The Implementation of Communicative Approach in Teaching Speaking to Third Year Students at the Department of English, Ahmed Draia University

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Abstract:

This study was designed to help us investigate whether communicative approach has been used in oral classes to make third year students feel enjoyed as an attempt to enable them to use the spoken form of the target language. To provide a sound evidence about its implementation at the department of English in Ahmed Draia University, there was a need to hand out a questionnaire to oral expression teachers as well as students of third year in April 2018. The accumulated data in this quantitative study clearly revealed students' fierce ambition to have the ability to communicate in English and the importance of participation to help improve one's communicative competence. The findings also showed teachers' use of communicative approach during oral classes to guarantee students' participation and engagement in the various speaking activities mainly discussion and group activity.

Keywords: speaking; significance; communicative approach; teaching.

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1. INTRODUCTION

EFL students in our country have a burning ambition to have the ability to use the spoken form of the target language as they are well conscious about the significance of speaking in human communication. The fact of having the potential to use English within or outside the formal setting (EFL classroom) lies heavily upon the appropriateness of the teaching approach or method being implemented in oral classes.

Various teaching attempts have been made to enable Algerian EFL students to speak the target language in order not only "*to express their ideas, opinions, information, and hopes*" but also "*to attain certain goals*"(Alzahrani, 2019, p.48). Speaking English is extremely needed, and efforts should be directed towards the improvement of students' speaking ability to enable them to communicate easily. For doing so, EFL teachers are required to give their undivided attention to what language experts called 'communicative approach' as it allows to improve "*students' ability to use language to interact with people in real situations*"(Aalaei, 2017, p.257). The attainment of the expected learning outcome necessitates therefore the implementation of communicative approach, which was established in the 1970s, in teaching speaking to EFL students.

Based on the above, teaching speaking to EFL students is certainly a difficult task to be approached. In this study, an attempt has been made to investigate whether EFL teachers use communicative approach in teaching speaking to third year students in Ahmed Draia (Adrar) University.

2. Research Questions

This study is conducted to answer the following questions:

1- Are third year students conscious about the significance of English speaking ability?

2-Do teachers of oral expression take responsibility to enable their students to speak the target language (English)?

3-What are the activities they use to teach speaking?

3. Research Hypotheses

On the basis of the above research questions, we hypothesize the following:

1- Third year students are conscious about the significance of English speaking ability.

2-Teachers of oral expression take responsibility to enable their students to speak the target language (English).

3-Various communicative activities are used to teach speaking such as discussion and information-gap activity.

4. Review of the Literature

4.1 Definition of Speaking

According to Samad, Bustari and Ahmad (2017, p.97), speaking can simply be defined as "*an ability to share thoughts, ideas, and intentions to the other people by using a language in oral form*". It refers therefore to one's capability to use the spoken form of the language as an attempt to communicate with others. The researcher Asrida (2014) approximately claimed the same as he clearly emphasized that it is "*the process of sharing information between speaker and listener in any circumstances*" (p.60).

4.2 Significance of Speaking

Speaking is, without doubt, a very significant skill that is given more attention than usual from the side of EFL students. Without this productive skill, it is absolutely impossible to communicate with people, and for this reason, each EFL student should have a burning desire to master this special skill as an attempt to acquire the ability to use the spoken form of the English language. In this respect, the researcher Kuśnierek, (2015) emphasized the fact that *"for most people, the ability to speak a foreign language is synonymous with knowing that language"* (p.75). Speaking English is therefore highly important, and teachers should

provide effective speaking activities to enable students to speak this foreign language.

4.3 Definition of Communicative Approach

According to Dr.Hamad (2016), communicative approach is a well-known teaching method that was established for the sake of getting students prepared to use the target language confidently as well as spontaneously outside the formal setting regardless of mistakes or any possible communication breakdown, and this what makes it special and different from the previous approaches. Its implementation within a real language classroom provides numerous opportunities for students to interact and communicate with each other in the target language to improve one's communicative competence.

4.4 Communicative Activities to Teach Speaking

Some of the communicative activities that can be used in oral classes are the following:

Discussion

Discussion is considered as the main communicative activity that teachers of oral expression should use in the EFL classroom to help improve the speaking ability of their students. In doing so, teachers are expected to either select the topic or to give their students, working in pairs or groups, the chance to freely select what they would like to discuss with their classmates for a better participation and engagement in the discussion (Xi-chun & Meng-jie, 2015).

Role-Play

Role-play is another speaking activity that can be used during oral sessions. In this context, the researcher Scrivener claimed the fact that *"In role-play, learners are usually given some information about a 'role'(e.g. a person or a job title). These are often printed on 'role cards' "*. He also claimed that "*A simple role card could do nothing more than name the role e.g. mother, detective or alternatively they could offer guidance as to what to do rather than the role itself , e.g. buy a train ticket to Brighton" (2005, p.155, In* Kuśnierek, , 2015).

