

# Application of Communicative Teaching Approach in Spoken English for Tourism Teaching

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**Abstract.** With the rapid development of tourism industry, foreign tourists and close cooperation between domestic and foreign tour enterprises are much more than before. In such circumstances, talents with professional knowledge and communicative competence in foreign language are enjoyed by most of tourism enterprises. Communicative teaching approach, appeared in 1970s, is a famous language teaching method in the world. The good combination of the language teaching approach and Spoken English for Tourism class will raise the efficiency of the class, arouse students' interests in study, and train qualified talents for tourism industry. This research paper first introduces the concept of communicative approach, and analyzes disadvantages of traditional Spoken English for Tourism class. Then it attempts to combine this modern teaching theory with the practice, exploring an effective way of applying communicative approach in the teaching of Spoken English for Tourism class.

**Keywords:** Communicative teaching approach, Spoken English for Tourism, Communicative competence.

## 1. Introduction

The requirements for employees in tourism are continuously changing with a higher standard. More importance is attached to those employees who are familiar with professional knowledge and simultaneously good at communicating with foreign tourists and foreign cooperators in tourism. This is a new trend of talents selection for those tour enterprises. *Spoken English for Tourism* is a compulsory English course for specific purposes in the schools of Tourism Administration. It provides students with good opportunities to improve their professional English skills in speaking. Meanwhile, how to avoid problems existing in traditional *Spoken English for Tourism* teaching, how to develop teachers' guiding function in teaching process, how to arouse the curiosity of the students and improve their competence of speaking English in their future work are issues need to be solved urgently. The writer combines the modern language teaching approach—communicative teaching approach with *Spoken English for Tourism* teaching in class, hoping to create a new teaching mode for professional language teaching.

## 2. Communicative Teaching Approach

### 2.1 Concept of Communicative Teaching Approach

Communicative teaching approach, or the communicative language teaching, is a language teaching approach that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study. The teaching approach attaches importance to organize classroom activities for providing students opportunities to use foreign language in communicative circumstances. Studying language by using it is the key concept in communicative teaching approach. Language skill is obtained by activating learners' original language and stimulating development of language system. Communication in communicative teaching approach means the interaction between teachers and students, students and language. Communicative teaching approach aims to improve students' communicative competence. It stresses function of learners in language learning process and stresses that the goal of language teaching is to train students' language communicative competence according to the specific learning

demands. Communicative teaching approach supports the view of teaching language in imitated real life. What students learn in language class should be used in their actual life and work. Teaching objective is to train students' competence of using language creatively and purposefully in different communicative situation. That is to say, the abilities to reorganize the language learning in class, and express their thoughts and emotion fluently are the final goals of language teaching, especially for teaching English course for specific purposes.

## **2.2 Features of Communicative Teaching Approach**

Firstly, communicative teaching approach is the combination of functions and ideas. Purpose of language learning is to train learners' communicative competence. The communicative teaching approach emphasizes on selecting typical materials from daily life and future work, teaching the language which is used in different situation for various purposes, such as asking for requirements, making descriptions, presenting attitudes and etc.

Secondly, teaching is a communicative process in communicative teaching approach. The classroom is a specific social communicative environment. Teachers organize classroom activities in foreign language, fulfilling the communicative language teaching process. Students are required not only to use correct language in these activities, but also to express in appropriate ways in different situations.

Thirdly, context is the basic unit in communicative language teaching. In communicative teaching approach, language is believed to exist in the coherent context instead of the isolated word or sentence. Language teaching aims to train students on how to use context in communicative circumstances instead of mechanically memorizing sentences. Sentences are used for expression in contexts and communications.

Fourthly, students are the main body of learning in communicative teaching approach. In the students-oriented foreign language class, training the competence of independent learning is one of the most important teaching purposes. Communicative teaching approach emphasizes on encouraging students in attending the classroom communicative activities instead of forcing them to do mechanical language exercises. Communicative teaching approach emphasizes arousing student's initiative in learning, dispelling anxiety in learning and moderately ignoring the grammar mistakes in learning.

## **3. Problems in Traditional Spoken English for Tourism Class**

Spoken English for Tourism is a specific English course facing employees involving in tourism and students majoring in tourism. Teaching contents are concerned with the English professional knowledge used in the operation and management of tourism. Obtaining the competences of communicating with the English native speakers and dealing with regular work in tourism industry in English is an important learning purpose for learners. However, in traditional *Spoken English for Tourism* class, there are some disadvantages making that harder.

### **3.1 Teachers-dominant Teaching**

The main attribute of traditional teaching of *Spoken English for Tourism* Class is that students accept knowledge from teachers passively. In the traditional English for Tourism class, students have fewer opportunities to take part in various classroom activities and practices. They usually do certain oral exercises according to teachers' instructions in a comparatively fixed way and seldom do self-study by searching references and group discussion. Homework assigned by teachers is concerned with certain topic expression without any practical and creative tasks, such as narration after observation, explanation after practices, summarization after reading, discussion after investigation, and so on.

### **3.2 Teaching Interrupted with Native language**

Chinese is native language for Chinese students in China. In *Spoken English for Tourism* class, students study in classroom where does not open to the outside world. In traditional *Spoken English for Tourism* class, teachers are accustomed to explaining professional English knowledge and analyzing scenes of speaking in Chinese, instead of edifying students in English environments and

create an English environment for them. Absolutely, mother tongue cannot be used to explain those difficult and important points in teaching.

