AG EDITOR

Strategies for Effective Communication in English Language Teaching at Universities

Estrategias para una comunicación eficaz en la enseñanza del inglés en la universidad

Olena Buzdugan[1] ✉, Nataliia Oskina[1], Eleonora Stryga[1], Bogdana Avramenko[1], Ganna Dyshel[1]

[1]Department of Western and Oriental Languages and Methods of Their Teaching, Faculty of Foreign Languages, The State Institution "South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University named after K. D. Ushynsky", Odesa, Ukraine.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: the article describes and analyses the components of communicative models being tested in modern higher education institutions teaching English as a foreign language. English language teaching is mainly based on cooperative learning, a key principle of the communicative component of the cognitive-communicative approach.
Method: in the course of writing the article, the syncretism of theoretical and experimental research methods was used, in particular: the method of modelling combined with the synergistic method, the experimental method, and the method of generalisation. It has been established that the cognitive-communicative approach to teaching English includes cognitive processes and their rational incorporation into the mechanisms of speech.
Results: this ensures solid assimilation and mastery of linguistic (lexical and grammatical) material while developing memory, creative thinking, prediction mechanisms, linguistic guessing, and other personality traits and characteristics. To prove its effectiveness, the ICLT (Intercultural Communicative Language Teaching) communicative model was tested at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of the State Institute "South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University named after K.D. Ushynsky" during the academic year 2023-2024.
Conclusions: the results of the pedagogical experiment showed positive dynamics of students' performance, which is reflected in a decrease in the number of students achieving the average (from 11,7 % to 3,9 %) and sufficient level (from 76 % to 70 %) and a significant increase in the number of students of the highest level (from 14,6 % to 28,3 %). Increased confidence in communicating with native speakers can be achieved by expanding the lexical and grammatical base.

Keywords: Language Teaching; Intercultural Communicative Competence; Higher Education Institution; Educational Technology; Technique; ICLT (Intercultural Communicative Language Teaching.

RESUMEN

Introducción: el artículo describe y analiza los componentes de los modelos comunicativos que se están probando en las modernas instituciones de enseñanza superior que enseñan inglés como lengua extranjera. La enseñanza del inglés se basa principalmente en el aprendizaje cooperativo, principio clave del componente comunicativo del enfoque cognitivo-comunicativo.
Método: durante la redacción del artículo se utilizó el sincretismo de los métodos de investigación teóricos y experimentales, en particular: el método de síntesis y análisis, el método de modelización combinado con el método sinérgico, el método experimental y el método de generalización. Se ha establecido que el enfoque cognitivo-comunicativo de la enseñanza del inglés incluye los procesos cognitivos y su incorporación racional

a los mecanismos del habla.

Resultados: ello garantiza una sólida asimilación y dominio del material lingüístico (léxico y gramatical), al tiempo que desarrolla la memoria, el pensamiento creativo, los mecanismos de predicción, la adivinación lingüística y otros rasgos y características de la personalidad. Para demostrar su eficacia, el modelo comunicativo ICLT (Intercultural Communicative Language Teaching) se puso a prueba en la Facultad de Lenguas Extranjeras del Instituto Estatal "Universidad Pedagógica Nacional de Ucrania del Sur que lleva el nombre de K.D. Ushynsky" durante el curso académico 2023-2024.

Conclusiones: los resultados del experimento pedagógico mostraron una dinámica positiva del rendimiento de los estudiantes, que se refleja en una disminución del número de estudiantes que alcanzan el nivel medio (del 11,7 % al 3,9 %) y suficiente (del 76 % al 70 %) y un aumento significativo del número de estudiantes del nivel más alto (del 14,6 % al 28,3 %). Es posible aumentar la confianza en la comunicación con hablantes nativos ampliando la base léxica y gramatical.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza de Idiomas; Competencia Comunicativa Intercultural; Institución de Enseñanza Superior; Tecnología Educativa; Técnica; Enseñanza de Lenguas Comunicativa Intercultural.

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, the role of a foreign language as an important tool for knowledge transfer and social interaction is becoming more relevant and significant. Excellent command of English expands the opportunities not only for specialists in a particular field but also for students throughout their studies at a higher education institution; for example, students can participate in various programmes of inclusive education and internships and receive grants from leading universities around the world. The communicative (communicative-oriented) approach, through the regular practice of effective communication models, is becoming increasingly popular today and seems likely to remain among the basic approaches to foreign language learning.