On the basis of the above claim, it is noted that the use of this communicative activity requires teachers of oral expression to firstly provide each EFL student with what is called a role card in order not only to clarify the role they are supposed to play but also to provide them with some helpful data to assist them in performing the role easily if it is necessary

Information-Gap Activity

Information-gap is a very special activity to be used for teaching speaking. In this activity, teachers are required to supply their students with totally different information from each other. Then, they are supposed to inform them that it is absolutely not allowable to give their classmates a chance to have a look at the data. Instead, they should interact and communicate in English with each other as an attempt to share the essential information they need to accomplish the task (Asrida, 2014).

Games

EFL teachers can also use games for the sake of making their students become better speakers of this foreign language. In this context, Owen and Razali briefly defined language games as "*the physical and mental activities that require participation and communication from the students to accomplish a language learning goal* " (2018, p.49).They motivate therefore students to get involved ,and this what really matters.

Group Activity

Group activity can also be used to motivate EFL students to use English as an attempt to learn collaboratively the target language. In this context, the researcher Kuśnierek (2015) emphasized that "*working in groups increases the amount of practice learners can get, as well as the amount of their speaking. When students sit in a small circle, their inhibitions are lowered and thus they are encouraged to speak*" (p.79).

In reference to the above explanation, it is noted that it is important to allow students to work together in groups to lower their inhibition about foreign language use and thus encouraging them to practise English.

4.5 Teachers' Roles in Oral Classes

There are some important roles that teachers of oral expression should consider in the EFL classroom. They are as follows (Harmer, 2001, pp.275-276):

Prompter

EFL teachers are sometimes required to help their students to "*stop the sense of frustration that some students feel when they come to a 'dead end' of language or ideas*" (Harmer, 2001, p.276).

Participant

As an attempt to guarantee students' participation during oral sessions, it is necessary that EFL teachers get involved in the communicative activity from time to time.

Feedback Provider

At the end of the speaking activity, EFL teachers are further expected not only to give some comments on the way their students performed in English but also to provide them with some advice that help them improve their level of oral fluency.

5. Method and Tools

5.1 Research Method: This study employed the quantitative approach.

5.2 Target Population: The participants in this study were 9 teachers of oral expression and 54 students of third year at the department of English in Ahmed Draia (Adrar) University.

5.3 Research Instruments: Two questionnaires were used in this study as an attempt to amass the required data. They are as follows:

1- Teachers' Questionnaire: It includes 7 items which are structured into three main sections. The first section involves some general information about teachers of oral

expression .The second one investigates their accountability toward teaching speaking to EFL students ; whereas, the last one is about communicative activities used to teach speaking

2- Students' Questionnaire: It embodies 8 closed questions which are also divided into three main sections. The first section aims at providing some general data about the participants. The following section investigates third year students' awareness about the significance of English speaking ability; whereas, the last one is about the use of communicative approach in teaching speaking.

5.4 Data Analysis Procedure: The data collected throughout teachers' and students' questionnaires were analyzed using frequency and percentages.

6. Results and Discussion

This section involves two main parts. The first part is meant for the analysis of the results; whereas, the other part attempts to provide answers to the research questions on the basis of the results obtained from both questionnaires.

6.1 Results Analysis

The Teachers' Questionnaire

Section One: General Information

1-Gender

Male ☐ Female ☐

Table 1. Teachers' Gender

Options	Number of Teachers	%
a	4	44.44
b	5	55.56
Total	9	100

Table 1 reveals that 55.56% of the respondents are females; whereas, the rest (44.44%) are males.

2-Qualification

a- BA (Licence) ☐   b- MA(Magister/Master) ☐   c- Ph.D(Doctorate) ☐

Table 2. Teachers' Qualification

Options	Number of Teachers	%
a	0	0
b	9	100
c	0	0
Total	9	100

The above table shows that all the respondents (100%) have an MA degree.

Section Two: Accountability toward Teaching Speaking

3-How would you describe your students' level of speaking?

a- High ☐   b- Above average ☐   c- Average ☐   d- Below average ☐
e- Low ☐

Table 3. Level of Speaking as Perceived by Teachers of Oral Expression in Ahmed Draia University

Options	Number of Teachers	%
a	0	0
b	2	22.22
c	6	66.67
d	1	11.11
e	0	0
Total	9	100

On the basis of the results recorded in table 3, the majority of the respondents (66.67%) claim that their students' level of speaking is average, yet 11.11% of them assume that their level is below average. In addition, 22.22% of the participants describe their students' level of oral proficiency as above average.

