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WAYS KAZAKHSTANI TEACHERS FACILITATE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH CLASSROOMS

Abstract

In recent years, the number of people who want to learn languages has been increasing. English is considered to be one of the most well-known languages with the largest number of non-native speakers of English. The main reason for learning languages is the ability to communicate in this language, express oneself and understand the interlocutors. Thus, the concept of communicative language teaching (CLT) has emerged in the field of language teaching, which basically involves teaching students how to use the language in real-life situations. There is a need for researchers to examine the current conditions in order to see the point of view of language teachers with regard to facilitating communicative competence in English classrooms. So, this research paper aims to explore the ways how kazakhstani teachers facilitate communicative competence in English classrooms along with identifying benefits and challenges that teachers face while promoting it and emphasizing the procedures that usually take place in the process of facilitation of communicative competence. The qualitative research design was chosen for this research and the data collection tool was the semi-structured interview in which seven kazakhstani English teachers participated. The findings of this study showed that communicative competence best facilitated through interactive practices, and linguistic and cultural differences play a crucial role in facilitating communicative competence.

Keywords: *communicative competence, kazakhstani teachers, EFL, ESL, language learning, challenges in facilitating communicative competence, benefits of promoting communicative competence*

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ҚАЗАҚСТАНДЫҚ МҰҒАЛІМДЕРДІҢ АҒЫЛШЫН ТІЛІ САБАҚТАРЫНДА КОММУНИКАТИВТІК ҚҰЗЫРЕТТІЛІКТІ ҚАЛЫПТАСТЫРУ ЖОЛДАРЫ

Аңдатпа

Соңғы жылдары тіл үйренгісі келетін адамдардың саны өсіп келеді. Ағылшын тілі ана тілі емес адамдар үйренетін ең танымал тілдердің бірі. Тілді үйренудің негізгі себебі– сол тілде қарым-қатынас жасай алу, өзін еркін жеткізе білу және сұхбаттастарды түсіну. Осылайша, шынайы өмір жағдайларында тілді қолдануды үйретуге негізделген коммуникативтік тілдік оқыту (CLT) тұғырдамасы тіл оқыту саласында пайда болды. Қазіргі жағдайды зерттеу қажет, себебі ол ағылшын тілі сабақтарында коммуникативтік құзыреттілікті дамыту жөнінде тіл мұғалімдерінің көзқарасын анықтауға мүмкіндік береді. Сондықтан бұл ғылыми жұмыс қазақстандық мұғалімдердің ағылшын тілі сабақтарында коммуникативтік

құзыреттілікті қалай қалыптастыратынын зерттеуді, сондай-ақ оны дамыту барысында кездесетін артықшылықтар мен қиындықтарды айқындауды және коммуникативтік құзыреттілікті қалыптастыру үдерісінде жиі қолданылатын тәсілдерге назар аударуды мақсат етеді. Бұл зерттеуде сапалық зерттеу дизайны таңдалды, ал дерек жинау құралы ретінде жартылай құрылымданған сұхбат қолданылды. Оған жеті қазақстандық ағылшын тілі мұғалімі қатысты. Зерттеу нәтижелері коммуникативтік құзыреттілікті ең тиімді дамыту интерактивті практикалар арқылы жүзеге асатынын, сондай-ақ тілдік және мәдени айырмашылықтардың коммуникативтік құзыреттілікті қалыптастыруда маңызды рөл атқаратынын көрсетті.

Кілт сөздер: коммуникативтік құзыреттілік, қазақстандық мұғалімдер, EFL, ESL, тіл үйрену, коммуникативтік құзыреттілікті дамытудағы қиындықтар, коммуникативтік құзыреттілікті ілгерілетудің артықшылықтары

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СПОСОБЫ, КОТОРЫМИ КАЗАХСТАНСКИЕ УЧИТЕЛЯ СОДЕЙСТВУЮТ РАЗВИТИЮ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ НА УРОКАХ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

