
**A critical assessment of the Effectiveness of Communicative Method
and Teaching of French**

BY

OFFIONG, Glory Richard
Department of French
School of Language

College of Education, Afaha Nsit

ABSTRACT

Communicative method is the teaching method which aims to teach students to listen, speak, read and write. Its empowers them by giving them the skills they need, both orally and in writing, to be able to communicate in everyday situations. Nigeria is an English-speaking country, teaching of French as a foreign language is on utmost important. In order to teach this language in the country's schools, various methods were set up which teachers should use. The techniques of the communicative method are created by the teacher to make the class lively and allow students to express themselves in class with the aim of achieving active participation of all students such as: games, songs, exercises, and audiovisual. Hence, it was concluded that communicative method gives learners the freedom to express themselves. This method is the most used method today and the most appreciated in the teaching of the foreign language. Therefore, it was recommended that government should make effort in providing materials to French teachers. However, they need them in the application of the communicative method, because they are essential for the effectiveness of teaching.

KEYWORDS: Communicative method, teaching, French, Uyo High School

Introduction

Nigeria is an English-speaking country limited to the north by Niger, west by Benin and east by Cameroon. Nigeria is also a member of international organizations such as ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States), the AU (the African Union), the UN (the United Nations), and OPEC (the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries). In all these organizations, French is one of the official languages used by Member States. For Nigerians to be able to do business with their neighbours, it becomes relevant that French be accepted in Nigeria. That is why French was adopted by the Nigerian government under the control of the late President Sani Abacha as the second official language in 1996. With this declaration, the National Policy on Education (2006) adopted the teaching and learning of the French language in nursery, primary and secondary schools.

The teaching of French as a foreign language is very important in Nigeria. The word «teaching» according to Robert, the French dictionary, is the action, the art of teaching, of passing on knowledge». In order to teach this language in the country's schools, various methods were set up which teachers should use. It was also discovered that French is a special subject and that the majority of Nigerian students consider it a very difficult subject as well as mathematics.

The word “method” is conceived differently by language specialists, R. Galission and D. Coste (1976) say:

In the field of teaching, a Method is a sum of reasoned approaches based on a coherent set of linguistic, psychological, definite principles or assumptions. (34)

Despite the method used to teach a foreign language, the effectiveness or success of teaching depends on the teacher. In other words, the teacher has a lot to do: the techniques of the activities, the creativities, the know-how in class to achieve the goal of the lesson.

Rationale for the Work

Promoting the use of communicative methods is one thing, effective application in the classroom by teachers so that students are motivated and interested in learning French is another thing. Although the communicative method was introduced into teaching, many teachers do not master its application well in their classroom lessons. Some of them do not have the language proficiency to effectively apply this method. Some ignore the introduction of jokes which is also part of this method to animate the class.

Research Problem

It is observed that despite the many advantages of the communicative method, some problems militate against the effective use of this method if no action is taken, this method runs the risk of being neglected by teachers. Some of these problems are: the shortage of teaching materials the lack of workshops and training programmes for teachers, the lack of electronic devices, the inability to operate the few electronic devices available by some ensignants, etc. given the contribution and effectiveness of the communicative method, it deserves to be encouraged and developed in the teaching of the FLE.

Objective of the Work

This research aims to:

- (a) Stress the importance of applying the communicative method in the teaching of French in a JSS 3 class at Uyo High School.
- (b) Highlight ways that can help the teachings apply the communicative method effectively

Conceptual Review

Concept of Communicative Method

The communicative method is the teaching method which aims to teach students to listen, speak, read and write (Gerngross and Pucha, 1993). It seeks to empower them by giving them the skills they need, both orally and in writing, to be able to communicate in everyday situations (with regard to all acts of speech such as defending, ordering, permitting, thanking, greeting, affirming, warning, lending, etc.) The notion of inter action is very broad and then there is inter action on each occasion that two persons come into contact orally or in writing, the conduct of each interlocutor acting on the other during the exchanges, in particular in the performance of a

common task. This task is either personal or collective. Reading, listening, preparing an email, re-assigning a project are tasks in the same way as filling your portfolio.

In other words, there are “tasks” whenever we act to achieve a certain result. The communicative method therefore consists in making the most of speaking because it is by speaking that we learn the language better in general. It is communicative and responsive. We create an atmosphere that makes everyone feel comfortable talking. We’re recreating real-life situations. Of course, we do not forget to work in writing and to evaluate oral comprehension. That is why we use radio program excerpts, film excerpts, songs, articles, advertising excerpts, etc. because it is important to understand everyday French. To stimulate conversations, we engage in debates, games and creative exercises.

The teacher must: improve the competence of communication, teach the social dimension of the language. Work on the speech. Give strategies to students. The learner is considered an active subject who needs to master some communication skills. Learning must be active. Learning a language involves creating habits and reflexes (Richards and Rodgers 2001). The communicative approach taken in its generic sense can be seen as a necessary pedagogical overhaul aiming at coherence in the didactic principles identified centred on the learner; In short, it is a new vision of learning.

The Benefits of the Communicative Method

The communicative method has many advantages. Among other things, we have:

- The communicative method allows students to cope orally with or without the teacher,
- This method encourages or facilitates the participation of all students.
- When each student has the opportunity to express himself, he will not be afraid of error.
- With communicative activities (games, songs, instructions, riddles, etc.) students are encouraged to practice the language.
- When the emphasis is first on communication on the part of the pupils, the teacher speaks little in class and the classes are less tiring.
- Students are no longer unable to express themselves because they have confidence in themselves because of their oral participation and contributions.
- With the communicative activities, the class becomes animated.
- There is a good relationship between the teacher and the students by applying this method.
- With communicative methods, the objective of authentic documents in the classroom will be well achieved because students easily assimilate what they are taught.
- Students are placed in concrete problem-solving situations. This approach involves group work that makes learning easy.

