

The application of communicative linguistics in the study of foreign languages (an example of the english language)

La aplicación de la lingüística comunicativa en el estudio de lenguas extranjeras (un ejemplo de la lengua inglesa)

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Abstract

The present research examines a set of methods and approaches concerning using modern linguistic innovations in teaching English as a foreign language. Communicative linguistics is among the priority directions in this field. The purpose of the research lies in establishing the efficiency of using a communicative approach for learning English in the framework of university education; the attitude of Ukrainian students to the communicative method, the involvement of the possibilities of communicative linguistics

in mastering English is determined. The methodology of the research is complex, based on the pedagogical experiment. Descriptive method, synthesis and analysis have been used to determine the theoretical fundamentals of the research. Statistical methods have been used to measure the achievements and attitudes of the experiment participants. The main hypothesis lies in the fact that the methods and tools of communicative linguistics facilitate and speed up the process of mastering English. The results of the research have shown that despite a number of difficulties, the participants of the experiment approve the introduction of a communicative approach in learning English; their academic results and communication skills have increased. Moving forward, there should be experimental research involving linguistic innovations in the practice of learning foreign languages.

Key words: communicative linguistics, English, communicative approach, speaking, English as a foreign language.

Resumen

La presente investigación examina un conjunto de métodos y enfoques relacionados con el uso de innovaciones lingüísticas modernas en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera. La lingüística comunicativa se encuentra entre las direcciones prioritarias en este campo. El propósito de la investigación radica en establecer la eficiencia del uso de un enfoque comunicativo para el aprendizaje del inglés en el marco de la educación universitaria; se determina la actitud de los estudiantes ucranianos hacia el método comunicativo, la participación de las posibilidades de la lingüística comunicativa en el dominio del inglés. La metodología de la investigación es compleja, basada en la experiencia pedagógica. Se ha utilizado el método descriptivo, la síntesis y el análisis para determinar los fundamentos teóricos de la investigación. Se han utilizado métodos estadísticos para medir los logros y actitudes de los participantes del experimento. La hipótesis principal radica en que los métodos y herramientas de la lingüística comunicativa facilitan y agilizan el proceso de dominio del inglés. Los resultados de la investigación han demostrado que, a pesar de una serie de dificultades, los participantes del experimento aprueban la introducción de un enfoque comunicativo en el aprendizaje del inglés; sus resultados académicos y habilidades de comunicación han aumentado. En el futuro, debería haber una investigación experimental que involucre innovaciones lingüísticas en la práctica del aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras.

Palabras clave: lingüística comunicativa, inglés, enfoque comunicativo, habla, inglés como lengua extranjera.

1. Introduction

In the modern educational process, it is natural to work on the intensification and improvement of methods of learning foreign languages. The resources of communicative linguistics, which provide an opportunity to choose the most effective and modern technologies in the educational process, are no exception (Zhernova, 2018).

The communicative approach in language teaching is one of the basic approaches to teaching foreign languages; the main focus of this approach is on interaction in various forms of communication for learning, which turns out to be the final goal of language learning. In a number of studies, such approaches are called as the audio-lingual methods (Leong & Ahmadi, 2016), involving the development and expansion of a conditional-functional curriculum. Learning English with the help of such a method is extremely popular in the world and deserves its introduction and implementation in the field of Ukrainian university education.

According to a number of scientific investigations (Lin & Hsieh, 2001), the toolkit of communicative linguistics is designed to formulate an educational complex that supports such positions as discursive competence, psychomotor skills and competencies, strategic competencies. Discursive competence includes linguistic competence, textual competence and pragmatic competence. The practical principles of using the contents and means of communicative linguistics can be used in the formation of linguistic competence, textual competence and pragmatic competence.

The communicative method of teaching English is aimed at forming a number of micro skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing. Those who learn a foreign language often do not have the opportunity to gradually enter the context of the language. Sometimes a foreign language is available to students only at lectures and practical classes; consequently, one of the tasks of the teacher is to encourage them to communicate in the classroom, work in pairs and in a group. Such measures in a number of practical investigations and theoretical studies (Sim & Pop, 2014) have been identified as valuable for the formation and improvement of students' communicative competence. This provides students with greater opportunities for communication and builds confidence in their own speaking skills. Developing confidence and getting rid of the fear of speaking a new language contributes to better language acquisition (Kiki-Papadakis & Chaimala, 2016). Methods of developing confidence in one's own speech activity, removing speaking anxiety are called the most significant negative factors of the communicative nature (Hyesook & Lee, 2005).