4-How often do they participate?

a- Always ☐   b- Often ☐   c- Sometimes ☐   d- Rarely ☐

e- Never ☐

Table 4. Participation in Oral Classes

Options	Number of Teachers	%
a	1	11.11
b	4	44.44
c	4	44.44
d	0	0
e	0	0
Total	9	100

From the above table, 44.44% of the respondents claim the fact that their students sometimes participate in oral classes; whereas, 11.11% of them assume that they always do so. In addition, the rest of the participants (44.44%) mention that they often take part in the discussion.

5-Is it your accountability to enable them to speak the target language?

a- Yes ☐   b- No ☐

Table 5. Teachers' Responsibility to Teach Speaking

Options	Number of Teachers	%
a	9	100
b	0	0

Total	9	100

Table 5 indicates that all the respondents (100%) acknowledge the fact that it is their accountability to enable EFL students to speak the target language.

Section Three: Communicative Activities to Teach Speaking

6-What are the speaking activities that you use in oral classes?

a- Information-Gap ☐ b- Role-Play ☐ c- Group Activity ☐

d- Gaming Activity ☐ e- Discussion Activity ☐

Table 6. Speaking Activities

Options	Number of Teachers	%
a	0	0
b	0	0
c	0	0
d	0	0
e	2	22.22
a+b+c+e	1	11.11
b+c+d+e	1	11.11
b+c+e	2	22.22
b+d+e	1	11.11
c+d+e	1	11.11
c+e	1	11.11
Total	9	100

On the basis of the results recorded in table 6, 22.22% of the respondents adopt only group work activity; whereas, the others (77.78%) use different activities to teach speaking.

7-Is it important to play the role of :

a- Prompter? ☐ b- Participant? ☐ Feedback Provider? ☐

d- Controller? ☐

Table 7. Roles of EFL Teachers in Teaching Speaking

Options	Number of Teachers	%
a	3	33.33
b	3	33.33
c	1	11.11
d	0	0
a+b+c+d	1	11.11
b+d	1	11.11
Total	9	100

From the above table, 33.33% of the respondents claim that they should play the role of prompter; whereas, 11.11% of them mention that they ought to play all the roles mentioned above. It is also shown that 33.33% of the participants state that they should play the role of participant; whereas, 11.11% of them claim that they should play not only the role of participant but also the role of controller. Furthermore, the rest of them (11.11%) clearly state that they should only play the role of feedback provider.

The Students' Questionnaire

Section One: General Information

1-Gender

a- Mal ☐   b- Female ☐

Table 8. Third Year Students' Gender

Options	Number of Students	%
a	10	18.52
b	44	81.48

Total	54	100

Table 8 clearly reveals the fact that 81.48% of third year students at the department of English in Ahmed Draia (Adrar) University are females; whereas, the others (18.52%) are males.

2-Do you enjoy sessions with your teacher of oral expression?

a- Yes ☐   b- No ☐

Table 9. Third Year Students' Enjoyment of Oral Classes

Options	Number of Students	%
a	40	74.07
b	14	25.93
Total	54	100

The above table (9) shows that the majority of third year students (74.07%) definitely enjoy oral sessions, yet the rest of them (25.93%) claim the opposite.

3-Is your level of speaking:

a- High? ☐   b- Above average? ☐   c- Average? ☐   d- Below average? ☐
e- Low? ☐

Table 10. Third Year Students' Level of Speaking

Options	Number of Students	%
a	6	11.11
b	16	29.63
c	29	53.70
d	3	5.56
e	0	0
Total	54	100

On the basis of the results observed in table10, 53.70% of third year students assume

the fact that their level of speaking is average, yet 5.56% of them claim that is absolutely below average. It is also shown that the level of 29.63% of the respondents is above average; whereas, the level of the rest of them (11.11%) is high

Section Two: Third Year Students' Awareness regarding the Significance of English Speaking Ability

4-As a third year student, is it important to have the ability to communicate in English language?

a- Yes [   ]   b-No [   ]

Table 11. Importance of Speaking Ability

Options	Number of Students	%
a	54	100
b	0	0
Total	54	100

Table11 reveals that all the participants (100%) acknowledge that it is extremely necessary to have the ability to communicate in the target language.

5-Does participation in oral sessions help you improve your speaking ability?

a- Yes [   ]   b- No [   ]

Table 12. Importance of Participation to Improve One's Speaking Ability

Options	Number of Students	%
a	54	100
b	0	0
Total	54	100

Table 12 shows that all the respondents (100%) admit that participation is necessary to improve their speaking ability.

