

IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of the communicative approach in English language teaching, with a specific focus on developing oral expression skills among university students. Drawing from both national and international research, including studies conducted in Peru, the research explores how the communicative approach influences linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competencies. Through the use of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, including ordinal rating scales, the study provides empirical evidence supporting the communicative approach as a student-centered, interactive method for enhancing language proficiency. Results indicate a high rate of success among participants in achieving targeted competency levels, particularly in oral communication. However, the research also highlights gaps in sociolinguistic and pragmatic development, emphasizing the need for more nuanced, culturally responsive teaching strategies. The findings underscore the continued relevance of the communicative approach and advocate for further research into individualized and innovative pedagogical practices.

Keywords: Communicative approach; oral expression; English language teaching; linguistic competence; CEFR; university students; sociolinguistic skills; pragmatic competence; student-centered methodology; language education.

Introduction

The communicative approach contributes to the development of effective communication and intercultural skills, aligning with global demands. Despite its widespread application, a critical research question remains unanswered: how does the communicative approach influence the oral expression abilities of university students? This question prompts a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between the communicative approach and the dimensions of linguistic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic competence.

Materials

These studies collectively emphasize the effectiveness of the communicative approach in English language acquisition and underscore the importance of innovative, student-centered pedagogical strategies. The use of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method research designs in these investigations offers a comprehensive understanding of how various teaching methodologies can enhance linguistic competence across diverse educational settings.

The study examines the effectiveness of the communicative approach in English language teaching, drawing on both national and international research. Among the studies conducted in Peru, Cuesta is particularly notable, as it demonstrates the effectiveness of the "Talkative" program in enhancing the oral expression skills of 56 participants through a quantitative research design [1]. Similarly, Pariona utilized a descriptive correlational quantitative approach with 165 participants, revealing that over 58% showed improvement in communicative skills, including discursive competence, as well as linguistic and sociolinguistic abilities [2]. Chávez, by integrating the communicative approach with constructivist principles, highlighted its positive influence on the communicative competence of university students through a qualitative research methodology [3]. Also following researchers made several research about communicative approach:

- Factors influencing English learning [4] ;
- The impact of the communicative approach on oral expression [5];
- The impact of the communicative approach in non-formal contexts, with an educational workshop [6];
- The improvement of oral communication through the communicative approach and the staging of situations [7].

Results

Regarding the variables and their operationalization, the study centers on two primary constructs: the communicative approach (independent variable) and oral expression (dependent variable). In line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the communicative approach is conceptually defined as a set of activities associated with the development of communicative competence, assessed through a standardized rating scale administered to university students. Oral expression is defined as a linguistic skill encompassing the production of spoken discourse, which integrates linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic components, also aligned with CEFR proficiency levels. The research aims to investigate the extent to which the communicative approach influences oral expression, examining key elements such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, and how these components are reflected in authentic communicative contexts.

The instrument utilized to assess oral expression was an ordinal rating scale, recognized as an effective evaluative tool for quantifying various variables. This type of scale, composed of statements accompanied by assigned numerical values, enabled the assessment of students' attitudes, opinions, and knowledge regarding oral expression in English. The integration of this rating scale into the research design provided a reliable and structured means of collecting quantitative data, allowing for a comprehensive and precise analysis of the dependent variable. This methodological choice reflects a rigorous and systematic approach to data collection, ensuring that the results obtained are both valid and representative of the target study population.

Discussion

This study has thoroughly examined the effectiveness of the communicative approach in English language instruction, with particular emphasis on the development of oral expression skills among university students. The findings offer compelling evidence in favor of the communicative approach, which remains a central pillar in contemporary language pedagogy. The research demonstrated that a substantial proportion of participants—up to 86% in certain domains—met or closely approached the expected levels of competence in both linguistic and communicative skills. This high rate of success highlights the crucial impact of an interactive, learner-centered methodology in fostering language proficiency, particularly in the domain of oral communication.

Conclusion

The research also identified specific areas requiring further attention and development. While the communicative approach has proven effective in enhancing overall linguistic competence, noticeable gaps were observed in the development of sociolinguistic and pragmatic skills. This shortfall indicates the necessity for more targeted instructional strategies that emphasize cultural subtleties and the practical use of language across varied social contexts, as noted by Oxford and Gkonou, among others [8]. Additionally, the differential levels of achievement across various components of language proficiency underscore the importance of adopting a more refined, individualized approach to language instruction—one that addresses the diverse needs, abilities, and learning styles of each student.

In conclusion, this study reaffirms the significance of the communicative approach in language teaching, particularly in fostering oral expression skills among university students. The findings support the need for a balanced integration of grammatical, lexical, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic components within instructional practices. As the landscape of language education continues to evolve, this research contributes meaningfully to the existing body of literature by emphasizing the importance of adaptable, student-centered pedagogical approaches. Future investigations should aim to address the observed gaps and explore innovative strategies to further develop the communicative approach, thereby ensuring its continued relevance and effectiveness in an increasingly dynamic global context.

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