Research work on improving the quality of educational opportunities of universities in teaching English is in the prospect. Communicative methods, which should remain an active component of education, are no exception.

2. Aims

The purpose of the research lies in collecting, reviewing and analysing the data of the experiment on improving the effectiveness of learning communicative skills in English by students of Ukrainian universities. An important component of the work is establishing the usefulness of using a communicative approach for teaching English within the framework of university education, investigating the attitude of Ukrainian students to the involvement of communicative linguistics opportunities in the process of mastering English.

The research purpose outlined involves solving a number of tasks as follows:

- to determine the evolution of the success of EG students through preliminary and final testing;
- to identify the main fundamentals that make up the communicative approach in learning English;
- to establish the respondents' assessment of the introduction of a communicative approach for learning English.

3. Materials and Methods

40 students of business specialities (073 “Management”, 241 “Hotel and restaurant business”) of Kamianets-Podilskyi Ivan Ohienko National University were involved in the experiment; they studied English and voluntarily agreed to participate in the experiment. Data collection was carried out from September 2021 to December 2022 (1 semester of the academic year).

All participants of the experiment were divided into 2 groups: the experimental group (EG), which chose to study English with the active use of the communicative linguistics tools, and the control group (CG), in which standard curricula and materials were used that were the basis for learning English for several years. For each group, the academic performance was measured at each stage of the experiment.

The present research has a complex nature; it combines both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis with the use of descriptive methods, which is necessary for almost all social studies. This is due to the fact that social studies cannot be represented only by quantitative approaches, without evaluation by members of a certain group, the society. The descriptive method is used to present theoretical material.

In order to obtain data, the main tools in the scientific work are questionnaires, surveys and observations, which are used to find out answers to research questions. The research consisted of III stages.

The first stage is the organizational one. Training and methodological materials are prepared, questionnaires are compiled, the questioning process is organized, and groups of students are formed who agree to participate in the experimental study. Respondents give their consent voluntarily, and the research team guarantees privacy; the information received will not go beyond the data collected for the experiment.

At the second stage, a preliminary assessment of the success level of the respondents and their assessment of the proposed program is carried out; thematic priorities are considered in terms of the communicative approach. At this stage, observation and survey methods are used; researchers collect and perform data analysis, which is then used as a basis for answering the research questions.

At the third (final) stage, a final assessment of the academic performance level and an assessment of respondents' priorities in learning English is carried out. At this stage of the research, the obtained data are processed and used in such a way that they can be used to obtain answers to the problematic research questions.

In order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the analysis, researchers use some theoretical studies as a reference in order to determine the problematic research questions, namely, the concept of communicative components of educational technology, communicative competence, difficulties in mastering English, the specificity of the communicative approach for language teaching.

The results of the analysis and description, which have been taken from the questionnaire data on the basis of the respondents' responses, are presented in the form of a description of statistics.

From among the difficulties and risks of the experiment, it is worth mentioning the insufficient time period of the experiment, which would provide an opportunity to carry out an in-depth qualitative study; consequently, it is not possible to determine the reasons for changes in the respondents' assessments.

4. Literature Review

The theory and practice of communicative linguistics contain those tools and methods that will contribute to the active formation of students' communicative competence. It is from such positions that researchers consider innovative approaches in mastering foreign languages (Kiki-Papadakis, & Chaimala, 2016; Sim, Pop, 2014). The methods of learning successful communication are studied, namely: the skills of conducting an eristic dialogue, participating in debates (Goh, & Burns, 2012; Patil, 2008), forming linguistic and cultural competences through communication (Jeong, 2006; Arbol del, 2018). Professional problems arising from insufficient communication skills in English are considered on a separate basis (Qing, 2011). For instance, issues in the tourism industry connected with insufficient English language skills of employees (Lee, Son, 2006); educational problems related to insufficiently high-quality teaching of the English language of communication in universities and the need to change curricula in the direction of activating communication skills (Erazo et al. (2019) are of particular importance.

One of the main goals of modern education is the formation of the correct motivation of students to communicate in English in the professional field (Bayram-Jacobs, 2015). The researchers noted that the traditional educational and pedagogical methods used to train speaking skills were ignored by most of the students who were involved in the research program. Therefore, in a number of similar scientific works, the importance of using innovations, the application of interactive, stimulating, those actualizing the communicative capabilities of a person for learning a foreign language are determined.

