

**EXPLORING THE USE OF THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH AMONG
LEARNERS IN TEACHING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS
IN TORORO DISTRICT.**

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my original work and its contents have not partially or wholly been presented for an academic award by any person in any university or institution of high learning.

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to my parents, Mr. Emmanuel Isaac Angulo and Betty Amony for the love and care, my siblings Nicholas, Rachael, Benjamin of Butebo District. My supervisor Ms. Racheal Nakazinga for the guidance and direction in this research, the Lecturers in the Department of Languages of Busitema University for the love and knowledge imparted. My mentors Mr. Emuron Luke, Mr. Okali John and Mrs. Kabarangira Ruth Aisu for the guidance and support, friends Mr. Ogema N. Ignatious and Mukisa Emmanuel for the advice and above all to the almighty God for the gift of life.

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ABSTRACT

The Communicative Approach is one of the key elements of the Competency-Based Curriculum and its principally a learner-centered and adapting to the needs of the students, teachers and society. It emphasizes the importance of the language learning process. This study sought to Explore the Use of the Communicative Approach in the teaching of the English Language in secondary schools. The study aimed to develop learners’ ability to communicate effectively in real- life situations. The study was undertaken with objectives to review the literature on the communicative approach in language teaching and its effectiveness in improving learner communication. To explore the role of the communicative competence in language learning and its relationship with the communicative Approach. To investigate the attitudes and perceptions of language learners and teachers towards the communicative approach and its impact on motivation and engagement in language learning. To evaluate the effectiveness of the communicative approach in developing different language skills. The study also was supported

with some research questions to aid on developing more information since they serve as a guide. The Literature as reviewed and gaps as well were identified. The study employed a descriptive research methodology that involved Document Analysis, observation, Questionnaire method to aid in collecting the necessary information.

According to the study, the communicative approach has been incorporated into the Competency- based curriculum and has been accepted by different stakeholders and it is being implemented in the schools. The different approaches being used are discussions, group work, presentations, role-plays, projects, experiments, research and many others. However, some problems are being experienced during the implementation process. Limited materials especially authentic materials lit textbooks and work books. Limited computer skills for teachers because of the inadequacy of technological aids like computers, projectors. Recommendations have been drawn and it is the different stakeholders of the schools and the government to do the needful. The information provided in this research will serve as reference for monitoring the aspects of implementation of the communicative approach into the competency- based curriculum in the selected schools and other schools in Tororo District and Uganda at large.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

The Communicative Approach is a language teaching methodology that emphasized the importance of communication in the language learning process. It was based on the principle that language learning focused on the ability of learners to use language in real-life situations. This approach emphasized the importance of the functional use of language, where learners communicated with one another in order to practice and develop their language skills. This approach was often contrasted with older methods of language instruction, which focused more on rote memorization of grammar rules and vocabulary.

The Communicative Approach emerged in the 1970s as a reaction to the dominant structural and behaviorist approaches to language teaching of the time. The approach was based on the theoretical work of linguists such as Noam Chomsky and Dell Hymes, who argued that language use focused on achieving communicative competence, not just grammatical correctness. The approach then gained practical momentum when pragmatic linguists such as John Austin and John Searle argued for the importance of context and situational meaning in the use of language.

In many countries, English became a second or even third language, and there was an increased need to teach English as a means of global communication. In secondary schools, English was often taught as a compulsory subject, and teachers dealt with the challenge of having motivated students to learn it. The Communicative Approach was seen as an effective way to engage students and made the learning process more meaningful.

The theoretical underpinning of the Communicative Approach was heavily influenced by sociolinguists and pragmatics. The approach grew out of a reaction against the overly formal and prescriptive nature of traditional language teaching methods. It was grounded in the belief that language was best learned through real-life communicative situations, where the focus was on the effective use of language in context. The approach emphasized the importance of developing

communicative competence, which included not only grammatical competence but also pragmatic competence and sociolinguistic knowledge.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The traditional methods of teaching English language were often criticized for failing to have equipped learners with the necessary skills to effectively communicate in real- life situations (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). As a result, there was increased interest in the communicative approach to teaching English.

However, there was limited research on the effectiveness of this approach in different contexts, (De Silva& Mallawaarachi,2020) and its implementation remains a challenge for many teachers and a lack of practical guidelines for teachers (Saif,2018). Therefore, there was need to explore the use of the communicative approach in the teaching of the English Language to address the gap in knowledge and better equip teachers with teaching strategies to improve learners' communicative competence.

