



Dildora MUHAMMADJONOVA,
Student, Uzbek State University of World Languages
E-mail: dildoramuhammadjonova1@gmail.com

Reviewer M.G. Shamsitdinova, associate professor of Tashkent State University of Law.(TSUL)

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO EFL LEARNERS

Annotation

The Communicative Approach (CA) has emerged as a dominant methodology in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, prioritizing meaningful interaction over rote memorization and form-focused drills. This study investigates CA's effectiveness in enhancing EFL learners' communicative competence, fluency, accuracy, motivation, and autonomy. Conducted over one academic year with 150 learners across three institutions, the mixed-method research combines quantitative assessments (pre-/post-tests, performance scales) with qualitative data (classroom observations, interviews, learner journals). Results indicate that CA significantly improves learners' ability to negotiate meaning, sustain discourse, and self-correct, while increasing motivation and learner autonomy. Nevertheless, successful implementation hinges on teacher proficiency, supportive curricula, and balanced attention to form. Implications for EFL curriculum design and teacher training are discussed.

Key words: Communicative Approach, EFL, communicative competence, learner autonomy, classroom interaction

"ЭФФЕКТИВНОСТЬ КОММУНИКАТИВНОГО ПОДХОДА В ОБУЧЕНИИ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ УЧАЩИХСЯ EFL"

Аннотация

Коммуникативный подход стал доминирующей методологией в преподавании английского как иностранного языка, отдавая приоритет значимому взаимодействию над механическим запоминанием и упражнениями, ориентированными на форму. В данном исследовании изучается эффективность коммуникативного подхода в повышении коммуникативной компетенции, беглости речи, точности, мотивации и самостоятельности учащихся английского как иностранного языка. Проведенное в течение одного учебного года с участием 150 учащихся из трех учебных заведений, исследование, основанное на смешанных методах, сочетает количественную оценку (предварительные/итоговые тесты, шкалы оценки) с качественными данными (наблюдения в классе, интервью, дневники учащихся). Результаты показывают, что коммуникативный подход значительно улучшает способность учащихся договариваться о значении, поддерживать дискурс и самокорректироваться, одновременно повышая мотивацию и самостоятельность учащихся. Тем не менее, успешная реализация зависит от уровня подготовки учителей, поддерживающих учебных программ и сбалансированного внимания к форме. Обсуждаются последствия для разработки учебных программ Английского как иностранного языка подготовки учителей.

Ключевые слова: коммуникативный подход, Английский как иностранный язык, коммуникативная компетентность, самостоятельность учащихся, взаимодействие в классе.

"EFL O'QUVCHILARIGA INGLIZ TILINI O'RGATISHDA KOMMUNIKATIV YONDASHUVNING SAMARADORLIGI"

Аннотация

Коммуникатив yondashuv ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'qitishda dominant metodologiyaga aylangan bo'lib, shaklga yo'naltirilgan mashqlar va mexanik yodlashdan ko'ra ma'noga asoslangan muloqotga ustuvorlik beradi. Ushbu maqolada kommunikativ yondashuvning ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'rganayotgan o'quvchilarning kommunikativ kompetentsiyasi, nutq ravonligi, aniqligi, motivatsiyasi va mustaqilligini oshirish samaradorligi o'rganiladi. Bitta o'quv yili davomida uchta ta'lim muassasidan 150 nafar o'quvchi ishtirokida o'tkazilgan aralash metodli tadqiqot miqdoriy baholash (oldindan va yakuniy testlar, baholash shkallari)ni sifatli ma'lumotlar (sinfidagi kuzatuvlar, intervyular, o'quvchilarning kundaliklari) bilan birlashtiradi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, kommunikativ yondashuv o'quvchilarning ma'no bo'yicha kelishish, diskursni davom ettirish va o'z-o'zini tuzatish qobiliyatini sezilarli darajada yaxshilaydi, shuningdek ularning motivatsiyasi va mustaqilligini oshiradi. Biroq uning muvaffaqiyatli amalga oshirilishi o'qituvchilarning malaka darajasi, qo'llab-quvvatlovchi o'quv dasturlari va shaklga beriladigan muvozanatli e'tiborga bog'liq. Ingliz tilini chet til sifatida o'qitish dasturlarini ishlab chiqish va o'qituvchilarni tayyorlash bo'yicha xulosalar muhokama qilinadi.