Аннотация

В последние годы желание изучать иностранные языки растет у населения людей по всему миру. Английский язык является одним из самых распространенных иностранных языков в мире с огромным количеством носителей. Способность выражать себя на другом языке, беглая речь, понимания и поддержания дискуссии являются главными причинами страсти к изучению иностранных языков. Следовательно, в области преподавания иностранных языков сформировалась концепция коммуникативного обучения языку (CLT), которая активно поддерживает изучение языка благодаря которым изучатели учатся использовать язык чтобы справиться с жизненными ситуациями которые случаются каждый день. Существует потребность рассмотреть текущие состояние преподавания английского языка, чтобы отметить точку зрения казахстанских учителей по внедрению коммуникативной компетентности на уроках английского языка. Как следствие, целью этой исследовательской работы являются- рассмотреть подходы преподавателей английского языка в продвижении коммуникативной компетентности на уроках английского языка, а также зафиксировать преимущества и негативные аспекты, с которыми преподаватели имеют дело во время внедрения коммуникативной компетентности на уроках, и подчеркнуть методы, которые обычно задействованы в процессе внедрения коммуникативной компетентности. Для данного исследования был выбран качественный подход, а полуструктурированное интервью, в котором приняли участие семь преподавателей английского языка из Казахстана, является инструментом сбора данных. Результаты исследования показали, что коммуникативная компетентность лучше всего формируется посредством интерактивных практик, а языковые и культурные различия играют решающую роль в развитии коммуникативной компетентности.

Ключевые слова: коммуникативная компетентность, казахстанские учителя, английский как иностранный (EFL), английский как второй язык (ESL), изучение языка, проблемы в развитии коммуникативной компетентности, преимущества развития коммуникативной компетентности

Introduction

Teaching foreign language effectively has always been the topic of discussion for a very long time. Many scholars and institutions have expressed their opinions and claims on language pedagogy. As learning and acquiring a new language is a complex process, there have been several methods and concepts introduced into the teacher and learner interaction and knowledge transfer. In modern times Communicative language teaching (CLT) is picked as the most effective method in language teaching by many scholars. Communicative competence is the central concept of CLT. Before exploring this concept, it is essential to foreshadow what was before CLT in language pedagogy.

The Grammar Translation method (GTM) serves as one of the oldest methods in foreign language pedagogy. Despite the GTM's "old-fashioned" status, it had remarkable success (MacMillian,2002). Explicitly detailed rules' explanation, memorizations of verb conjunctions and vocabulary lists, and emphasis on writing and reading skills characterize the GTM. Teachers were authoritative figures during the language teaching process. Kissacik (2016) states that students' regard to teachers as the singular authority of information repercussed their total dependence. The GTM's effectiveness halts at rules memorization whilst failing at cultivating and enhancing speaking and listening skills (Bahar, 2013).

The Audio-lingual method (ALM) served as a replacement to the GTM and arose in the mid 20th century. In contrast to GTM, ALM focused on speaking and listening skills by prioritizing drill activities, repetition. Cuadrado and Cuadrado (2016) state that challenges in application of new words arise as focusing on repetitive drill recoils into lack of contextual understanding.

The afore-mentioned methods' aftermath in the form of language learners' dissatisfaction and several scholars' criticism of an overcomplicated and fruitless teaching process resulted in rise of communicative competence. Communicative competence is a concept that arose in the late 1960's and early 1970's. It is often characterized as the ability of learners' usage of target language verbally and non-verbally under different circumstances and varying environments. This concept was introduced by Dell Hymes as he opposed Noam Chomsky's notion of "linguistic competence". Dell Hymes believed in order to use foreign language professionally and coherently, grammar expertise wasn't enough.

Communicative competence consists of several components: grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic. Cueellar (2013) defines grammatical competence as learners' aptitude for the production and perception of grammatically adhering phrases and sentences. Expertise in logically transmuting sentences into appropriate meaningful oral or textual utterances depending on social context is referred as discourse competence (Trujillo,2010). Sato and McNamara (2019) comment that sociolinguistic competence is the competence of mastering the appropriate language use in different sociolinguistic contexts. Strategic competence defines language user's resourcefulness in dealing with unanticipated challenges during communication despite their mastery of linguistic and sociocultural code (Mariani,1994).

