Organization of Teaching English with the Help of Cluster Approach: A Case Study

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Abstract- This paper aims to investigate the use of Cluster Approach (CA) in teaching English for biology students (as a part of ESP) and to know how this approach is useful in improving their professional communication skills. Therefore, it uses the Cluster Approach (CA) in improving a student's language skills. If a teacher follows the Cluster Approach (CA), it will be useful to students to improve their professional communication skills. Cluster Approach (CA) is such an approach to methodology that makes use of the varied language learning approaches instead of one approach, but at the same time focuses on specialization, on the development of professional language or language used in a certain specific area of the profession. It is a skilled based approach as the teacher can base his method or approach on the basis of the learner's age, knowledge and aims and objectives of the lesson. This study was carried out in two groups – controlled and experimental. Each group consisted of 24 second-year students of the Biology at Gulistan State University. Thus, the research takes form of a case-study.

Index Terms- Teaching English, approaches, methodology, ESP, Cluster Approach (CA), professional communication skills.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of English has increased all over the world and it is playing a key role in social, economic and cultural life. As English is a part of professional life, each and every student should be good (B2 level according to CEFR criteria [5]) at English thus meeting the requirements of modern educational systems [3; 4; 6; 7]. A specialist in biology will be qualitative and efficient if he gets proper proficiency in English [1]. The English teacher plays a key role in developing language skills in biology students. However, it is challenging for a teacher to make students good at English. If a teacher knows various approaches, and how to use them, it will be easy for him or her to develop professional communication skills in students [2]. The following are the objectives of English language teaching in general:

- To enable students to comprehend spoken form
- To develop students' ability to use English in day to day life and real life situation
- To enable students to read in English with full comprehension
- To enable students to write English correctly and meaning fully to express their ideas etc.

II. RESEARCH OVERVIEW

There are various methods and approaches to teach English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to biology students and to meet all the above mentioned objectives [9; 10; 11]. Moreover, the teacher has to play various roles to meet these objectives. The Cluster Approach (CA) is the suitable approach in the language teaching to make students good at English and reach another specific objective – to prepare students to use English in their professional activity [12] and in certain professional area [13]. Some studies advocate the use of Cluster Approach (CA) in teaching English as it is based on the needs for language learning both at the national and individual level [14; 15; 16]. The report says that English must serve as the window of the world at the national level, and it provides opportunity for an individual who seeks socio-economic advancement in the individual level.

Teaching ESP at university level should aim at:

1. Equipping the student with professional communication skills necessary to cope with the situations he is likely to encounter (these should be predictable);
2. Providing the kind of information context which is relevant to contemporary area of study and future profession.

Emerging specialists in biology must have effective professional communication skills in English to get job. As a result, it is the teacher's responsibility to make students proficient in professional English. That is why a teacher has to follow Cluster Approach (CA) inside and outside the classroom to reach the above mentioned goals. The teacher makes students involve in participating various professional language activities, thus creating interest in students in English language by following Cluster Approach (CA). It should be underlined that the Cluster Approach (CA) involves various procedures and techniques drawn from various methods.

The Cluster Approach (CA) to language teaching is mixed process of structural, professional communicative approaches [17]. If the topic belongs to structures, teacher has to follow structural approach. If the topic belongs to speaking activity, teacher has to follow professional communicative approach. Nevertheless, when a teacher teaches grammar topic, he or she can follow inductive or deductive approach, it depends on age and background of the students. When a teacher deals with the topic concerning phrases or idioms, he or she can use the Cluster Approach and even be bilingual if students are interested in professional context and have enough professional background. If it is reading topic, a teacher can use specific text and audiolingual method seems to be relevant. To sum up, the Cluster Approach (CA) is a combination of traditional and innovative approaches with a specific focus on professional language. It offers better opportunities to learn professional language skills. It gives good result without additional pressure on learner.

III. PRINCIPLES AND ADVANTAGES OF CLUSTER APPROACH

The following principles of the Cluster Approach (CA) are shown in a number of research papers:

1. It gives a chance to teachers to select different teaching techniques basing on professional context in each period and in different places to reach aims of the lesson;
2. It breaks monotony of traditional lesson in one hand and ensure better understanding on the other hand;
3. Different kinds of audiovisual materials and teaching aids in professional context lead to better understanding;
4. It saves a lot of time in presenting language activities.

The following advantages are supposed to be found when Cluster Approach (CA) is used in teaching ESP to biology students:

1. Learners become attentive and respond faster;
2. It offers multiple opportunities to students to develop their own skills in combination with their professional skills;
3. It enhances active participation;
4. It makes learning lively and enjoyable;
5. It makes learning languages motivational as it is directly connected to the students' future profession;
6. It promotes class control and students have interest in class and it allows class discussion.

These findings confirm Krashen's (1988) input hypothesis [8] which assures that the best methods of second language teaching and learning supplied by comprehensive input and not forcing production.