Kalit so'zlar: kommunikativ yondashuv, ingliz tilini chet til sifatida o'qitish, kommunikativ kompetentsiya, o'quvchilarning mustaqilligi, sinfdagi o'zaro ta'sir.

Introduction. English serves as the global lingua franca in commerce, academia, and diplomacy, with over 1.5 billion users worldwide [6]. Consequently, language educators seek pedagogies that equip learners with practical communicative competence rather than mere knowledge of rules. The Communicative Approach (CA), rooted in functional linguistics and discourse analysis, emerged in the 1970s as a response to limitations of traditional grammar-

translation and audiolingual methods [12]. Unlike those approaches, CA foregrounds authentic language use in social contexts, emphasizing meaning negotiation and task-based learning [4].

Over the past five decades, CA has influenced language teaching paradigms globally, informing syllabi, materials development, and assessment design. In EFL settings, where learners often have limited exposure to English

outside the classroom, CA's focus on interactive activities—such as role-plays, information gaps, and simulations—aims to replicate real-life communicative scenarios [11]. Despite widespread adoption, questions remain regarding its efficacy across proficiency levels, cultural contexts, and institutional constraints.

This study explores CA's effectiveness in enhancing EFL learners' communicative competence, fluency, accuracy, motivation, and autonomy. Specifically, it addresses the following research questions:

To what extent does CA improve learners' fluency and accuracy in spoken and written English across intermediate proficiency levels?

How does CA influence learner motivation, confidence, and autonomy compared to traditional instruction?

What contextual factors (e.g., teacher training, curriculum design, resource availability) facilitate or impede CA implementation in Uzbek EFL classrooms?

By combining quantitative measures (pre-/post-tests, performance scales) with qualitative insights (classroom observations, interviews, learner journals), this research provides a holistic evaluation of CA in a Central Asian EFL context. Findings will inform curriculum developers, teacher educators, and policymakers on best practices for integrating CA principles into language programs. Furthermore, the study contributes to theoretical debates on balancing communicative authenticity with form-focused instruction in high-stakes educational environments.

Literature Review. Hymes's concept of communicative competence integrates grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence [8]. CA operationalizes this framework through task-based and role-play activities that simulate real-life language use [4].

Studies report significant fluency gains among CA learners. For instance, Lee found a 40% increase in

Results. Quantitative Findings

Measure	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	% Change	t (df=149)	p
Fluency (wpm)	45.3 (8.2)	61.7 (9.1)	+36.3%	24.56	<.001
Accuracy (error rate)%	18.4 (5.1)	12.9 (4.3)	-29.9%	18.72	<.001
Vocabulary (units)	63.2 (7.5)	81.4 (8.3)	+28.8%	22.13	<.001

All gains were statistically significant, indicating robust improvement in communicative performance.

Qualitative Findings

Three overarching themes emerged:

Increased Learner Confidence: Learners reported feeling more comfortable speaking in class and initiating conversations.

Enhanced Interaction Patterns: Observations revealed a shift from teacher-fronted lectures to learner-learner negotiations and peer feedback.

Need for Balanced Form-Focus: Both teachers and learners expressed the necessity of occasional explicit grammar reviews to prevent fossilization of errors.

Discussion. The marked improvements in fluency and accuracy corroborate prior research, suggesting that CA facilitates automaticity through meaningful practice. Confidence gains align with Self-Determination Theory's emphasis on autonomy.

For optimal outcomes, EFL programs should implement:

Comprehensive Teacher Training: Workshops on task design, error correction strategies, and classroom management in CA contexts.