### **3.3 Vapidity in Teaching**

Vapidity in teaching in traditional *Spoken English for Tourism* class embodies in space, time and methods of teaching. Teachers do not focus on creating real context in traditional *Spoken English for Tourism* class, which is restraining students' enthusiasm in learning. The contents of teaching in class do not connect with practical work context really. What students learn in class cannot assist them in dealing with practical issues in their future work. It reduces efficiency of teaching intangibly as a matter of fact.

## **4. Communicative Teaching Approach Applied in Spoken English for Tourism Class**

### **4.1 Creating Students-dominant Communicative Environments**

Actually classroom is not a real communicative place, but it is an imitated communicative ground by setting up certain language contexts. Students are supposed to be the working staff in tourism and try to cope with different matters in the imitated communicative context in English. They are the leading sector of the classroom activities. For instance, the role-play is a typical classroom activity in communicative language teaching. Teachers set up different situations in tourism, meanwhile students play various roles, prepare props, ruminate over how to express in the designated contexts, and finally boldly present themselves with partners in front of the entire class. The one of the obvious examples in *Spoken English for Tourism* is about *Hotel Reservation*. Students are divided into two parts, i.e., tourist part and reservationist part. After making sure the room reservation procedures in hotel services, students are required to play their roles. "Tourists" communicate with different "reservationists", and try to search for suitable rooms for themselves. Certain non-language such as body language or gesture language can be used in communication. As teachers in communicative language teaching class, they should remind students of the existing cultural differences between east and west in real situation.

### **4.2 Emphasizing Students' Proximal Development Zone in Communicative Class**

In communicative language teaching, teachers should plunge into a teaching research with vigor and gusto in order to innovate the traditional teaching and obtain a better teaching effect. Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development" theory must be considered in communicative language teaching. Teachers should study the actual and potential competence of students in utilizing professional knowledge, and then explore scientific curricula structure and appropriate contents for students in *Spoken English for Tourism* class. Teaching materials of *Spoken English for Tourism* class must be analyzed and reorganized by teachers so that teaching contents can be accepted comparatively easily by students in different communicative activities. If communicative tasks are selected appropriately, students can easily realize that their foreign language competence is not good enough to deal with the issues in the imitated communicative situation. In such a circumstance, students have strong desire to read related written materials given by teachers, such as related theoretical articles, model dialogues, speeches spoken by celebrities in tourism industry and so on.

### **4.3 Drawing Support from Different Teaching Means**

To arouse students' interests in professional knowledge of *Spoken English for Tourism*, various types of teaching means should be applied in communicative activities, such as CAI, videos, audio materials, pictures, real objects. In the case of dealing with complaints from foreign tourists, video materials are played to students first. Then students are required to talk about whether complaints in video are reasonable and how to cope with it. Attracted by vivid video materials, students are more willing to join the classroom activities positively.

### **4.4 Stressing on Fluency in Lingual Communication**

Communicative teaching approach advocates an unrestrained communicative interaction in foreign language. Teachers should tolerate students' mistakes in language. Mistakes are inescapable in professional communication. If students are interrupted by correcting mistakes in the process of communication, their confidence and pride will be depressed. Teachers should encourage students to

express their ideas in a relatively fluent way. However, those frequent mistakes, which influence the correct understanding in communication, should not be ignored. Teachers should attach importance to the communicative function and social meaning of professional English, as well as remind students of omitting those significant language mistakes. Correcting mistakes should be done after communicative activities. E.g. the frequent used word *suite* is usually pronounced incorrectly by learners. The word is very important in hotel working communication. It must be pointed out by teachers at the appropriate time. However, teachers must protect students' enthusiasm for communication when they correct the mistakes in front of the class. Tense is the usual mistake in professional communication. Under most of circumstances, it is not a big obstacle in communication. Thus, teachers need not correct them at all time.

#### **4.5 Strengthening Teachers' Professional Knowledge and Improving Individual Quality**

In fact, the requirement for teachers in communicative teaching is higher than that in traditional language teaching. In communicative *Spoken English for Tourism* class teaching, teachers must have a higher language communicative skill, including English expression competence, extensive tourism knowledge, accurate understanding about foreign cultures as well as communicative tactics. Teachers must be proficient at speaking English, purposely update the latest development and research findings in tourism, and further grasp cultures and language customs of English speaking nations. Moreover, teachers should possess talents of performance in order to present themselves confidently and humorously in front of students. Continuously learning and improving are necessary for teachers.

### **5. Summary**

Accountability, curiosity, and flexibility are necessary qualities for teachers in communicative language teaching. Teachers should establish short-term and long-term working and study targets, and try to become the popular teachers who are familiar with communicative *Spoken English for Tourism* teaching and have sufficient practical experiences. After studying in communicative *Spoken English for Tourism* class, students are aroused by various communicative activities. Communicative approach is an effective teaching method for improving students' professional communicative competence in English and increasing interest and enthusiasm of professional English learning. It is helpful for students to get more job opportunities, enhance their working confidence, and become skilled in communicative competence in tourism industry.

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