In higher education, where academic mobility programmes are provided, forming and developing intercultural communication skills is important. At the beginning of the educational process, the teacher should choose a communication model and optimise its content based on the requirements of the educational programme and pedagogical principles in order to manage the educational process efficiently and achieve the desired results. When implementing communication models with many different learning activities, teachers must prioritise the professional development task of encouraging students to learn English. In this regard, it is essential to be creative in using modern teaching methods and games to find practical solutions to optimise the teaching of English to students in higher education through the introduction of communication models. Communicative competence is one of the main categories of modern theory and practice teaching English as a foreign language. The following components of communicative competence can be distinguished: linguistic, sociocultural, sociolinguistic, discursive, social, and strategic. While other components of communicative competence identified in the literature, in one way or another, characterise the 6 mentioned competences. For example, linguistic competence, which includes the ability to use the foreign language material being studied in all speech activities, correlates with sociolinguistic competence, which focuses on the necessary content features of students' speech activities. Pragmatic competence includes the same characteristics as sociolinguistic ccompetence.

The analysis of scientific sources confirms that the communicative approach to teaching English includes several methods and techniques to develop student's knowledge and skills necessary for high-level English communication. Scientists consider communicative competence as the ability to evaluate social behaviour, including the development of a system of foreign language knowledge and skills: the ability to consistently express one's opinion in situations of oral and written communication (discourse competence); the ability and skills to use in communication the sociolinguistic phenomena of the country of study (sociocultural competence); lexical and grammatical skills (linguistic competence).

Abrejo et al.[1] argue that the most effective and modern methods of teaching English, which embody the most important and generally accepted concepts of language learning, namely Language Teaching Communication (CLT), are used in English-speaking countries. Munzaki et al.[2] argue that the communicative teaching method is used to help students gain knowledge and achieve their educational goals. The study by Khalil and Semono-Eke[3] attempts to share experiences in teaching English and developing a secondary language personality among general education students.

Lippard et al.[4] investigated the specific characteristics and level of knowledge of students that need to be considered in professional English language teaching and presented the teaching methods most suitable

for the purpose. Selvi and Yazan's[5] discussion is based on diachronic symbiosis. It is supplemented by an overview of the leading models and trends that promote the systematic study of English as a foreign language and its educational and sociolinguistic implications. Owens and Hite's[6] study shows the effectiveness of such an educational method as project-based learning (PBL) in improving and developing the communication skills necessary for interaction between students and teachers. Elmahdi and Hezam[7] provided a comprehensive argumentation on the problems of teaching English vocabulary to non-native speakers. In her research, Fantini[8] emphasises the importance of developing students' intercultural competences, internationalising the curriculum and expanding educational exchange opportunities. Wang[9] explored the challenges faced in teaching English. Tran and Duong[10] point out the need for educational models that incorporate multicultural content into English language teaching. Ho[11] shows in her research that communicative learning of English (CLT) is a convenient method to help facilitate students' learning and understanding of English, improve their communication skills, and increase their confidence in English. Taridi et al.[12] contributed to identifying the impact of communicative language teaching on online education in the current context. Peng et al.[13] examine intercultural communication competence (ICC) from a diachronic perspective. Akhmetzadina et al.[14] comprehensively assessed the existing and most commonly used distance learning methods in foreign language learning.

Bureković et al.[15] investigated five methods of teaching English: the direct method, communicative language teaching (CLT), sound language method and task-based language learning (TBLT). Rus[16] emphasises the importance of consistently using creative methods in teaching ESP. Shi[17], in her research, points out possible methods of creative solutions to the problems teachers face in teaching English. Zhai[18] emphasises the need for meaningful communication, debate, explicit language, and problem-solving skills. Magaña et al.[19] gave a fair assessment of the use of the flipped classroom to teach foreign languages. Zarrinabadi et al.[20] point out that concentrated efforts can develop linguistic thinking. This effort can be seen as a source of motivation that drives students to learn English.

According to the communicative approach, learning strategies are built in a specific sequence: from recognising, understanding, and memorising elements of the English language to reproducing these elements independently in complex communicative situations. To implement this approach, constant communication between students and modelling real-life speech situations are important.

