choices to an audience.

Self-Assessments and Reflective Journals – Students track their own progress, set learning goals, and reflect on their communication skills. Example: Students write a weekly reflection on their speaking challenges and improvements.

Peer Feedback and Evaluations – Students assess each other's speaking and writing skills, promoting self-awareness and constructive criticism. Example: After a role-playing activity, students give feedback on pronunciation, fluency, and coherence.

Portfolio Assessments – Students compile recordings, essays, presentations, and project work to demonstrate their growth over time. Example: A student creates a digital portfolio containing voice recordings, written reflections, and video presentations.

Rubric-Based Grading – Instead of focusing only on grammar, assessment rubrics should include fluency, coherence, pronunciation, and interaction. Example: A rubric for a speaking test includes categories like 'use of idiomatic expressions' and 'ability to maintain conversation flow' [9].

Utilizing authentic materials alongside technology, collaborative learning, and comprehensive assessment strategies not only elevates language teaching but also prepares students to navigate real-world communication challenges. This multifaceted approach can significantly enhance students' engagement and confidence in using language, ultimately leading to greater success in their academic and professional pursuits.

CONCLUSION

The investigation into enhancing advanced professional communication skills among university students through the incorporation of innovative technologies in the CLT course highlights the transformative potential of this teaching strategy. By merging advanced technologies with educational methods, it has opened up promising pathways for equipping students with the nuanced communication skills necessary for their future careers. The application of innovative pedagogical technologies has not only improved traditional teaching practices but also created a richer, more immersive learning environment. Tools such as virtual simulations, interactive multimedia, and collaborative platforms enable students to refine their communication skills across various professional situations. Employing an integrative interdisciplinary approach has significantly expanded students' viewpoints, encouraged critical thinking, and readied them for the complex demands of their fields. By drawing on multiple disciplines, students gain a comprehensive understanding that helps them navigate professional communication's intricacies.

Interactive teaching techniques, including case studies, role-play, and group projects enhanced by technological tools, have been crucial in delivering practical experiences that surpass mere theoretical knowledge. These methods actively involve students, prompting them to implement communication strategies in real-life scenarios while fostering engagement and critical thought. Furthermore, the research highlights the importance of broadening the educational landscape within CLT. Innovative technologies have expanded the range of topics addressed in the course, exposing students to varied communication challenges and scenarios, ensuring they are well-prepared for the ever-changing communication environment they will face professionally. Reflecting on the results of this investigation, it is clear that incorporating innovative technologies within CLT course represents a significant evolution in teaching methodologies, rather than just an improvement. This strategy guarantees that university students not only develop advanced communication skills but are also equipped to handle the complexities of today's professional environment. The study calls for ongoing research, teamwork, and the adaptation of innovative technologies to further enhance the integration of communication skills development in higher education. Such forward-looking strategies are crucial for cultivating the advanced professional communicative competence necessary for future graduates' success.

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