

DEVELOPING ENGLISH COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN NON-PHILOLOGY STUDENTS

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Abstract: This article investigates innovative strategies to develop English communicative competence among students who are not majoring in philology. As English continues to dominate academic and professional communication worldwide, it becomes essential that non-philology students gain the ability to use English effectively in real-life contexts. The study presents findings from an experiment conducted with students of technical fields, demonstrating how modern, interactive, and context-driven methodologies significantly enhance speaking and listening skills compared to traditional approaches. The research highlights the importance of applying content-based instruction, practical language tasks, and the integration of digital tools into classroom practices.

Keywords: communicative competence, non-philology students, ESP, CLIL, language education, task-based learning, English for specific purposes

Introduction

In today's globalized academic and professional environment, English has become the primary language for international discourse. For students outside the field of philology—such as those studying engineering, medicine, economics, and information technology—English proficiency is increasingly crucial not only for academic success but also for participating in international collaborations, reading specialized literature, and communicating in multicultural teams. Despite this need, language instruction for non-philology students often remains rooted in outdated, grammar-oriented methods that fail to address the development of practical communicative competence. Communicative competence, as defined by Canale and Swain (1980), encompasses not only grammatical accuracy but also the ability to express ideas clearly and appropriately in specific social and professional contexts. The communicative approach, including Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP), offers promising pathways for enhancing students' engagement with the English language in ways directly relevant to their future careers.

Methodology

This research was carried out using a quasi-experimental design at a regional technical university. The participants included 60 second-year undergraduate students enrolled in engineering and information technology programs. The students were randomly assigned into two groups: the control group and the experimental group, each consisting of 30 learners. The control group followed a traditional English curriculum based on grammar-translation and reading comprehension exercises. In contrast, the experimental group was taught using student-centered methods emphasizing communicative competence, including CLIL-based instruction, role-plays, problem-solving tasks, and simulation of real-life professional situations. The study lasted ten academic weeks. Teaching materials for the experimental group were developed to reflect the learners' academic disciplines. These included project-based learning activities

related to technical content, peer collaboration tasks, and topic-specific vocabulary development. Pre- and post-intervention assessments were conducted using speaking tests aligned with CEFR B1-B2 level descriptors. Additional data were collected via anonymous student surveys and teacher interviews to evaluate learners' attitudes, perceived effectiveness, and motivation levels.

Results

The pre-test results indicated that both the control and experimental groups had comparable levels of English speaking proficiency at the beginning of the study. However, post-test outcomes showed a marked difference between the two. In the experimental group, 68 percent of students achieved B2-level proficiency, while only 31 percent of students in the control group reached this level. Students in the experimental group demonstrated greater fluency, improved pronunciation, and enhanced ability to participate in discussions and deliver oral presentations. Surveys conducted among students revealed that over 80 percent of participants in the experimental group felt more confident using English in both academic and informal contexts. They noted that the relevance of course content to their field of study made learning more engaging and purposeful. Teacher feedback further confirmed increased student motivation, more active class participation, and a greater degree of language autonomy in the experimental group compared to the control group.

Discussion

The findings of the study support the argument that traditional grammar-focused instruction is insufficient for developing communicative competence, especially among students who need to apply English in field-specific and professional environments. Integrating English learning with students' academic disciplines through CLIL and ESP has proven to be effective in fostering both language acquisition and subject understanding. Students are more likely to engage with and retain new vocabulary and structures when they encounter them in meaningful, real-world contexts. Moreover, the communicative approach promotes active learning, critical thinking, and collaborative problem-solving, which are essential 21st-century skills. One of the challenges identified in this study is the limited availability of qualified language instructors who are also familiar with non-linguistic disciplines. There is also a lack of ready-made CLIL or ESP materials tailored to technical fields, which requires additional effort and coordination between language departments and subject-matter experts. Institutional support, in the form of training workshops, curriculum development resources, and blended learning platforms, is necessary to sustain the shift from passive learning to communicative competence development. Digital tools and language learning technologies such as voice recorders, online platforms, pronunciation applications, and virtual discussion boards further expand opportunities for interactive practice beyond the classroom. When properly integrated, such tools help reinforce speaking habits and self-evaluation.

Conclusion

This study concludes that developing communicative competence among non-philology students is not only achievable but also essential in the modern educational landscape. Contextualized and interactive language teaching strategies, including CLIL and ESP methodologies, significantly outperform traditional approaches in enhancing students' English proficiency. These findings imply that higher education institutions should revise their English language programs for non-linguistic disciplines by incorporating communication-oriented content and pedagogies. Investing in teacher training, interdepartmental cooperation, and the development of specialized instructional materials is critical to ensuring long-term success.

Moreover, leveraging technology to support language learning makes the process more flexible and engaging for students. By equipping students in engineering, IT, and other non-philological fields with strong communicative competence, universities will better prepare graduates for participation in global academic and professional networks.

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