The article aims to describe effective communication models being tested in modern higher education institutions when teaching English as a foreign language.

METHOD

The communicative approach to teaching English in higher education is developing parallel with other sciences and theories: cognitive science, educational psychology, and linguistics. Therefore, this approach encompasses different views on teaching English. It aims to achieve professional goals and master students' English language and speech tools.

In the course of writing the article, the syncretism of theoretical and experimental research methods was used, in particular:

- analytical and synthetic method to describe the key definitions of the study and to evaluate the latest developments in the field of modern linguodidactics;
- the modelling method combined with the synergistic method (to create and describe the components of communication models and study ways of their practical application in higher education);
- experimental method (the method of pedagogical experiment in combination with statistical research methods and methods of mathematical analysis used to conduct a pedagogical experiment at a Ukrainian university);
- generalisation method (to summarise the data of the pedagogical experiment on the implementation of communication models in the educational process when forming the conclusions of a scientific article).

RESULTS

The communicative approach to teaching English requires the necessary lexical and grammatical minimum, determined by the relevant programmes of each higher education institution, depending on the students' specialities. According to the concept of the approach, when learning English, the teacher presents new lexical items, avoiding the use of the native language. The grammatical material is presented in speech situations.

In learning a foreign language, it is important to be aware and understand the language units used and develop the ability to explain their choice and use, which is the basis of the cognitive approach. Combining the communicative approach with the cognitive approach in teaching aspects and types of speech activities is important. The new approach (cognitive-communicative) includes cognitive processes and their rational

incorporation into speech mechanisms, which ensures solid assimilation and mastery of linguistic (lexical and grammatical) material while developing memory, creative thinking, prediction mechanisms, linguistic guessing and other personality traits and characteristics. In the course of the study, observations show that students with a passive attitude to learning gradually become a subject of the learning process, with a sense of responsibility for the outcome of learning English, as well as those learning skills that will contribute to the development of their independence and autonomous improvement of their English language proficiency. Implementing this approach will be possible if the teacher creates the conditions for the main stages of the cognitive process to pass gradually (analysis and systematisation of previously accumulated knowledge in a particular area and consolidation and practical use of new knowledge gained during the learning process).

The cognitive-communicative approach, by the modern requirements of training specialists in a particular field, requires careful selection of the content of the material, the form and methods of presenting this material to students; a combination of cognitive and discussion topics, selection of professionally oriented texts with problematic issues and tasks. The following set of tasks is used to develop communicative skills that stimulate students' cognition while teaching such types of speech activities as reading, speaking, listening and writing:

1. Reading (searching for information (library resources, Internet sources) necessary for students to perform oral and written tasks in English; reading authentic, professionally oriented texts in English on theoretical and practical issues of the primary disciplines).
2. Speaking (organisation of discussions, conferences, round tables, role-playing games).
3. Listening (listening to lectures, presentations, and reports in English by the professional direction; listening to fragments of audio recordings of professional communication in English).
4. Writing (writing essays on theoretical and practical issues by the future profession; drafting a script for oral presentations in English to be presented during various training tasks).

English language teaching is mainly based on the principle of cooperative learning, a key principle of the communicative component of the cognitive-communicative approach. This means that group work is organised based on cooperation. The main advantages of collective or group work are stimulating students' cognitive activity, increasing the mastery of speech skills, ensuring communication of all group members, and discussing communicative situations. When working in groups, the teacher becomes not only a transmitter of knowledge but also an assistant and organiser of learning. In this situation, the teacher should have equal rights with learning activities. This condition dictates the need to implement a differentiated approach to teaching, which considers each student's individual characteristics, and a subject-oriented approach, where all participants are active subjects of activity.

In today's world, the role of English as an important tool for knowledge transfer, social integration and intercultural interaction between students from different countries is becoming more relevant and significant. A good command of English expands the opportunities not only for specialists in a particular field but also for students throughout their studies at a university; for example, students can participate in various programmes of inclusive education and internships and receive grants from leading universities worldwide.