The investigation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is being conducted in the context of teachers' and students' attitude towards it, the method of teaching in the communicative learning environment. Communicative Language Teaching of a foreign language involves participants in authentic communication, it develops communicative abilities, communicative competence. Students are more engaged; the learning process is more effective and accelerated, assuming that teachers provide the relevant opportunities in communicative activities at different levels and act in the interests and in accordance with the needs of education seekers (Littlewood et al., 1981). Such studies were carried out in connection with the involvement of high technologies in mastering a foreign language (Bruin et al., 2014). These are important developments of action algorithms, methods of their implementation in the communicative environment. Their improvement and technological know-how is the subject of further scientific investigation and appear to be a real research problem (Fujita et al., 2017). From among the difficulties of the practical implementation of the communicative approach, the following ones should be outlined, namely: the difference between the levels of mastery of a foreign language among students; the insufficient number and quality of educational materials that use the communicative principles of learning a foreign language – this is also relevant for non-native English speakers who are determined to improve communication changes.

The attitude of the participants of the educational process to the communicative method of teaching English with the involvement of information technologies was actively considered (Synorub, Medynska, 2019). Weaknesses and strengths of this approach were identified; further development prospects were determined.

5. Results

In the course of the research experiment, a number of organizational, teaching-methodical and educational measures were introduced, which were supposed to promote the use of communicative methods for teaching English. Its efficiency and usefulness were to be evaluated by the participants of the experiment.

The educational program with application of the communicative approach is based on the use of categorization and the functional potential of language and its structures. A communicative approach to learning involves the consideration of three positions, as follows:

- work on the constant use of the English language as a means of communication;
- using language to perform important educational tasks;
- student-centred approach, where the needs of the student are a priority.

At the first (preparatory) stage of the research, preliminary preparation was carried out for the implementation of the English language learning program based on the communicative linguistics tools. A set of educational and methodological materials was prepared; preliminary consultations were held with teachers who agreed to participate in the experiment.

At the second stage of the research, control testing was conducted at the beginning of the semester, which showed the level of mastery of communicative skills and theoretical fundamentals of English. Along with this, it was suggested to separately define such a topic, which hasn't been categorically perceived; the respondent hasn't coped with it. The results are represented in percentages.

Table 1.

Results of preliminary testing of groups (author's development).

Topics	Groups	Number of persons	Average score (based on a 100-point scale)	I categorically do not perceive it
Understanding	EG	20	46	6%
	CG	20	44	4%
Lexical Resource	EG	20	66	10%
	CG	20	70	12%
Phraseology	EG	20	35	28%
	CG	20	34	32%
Writing	EG	20	66	5%
	CG	20	69	3%
Speaking in the context	EG	20	46	18%
	CG	20	44	16%

The results of testing have revealed that the level of students' speaking skills is at the level of 45 points according to the 100-point rating scale in both groups, while writing skills and vocabulary on average are 68 points and 68 points respectively. This indicates a potential readiness to intensify communicative activity; however, there are certain communication difficulties, the fear of communicating in a foreign language, which has become an obstacle and requires the use of communicative linguistics methods.

During the semester, training was conducted in the EG, which involved the active use of a communicative approach; listening was actively implemented; with the help of interactive methods and dramatization as a pedagogical technology of teaching a foreign language, communication skills are activated in order to conduct dialogues, conversations in a group, to pronounce monologues on professional topics. At the end of the semester, control testing was conducted. The result was measured in percentage.

Table 2.
Results of final testing of groups (author's development).

Topics	Groups	Number of persons	Average score (based on a 100-point scale)	I categorically do not perceive it
Understanding	EG	20	56	3%
	CG	20	46	3%
Lexical Resource	EG	20	76	4%
	CG	20	74	10%
Phraseology	EG	20	48	12%
	CG	20	36	30%
Writing	EG	20	76	4%
	CG	20	71	3%
Speaking in the context	EG	20	66	9%
	CG	20	50	13%

Based on the results assessing knowledge and skills acquired by respondents in the EG and CG, the academic performance in the experimental group was higher by 8%, and the negative perception of the communicative approach and difficulties in communicating in English in the experimental group was less by 12% than at the beginning. The greatest improvement in the academic performance in the EG is related to the study of phraseology in the experimental group; the academic performance in this topic increased by 13%.

At the final stage, an analysis of students' academic performance was conducted, as well as the level of their positive and negative attitude towards the program implemented. At the beginning and at the end of the academic semester, students in CG and EG were asked to evaluate the curriculum according to which they were studying. It was necessary to choose only one of three positions: positive, medium and negative attitude.

Table 3.
Comparative table of students' academic performance and their evaluation of the program (curriculum) negative.