6-How often do you participate?

a- Always ☐ b- Often ☐ c- Sometimes ☐ d- Rarely ☐ e- Never ☐

Table 13. Students' Participation in Oral Classes

Options	Number of Students	%
a	1	1.85
b	20	37.04
c	25	46.30
d	6	11.11
e	2	3.70
Total	54	100

From the results recorded in table 13, 46.30% of the respondents claim that they sometimes participate in oral sessions, yet 3.70% of them acknowledge that they never do so. In addition, 1.85% of the participants always try to get engaged as an attempt to improve their communicative competence, whereas, 11.11% of them rarely do so. Besides, 37.04% of them often participate in EFL classroom.

Section Three: Teaching Speaking through Communicative Approach

7-What are the speaking activities your teacher of oral expression adopt?

a- Information-Gap ☐ b- Role-Play ☐ c- Group Activity ☐
d- Gaming Activity ☐ e- Discussion Activity ☐

Table 14. Speaking Activities Used in Oral Sessions

Options	Number of Students	%
a	3	5.56
b	0	0
c	4	7.41
d	0	0

Options	Number of Students	%
e	16	29.63
a+b+d+e	3	5.56
a+b+e	2	3.70
a+c	2	3.70
a+e	2	3.70
a+e+c	4	7.41
a+d+e	2	3.70
b+c+d+e	3	5.56
b+e	2	3.70
c+d	1	1.85
c+e	6	11.11
d+e	4	7.41
Total	54	100

Table 14 shows that 29.63% of the participants claim that their teacher counts upon discussion activity; whereas, 7.41% of them assume that he/she uses group work activity. In addition, 5.56% of the respondents mention that he /she relies upon information gap activity; whereas, the rest of them (57.40%) shed light upon the fact that they use different activities to teach speaking.

8-Does your teacher of oral expression encourage you to get engaged in the activities?

a- Yes ☐   b- No ☐

Table 15. Encouragement of Students to Participate

Options	Number of Students	%
a	41	75.93
b	13	24.07
Total	54	100

From the above table, the majority of third year students (75.93%) admit the fact that their teacher of oral expression definitely encourages them to get engaged. On the other hand, 24.07% of them claim that they do not do so.

6.2 Discussion

On the basis of the results obtained from students' and teachers' questionnaires, it is required to shed light on three main issues to provide answers to the research questions as follows:

1-Third Year Students' Awareness regarding the Significance of English Speaking Ability

The results from students' questionnaire clearly revealed to what extent they are aware about the significance of speaking ability. All of them (100%) are ambitious to speak the target language as they have a clear image about how much it is important to have the ability to use the spoken form of English language especially since they are now in their third year.

2-Accountability toward Teaching Speaking

Although teaching speaking is a challenging job to do, teachers of oral expression take responsibility to enable their students to speak the target language as they adopt the right speaking activities.

3-Communicative Activities to Teach Speaking

EFL teachers use various communicative activities to teach speaking mainly discussion, role-play, and group activity

7. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate whether EFL teachers use communicative approach in

oral classes to help third year students communicate easily in the target language. For doing so, it was necessary to firstly review definition of speaking, significance of speaking, definition of communicative approach, communicative activities to teach speaking, and teachers' roles in the EFL classroom as well as to administer two questionnaires at the department of English in Ahmed Draia University.

In the light of the results obtained throughout this study, one can notice the following:

Students of third year are extremely ambitious to acquire the capacity to use the spoken form of the target language (English) to either interact with others or achieve certain goals. They expect their teachers of oral expression to provide them with all the help they need to attain the desired learning outcome.

EFL teachers take responsibility to enable their students to speak the target language (English). They intends therefore to implement various speaking activities to make their students feel excited as an attempt to encourage them to practise English as much as possible.

Participation in oral classes is extremely necessary to help improve one's speaking ability (communicative competence). Unfortunately, some students do not make any attempts to take part in the discussion as they are not getting enough encouragement from their teachers in oral classes.

There is an implementation of communicative approach in oral classes at the department of English in Ahmed Draia university for the sake of getting students of third year prepared to speak English within or outside the formal setting (EFL classroom). EFL teachers use therefore several communicative activities, including role-play, information-gap, games, discussion, and group activity, to make their students feel nothing but motivated to attain the expected learning outcome.

8-Recommendations

In the light of the above conclusions, we recommend the following:

Teachers of oral expression should build a positive relationship with all their students

to make them feel comfortable to participate in the various speaking activities. They should also provide a more special encouragement for those students who lack self-confidence to speak in front of their classmates.

Students of third year should not play a passive role any longer. Instead, they should learn to express their feelings and thoughts about the teaching approach or method used to help them communicate in English.

Teachers should always plan to test students' level of speaking in order not only to examine the improvement of their communicative competence but also to ensure the effectiveness of the various activities used to teach speaking.

Communicative approach is what EFL teachers need to enable their students communicate in the target language. Its implementation in oral classes makes third year students feel more motivated to participate as an attempt to achieve the desired learning outcome.

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