Though Cluster Approach has a number of advantages, it has also some drawbacks:

1. By some researchers Cluster Approach (CA) is considered to be too practical and may not meet the criterion of efficiency of learning languages as a science.
2. It is time consuming;
3. According to some latest studies, it may be not useful to slow learners as it requires active participation and discussion;
4. If a teacher of English does not have good command over all aspects of the Cluster Approach (CA), students may confuse and become demotivated.

IV. METHOD

The participants in this study were two groups – controlled and experimental. Each group consisted of 24 second-year students of the Biology at Gulistan State University. A total 48 students were observed. The researcher followed Cluster Approach (CA) for A section of 24 students and followed single method, direct method for B section of 24 students. ESP teaching manual approved by Gulistan State University's Scientific Council was used as a basic source. The manual has twenty-five chapters. Each and every chapter has a set of activities focusing on Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Grammar, Vocabulary, Professional Scenario and case studies, questions and tasks, glossary and recommended literature.

The researcher taught various language items by using different methods within the Cluster Approach. The researcher followed audio-lingual method and reading method to teach professional listening activity. Professional listening activity in every lesson had some conversations on professional topics. The researcher assigned a task to particular students and asked them to record their voice by reading conversations. Generally, students have interest if a teacher uses different audio-visual aids like tape recorder, mobile, slides etc. Playing recorded conversations on professional topics and live conversations on the working place created great interest in students.

After playing recorded audio, the researcher asked questions which followed conversations. The researcher enriched Cluster Approach (CA) with the elements of communicative approach and task-based approach to conduct speaking activities like JAM, Debate, discussions, Role-plays etc. It should be mentioned that some of the students hesitated to come and participate in activities. Then the researcher motivated them to participate in activities on the example of lab workers and their activities, in same way it helped to build up students' confidence. The researcher did not interrupt when students were speaking right or wrong.

After their completion of participation, the researcher encouraged them and at the same time she gave constructive feedback. In some rare cases the researcher used grammar-translation method and direct method to teach grammar. She also used deductive approach and inductive approach to teach grammar according to professional context. The researcher explained grammar topics through power point presentation; it created interest and avoided boredom in students as they had been listening grammar in traditional class rooms. PPT presentations may be common in teaching in cities but it is new in rural area institutions. The researcher followed bilingual method to teach vocabulary in biology sphere. The researcher gave examples after explain meaning of the words and asked students to frame a sentence of their own basing on professional context.

After teaching specific vocabulary items, the researcher conducted quiz competition on vocabulary topics like synonyms, antonyms, one-word substitutions, idioms etc. The researcher followed professional communicative approach to teach scenario activities which include role-play, and discussions narrowly focused on the students' future profession, and, moreover, on the specific area of their future profession. Simultaneously, the researcher followed task-based approach and direct method to teach life skills.

After explain the life skills topics like positive attitude, leadership, communication skills, stress management, goal setting, the researcher asked students to summarize what they understood and share their knowledge and experience on the professional topic. Depending on the topic of the lesson and lesson aims, the researcher followed task-based approach to teach writing topics like essay, paragraph writing etc.

V. PRELIMINARY DATA RESULTS

A questionnaire was administered to all participants. It consists of two sections. The questionnaire covers eight activities observed during experimental lessons. The first section contains educational background about participants. The second section contains ten items which contains three multiple options – good, average, poor with following questions.

1. I can understand English when others speak
2. I feel nervous to speak without preparation
3. I feel comfortable to speak on any topic
4. I can understand gist when reading text
5. I can frame sentences without errors
6. I use L2 to communicate with others
7. I don't hesitate to participate in language and soft skills related activities
8. I feel language learning is easy in English class
9. I feel comfortable in English class
10. I like way of teaching and I have interest in English class

Participants were asked to complete questionnaire after completion of first three chapters and then the results are interpreted

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Each participant level was calculated. The group "A" has the following results:

Table 1. Results of the group "A".

Section number	Number of students	Level
1	16	A
2	5	B
3	3	C

As for the group "B", it has the following results:

Table 2. Results of the group "B".

Section number	Number of students	Level
1	10	A
2	8	B
3	6	C

The Cluster Approach (CA) was successful in the language classroom in the case of group "A". Students felt comfortable and showed interest in participating almost all language activities. In the group of "A", majority of the students improved their professional communicative skills due to Cluster Approach (CA) whereas students hesitate to participate in many activities in the case of group "B". The following bar chart shows "A" group and "B" group students' performance.

