

Classroom activities in Turkish communicative language teaching (TCLT): Theory and practice (AEP – Language Centre, UCY)

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Classroom activities in Turkish communicative language teaching (TCLT): Theory and practice (AEP – Language Centre, UCY)

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to introduce a number of communicative activities/tasks (group work and pair work, drama, improvisation, role-playing, simulation, problem solving, communication games) used in Turkish Language classes of Adult Education Program (AEP) offered by the University of Cyprus Language Center (LC-UCY). The communicative activities/tasks were designed in accordance to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR), to be used in beginners to intermediate level classes. The main aim of using these activities/tasks was to develop and improve speaking skills not only inside the classroom but also outside. Synchronous and asynchronous learning environments were implemented which encouraged the collaboration between student-student and students-teacher/tutor. A rationale and a description of how these activities were integrated into Turkish courses and how they achieved the stated aims and objectives will be discussed together with the linguistic theories. Suggestions and recommendations are also mentioned.

KEY WORDS

Adult Education Program, Turkish Language, Communicative Approach, Activities/tasks

1. Introduction

1. 1. Turkish Language in Cyprus

Cyprus, which is acknowledged as the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, has always been a multilingual society. The official languages of the Republic of Cyprus are Greek and Turkish. Notably The majority of T/Cs possessed greater extent of communicative competence in Greek. In contrast, there were very few G/Cs who held communicative competence in Turkish. Due to the persistence of bilingual factors, both languages have historically exerted effects on one another. Cypriot Greek (CG) and Cypriot Turkish (CT) borrowed heavily among each other and different phrases and words are still being used nowadays by G/Cs and T/Cs. In 1974, Turkey occupied Cyprus and thus, forced the division of the two main communities on the island. This had an effect on the linguistic development of Greek and Turkish for T/C and G/C speakers respectively. After some years, in 1989, the Turkish and Middle Eastern

Studies Department was established at the Faculty of Humanities of University of Cyprus (UCY) in order to provide opportunities to learners to learn the language, the history and culture of Turkey. In 1992, the department started the admission of students. The focus of the department was to provide a basic introduction to the whole range of Turkish Studies, focusing more on improvising the learning procedures of Turkish Language (TL). In 2004, the communication amid the two communities was partly allowed. With the opening of the borders, the MOEC, in order to promote linguistic knowledge and joint understanding between the two communities (G/C community and T/C community), introduced certain important steps. One of those measures was the implementation of TL in the educational system (gymnasium and lyceum/secondary schools, Adult Education Center (AEC), State Institutes of Further Education concerning adult education.

1. 2. Turkish Language at LC-UCY

Since 2006, the LC has been offering courses to the general public on a fee basis through its AEP. It has mainly designed programs for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and Logistic/Accounting Organizations. Since 2008, new directives were issued and these programs are now offered in collaboration with Centre for Lifelong Learning, Assessment and Development (KEPEAA). The following programs are offered: English (IELTS, Business English, Workshop-Technical English and Business English), Turkish (A1-C1, Turkish for Nurses and Medical Personnel), Russian (A1-C1, Russian/English Translation of Contracts), Armenian (A1-B1), and Hebrew (sponsored by the Israeli Embassy- A1). The courses follow the CEFR.

The number of the participants of the TL classes has increased since the opening of the borders in 2004 (see Appendix: Table 1). The LC and the instructors have also been active in the use of Instructional Technology for several years. The teaching facilities are fully equipped with state-of-the-art multimedia technology. The LC focuses on small groups of 10-15 participants for optimal language learning. The AEP of the LC, UCY prepares students for their exams (IELTS, TOMER or ISTANBUL, etc.).

According to Pelekani's (2016) research on "Students' attitudes towards Motivation and Technology in a Turkish Language Classroom", 42% of the students who participated in A2, B1 and B2 levels graduated from the Turkish and Middle Eastern studies of UCY and they were interested in continuing learning Turkish in order to speak and understand it fluently and reap more opportunities in the future to teach this language

independently. The same study showed that the 15% of the participants were students from the Law and Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies.

2. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

It is widely known that the language constitutes a communication instrument and teaching should seriously take into account this subject. This issue is what exactly makes CLT. The goal of language teaching is to develop learners' "communicative competence" (Brown, 2007; Hymes, 1972; p. 4, Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Classroom goals are focused on all of the components of communicative competence and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence. Grammatical competence (knowledge of the building blocks of sentences such as parts of speech, tenses, phrases and how sentences are formed) is not sufficient for students to be able to use the language for meaningful communication. Thus the mastering of grammatical competence should be combined with the mastering of communicative competence. The activities/tasks constitute the methodological torso of CLT. The activities that comprise real communication and engage the students in an authentic language usage, full of meanings improve students' language learning.

3. Effective Communicative techniques, tools and activities in a TL classroom

3.1. Techniques

Swain (2000) defines a technique as the use of various methods and it focuses on interaction habits of a learner. It values experiments or interviews of the learners as a special auxiliary stage. This approach was adopted to create speakers from learners as it determines the learner's ability to construct speech activities with language in the normal settings. It goes to the extent of comparing the infant language adaptive character and the adults (Horwitz, Elaine, Michael, and Joann (1986). It anticipates for sentence development of the second language during speech construction. The techniques below (1-5) are, therefore, used in TL classroom:

1. Picture narrating and describing: Students tell the story taking place in the sequential pictures by paying attention to the criteria provided by the teacher. In picture describing the teacher can present some pictures and ask the students to describe what they see in the pictures. Both language techniques foster the creativity and imagination of the learners.

2. **Storytelling:** Students can tell stories among themselves in Turkish language based on previous knowledge. When the students make mistakes, they get feedback either by their peer or by the teacher.
3. **Classroom discussion:** After a content-based lesson, a discussion is held. Classroom discussion helps students to be more open and free and communicate without any fear. This boosts their speaking in the second language. This activity fosters critical thinking and quick decision making, and students learn how to express and justify themselves in polite ways while disagreeing with the others (e.g. debate).
4. **Brainstorming:** Brainstorming assists a teacher to bring forward learner's ideas and extend and maintain group discussion. Every participant is encouraged to think aloud and suggest as many ideas as possible.
5. **Simulations:** Simulations include a teacher planning the class in a somewhat different way that will make a student understand the language he/she is teaching them. For example, the educator can plan the lesson like a courthouse in order for the students to understand how to use court terms. Simulations are very similar to role-plays but what makes simulations different than role plays is that they are more elaborate. In simulations, students can bring items to the class to create a realistic environment.

3. 2. Communicative tools:

Communicative tools aim to increase students' communicative competence, to promote motivation, autonomy and social equality and identity during the language learning process. Communicative tools integrated into the TSL can increase both input (exposure) and output (use) of the target language-Turkish. Examples of Communicative tools used in our classroom are as follows:

- Presentations (*powerpoint, prezi, emaze, etc.*) and animation tools (e.g *Go! Animate, etc.*). Teaching with interactive colourful and brain-friendly presentations and animation tools enables second language teachers to explore and get familiar with the audiovisual and technological communication specific resources of animation methods and utilize them in enhancing the foreign language fluency of their students. Animation makes the learning process more lively which attracts the attention of the second language learners.
- *Voki*: It is an online tool. It is a fun tool that students can use for homework, class work or project in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The steps for

creating a Voki are: select an avatar, customize it, add a voice, choose a background, and then publish and share it either in classroom webpage or Facebook group account. With Voki, students can make use of Voki through recording themselves reading a passage or saying a dialogue. Listening to the Voki will allow them to listen to how they sound, as well as work on their fluency. It allows students who may not be efficient at writing to share their message or tell their story.

- Flashcards and realia (*maps, fruits and vegetables, toys, etc.*): Visual aids are often used by teachers. Visual aids are media which can be seen and be touched by students. Using real objects into the classroom can make the learning experience more memorable for the learners.
- *Skype* Teaching and *WiZiQ*: - Online teaching via *Skype* or *WiZiQ* can make the students feel high stimulation and desire for the acquisition of the target language (Turkish). It is anticipated that successful incorporation of *Skype* sessions will lead to refining of the second language learners' focus enhancement of their language because of the utilization of technology. The *YouTube* and mp3 feature, screen sharing, polling, and whiteboard in *WiZiQ* make teaching attractive and interactive for learners.
- *PBworks*: *PBworks* is a wiki which is an ideal technology tool for getting students to work together and collaborate. A single wiki space is created where students can add up text, videos, links, podcasts, upload vocals recorded in *Voki* or *Voccaro* where they talk about themselves or also about a place they have visited that might be interesting. Students can collaborate and work together sharing ideas, editing each other's work etc. Teachers can track student's contributions and easily see in the history who has added and contributed to the site.
- *Kahoot*: is a free-game-based learning platform that makes it fun to learn Turkish or any other language. It can be used for all ages (young and adult learners). Teachers can set their game in accordance to the topic she/he wants to examine. Students can either use their phone devices to play by installing the program or join the game online via the website or if the lesson takes place in a language laboratory, students can play the game there. Students are eager to begin the game. During the game all students are actively engaged and the environment becomes more and more comfortable. Learning becomes more dynamic and active.

