

The communicative approach to the teaching of foreign language

The communicative approach to the teaching of foreign languages is a very important method of teaching methodology. Teachers have to focus the teaching of the foreign language in the classroom in such a way that students can communicate in a conscious way, taking into account their real experiences.

The communicative approach could be said to be the product of educators and linguists who had grown dissatisfied with the audio-lingual and grammar-translation methods of foreign language instruction.

They felt that students were not learning enough realistic, whole language. They did not know how to communicate using appropriate social language, gestures, or expressions; in brief, they were at a loss to communicate in the culture of the language studied. Interest in and development of communicative-style teaching mushroomed in the 1970s; authentic language use and classroom exchanges where students engaged in real communication with one another became quite popular.

Communicative language teaching makes use of real-life situations that necessitate communication. The teacher sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life. Unlike the audio-lingual method of language teaching, which relies on repetition and drills, the communicative approach can leave students in suspense as to the outcome of a class exercise, which will vary according to their reactions and responses. The real-life simulations change from day to day. Students' motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics.

Teachers in communicative classrooms will find themselves talking less and listening more – becoming active facilitators of their students' learning. The teacher sets up the exercise, but because the students' performance is the goal, the teacher must step back and observe, sometimes acting as referee or monitor.