1.3 Purpose of the study

To explore the use of the communicative approach in teaching the English Language and it's impacts on students' language proficiency, motivation, and communicative competence.

1.4 Aim of the study

To develop learners' ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations.

1.5 Objectives of the study

1. To review the literature on the communicative approach in language teaching and its effectiveness in improving learner communication.
2. To explore the role of communicative competence in language learning and its relationship with the communicative approach.
3. To investigate the attitudes and perceptions of language learners and teachers towards the communicative approach and its impact on motivation and engagement in language learning.
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of the communicative approach in developing different language skills, including speaking, listening, reading and writing.

1.6 Research questions

1. How do teachers use the communicative Approach in teaching the English Language in the classroom?

2. What materials do teachers use in enhancing communication?

3. What were the learners' perspectives in teaching English Language using the communicative approach?

1.7 Significance of the study

The study lied in its potential to improve English Language acquisition among learners. The Communicative Approach is a learner- centered method of language learning that involves instructions and communication, rather than just memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules. This approach encouraged learners to communicate in real- life situations, which made language learning more enjoyable and motivated learners to persist in their language learning effects.

This study aimed to provide insights into the effectiveness of using the Communicative Approach in teaching English Language, particularly in terms of how it enhanced learners' language proficiency, confidence, and communication skills. It helped promote better language learning outcome and provide guidance for language instructors on how to integrate the Communicative Approach into their language teaching practice.

Furthermore, this research also contributed to the knowledge on language pedagogy, specifically on the application of Communicative Approach in teaching English as a foreign language(EFL). It prompted language teachers to re- evaluate their current teaching methods and adopted more effective, communicative pedagogical strategies that catered to the needs of language learners who sought to acquire proficiency in English for various purposes.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Literature Review

The Communicative Approach was one of the major language teaching approaches that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, emphasized communication as the primary role of language learning (Nunan,2015). According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), communicative competence involves not only linguistic competence but also pragmatic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. The approach emphasized the use of authentic language in meanings contexts, where learners engage in communicative tasks that require them to use language in a real- life situation. (Nunan,2015).

It was also based on several theoretical frameworks, which included sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). These frameworks recognized the social nature of language and the importance of context in language use. The study by Li (2005) found that communicative language teaching improved learners' communicative competence, fluency, and accuracy.

2.1 Implementation of the communicative approach in the teaching of the English language

The communicative approach in the teaching of the English Language was widely and studied in various contexts worldwide, which included secondary schools. The approach focused on meaningful interactions and the use of language in real-life situations.

The implementation of the communicative approach in teaching English as a second language gained momentum worldwide in secondary schools in Uganda focused on its context, benefits, challenges and solutions.

Context of English Language Teaching in Uganda

English is the official language of instruction in Ugandan secondary schools. However, it was often taught as a subject rather than a means of communication. The traditional approach to language teaching emphasized memorization and grammar rules, neglecting essential language skills necessary for effective communication. The communicative approach aimed to promote interactivity, and authentic communication.

Benefits of the communicative Approach

Recent research suggested that the implementation the communicative approach in teaching English in Ugandan Secondary schools yielded several benefits. Firstly, it fostered learners' confidence in using English, enabling them in real-life situations.

Challenges in the implementation of the communicative approach

Lack of teacher training. Many teachers had not received enough training in the implementation of the communicative approach. They lacked the necessary knowledge and skills to facilitate student-centered learning.

Limited technology for example computers, internet which made it hard to facilitate and carry out activities.

2.3 Gaps in Literature

The gaps in the literature there was need to examine;

Assessment of the impact of the Communicative Approach in different context.

The role of technology in the implementation of the Communicative approach.

Teacher training and perceived effectiveness.

Focus on specific skills.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Research Methods

This chapter explains the research design, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection methods, area of study, source of data, data analysis, ethical considerations that are used in carrying out this study.

3.1 Study area

The study was conducted at St. Peter's College Tororo and St. Benedict High School. Both schools are located in Tororo Municipality.

3.2 Sampling population

A few of the staff from each school were consulted. Some teachers teaching Senior one and senior two were interviewed, observed while teaching. Their various schemes of work and lesson plans were checked as well. Learners were interviewed and observed during the teaching-learning process. The teachers consulted were those from the language department in the two schools.

3.3 Sampling criteria

The study involved simple random sampling technique that involved use of teachers who had knowledge about the subject of research and had the willingness to provide information without any bias.