Communicative competence's positive influence on language learner's capability in usage of English in real life serves as the reason for teachers to facilitate it during the language learning process. Teachers' tailoring methodology in accordance with learners' needs, styles, and preferences is essential in facilitating communicative competence formation. Effective development of learners' communicative competence requires the consideration of proficiency level, learning style, cultural background in planning lessons, and provision of prospects in authentic language use. This paper seeks to unravel the ways kazakhstani teachers facilitate communicative competence in their classrooms. To achieve this aim the following research questions were designed:

1. How do kazakhstani teachers promote communicative competence in the classroom?
2. What are the possible challenges and benefits of implementing communicative competence in English language classrooms?

Methods and Materials

As it was mentioned before, the aim of this research was to explore the ways kazakhstani teachers facilitate communicative competence in their classrooms.

Research design

Qualitative research design in the form of semi-structured interviews was opted for exploration of the ways kazakhstani teachers facilitate communicative competence. According to Creswell (2012), the qualitative research design's aspect of granting access to in-depth inspection of participants' experiences and detailed responses, thus it was the reason for the selection of this particular research design.

Research sampling

The sample of the study was kazakhstani English-language teachers with 1-2 years of experience in the field of teaching. Purposive sampling techniques were used by the researcher, which basically means that participants of this study were selected according to certain criteria (Creswell, 2012). In this case, these criteria included that the participants had 1-2 years of experience teaching English and experience implementing communicative competence in their classroom. In addition, the total number of interviewees accounted for 7 people.

Data collection tools and methods

Due to geographical restrictions, all interviews were conducted online via Zoom. The format of the interview was semi-structured. So, it consisted of six questions that were prepared in advance, but at some points, due to further elaboration on the response, there was a need for asking additional questions to fully grasp the teacher's opinions. Teachers' responses were recorded and then transcribed.

Ethical consideration

Prior to the interview, all participants were presented Consent form, and they participated in this study on a voluntary basis. Confidentiality of the responses was ensured.

Findings

This section will present the findings of the semi-structured interview. Participants were to provide answers to 6 beforehand prepared questions and several unexpected questions occurred during the interviewing process. The obtained data were analyzed with Braun and Clarke's (2012) method of thematic analysis.

Theme 1 In-class procedures

The first three questions were dedicated to discovering the techniques kazakhstani teachers use to facilitate communicative competence in their classrooms. The first three questions were crafted to cover this theme. The first question was structured as follows - What strategies do you implement in fostering communicative competence? It was revealed that most of the teachers implement speaking skill based activities during their lessons. Since speaking skill based activities enable students to enhance their collaborative skills.

"... I often rely on group activities such as role-playing, interactive games, and poster-making; as they engage students in speaking activities. And speaking skill is essential in communication...". (Participant 3)

Not all participants focus on speaking skills and group work. It was discovered that some teachers investigate how the English language works.

"... My students and I use a lot of translation practices. I do it because I want to show my students the contrast between their Mother Tongue and English. So through these exercises my students see how ideas are conveyed in English..." (Participant 5)

Second question was constructed as follows- "How do you assess communicative competence in your classroom?". Several teachers admitted that they pay attention to the speaking tasks that students are required to do. They measure students based on students' ability to fully express themselves.

"... I combine formative and summative assessments . I write down notes while students are handling classroom tasks and how they initiate and keep up the conversation with each other. Speaking tests or group projects, even role-plays are used by me for formal assessment." (Participant 1)

Several Teachers indicated that they pay attention to the writing tasks as well.

“I often assign my students short essays for various topics. Then while checking the essays I pay attention to the appropriateness of the language and if they express their viewpoints in a culturally appropriate way”.(Participant 2)

The next question asks the following question- “What do you do when there are differences between students’ levels of communicative competences?”. Teachers responded that they promote pair work and healthy interaction between learners with different levels of communicative competence.