3. 3. Communicative activities:

Individual activities, pair work and group work activities are designed by the teachers for the AEP of TL. All the activities have clear rules and explanations in order to be sure that all the students can understand. With the individual activities (mostly online) like quizzes for self-assessment, flashcard etc, students work at their own pace, they are confident about what they know and what they need to spend more time on, they can use their preferred learning styles and strategies. In pair work activities students have the chance to work with and learn from their peers; students who struggle with learning can learn from more capable peers; it is especially useful for students who prefer interpersonal learning settings. Group work activities/tasks provide more opportunities for practice; afford an increased variety of activities, and increases student creativity.

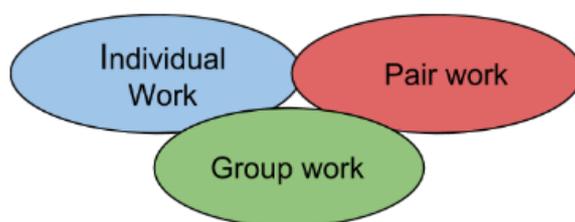


Figure 1: Type of activities

Theme-based units and task-based instructional activities include any activities that encourage students in engaging in the learning process. Communicative activities require a learner to speak with and listen to other learners. They also have authentic purposes: to find information, break down barriers, talk about self, and learn about the culture. Research on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) suggests that when students are engaged in activities/tasks within a dynamic learning environment they can reach their outcome. Communicative activities/tasks have lots of benefits. Some students at the beginning feel that they will never learn Turkish or never feel comfortable speaking with a native speaker of Turkish. It also may be difficult for learners to realize that there can be more than one correct response to a question and many ways to ask a question. Also, maybe some learners find it difficult to work in pairs or groups, and talk to one another. However, many, if not most, learners adapt and prosper with increased interactivity and independence because as language teachers we offer activities that can help turn the Turkish classroom into an active, safe and enjoyable place where everybody can learn what they need and want to learn.

3.3.1. Sample Activities

The following activities (see more examples of our activities in the appendix: Table 3) provide opportunities for interaction, communication and collaboration among students. Our role as language teachers is changing, now we are facilitators in learning.

- Activity 1: (Roll the ball) is designed for the A1 level -Early Intermediate Activity and it is a warm- up group activity. With this activity, students can roll the ball to each other and say their names with one word that they have learnt in the previous sessions starting with the first letter of their name. Using the alphabet letters students repeat the words that they learnt. This kind of activity reinforces previous session vocabulary.
- In activity 1, A2 level, (Draw the thieves) the teacher separates the class in small groups of 3. The teacher read the news aloud and the students draw the thieves according to what they have heard. At the end all the groups should share their images. They compare the images and try to answer the questions; did we draw the same thing? Why or why not? What nouns and/or adjectives are missing? The teacher encourages each group to talk in Turkish and explains what they got right or wrong (she/he gives a group feedback).
- In activity 1, B1 level, (Employment -Role-play: interviewer and candidate) students work in pairs and write a content-based dialogue. In this activity, students repeat the essential vocabulary and use the grammar related to job interviews. Attention is given on the pronunciation and word stress of some loanwords.
- In activity 1, B2 level, (Activity name “Debate: Love or money?” [Aşk mı para mı?]) the class works in groups. The teacher gives 4-5 simple sentences for each group and allows 10 minutes for discussion. All students from each group must present an argument for and against the proposal. Then one student from Group A presents an argument for the proposal, another from Group B presents against. The teacher ensures that every group is represented. The teacher provides feedback at the end (see examples of phrases in the appendix: Table 2).
- In activity 1, C1 level, (Activity name “Turkish caricature”) the teacher gives two caricatures and gives time to the class to study the caricatures and figure out their meaning. Then she/he asks the students to comment on the caricatures. The use of caricatures in language teaching can engage learners to think critically. Using them as teaching material can engage learners in classroom participation,

and inspire them to be active participants rather than passive recipients, contrary to the traditional classroom setting.

