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ABSTRACT

Communicative approach is the newest of the methods used in teaching French. It emphasizes the use of French in everyday life. The approach aims at making the learner proficient in oral and writing skills. The communicative approach is learner oriented and even employs the mother tongue to education difficulties in language learning. The teacher does not translate but asks questions to give the learners clues to the meaning of what will be presented. This paper explains the tenets of the communicative approach and compares it with some other approaches. Finally, some recommendations are given among which are that the serving teachers should be trained in the approach and teacher training institutions should include that approach in their methodology courses.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper therefore the concepts of innovation and communicative approach are presented. The tenets of communicative approach are presented and discussed. The communicative approach is compared with the other methods employed in teaching French to elucidate its merits. Finally the merits of the method in the teaching of French in Nigerian schools are presented.

Keeping your students interested and engaged in class is every teacher's challenge and wish. So if you're looking for fun, new ways to teach French, look no further. Here are eight French teaching methods and strategies to refresh your pool of ideas and naturally motivate your students.

1. Use the cooperative learning method

Cooperative learning is a fun method to get your students motivated and excited. Students will work in small groups and have a project or task to complete. You, as the teacher, will act as facilitator and observe how well they work in a pair or group to complete the task you have set them.

Fairytale mystery

I like to give my students a fairytale in French, divide them into groups of five and assign characters to each one. For example, take the story of Cendrillon and ask each member of the group to pick a character: Cinderella, the wicked stepmother, the ugly sisters, the prince. The idea is to solve a crime—who stole the glass shoe? Each character will have a set of questions in French to ask the others, in order to discover who the guilty person is. For example, *Où étais-tu entre minuit et une heure du matin ?* Each student gets a chance to ask questions and after a certain amount of time, each group should be ready to present its findings.

Cooperative learning tasks

Here are some more ideas from around the web of possible tasks/techniques that work well with this method: Think-pair-share. This is a common technique, where the students reflect on a question about something they have just learned. Then, they pair up with another student to discuss their thoughts and finally each shares their response with the whole class. Round robin. Another common technique, this one simply involves asking a question that will produce varied answers, and having students go around and share their answers in small groups. For example, you might ask, *“Quel souvenir de ton enfance préfères-tu ?”* or *“Comment as-tu rencontré ton/ta meilleur(e) ami(e) ?”* This setup will get your students talking and interacting while improving their vocabulary and speaking skills.

2. Use the communicative approach

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In the communicative approach, the focus is on communication rather than grammar structures. This approach gives the teacher a facilitator role and takes the focus off the language by stressing the content. The idea is to communicate fluently, but not necessarily accurately.

If you were to show your students how to repair a bicycle, for example, they would learn bike vocab while you taught the process of fixing the bike. Your students would then be able to communicate in French by using the relevant vocabulary and conveying their feelings, ideas and thoughts.

Here are a few ideas for teaching French through the communicative approach:

Try role play

Allowing your students to role play any real-life (or fictional!) situation is a fantastic way to get them to use French in this way. Make sure students have the necessary vocabulary and cultural information beforehand, and then let them act it out.

For example, one possible scenario would be for your students to go shopping for food. This helps them review the vocabulary for different kinds of shops (l'épicerie, la boulangerie, la boucherie, le supermarché, etc.), kinds of foods (le pain, la viande, le lait, le vin, etc.), how to ask what something costs and quantities (un kilo de pommes, un litre de lait, une tablette de chocolat, etc.).

Learn about classmates

Another useful way to practice this method is to have your students find out more about each other by asking one another questions.

For example, students could ask questions such as "Aimes-tu aller au cinéma ?," "Quel sport préfères-tu ?" and "Préfères-tu le thé ou le café ?" This results in meaningful communication and interaction between students is paramount.

Fill out a questionnaire

You could also ask your students questions which would allow them to express their feelings, emotions, likes, dislikes and above all, their imagination.

For instance, Marcel Proust's questionnaire is extremely useful on many levels—students' interactions with each other, the vocabulary, the way questions are asked and comprehension. By using it, you can either get students to reflect on their own likes and dislikes, or you can adapt it and have students ask the questions to a peer.

Proust's questions include "Le principal trait de mon caractère," "La qualité que je préfère chez un homme/chez une femme" and "Ce que j'apprécie le plus chez mes amis."

3. Use the Accelerative Integrated Method (AIM)

The Accelerative Integrated Method (AIM) of language learning was designed in the late 90s by Wendy Maxwell, a French teacher in Canada, to accelerate the development of fluency in the beginning levels of language learning.

This approach teaches vocabulary visually and in an auditory manner, so the use of theater, stories and music are important. Students are introduced to the vocabulary through gestures, and then shown a contextualized play using the same words. This cements the vocabulary while demonstrating how to use it, which often leads to the students' use of their own imagination and creativity in order to expand on the activity.

AIM Language Learning

AIM Language Learning has gathered a series of short videos on YouTube, such as student-maden "Les Trois Petits Cochons," which are useful in the classroom. That particular story and activity, for example, will introduce the vocabulary of animals such as cochon and loup, and the phrase avoir peur. Once the vocabulary has been learned, you can then give your students a comprehension test, which can be either written or oral (or both). They might even be inspired to make their own videos!

AIM Language Learning explains that their method will help students become proficient in the target language faster. Useful key words are taught first and then task-based activities are set in

order to create a kind of language immersion. Gestures, as mentioned previously, are very important.

I like to use this method in the early stages when I am teaching my students how to introduce themselves. I point to myself and say “Je m’appelle...” and add my name. I then point to a student and say “Et toi ?” This should elicit a reply.

AIM tasks

Here are a few more task-based activities:

Charades. Have students pick a piece of paper with an action written on it from a box (e.g. lire un journal, manger au restaurant, faire du vélo). The student then acts out that action, and their classmates must guess the French verb/phrase.

Famous people. Ask your students in groups to come up with a list of four or five famous people from the 20th century. They must then give reasons why each person is on their list.

French recipe. Let students present a French recipe to the class! In groups they’ll need to both show the ingredients needed and then pretend to prepare the dish. This will help not only with oral fluency, but also with vocabulary and grammar (such as the imperative) review.

4. Teach with French TV and films

If you favor a blended learning approach, introducing French films or television is an excellent method to help students improve their four language skills.

Cinema français FLE

A wonderful site for creating lessons based on movies is Apprendre le français avec le cinéma. It analyzes 18 films, providing specific questions and topics to explore before and after watching (with answers), plus themes, ideas for exposés and more.

But that’s just the “films” section! The other four main parts of the site are the history of French cinema, film genres, quizzes and dialogues from the featured movies.

It’s an incredible resource for French teachers, but also to share with your upper-intermediate and advanced learners, so they can gain even more from watching these films on their own.

Use movie posters

A fun activity when teaching with movies is to have your students analyze the film’s poster. This will lead to vocabulary expansion and an improvement in analytical skills. Take, for example, the poster or photos for “La Vie en Rose” (its French title is “La Môme”), which may be found on the official website of the film.

Ask your students in groups of 2 or 4 to describe what they see on the poster or photo. Is it outside or inside? Is it night or day? Describe the person you see. What does the poster tell you about the genre of the movie? These can all be used to hone description skills

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