“I pair up stronger students with less able ones. I also give extra supporting materials to those who might need them. I also tell my students to help each other in order to let them know that we are all learning together and not one by one.” (Participant 7)

Theme 2 Perception of the teachers

Questions number 4 and 5 were asked to identify the benefits and challenges in facilitating communicative competence in the classroom?”

Question number 4 asks “Are there any difficulties in facilitating communicative competence?”. Many teachers expressed that the difference between students’ mother tongue and English is one of the challenges in facilitating communicative competence in the classroom.

“The way how Kazakh and English languages are constructed , they are different. English is more direct, while Kazakh language is more indirect or formal. Since my students already use two languages other than English, which are Kazakh and Russian. They are reluctant to speak English because they had bad experience using Russian which is another foreign language to my students” (Participant 4)

“My students have a habit of translating sentences directly from their native language which leads to inappropriate utterances due to the difference in level of politeness in both languages” (Participant 1)

Teachers also indicated that fear of making mistakes and shyness slow down the process of facilitating communicative competence.

“Making mistakes is the major hindrance in communicative competence. Our children were not given a chance to make mistakes so they are scared to be punished, but you know English is about confidence. Shy attitudes need to be overcome in order, because communicative competence requires the ability to express themselves. How can they express themselves, ideas and opinions if they are shy all the time” (Participant 5)

Question number five asks “What are the benefits of promoting communicative competence?”. Teachers have pointed out that students learn how to apply language in everyday life and students use language meaningfully.

“Engagement is guaranteed during the lesson as students use language to tackle real life problems. By focusing on meaningful interaction, students not just learn rules but also learn how to adapt their language in different situations.” (Participant 6)

It was also discovered to be beneficial from a cultural perspective. Students get to learn about cultural aspects of the language.

“Facilitating communicative competence enable students to be aware of cultural aspects of English speaking population, developing their adaptability in dealing with cultural clashes” (Participant 4)

Theme 3 Suggestion to colleagues

Last question was dedicated to finding out recommendations from kazakhstani teachers to their colleagues. Participants gave several insights to facilitating communicative competence in the classroom. Some teachers suggest implementing interactive work activities where students apply the target language in different contexts.

“I would advise encouraging students to use language naturally, creating real life situations. Asking open-ended questions and frequently organizing discussions are also beneficials for facilitating communicative competence in the classroom” (Participant 3)

Some teachers advice encouraging students to use target language outside of the classroom.

“I think it is fun and helpful to ask students to use English in realistic environments, such as during the break, at home etc. This also facilitates independent learning” (Participant 2)

Discussion

Through thorough analysis of the responses received from the qualitative research several aspects of promotion kazakhstani teachers' communicative competence were revealed. It can be identified that teachers link speaking skill directly with communicative competence. It seems that there are strong correspondents between speaking skill and communicative competence. This might be due to the fact that speaking is the primary component of a language which is productive.

It was discovered that cultural differences serve as an obstacle in facilitating communicative competence. From teachers' responses, it can be noted that it is important for students to be aware of linguistic structural differences between their native and target languages.

Opportunity for students to learn about different cultures and provision reinforcement to express themselves fully in another language are the benefits of promoting communicative competence.

Conclusion

Language learning is a complex process that requires thorough consideration of a plethora of aspects. Communicative competence is one of them. It is essential to be facilitated in the classroom. It was discovered that communicative competence positively affects learner's awareness of the need for adaptability according to cultural settings. Findings unraveled that the best ways to facilitate communicative competence is through interactive activities where students develop their collaborative skills and communication skills. However language structure differences and cultural contrasts might cause obstacles in facilitating communicative competence. Findings indicated that it is essential to address these issues during the learning process in order to make students fearless in case of uncertainties' occurrence during the learning process.

There are some limitations of this research. This first one is a time constraint, more precisely, there was not enough time to conduct the research. Consequently, the sample of the research was also smaller. The next limitation is employing qualitative design. Although this design gave the opportunity to gather in-depth information on this topic, due to the small number of participants the results cannot be generalizable. For this reason, it would be better if future researchers use quantitative design to gather statistical data and by covering a larger sample to generalize the results.

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