The ICLT (Intercultural Communicative Language Teaching) model is a three-component model (Figure 3). The first component is linguistic culture, which represents the basic learning process (input—message—practice—output). The second component is central and consists of four consecutive stages that aim to develop students' ICC skills. Each stage reflects a learning and knowledge formation phase, contributing to developing students' skills and abilities.[10, 21]

The introduction stage. This stage of English language learning involves providing students with linguistic knowledge, including a variety of texts and authentic sources (oral, written, and visual). S. Krashen's theory of comprehensible introduction[22] is aimed at increasing students' motivation.

Idea formation stage. Students discuss the reasons for language and intercultural differences and compare unfamiliar elements with those they already know. During this stage, R. Schmidt's[22] input hypothesis theory is introduced to improve students' linguistic awareness and attitudes towards intercultural interaction and encourage them in more realistic learning tasks.

The practice stage. Students have several opportunities to work on communication tasks under the guidance of a teacher who suggests new elements of knowledge gained during the previous two periods of study. At this stage, the interactive theory of hypotheses by M. Long[22] is used, contributing to the development of students' ICC (Intercultural Communicative Competence) and intercultural communication skills.

Exit stage. In this stage, students test new forms or strategies acquired in previous periods, learn new linguistic and intercultural features in more depth, and put practice to use through linguistic and intercultural tasks (e.g., projects, reports, presentations). The learning theory in this stage focuses on Swain's original hypothesis theory, which aims to help students become aware of gaps and issues in their learning.
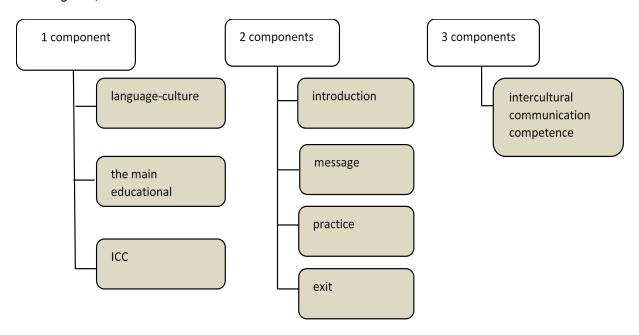
Figure 1. Model of teaching the language of intercultural communication

The third component of the ICLT model is communication skills, which form the basis for communication with native speakers and representatives of different cultures, including linguistic and extra-linguistic communication skills.
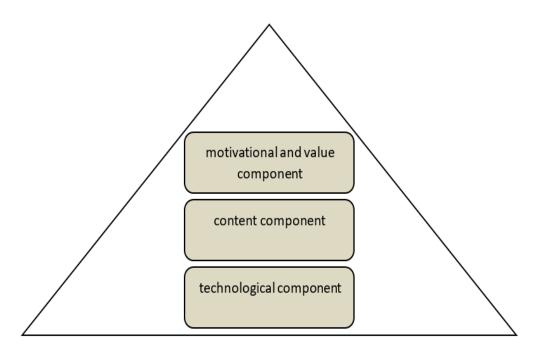

Figure 2. Multilingual learning model

The multilingual learning model consists of the following:

1. the motivational and value component, which is formed by various methods and techniques of cognitive linguistics and teaching methods;
2. the content component (formation of active vocabulary, grammatical structures, behavioural patterns in specific speech situations);
3. technological component.

The 5E theoretical model envisages creating an educational space where students acquire, form, and consolidate the knowledge and skills they have acquired in practice (figure 3).
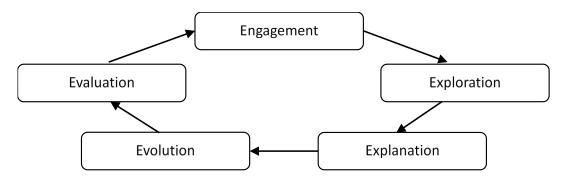
Figure 3. Training model 5E

All the phases depicted in the diagram are closely interrelated. In the engagement phase, basic knowledge is acquired, and motivation for language learning is developed. In the explanation phase, reflective concepts, evaluation and self-evaluation are tested. The explanation phase is when the student and teacher interact most closely. In the evolution phase, the student observes his or her progress, and the evaluation phase involves external assessment by the teacher and self-assessment and self-actualisation by the student.