Curricular Materials: Authentic texts, audio-visual resources, and digital platforms supporting interaction.

spontaneous speech length after CA instruction [10], while Kim and Cho observed improved syntactic accuracy when form-focused feedback was integrated into communicative tasks [9].

Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory posits that autonomy-supportive teaching bolsters intrinsic motivation [7]. CA's learner-centered design fosters autonomy by involving learners in task negotiation and self-assessment [7].

Teacher beliefs and proficiency often hinder CA adoption. Borg highlights that teachers steeped in grammar-translation methods may resist learner-centered practices [1]. Resource constraints and high-stakes testing further complicate CA integration [3].

Methodology. A convergent mixed-method design was employed, equally weighting quantitative and qualitative data to triangulate findings.

Participants were 150 intermediate-level EFL learners aged 18–25 at three universities in Tashkent. Classes met thrice weekly for 90 minutes over two semesters.

Instruments and Procedures

Pre-/Post-tests: Standardized tests measuring fluency (words per minute), accuracy (error rates), and receptive vocabulary.

Observation Protocol: Checklists for interaction patterns, task completion, and corrective feedback.

Interviews and Journals: Semi-structured interviews with 12 teachers and focus groups with 24 learners; weekly learner journals reflecting on task engagement and perceived competence.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using paired-sample t-tests to assess pre-/post-test gains ($\alpha = .05$). Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-step procedure.

Assessment Adjustment: Incorporation of portfolios and performance-based tasks alongside traditional exams.

Limitations include the study's focus on a single proficiency level and geographic area. Future research could explore longitudinal retention, CA's impact on advanced learners, and integration with technology-enhanced language learning.

Conclusion. This study demonstrates that the Communicative Approach (CA) yields substantial benefits for EFL learners at the intermediate level in Uzbekistan. Quantitative data revealed statistically significant gains of 36.3% in speaking fluency, a 29.9% decrease in error rates, and a 28.8% increase in receptive vocabulary after one academic year of CA-based instruction. Qualitative insights further indicated heightened learner confidence, more dynamic peer interaction, and enhanced autonomy in language tasks.

Crucially, the effectiveness of CA hinges on three interrelated factors:

Teacher Proficiency and Beliefs: Instructors must receive targeted professional development to design communicative tasks, manage classroom interaction, and provide timely, form-focused feedback. As Borg and Butler note, teacher attitudes toward learner-centered methods shape implementation fidelity.

Curricular and Resource Support: Authentic materials, multimedia tools, and clear guidelines on balancing task

complexity with linguistic focus are essential. Curriculum frameworks should integrate performance-based assessments—such as role-plays and portfolios—that align with communicative goals while retaining opportunities for explicit grammar review.

Institutional and Assessment Context: High-stakes examinations centered on discrete-point grammar tests may conflict with CA's emphasis on fluency and meaning negotiation. Policymakers and program designers must consider mixed assessment models that value communicative proficiency alongside grammatical accuracy.

Given these conditions, the present findings advocate for a hybridized approach: embedding focused, brief form-oriented activities within broader, task-based communicative lessons. Such a model retains CA's interactive strengths while addressing accuracy concerns, thereby accommodating both learners' immediate success and long-term language development.

Recommendations for Practice and Policy
Pre-service and In-service Teacher Education: Establish mandatory CA workshops, peer observation cycles, and reflective practice communities.

Curriculum Design: Develop syllabi that sequence communicative tasks with periodic form-focused modules, ensuring a spiral progression of linguistic complexity.

Assessment Reform: Introduce portfolio assessments, oral proficiency interviews, and peer-assessment rubrics to capture multiple dimensions of communicative competence.

Future Research Directions Longitudinal studies are needed to assess retention of gains over multiple years and proficiency levels. Further investigation into technology-mediated CA—such as online task platforms and virtual exchanges—could reveal scalable models for EFL contexts with limited face-to-face contact.

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