

COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

Communicative language teaching is best considered an approach rather than a method. It aims to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication.

Definitions:

Communication is the activity of expressing ideas and feelings, or of giving people information.

Language is the system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people.

The relationship between language and communication:

- Language is communication.
- Communicative acts do not always need words.
- Our aim is to develop the ability and the skills to communicate through language.

Communicative approach is one of the latest approaches that is being followed in teaching English. Some of the exponents like H G Widdowson, Brumfit C and others recognize that the communication is the basic function of language and its teaching must be given due importance in the school curriculum. It is also believed that effective use of language enables the learner to communicate effectively.

Dellhymys says “Teaching of effective use of language takes care of usage and there is no need to teach grammar separately”. Learners needs and interests are given due importance while adopting communicative approach in English language teaching.

Dr. Shaik Mowla says “The communicative Approach is a learner centred approach which gives the learner not only grammatical competence but also a social skill as what to say, how to say, when to say and where, in order to satisfy his daily needs or larger aims”.

David Numan says that “Communicative approach is basically a communicative language teaching approach and it is not merely a system of rules but it is a system of human interaction through various behaviours and expressions both in speech and writing”.

Principles of Communicative Approach

In communicative approach, prime importance is given to learner's active participation.

- a) **Learner Centred Approach:** Communicative approach gives importance to the language needs of the learners and provides learning experiences. Learner's interests and his progress in learning language are taken care of by teacher under this approach.
- b) **Give priority to fluency over accuracy.** Accuracy is the ability to use the language correctly. Fluency is the ability to use the language spontaneously and effectively. As opposed to traditional methods, CLT regards fluency is the basic aim of language teaching, and thus fluency practice should precede accuracy practice. During fluency practice errors should be left uncorrected, as a rule.
- c) **English Language is taught in small chunks and through tasks:** the language curriculum is designed in terms of units and sub units. Hence teaching of language in chunks is used to facilitate the learner to make constant progress. Besides, these chosen chunks are taught through simple and familiar tasks. Ex: Teaching of present tense through a situation from train timetable.
- d) **Importance is given to speech:** Communicative approach gives prime importance to speaking skills. It is very natural to see the learner expressing his thoughts and feelings through oral expression. This principle provides the learner opportunities to learn the skills of speaking.
- e) **Teaching of Functional Grammar:** Communicative approach does provide opportunity to learn grammar functionally. Teacher must identify the thrust areas of learner's grammar and teach them incidentally through situations according to the needs of the learner. This is an indirect approach to teaching of grammar and further this approach proves that there is no need to teach formal or prescriptive grammar.
- f) **Teacher is the facilitator:** Teacher is not more a traditional teacher. He is rather a facilitator. He facilitates the learner in several ways. Under this approach he is treated as one among the

learners. Tasks and situations for the effective learning are made by the teacher. The teacher has to decide which the best way to create situation is and he should provide opportunities for them to promote happy learning.

- g) **Communicative approach does not encourage formal system of teaching and examination:** it does not mean that there is no need for tests and examination in language teaching. In other words, it emphasizes more on participant observation techniques, teacher made assessments and self assessment techniques. This type of assessment gives immediate feedback to both the teacher and the taught.

Procedure to be followed in teaching communicative approach:

- Identify the specific needs of the language learners
- Prepare communication tasks and activities based on the language needs of the learner
- Initiate teaching through warm up exercises (oral communication)
- Organise the class according to the conversation/ interacting situations.
- Provide necessary inputs and resources relating to situations
- Provide practice materials viz., word cards, sentence strips, matching tables, action chit activities, relevant and authentic texts, pictures and diagrams, exercises on stress and intonation.
- Provide oral drill, dialogues and conversation slots
- Teacher must motivate every learner of the class to take active participation in the classroom proceedings.
- Teacher can make use of the textbooks or the lessons if they are written with communicative skills.
- He must keep an up to date record on the steady progress made by each learner.
- He can also make use of readily available resource materials like, newspaper, magazines, and similar resources to promote better learning.
- He can also make use of latest technologies, software programmes, audio-visual resources to develop effective communicative skills in English language.

Advantages:

- Communicative Approach facilitates the English Language learner to develop strong speech habits.
- It recognizes the needs of the language learner and provides learning experiences accordingly
- It does not encourage rigid system of tests and examinations, instead, teacher himself makes his own testing devices and uses them
- English language is taught in a natural setting. It is in the sense that the teacher creates natural learning atmosphere as the learner finds it with his mother tongue
- Audio-Visual aids can be very well be utilized to teach various aspects of communication
- Teacher's role is recognized as facilitator who promotes maximum learning among the language learner.

Disadvantages:

- Communicative approach does not work effectively in the hands of ill equipped teachers
- Teaching of English in a second language learning context is not very successful due to frequent changes in languages policies and attitudes towards English language teaching
- It emphasizes teacher made tasks, syllabus etc., it looks very ideal and beyond the capacity of an average teacher
- It is difficult to ensure quality learning and uniform assessment under the care of one or two teacher through communicative approach. Because of inadequate competencies and subjectivity in assessment
- At times, teaching of functional grammar is found inadequate and ineffective, hence the use of CA in second language context is less effective.
- There are several aspects to be taught under language teaching especially textbook based teaching of prose, poem, drama, grammar and composition. And CA appears to be insufficient to handle all these aspects of language teaching.