To prove the effectiveness of the ICLT communicative model, it was tested at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of the State Institute «South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University named after K.D. Ushynsky» during the academic year 2023-2024. The communicative model was used in teaching the normative discipline «Practical English». The experiment involved 86 second-year students. The effectiveness of the communicative model was evaluated through the dynamics of academic performance in the discipline, the final survey and testing (table 1, figure 4).

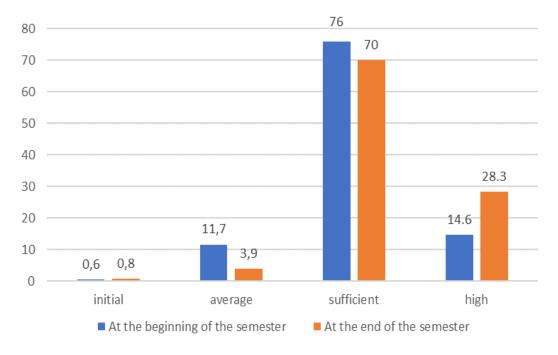| Table 1. Student's performance in the discipline "Practice of Speaking and Writing (English)"				
Levels	**At the beginning of the semester**		**At the end of the semester**	
	Quantity	**%**	**Quantity**	**%**
Initial	0,5	0,6	0,9	0,8
Average	0,6	11,7	0,8	3,9
Sufficient	6,7	76	2,5	70
High	39,6	14,6	37	28,3

Figure 4. The impact of implementing the ICLT communication model on the academic performance of second-year students, in %

The results of the pedagogical experiment showed positive dynamics of students' performance, which is reflected in a decrease in the number of students achieving the average (from 11,7 % to 3,9 %) and sufficient level (from 76 % to 70 %) and a significant increase in the number of students of the highest level (from 14,6 % to 28,3 %). As students were able to identify factors that positively impacted their interests and stimulated their desire to improve, the following conclusions were drawn: increased confidence in communicating with native speakers can be achieved by expanding the lexical and grammatical base. In addition, the students noted that since native English speakers live in entirely different cultural spaces, communication should be adapted to personal and professional interactions. As we can see, the chosen communication model contributes to a more complete understanding of linguistic and cultural interactions with native speakers.

DISCUSSION

We agree with scientists[23,24,25] that effective learning of English is impossible without a detailed mastery of the grammatical level of the language. However, scholars still have no unanimous approach to the ideal ratio of combining grammar material with all other types of tasks; some suggest that students learn grammar rules independently. Other scholars[26,27,28] do not see a direct link between acquiring grammatical material and developing students' communicative competence.

The communicative model we have analysed can only be effective if a basic vocabulary exists. It is important to apply the principle of activating learning through activities because a pragmatic approach to language learning positively affects the development of cognitive abilities.

The criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the implementation of communicative models in the educational system, the possibility of integrating language teaching with other disciplines, the influence of cultural and social aspects on the choice and implementation of communicative models, as well as the ways of using digital technologies in the development and implementation of communicative models in teaching English in the university system of education remain controversial issues that require further research.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the main task of the communicative approach to teaching English is to develop communicative competence in higher education students through meaningful, communicative-oriented tasks. The considered communicative model of ICLT (Intercultural Communicative Language Teaching) involves the use of various teaching methods and includes several principles (learning based on communicative tasks; activation of learning through activities; use of authentic materials; use of meaningful, understandable, rich and multivalent information; collective activity of students in the classroom).

Today's students can choose their forms and methods of preparing for classes. Learning a foreign language is moving from «knowledge consumption» (when books and teachers are the primary sources of new information) to «knowledge management» (when a student takes an active part in searching, editing, and formatting the content of information). These modern changes have proposed new requirements for monitoring the level of students' communicative competence, which may be the subject of further research.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST
The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION
Conceptualization: Olena Buzdugan, Nataliia Oskina.
Data curation: Nataliia Oskina, Eleonora Stryga.
Formal analysis: Eleonora Stryga, Bogdana Avramenko, Ganna Dyshel.
Research: Olena Buzdugan, Nataliia Oskina, Eleonora Stryga, Bogdana Avramenko, Ganna Dyshel.
Methodology: Bogdana Avramenko, Ganna Dyshel.
Resources: Nataliia Oskina.
Validation: Olena Buzdugan, Ganna Dyshel.
Writing - proofreading and editing: Eleonora Stryga, Olena Buzdugan.