The Communicative Method at Morrison G.S.

Children are active participants in their own education and development. This means that they should be mentally and physically active in learning what they need to know and do.

Morrison explained that learners are enormously involved in the learning process, that is, they should be very active in the classroom and not allow a situation where the teacher is the only one speaking in the classroom while they remain passive (Morrison, 2006).

The Communicative Method according to Wikipedia

Student-centred learning (also called child-centered learning) is an approach to education focusing on the needs of the students rather than those of others involved in the educational process, such as teachers and administrators. Student's needs, abilities, interest, and learning styles with the teacher as a facilitator of learning.

This indicates that in the classroom, the teacher has the responsibility of guiding the learners to achieve what they need to know and what they are interested in doing (Wikipedia, 2017).

The Current State of Research

In simpler terms, the word 'method' refers to the set of steps to follow to demonstrate knowledge, while the word 'communicative' emphasizes the ideas, feelings, desires and thoughts that are passed on to another person. The directions of this method, is to encourage students to use the French language in communication situations both in and outside the classroom. The search for the most functional pedagogical method in applied linguistics was in force from the beginning of the 19th century. The communicative approach in teaching seeks first of all the power and the means by which students can express themselves first orally, then in other linguistic competences: writing and interpreting. The success of the communicative approach depends immensely on the professor, his dynamism and the activities he initiates: communicative activities such as songs, authentic documents, films, games, exercises and videos, etc. this approach, seeks, from the beginning of the course, to put the students in a «real» communication situation.

The Effectiveness of the Communicative Method on teaching French in the JSS3 class of Uyo High School

According to our observation, the use of the communicative method in teaching French in the JSS3 class of Uyo High School is effective. Students are well motivated to express themselves in class because with this method, they now have the opportunity to speak in class. The teacher is not the only one speaking in class. After the explanations of the lesson, the teacher separates them into small groups so that they play different roles and they are no longer afraid. As soon as the teacher mentions the role play, the students get excited. The teacher teaches them different subjects, some of which relate to exercises, others to songs and still others to role-playing. It was noted that the class was very lively. Those who had exercises formulated questions that others try to answer. For the group that we gave the song to, that was the lesson that is incorporated into the song. So we can hear a song like: The colors we have are: black, green, blue, red, white and yellow (bis). For the role play, have students repeat exactly what the teacher did. All this indicates that the application of this method on the teaching of French in the JSS3 class of Uyo High School is a success according to our experience.

The Techniques of the Communicative Method

The techniques of the communicative method are techniques created by the teacher to make the class lively and allow students to express themselves in class with the aim of achieving active participation of all students (Richards, 2006). These are techniques such as: games, songs, exercises, and audiovisual.

Songs: These as an approach in the communicative method, allow students to master the pronunciation of French words and retain the lesson because from the moment the students remember the song chanted by the teacher in class while teaching a particular lesson, he remembers the lesson itself. For example, in the teaching of the "days of the week" if the teacher forms a song with this lesson after the explanation, this will make his task easy because the pupils will be motivated to sing so, using the communicative method, the teacher should not forget the impact of the songs on the pupils.

Exercises: Here the teacher should create exercises that will allow students to express themselves in class, after each lesson, exercises should be given for students to open their mouths. For example, after the explanation on the subject like "parts of the body", the teacher can give an exercise like:

Make three sentences each with parts of the body. Example: (I speak with my mouth), and after the conjugation of the verbs, the teacher asks: who can conjugate the verb "come" in the present indicative? With the help of such exercises, students will be motivated and will always be tempted to say something even if they make mistakes.

Role games: This approach encourages the active participation of students in the classroom. It makes it possible to better assess the development of each student. Students can thus share the feelings of others because they are called to play the roles of others; this makes the teaching effective. This approach is profitable in the development of comprehension, expression, reading etc. because the pupils will recreate activities around what they are trying to imitate. The teacher's task in this case is to guide the students and divide them into small groups, giving them different roles up to date in front of the class. As a result, students will no longer be afraid of making a mistake or standing up in front of others to speak because everyone in the class will participate.

Audiovisual: It is the combination of sound and image. Audio is synonymous with sound just as the visual implies the image. The concept of audiovisual in French class is defined as the use of audio-visual material and equipment such as video cassette, audio cassette, compact disc (CD), video tape recorder, television set, overhead projector, even the computer. The use of these materials and equipment has many advantages that will facilitate the learning of phonetics, grammar, oral comprehension, language skills and oral and written communication techniques which all aim at mastering speech. langue itself. Audiovisual is a perfect companion in the banking class. It is one of the teaching aids that can transmit audio and visual messages in the teaching of langue. Messages can be recorded by the teacher on audio (sound) or video (image + sound) cassettes, tapes, audio and video discs etc. The training of the learner in the field of oral expression is done in part through repeated listening to these audiovisual messages. Indeed, the audio-visual brings many advantages to the teaching of French in a language class.

Conclusion

Communicative method gives learners the freedom to express themselves. This method is the most used method today and the most appreciated in the teaching of the foreign language. It allows teachers as well as students to engage in free conversation, which makes the French class lively. Game, songs, exercises and audio-visual are techniques that contribute to the success of the communicative method in the quest to promote communicative skills. Therefore, communicative method is of major importance in the teaching of the French language.

Recommendations

1. Government should make effort in providing materials to French teachers. However, they need them in the application of the communicative method, because they are essential for the effectiveness of teaching.
2. Government should provide our secondary schools with sufficient materials such as cassette radios, television sets, computers and laboratories to encourage teachers in teaching and learners to learn.

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