With the same technique few of the learners were involved to check on the skills that were essential for the communicative approach in the teaching of the English language speaking, listening, writing, and reading.

3.4 Research tools and instruments

Document analysis, observation, questionnaires, and interviews were some of the basics of data collection methods used throughout the study.

The document analysis included visiting the schemes of work and lesson plans of various teachers to check on how the teachers were incorporating the communicative approach into the curriculum and its implementation.

The observation method was used and done in a way that the researcher observed the teacher in a real classroom setting and as well as the learners through interactions.

Questionnaires were used to assess the language needs and preferences of students through collecting information about their interests, goals, and language learning experiences. The template of a sample questionnaire was provided below:

1. Personal information

- a. Name: c.class/Stream:
- b. Age: d. Gender:

2. How familiar were you with the communicative approach in language learning?

- a. Very familiar
- b. somewhat familiar
- c. Not familiar at all

3. Have you ever heard about the communicative approach in your English language classroom?

- a. Yes
- b. No

4. If yes, how would you describe the communicative approach in your own words?

5. In your English language classes, how often did your teacher implement the communicative approach?

- a. very often
- b. occasionally
- c. Rarely

d.Never

6.Which activities did you participate in that involve the communicative approach?

a. pair or group discussions

b. Role-plays or simulations

c.Debates

d.Problem solving activites

7.Did you feel motivated to participate in English language activities when the communicative approach is used?

a. Yes, definitely

b. Sometimes

c.Not at all

8.How important did you think the communicative approach is in improving your English language skills?

a. very important

b. somewhat important

c. not important

9.Which English language skills did you think the communicative approach helps you develop the most?

a. speaking

b. listening

c.reading

d.writing

e. others (please specify)

10. What challenges, if any, did you face during communicative activities

3.5 Ethical considerations in the proposed research

The following ethical considerations were considered and followed during the course of the study.

Informed consent. The researcher obtained voluntary and informed consent from participants which ensured that they fully understand the purpose, procedures, potential risks, benefits and their rights in participating in the research.

Data handling and analysis. The researcher handled and analyzed data in a responsible and transparent manner which ensured that the data was protected and used appropriately. The data was kept in a file with a strong password.

Compliance with laws and Regulatory Standards. The researcher adhered to all relevant laws, regulations, and ethical guidelines governing research with human participants. This involved obtaining approval from the head teachers, Deputy head teachers in charge of academics.

3.6 Limitations of the study

In this study, the following challenges were prior to happen and some of them include

Limited cooperation from students

Students sometimes did not return back the questionnaires

Inadequate time to carry out interviews due to meetings and teachers were in class.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter involves the findings of the study as per the objectives that were designed.

4.1 Presentation of findings

The school administrators, the Deputy head teacher and Heads of Department of the two schools. The teachers of language in both schools were the sources of information.

According to document analysis, the schemes of work and lesson plans prepared by various teachers were visited and analyzed.

According to the observation method, the teachers whose schemes of work and lesson plans had been visited were observed while teaching in class.

According to the Questionnaire method, information was obtained from some students that were distributed to them.

The Head of Department of Languages in St. Peter's College Tororo Mr. Nyeko Richard gave me some schemes of work and lesson plans and also gave me a go ahead to interview teachers and some students. He allocated to specific time to me since lessons were ongoing and learners had numerous activities ongoing.

4.2 Review of the Communicative Approach in language Teaching and its effectiveness in improving learner communication

According to the results of study, the teachers have picked interest in implementing this approach and incorporating it into the Competency based curriculum since it is key and part of this curriculum.

To a larger extent, this approach is emphasized by the teachers to students especially during debates role play activities and this has built on the student's confidence and improved their language skills. However, this approach has been criticized by some teachers who are still stuck with the traditional methods of teaching like the teacher-centered approach. This is because

teachers lacked enough knowledge and skills about the approach. This is because some teachers did not receive enough training in which the communicative approach is incorporated. Some teachers who were interviewed and asked to remain anonymous that enough and adequate studies have not been made concerning the approach and that they are expected to incorporate it into the competence –based curriculum which is difficult and tiresome for them and impacts greatly on the learners.

4.3 To investigate the attitudes and perceptions of language learners and teachers towards the communicative approach and its impact on motivation and engagements in language learning.

