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THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

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Introduction. In order to teach a foreign language, teachers can apply different approaches. A century ago teachers used an approach based on the grammar-translation method. And it was efficient for learning words and grammar rules, but speaking skills were still at a low level. So, there was a need for a change in teaching, as a result, teachers and methodologists were experimenting to teach with the help of something that later would be called the “communicative approach”. It is still preferable; as it is offered by most language schools due to its efficiency. It can be used for every language level of competence. Moreover, it helps a learner to get used

to real English, and it improves all language skills, but special attention is paid to speaking and listening.

Materials and methods. Our work was carried out using the methods of observation, analysis as well as description. We have described the results of scholars who investigated the communicative approach. As we have hands-on experience teaching English, we observed what aims could be achieved when communication was regarded as the main part of the learning process. And we have also analyzed the circumstances that prevent learners from speaking.

Results and discussion. Let's have a look at the communicative approach to teaching in detail, especially English. So, its name speaks for itself, i.e. "communicative": one that is used for communication. In this approach we don't learn words and grammar rules in isolation, we learn them together and start using them from the first lesson.

According to Jack C. Richards (2006), this approach is defined as a set of principles about language teaching goals, how learners learn a language and classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom.

Since the early 1970s, it has been considered to be the most effective theoretical model for teaching English. Before that learners mostly studied words and grammar rules and improved their reading and writing skills. But when it came to speaking and listening, it was difficult for learners to perform these activities. So, they were unable to speak and listen, because they had no exposure to authentic materials. Both teachers and students were unsatisfied with their results. Everything changed after the communicative approach. Students started to speak even if they were absolute beginners. A teacher provides the necessary information, hints and examples that act as facilitators to speak. So, this approach prepares a learner to use language for specific situations.

Various communicative activities, e.g. as work in pairs or in groups, open or cued dialogues, role-playing and others are associated with the communicative method of teaching. They are called communicative activities; it means that teachers

develop some tasks that are aimed to use language in different situations. S. S. Jabeen (2014) conducted some research on teachers' attitudes to the communicative approach. Though most teachers are strong supporters of the communicative technique, some are against it as they consider that there should be freedom of choice of one or another approach. As a result, they use the grammar-translation method in combination with other methods. Some teachers don't use this approach because of some obstacles such as an inadequate syllabus or teaching materials, and a low or minimal language level, so they don't find this approach effective in this environment. But the majority of teachers had positive feedback about communicative language teaching.

Since this approach is called communicative, obviously fluency is above accuracy, but it doesn't mean that accuracy is neglected. Teachers should mix tasks to improve both accuracy and fluency. Accuracy work could be done before or after fluency work. For example, according to students' performance on a fluency task, the teacher could give accuracy exercises to cope with grammatical or other mistakes that have been made during the fluency task (Richard, 2006).

Let's give examples of communicative approach activities. In the case of speaking, it can be pair or group work: if a teacher wants their students to practise asking questions: such situation as a job interview can be chosen. For writing, we can choose, for example, a letter of request. In fact, all language skills can be improved with the help of the communicative approach. So, in this approach not only do we learn a language, but also obtain knowledge from other areas. It is particularly important in the case of learning English for specific purposes.

Teaching English at a technical university for students whose speciality is not connected with languages, we can say that the communicative approach is very promising. We can integrate authentic materials in teaching, and create different tasks that foster the further improvement of language skills. But, at the same time, the communicative approach faces the following challenges: students enter the university with different levels of English competence. Consequently, not every student is able to speak, which can be explained by the fact that they have limited

vocabulary, it takes time to pick up the vocabulary unit, and while making up sentences, students translate their thought from their mother tongue into English. And the second group whose level is much higher, find the given task too easy. Teachers should take into account this fact, and if needed diversify tasks for all levels.

There is another obstacle that cannot make students speak. It is concerned with psychology. There is a term called “foreign language anxiety”. Let’s imagine that students know words, and are aware of how to build a sentence, but they prefer to be silent or whisper the answers. According to the research conducted by S. Yusufovic (2015), learners are afraid to hear their own voice in a foreign language that is unknown or less known area. The scholar claims that foreign language anxiety can be overcome through practice. Different activities can be used in teaching. Moreover, there should be no assessment when learners practise speaking. In other words, students shouldn’t be afraid to speak as their mistakes will not matter for the marks.

Conclusion. As we mentioned earlier, communicative language teaching is a very productive approach to teaching English. Students who have been taught with the help of the communicative approach feel more confident and comfortable when speaking because they were exposed to activities that imitate communication in real-life situations. Most teachers have a positive attitude toward this approach and actively use it during English classes. Different activities are prepared by teachers in order to improve all the language skills of students. This approach improves both fluency and accuracy. As some students cannot easily speak due to psychological factors, the task of any teacher is to create a friendly atmosphere where students are not afraid to make a mistake.

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