So, communicative language activities are about allowing students to practice more and to relate language to their own realities. Activities in CLT are focused on students in authentic communication. The more practice and success students have using Turkish, the better their motivation to learn the language.

4. Conclusion and Future Recommendations

The present study introduces a number of communicative activities/tasks (group work and pair work, drama, improvisation, role-playing, simulation, problem solving, communication games) used in Turkish Language classes of AEP offered by LC at UCY. The communicative activities/tasks were designed for and used by beginners to intermediate level classes. The activities were designed in accordance to the CEFR. These activities provide learners with the best possible opportunity to evolve in the learning of the TL, by developing the emotional, creative, social, and conceptual and language capability, including a high degree of the intercultural communication skills. This kind of activities can create a positive motivational climate in the classroom (Dörnyei, 2014, p. 530).

The main aim of using these activities/tasks is to develop and improve speaking skills not only inside the classroom but also outside. Theme-based units and task-based instructional activities keep students motivated and engaged in the learning process. The task completion process is an active learning process, and therefore, students have the responsibility for their own learning. The teacher is facilitator and monitor. Overall, the activities have a positive impact on students' autonomy, language skills and self-confidence. Pair work, group work and individual work can all be effective, if they are used at the right times and if they are structured in an appropriate way. For teachers, pair work and group work can be excellent tools to promote student interaction; individual work, on the other hand is easier to assess and often appeals to students with intrapersonal intelligences.

Therefore, teachers have to choose the appropriate approach(es), techniques and activities for students, based on their needs in TL learning so the students are able to develop their skills. The learning techniques should engage the students in real, authentic, functional use of language for the purpose of meaning transmittance.

Activities should be well-designed in order to promote interaction and communication among students.

In our classes, self-acting, teamwork and interaction among the students are being promoted in contrast to traditional teacher-centered direction. Finally, the diversity of the language is recognized along with its manifestations.

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Appendix

Table 1: Registrations at the TL courses of AEP

Academic Year	Registration
2005-2006	60 Ministry of Defence
2011-2012	20
2012-2013	94
2013-2014	45
2014-2015	75
2015-2016	68

Table 2: Expressions

Turkish expression	Literally meaning	Translation
Tatlı dil yılanı deliğinden çıkarır.	Sweet language takes out the snake from the hole	“You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar”
Dilin kemiği yoktur	The language does not have bones.	“You and your big mouth!”

Table 3: Communicative Activities at TL classroom

Activity name	Level	Time	Grouping of students	Objectives
Roll the ball	A1	15 minutes	Group work the whole class	Using the alphabet letters students repeat the words that they learnt.
Telephone conversation	A1	20 minutes	Pair work	Learning how to ask and answer questions in a formal setting. Learning the principles of role-play Creative collaborative writing
Draw the thieves	A2	20 minutes	Pair work	Understand the content and the vocabulary Be able to use the words in a sentence

Create a video- at the grocery	A2	30 minutes	Groups of 2 (4-4)	Read the supermarket advertisement Creative collaborative writing Playing roles
Employment - Role-play: interviewer and candidate	B1	30 minutes	Pair work	Introducing themselves, their working experiences, their educational background etc Creative collaborative writing
Creative Monologue - Oscar	B1	30 minutes	Individual work	Creative collaborative Writing Be able to act and speak in front of the class naturally
Debate: Love or money?	B2	20 minutes	Groups of 2 (4-4)	Presenting opinions and arguments using expressions like “I would like to argue that...”, “In my view ... I disagree with ...”
Turkish expressions	B2	15 minutes	Group work -the whole class	Read the expressions try to understand the meaning Semantics of words and/or phrases
Turkish caricature	C1	20 minutes	Group work -the whole class	Increase students’ critical thinking the new vocabulary (nouns/verbs etc)
Debate: Advantages / disadvantages of watching TV	C1	15 minutes	Groups of 2 (4-4)	Expressing opinions; using appropriate language to agree and disagree Revising the new vocabulary and grammar