Some students appreciated the approach as it helped them to develop their speaking and listening skills and encouraged them to engage in real life conversations. This is because learners do it as a more practical and meaningful way to learn language as it provided them with opportunities to use language in authentic contexts for example the students of senior one class enjoyed more of debates and role play activities like skits on topics like environments and pollution. This made learners to actively participate, collaborated with their peers, and took initiatives in creating opportunities both inside and outside the classroom. These engagements led to better language acquisition and progress. On the other hand, some learners have negative attitude towards the communicative approach as they preferred a more traditional and grammar-focused approach as they found it challenging to participate in communicative activities especially when they lacked confidence in their language skills. These learners perceived the communicative approach as less structured and it provided them with enough guidance and instruction for example a few learners in senior one R found it hard to speak in class during communicative activities.

However, some teachers have had a negative attitude towards the approach. This is due to concerns raised such as difficulty in managing classroom dynamics during communicative activities and challenges in assessing learners progress. The teachers preferred traditional teaching approaches that emphasized explicit grammar teaching and focus on mastery of linguistic knowledge. Some teachers found it hard to assess communicative related activities in class because they found it tiresome and burdening. While, some teachers who perceived the approach positively believed it enhanced learners' motivation and engagement. Students actively

participated in discussions, debates and role-plays. The teachers observed increased learner autonomy as students took charge of their learning, sought opportunities for communication and directed their own language developments. Some teachers were able to design communicative activities and create a communicative environment. They made lesson plans that provided ample opportunities for meaningful interactions and encouraged pair and group work and promoted the use of the target language in authentic context. The teachers also integrated technology to support communication practice in and outside the classroom.

4.4 Effectiveness of the communicative approach in developing different language skills including speaking, listening, reading and writing

The focus on the communicative approach is on real life communication. This approach promoted interactive and meaningful speech that allowed students to practice and improve their speaking skills in a communicative setting. For example, every Wednesday on assemblies in St. Peter's College students would engage into small skits of forty-five minutes and speeches as well like presentations on topics like environment and pollution from the PANDAMITI CLUB.

In the communicative approach, listening skills were developed through exposure to authentic language use. Real life listening materials such as recordings of conversations, interviews or speeches were used to provide learners with opportunities to understand and interpret spoken language in different contexts. Students were encouraged to listen actively and engaged in communicative tasks such as information gaps where they needed to understand and respond to what they hear.

The communicative approach also recognized the importance of reading for language development. Authentic reading materials such as articles, short stories or poems were used that exposed students to different writing styles and genres. Reading activities in the communicative approach focused on comprehension, interpretation and discussion of the content. Students were encouraged to express their opinions, critiqued the text and shared their thoughts with their peers which enhanced their reading skills.

The communicative approach promoted meaningful and purposeful writing. Students were engaged in various writing tasks that resembled real- life situations such as writing letters, emails

or reports. Writing is often integrated with other writing skills such as speaking or reading to create a communicative context for written expression. Student practiced expressing their ideas, opinions, and thoughts in writing which helped develop their writing skills. Students of Senior One R wrote articles concerning with the conservation of the environment and climate change and made advertisements.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion of the findings

5.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of the discussion of the findings, conclusion drawn depending on the finding and the recommendations to enable the researchers who will pick interest in the same study area.

5.1 Discussion on how teachers used the communicative approach in teaching the English language in the staffroom.

Teachers focused on communication and interaction among students using the following strategies;

Student-centered activities. Teachers engaged students in activities that required active participation and communication such as pair work, group discussion and role plays. This encouraged students to use the language in real life situations. for example, students of Senior One G were discussing about the different types of environments.

Use of technology. Teachers utilized technological tools like online resources, interactive websites, language learning apps, and video conferencing that enhanced language learning and provided additional opportunities for communication practices. Teachers were observed playing video clips on child abuse for students in class.

Integration of skills. Teachers integrated various learning skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, developed students' overall language proficiency. They designed activities that replicated real-life language use, followed by a group discussion.

Task-based learning. Teachers assigned tasks that required students to use English to accomplish a certain goal. This gave students purposeful opportunities to practice the language.

5.2 Discussion on the materials teachers used in enhancement communication

Teachers used a range of materials that facilitated effective communication and improved students' language skills, and these included;

Textbooks and workbooks which often contained various exercises, dialogues and role plays that provided opportunities for students to practice communication in different context. These materials covered grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing skills which fostered both formal and informal communication. The government and concerned authorities distributed the relevant textbooks and works that serve as references in class and for classroom activities.

Language games and activities which teachers used language games and activities that made learning interactive and enjoyable, these included word puzzles, board games that required students to communicate and collaborate with their peers to complete a task or solve a problem.