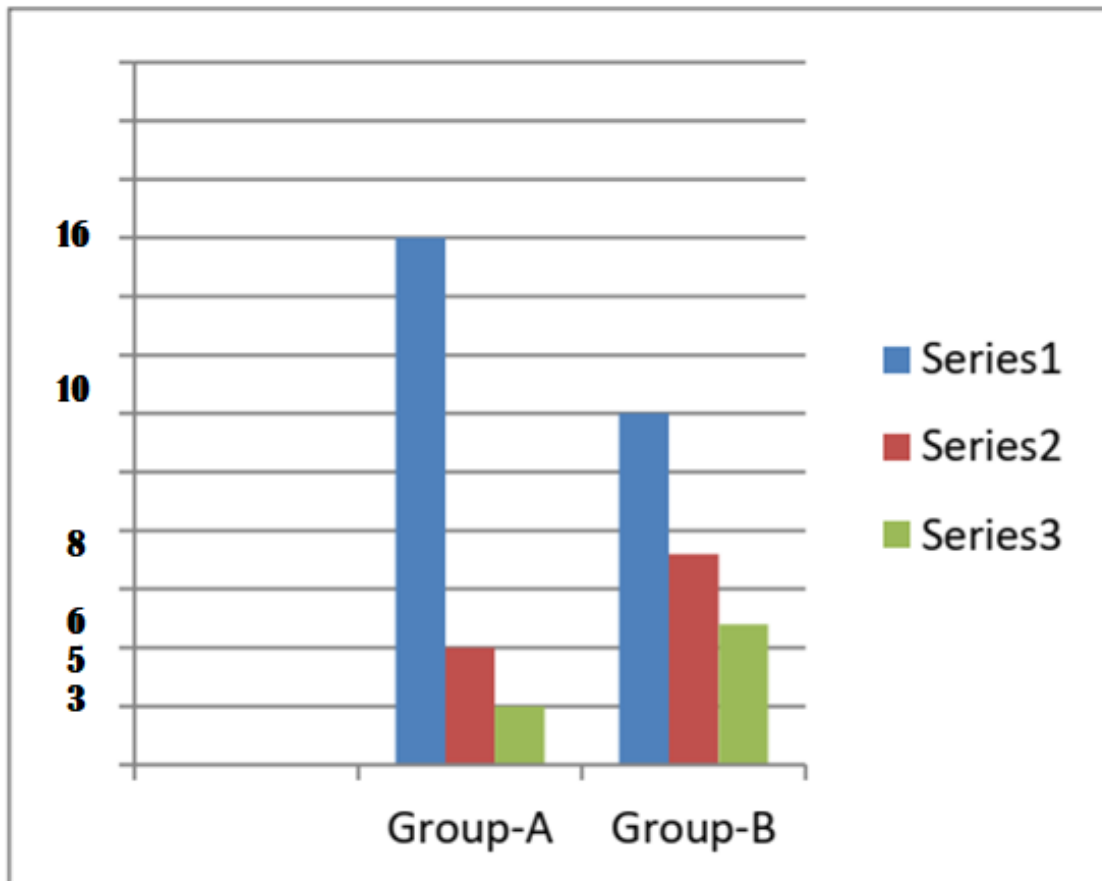**Table 3. Bar chart showing students' performance in groups "A" and "B"**

Table 3. Results of using Cluster Approach (CA) in group "A".

No.	Advantages	Yes (Frequency)	Percentage	No (Frequency)	Percentage
1	Enhancing active participation	17	71%	7	29%
2	Enjoying listening to groupmates or peers	18	75%	6	25%
3	Becoming attentive	20	83%	4	17%
4	Promoting class control	24	100%	-	-
5	Building good contextual and professional contact between teacher and student	20	83%	4	17%
6	Orientation to the specific professional result	20	83%	4	17%

Table 4. Results of using one separately chosen method in group "B".

No.	Advantages	Yes (Frequency)	Percentage	No (Frequency)	Percentage
1	Enhancing active participation	10	42%	14	58%
2	Enjoying listening to groupmates or peers	14	58%	10	42%
3	Becoming attentive	18	75%	6	25%
4	Promoting class control	20	83%	4	17%
5	Building good contextual and professional contact between teacher and student	18	75%	6	25%
6	Orientation to the specific professional result	16	67%	8	33%

The table 3 shows that how student get benefit if teacher follows Cluster Approach (CA) in language classroom and table 4 shows that what will be result if the teacher follows single method in the class room. So when we compare to single method as shown in table 4, Cluster Approach (CA) is 100% result oriented as shown in table 4. So undoubtedly, Cluster Approach (CA) is much more effective than traditional approach.

VII. CONCLUSION

The results of this study reveal that student foreign language performance is closely connected to the approach chosen by the teacher, therefore, in many ways it depends on teacher's performance. If the teacher is active, enthusiastic, motivator and encourages – students participate in various foreign language activities without hesitation like group A, whereas few students participate in language activities if teacher is confine to one single method. One can develop professional communicative skills by practice and participating in real-life language activities. So it is proven that in language classroom teacher plays key role in developing professional language skills of the students. So if the teacher follows Cluster Approach (CA), the lesson will be interesting and motivating, the teacher can avoid monotony of traditional lesson, and in general it leads to the constant improvement of students' professional communicative skills in a foreign language and objectives of the language classroom will be reached efficiently.

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