Pre-testing	Group	Number of students	Positive	Medium	Negative
	EG	20	24%	65%	11%
	CG	20	23%	66%	11%
Post-testing	EG	20	38%	56%	6%
	CG	20	26%	65%	9%

As a result, the rejection of the communicative approach to learning English in the experimental group decreased by 5%, and the rejection of communication activity in the CG remained within the margin of error of 2%. The positive attitude towards applying the communicative approach in the EG increased by 18%, while the CG, which followed the

traditional curriculum, continues to be sceptical concerning using the communicative linguistics tools.

At the final stage, a survey was also conducted regarding the respondents' assessment of the introduced learning technology.

Table 4.

Assessment of respondents' priorities in mastering English (author's development).

Issue	Agree		Possibly		Disagree	
	EG	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG
Communication in English in a group is a real communication that promotes learning and mastering the language	58%	40%	10%	23%	32%	37%
Support of learning processes	48%	32%	32%	40%	20%	28%
English is a valuable asset for me	46%	35%	21%	27%	33%	38%
The ability to communicate in English accelerates the learning process	70%	52%	24%	38%	6%	10%

As the results show, the majority of respondents value the ability to communicate in English – 70 % in EG, 52% in CG, respectively. By the way, students have rated the importance of mastering English as a language of professional communication (EG – 68 %, and CG – 63 %). The importance of internal communication in the group as a language of learning has also given high results (EG – 80 % and CG – 72 %). In general, the value of the communicative component in mastering English in EG is 7 % higher than in CG.

The data obtained have shown that communicative competence is an active request of future specialists; consequently, further work should be done towards improving the educational process related to development and active implementation of communication skills.

6. Discussion

The importance of applying the methods of communicative linguistics in the process of learning English has been determined in a number of scientific studies (Gilakjani, 2016; Ampatuan, San Jose, 2016). In fact, active communication activity is of great importance for successful interaction in business communication and private interaction with people. The activation of communication activity is considered as a way of transmitting messages, forms of embodiment of ideas and meanings in a simple, clear and understandable form (Aronin, Singleton, 2018). A study was also conducted on the necessity to include mastering English to the educational curriculum of students studying at tourism and business direction in Asian countries, forasmuch as it was the communication skills that were insufficient for university graduates of this speciality (Ho, Ya-Yu, 2020). Actually, the

participants of our experiment have indicated the need to consider and study such positions as “communication in context” (71% of respondents), “understanding” (68% of respondents) with the involvement of a communicative approach.

The results obtained in the study (Summaira et al., 2015) indicate to the fact that the attitude of teachers and students towards the communicative approach in learning English is generally positive. However, the researchers have highlighted difficulties in communication, unwillingness to actively use English in communication; it is suggested to work on educational programs (curricula) in the future, updating an individual approach to communication (Summaira et al., 2015). According to the results of the present research, respondents from the control group consider communication in English to be an important component of successful learning (68%). Along with this, respondents in the control group (67%) believe that English is a valuable asset for students. The necessity to involve students in language situations of professional communication should provide them with the experience of using English as a language of communication in the context of another language. It is also worth paying particular attention to the practice of turning to watching news in English, films, reading books and newspapers, watching electronic news media, etc. Active work with the communicative component of the language existence will help not only to acquire new knowledge, but also to develop communicative competence, to get acquainted with different types of texts, to maintain a connection with English outside the educational process. The communicative approach in teaching the language should be based on free choice and effectively achieve a decent level of language proficiency.

7. Conclusion

During the experiment, the research group has obtained a number of results, which provide the conclusions as follows: it is possible to facilitate mastering English by applying the approaches of communicative linguistics to the activation of students' speaking skills.

In the course of the research, it has been established that students who used the tools and the possibilities of the communicative approach in their studies had higher academic results in the sections of activation of communication activity, the ability to conduct a dialogue, understand and communicate successfully: the academic performance rate in the experimental group was higher by 8%, and the negative perception of the communicative approach and difficulties in communicating in English in the experimental group was lower by 12%. The growing demand for professionals, who can communicate in English in their professional activities, has drawn particular attention to English as the language of professional communication, the need to intensify communication activities. Educational support of English as a foreign language in business, science and culture should be well implemented; it should use the best acquisitions of linguistics, psychology and pedagogy.

Therefore, practical experimental investigations should be continued in the development of new teaching technologies in mastering English; as a result, this would help teachers,

students and researchers to gain more knowledge and operational opportunities in teaching a foreign language in order to develop students' communicative competencies.

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