Online resources and application that were available and enhanced communication skills, these included language learning platforms, audio and video conferencing tools, online discussion boards that allowed students to practice communication skills with native speakers or peers from different cultures.

Authentic materials which teachers incorporated authentic materials like newspaper articles, magazines, advertisements or real-life conversations into their lessons. These materials exposed students to natural language usage, cultural experiences and current situations which helped them develop their communication skills in real world context.

5.3 Discussion on what were the learner's perspectives on using the communicative approach

Active participation in which the communicative approach made learners to be encouraged to actively participate in their own learning process. This involved engaging in conversations, role-plays, and group activities, which learners often found more enjoyable and motivating compared to traditional lecture-based methods. Students of Senior three preferred and enjoy projects because they are so interactive for them.

Authenticity emphasized real-life communication, learners felt that the communicative approach exposed them to authentic language use and cultural contexts. This exposure helped them develop a more natural and nuanced understanding of the language.

Increased confidence for the learners to speak on assemblies, Old Boys Meetings during presentations in debates. learners have numerous opportunities to practice their language skills in a supportive and interactive environment. This boosted their confidence in speaking and using the language, contributed to their overall language development.

Collaboration and interaction in which the communicative approach promoted communication and collaboration among learners. This fostered a sense of community in the classroom and enabled learners to learn from and with their peers. Students appreciated the opportunity to interact with others and benefit from the different perspectives and experiences they bring.

5.4 Conclusion and recommendation

This shall include a general conclusion drawn based on the results of the study as per the set research objectives. The suggested recommendations shall call upon the concerned authorities to do the needful for proper implementations of the communicative approach in the competence based curriculum. These recommendations also inform the future researchers about the related areas that need research in the same or related field of study.

5.6 Conclusion

This study found out that the communicative approach has been accepted and other various teaching approaches that incorporates the same approach

5.7 Recommendations

According to the result of this study, I put the following recommendations to strive towards achieving the aims and objectives of the communicative approach.

The government should avail the schools with enough materials and textbooks for each class. For example, learners in Senior Three are still using senior two textbooks because the senior three textbooks are few and this calls for immediate attention by the responsible authorities to produce books in time.

The various stakeholders of the schools and government should think about enhancing the training of teachers to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills in which the communicative approach is incorporated into the curriculum.

Incorporate real-life and meaningful tasks: Design activities and tasks that simulate real-life communication. For example, include role-plays, debates, and discussions on topics that are relevant and interesting to the students. This will motivate them to engage in meaningful conversations in the target language.

Promote use of authentic materials such as newspaper articles, videos, to expose students to real-world language use and cultural contexts. This will help them develop a broader and more practical understanding of the language.

Encourage collaboration and interaction by creating opportunities for students to work in pairs or small groups to complete tasks and projects. This will promote peer-to-peer interaction and collaboration, leading to increased engagement and language practice.

Provide feedback and guidance by offering constructive feedback to students during their communicative activities. Focus on both accuracy and fluency, and provide clear explanations or examples to help students improve their language skills.

Advocate and Utilize technology tools such as video conferencing, online discussion forums, and language learning apps to facilitate communication beyond the classroom walls. This will extend learning opportunities and provide additional practice in authentic contexts. The government can provide computers to schools, internet access for easing research.

The government and school authorities should provide ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills in implementing the communicative approach effectively. Support teachers in adapting their teaching practices to meet the changing needs of their students.

The concerned authorities like the Heads of Department should foster collaboration among language teachers to share best practices, resources, and experiences related to implementing the

communicative approach. This will create a supportive network and lead to continuous improvement in teaching and learning

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APPENDICES

Appendix i: RESEARCH TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS

A sample template is to be used consisting of simple information during the collecting of data using questionnaire method.

Appendix ii: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO THE FIELD

I am a year three student of Busitema University pursuing a Bachelor’s Degree in Languages, English and Literature in English. Am carrying out a research on Exploring the use of the communicative approach among learners in teaching the English Language in Secondary schools in Tororo District. Kindly respond to the questions that are asked in the manner that you understand. Allow me to access some of the materials such as lesson plans and schemes of work. The information obtained is for academic purposes and maximum confidentiality will be accorded to it.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Signature.....

Awati Norah Patience

BU/UP/2020/0814

Signature.....

Name MADAM NAKAZINGA RACHAEL

SUPERVISOR

Appendix iii: RESEARCH TIMELINE